

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE - 20 August 2001

REPORT ON: LISTENING TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 520 - 2001

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform members of the nature and purpose of the "Listening to Children Matrix" as an important additional safeguard for children and young people accommodated in local authority residential units.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

2.1.1 Notes the content of this current report

2.1.2 Instructs the Director of Social Work to monitor the operation of the "Listening Matrix" system and provide reports to Committee as required on issues arising and their outcomes.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs involved in maintaining the role of the Children's Rights Officer are provided for within the revenue budget. There are no additional financial implications from this report.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

The Children's Rights Service has a specific role in providing access to knowledge and information, for the most vulnerable children in Dundee, which empowers and enables them to participate in decisions that affect them and contributes to an improvement in the quality of their lives

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The Children's Rights Service promotes the status of children of all abilities for whom the Council has responsibilities as a corporate parent. This additional safeguard ensures that children accommodated in local authority units are treated with equity and fairness and that they are protected from discrimination.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

The "Listening Matrix" is a system for gathering, analysing and interpreting information produced by or relating to Dundee young person's residential units. Within this new development the Children's Rights Officer will focus on safeguards and listening to children and young people in residential units.

This will involve an analysis of information gathered from a variety of sources, within a rights framework. He will also carry out regular visits to each of the units and will meet with young people, staff and managers. The Children's Rights Officer will use the information he gathers to examine the meaning behind the information and to get to the root of incidents and events involving young people, staff and the wider community.

While maintaining confidentiality, general observations will be shared to promote the development of good policies, procedures and practice. It is intended that the operation of the Matrix will provide an important new safeguard and contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people in Dundee residential units. Further details of the Matrix are appended to this report

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Director of Finance, Director of Support Services, Director of Education, Director of Neighbourhood Resources and Development, Director of Corporate Planning and the Children's Reporter have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

9.0 SIGNATURE

Director of Social Work

Date

2 August 2001

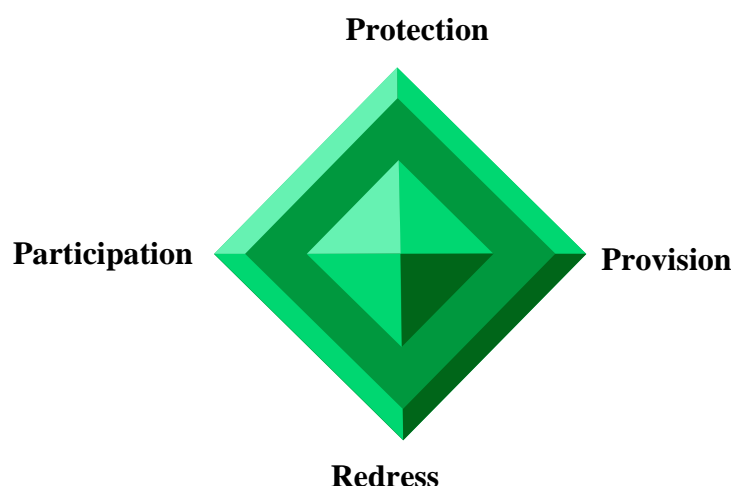
SAFE-GUARDING

How are children and vulnerable adults safeguarded in the provision of services?

Children

A system involving a 'Listening to Children Matrix' has been developed, which will gather, analyse and interpret information produced by departmental residential units. The method uses a rights framework to explore the meaning at the root of incidents and events involving children, staff and the wider community.

The framework can be expressed as a compass, with four bearing points:



This method would gather information, which gives indications of quality performance under these four headings (or bearings) ie provision – is it of sufficient quality and appropriate to need? Protection – do measures generate real safeguards? Participation – does this produce real and active involvement, not just tokenism? Redress – are complaints and dissatisfactions raised by children speedily and properly addressed?

The information which would service this proposed arrangement would include:

- Statements of Functions and Objectives
- Inspection Reports
- Minutes of young people's meetings
- Complaints records
- Violence and aggression reports
- Absconder/missing person records
- Serious incident recordings

The Children's Rights Officer will look at the information contained in the above material and compare the recorded actions and outcomes in relation to the rights compass headings. Close liaison with unit managers and the service manager would be maintained. Observations would be shared to assist the development of good policies, procedures and practice.

The department employs the following measures to safeguard vulnerable children, in particular those living away from home. These measures are in the main imbedded in recruitment and the subsequent arrangements to train and support staff: practice standards and access to external supports.

- ❖ All staff are SCRO checked. A satisfactory profile is required before recruitment.
- ❖ Young people are involved in interviews for residential staff. Their views on the suitability of applicants are important in the selection process.
- ❖ The Children's Rights Officer provides information and advice and staff development input in relation to rights and responsibilities.
- ❖ Young People's Standards have recently been adopted in local authority YPUs. These set out the prerequisite requirement of safety and security within residential units. These standards also aspire to achieve best or commendable practice in all aspects of quality care (eg anti bullying strategies, health promotion and access to education).
- ❖ All children in family placement will have their own allocated worker as well as a link worker to support the carers.
- ❖ The Children's Rights and Advocacy Service's Who Cares? Scotland worker has a full time responsibility for providing independent advocacy for looked after and accommodated children and makes proactive visits to children and young people in YPUs: residential schools and secure units taking up any concerns residents may have.
- ❖ The Children's Rights Officer is freed up to take on a more strategic role in promoting the rights of looked after children. He also provides a visiting and advocacy service for children affected by disability who may be living at home or away from home.
- ❖ A 'listening to children' framework is being established which will analyse the information contained in absconder/runaway reports: complaints made by young people: Violence and aggression reports: serious incident reports and minutes of unit meetings. The Children's Rights Officer will manage this arrangement and report to the head of service on matters of concern or action required.
- ❖ Children or young people who wish to make a formal complaint will be supported by the Children's Rights and Advocacy Service if requested.

The Inspection process continues to contribute to and comment on a broad system of safeguarding arrangements. Evidence would indicate that children who are looked after in a residential setting in Dundee feel able to express their views and/or complain and that their views are listened to. There is an effective CRO service and an awareness of "Who Cares?" and "Childline" supports. It is the intention of the Inspection Service to explore an enhanced role for "Who Cares" in the inspection process to ensure children's views are fully represented.