

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL  
REPORT**

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: EXTRAORDINARY LIVES – CREATING A POSITIVE FUTURE FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCOTLAND
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 5 DECEMBER 2006	Ref: CM/CC	

**1. Purpose of Report / Introduction**

To advise Committee of the content and conclusions of the Social Work Inspection Agency's review report "Extraordinary Lives – Creating a positive future for looked after young people in Scotland".

**2. Background**

- 2.1. The review identified what makes a positive difference to the lives and futures of children and young people who are looked after by local authorities.
- 2.2. The review research was completed with reference to a small group of children and young people who are looked after by local authorities and considered a range of their experiences, their daily routines and their relationships with carers and professionals.
- 2.3. In order to inform the review, therefore, four further separate studies were commissioned into kinship care, looked after children's daily activities, their health and emotional development and the law affecting children and young people.
- 2.4. The report is directed towards people concerned with looked after children and their families; including elected members, local authorities and voluntary organisation staff, foster carers, health professionals, and those involved in developing and improving children's services.
- 2.5. The report also supports the Manifesto for Children and Young People Looked After Away from Home. The Manifesto has been drawn up by a number of national child care agencies with the aim of influencing a national strategy for looked after children. North Lanarkshire Council has signed up to this Manifesto.

**3. Proposals / Considerations**

- 3.1. The review considers the needs of children with reference to specific areas ~ in terms of safety, nurture, health and activity, achievement, respect and responsibility.
- 3.2. The patterns of disadvantage experienced by looked after children impact upon them in adult life in that their academic achievement is significantly lower than the general population, they are more likely to need mental health services, be homeless, be imprisoned and have their own children removed from them.

### 3.3 The review's key messages are:

- looked after children can overcome adversity and can do well when they are well cared for and that relationships with skilled adults can help them develop successfully.
- children and young people looked after away from home need stability and the chance to put down roots. They are adversely affected by frequent placement moves and in these circumstances their access to education and health services can be disrupted.
- tackling disadvantage and discrimination experienced by many looked after children requires planning at every level within local authorities and between them and their partners in delivering children's services.
- developing an understanding of what children and young people think about services supports effective engagement and long term service planning.

## 4 Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implication

- 4.1 The report provides research evidence to support its conclusion that local authorities and partner agencies should prioritise the needs of children and young people who require to be looked after away from home.
- 4.2 The review report will now be given full consideration by the Children's Services Strategy Group. A number of proposals including: improving educational achievement; involving young people in key processes (e.g. the recruitment of staff), and improving health outcomes will be given particular attention.
- 4.3 There is no additional funding available to the Council in relation to this review, however the work associated with the full implementation of the review has significant resource implications for local authorities and partner agencies. This is an issue which is being tabled with the Scottish Executive by COSLA.

## 5 Recommendation

- i Committee is asked to note the contents of this report



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**6<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

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