

Motherwell, 20 February 2006 at 11 am.

A Meeting of the **SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB-COMMITTEE**

PRESENT

Councillor Sullivan, Convener; Councillors Burrows, Chadha, Gormill, Higgins, Lafferty, McAuley and McLaughlin.

CHAIR

Councillor Sullivan (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Corporate Freedom of Information Officer; Head of Social Work Services; Co-ordinator, Child Protection Committee; Co-ordinator, Youth Justice; Senior Officer, Justice; Service Co-ordinator, Addiction and Children's Rights Officer, Social Work Department.

APOLOGIES

Councillors M. Clark, Fagan, Irvine and McCabe and L. Seaton, North Lanarkshire Carers Together.

WELCOME

The Convener welcomed Councillor Higgins to his first meeting of the Social Work (Operations and Services) Sub-Committee.

CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE

1. The Co-ordinator, Child Protection, provided a detailed presentation on the work undertaken by the Child Protection Committee towards safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in need or at risk from harm within North Lanarkshire. In particular she advised the Sub-Committee on:-

- the safeguarding and protection of children
- partnership working with agency representatives
- the Child Protection Reform Programme and the publication of "Its Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright"
- the key initiatives involved in delivering the Child Protection Reform Programme
- the reviewed membership, structure and reporting mechanism linking the agencies
- raising awareness of child protection, and the involvement of communities
- proposals for an integrated action plan to include a protocol for getting priorities right, and a multi-agency inspection programme,

and

- the current position and challenges in North Lanarkshire, where 45 child protection children were currently registered on the child protection register.

After responding to Members' questions, the Convener thanked the Co-ordinator, Child Protection Committee, for her informative presentation.

Decided: that the terms of the presentation be noted.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTERS ADMINISTRATION ANNUAL REPORT 2004/2005

2. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 20 February 2006 by the Director of Social Work (1) advising on the content of the annual report of the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA) for 2004/2005, and highlighting the implications for North Lanarkshire; (2) outlining the background to the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration which forms part of the Children's Hearing System; (3) indicating that within North Lanarkshire SCRA is represented on a number of partnership working bodies including the Children's Services Strategy Group and its sub-groups, and is a key partner in the delivery of integrated services; (4) intimating that over 2004/05, within North Lanarkshire, 2,681 referrals were made to the Reporter on offence grounds and 4,148 were made for care and protection grounds, which indicates a respective increase of 21% and 58%, and represents an increase in the workload for Reporters and Social Work staff who service Children's Hearings, and (5) intimating, also, a small increase in children's hearings from 2,121 in 2003/2004 to 2,199 in 2004/2005 compared with the number of referrals made to the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration.

Decided:

- (1) that an amended report be submitted to the Social Work Committee on the annual report of the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration, highlighting the implications for social work services in North Lanarkshire, and
- (2) that the content of the report be otherwise noted.

FUNDING TO IMPROVE FOSTERING SERVICES

3. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 20 February 2006 by the Director of Social Work (1) advising of an additional £12m being made available by the Scottish Executive to improve Fostering Services across Scotland; (2) intimating that the allocation to local authorities was based on the number of young people looked after and accommodated away from home in each authority; (3) detailing in paragraph 2.3 of the report the funding allocated to North Lanarkshire over the years 2005/2008; (4) identifying the recruitment of foster carers, retention of foster carers, and increased placement choice as the key areas in which the Scottish Executive is seeking improvement; (5) indicating that a comprehensive review of fostering services in North Lanarkshire is nearing completion which will include proposals outlining an action plan for use of the additional funding to increase the numbers of foster carers and improve arrangements for retaining foster carers, and (6) recommending that link carer arrangements be incorporated within the review of fostering services.

Decided:

- (1) that link carer arrangements be considered as part of the wider fostering review;
- (2) that the Director of Social Work bring forward a report to the Sub-Committee on the outcome of the fostering review, and
- (3) that the contents of the report be otherwise noted.

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE CONSULTATION ON DRAFT SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT 2003 (NOTICE OF RELEASE OR TRANSFER) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2006

4. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 27 January 2006 by the Director of Social Work (1) advising that the Scottish Executive had requested by 15 February 2006 comments on the Draft Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notice of Release or Transfer) (Scotland) Regulations 2006, and (2) seeking approval of the response submitted to the Scottish Executive by the Director of Social Work prior to the deadline, as set out in the attachment to the report.

Decided:

- (1) that the Sub-Committee, for its interest, endorse both the response set out in the attachment to the report by the Director of Social Work as the Council's response to the Scottish Executive consultation on the Draft Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Notice of Release or Transfer) (Scotland) Regulations 2006, and the action taken by the Director of Social Work in forwarding the response to the Scottish Executive, and
- (2) that the contents of the report be otherwise noted.

SECTION 15 OF MANAGEMENT OF OFFENDERS ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005 – DELIVERY OF THROUGH-CARE SERVICES FOR SEX OFFENDERS SENTENCED TO PERIODS OF CUSTODY BETWEEN 6 MONTHS AND LESS THAN 4 YEARS (JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR SEJD19/2005)

5. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 27 January 2006 by the Director of Social Work (1) advising of the commencement from 8 February 2006 of new legislation in the form of Section 15 of the Management of Offenders Etc. (Scotland) Act 2005 – “Delivery of Throughcare Services for Sex Offenders Sentenced to Periods of Custody between 6 months and less than 4 years” and the implication of the guidance in the Scottish Executive Justice Department Circular SEDJD 19/2005 for the Department of Social Work; (2) outlining the background to the new legislation; (3) listing the main areas for action as (a) the allocation of a supervising authority for each offender; (b) the identification of specific tasks for prison-based Social Work staff – including specified levels of contact; (c) the allocation of a supervising officer – and clarification of the role and tasks for that individual; (d) pre-release processes including home background reports; (e) the need for a risk assessment and risk management plan to be developed for each offender, and (f) the production of community-based supervision plans; (4) intimating that North Lanarkshire manages the Justice Throughcare Team for the Lanarkshire Justice Group, and had been advised of those persons subject to the new arrangements, and (5) indicating in paragraph 3 of the report the main areas for action and informing that the new requirements will place additional responsibilities on existing resources, with some additional funding likely to come from the Scottish Executive.

Decided:

- (1) that the Director of Social Work bring forward a further report to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee providing an update on the operation of the new legislation, and
- (2) that the contents of the report be otherwise noted.

RISK MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY CONSULTATION ON ACCREDITATION

6. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 27 January 2006 by the Director of Social Work (1) advising that the Risk Management Authority - created via the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003 - had requested by 13 January 2006 comments on a consultation document on an accredited framework for working with high risk offenders, and (2) seeking approval of the response submitted to

the Risk Management Authority by the Director of Social Work prior to the deadline, as set out in the attachment to the report.

Thereon the Convener proposed that the consultation response include a request for consideration to be given to the resource implications of the proposals.

Decided:

- (1) that the Sub-Committee, for its interest, endorse both the response set out in the attachment to the report by the Director of Social Work as the Council's response to the Risk Management Authority's Consultation on Accreditation, subject to the inclusion of a request for consideration to be given to the resource implications of the proposals, and the action taken by the Director of Social Work in forwarding the response to the Risk Management Authority, and
- (2) that the contents of the report be otherwise noted.

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL ON ALCOHOL

7. There was submitted a report (docketed) dated 18 January 2006 by the Director of Social Work (1) advising of the development of a Council on Alcohol within North Lanarkshire; (2) indicating (a) that the Lanarkshire Alcohol and Drug Addiction Team (ADAT) in conjunction with the North and South Lanarkshire Councils had commissioned Alcohol Focus to investigate the feasibility of establishing a Council on Alcohol for Lanarkshire or alternatively, one for each authority area, and (b) that the survey had concluded it would be more practical to develop a service in each area; (3) intimating (a) that, as part of their remit, Alcohol Focus had recently appointed a Development Officer for the North Lanarkshire area to set up the new organisation, and (b) the priorities of the Development Officer will include (A) the establishment of an interim management committee; (B) developing the draft budget for the service; (C) recruiting and training volunteer Counsellors; (D) developing an operational counselling base in the Motherwell area; (E) obtaining charitable status for the new organisation, and (F) integrating the existing voluntary organisations into the new North Lanarkshire Council on Alcohol; (4) advising of the development of an integrated substance misuse service by North Lanarkshire Council and NHS under the auspices of the Joint Future Agenda, to complement the work of the Council on Alcohol, and (5) indicating that the new Council on Alcohol will result in an increased pool of volunteer counsellors to enhance the local service provision and increase the options and choices for individuals who require counselling input as part of their treatment and rehabilitation regime.

Decided: that the contents of the report be noted.