

REPORT TO: EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 13TH FEBRUARY 2008

SUBJECT: CO-LOCATED UNIT

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Committee to progress with a proposal to establish a co-located Child Protection Unit in Moray in partnership with Grampian Police.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section D (27) of the Council's Administrative Scheme related to the exercising of the functions of the Council under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee approve the establishment of a co-located Child Protection Unit in Moray subject to capital and revenue costs being agreed by the Moray Council at its budget setting meeting in February 2008.
- 2.2 Should the unit be established its operation will be subject to review and will be reported to Committee nine months after commencing activities.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Education and Social Services Committee at its meeting on 22nd August 2007 (para 18 of the minute refers) approved the following recommendations:-
 - (i) in principle the development of a proposal in partnership with Grampian Police to establish a co-located Child Protection Unit in Moray; and
 - (ii) the intention of the Community Service Department to bring a further report to Committee in November with costed proposals.
- 3.2 The general background to the proposal prepared for the August Committee report is attached as **APPENDIX 1** for ease of reference.
- 3.3 The fully developed proposals are available as **APPENDIX 2** Co-located Unit – Operational and **APPENDIX 3** Co-located Unit – Facilities, attached to this report.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Development Plan/ Community Plan/ Service Improvement Plan**

The proposals contained in this report relate to Service Priority 4.2 of the Community Service Department's Service Development & Improvement Plan 2007-08 that seeks to promote integrated working.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

There is a clear relationship between the proposal and the duty placed on local authorities in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 'to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need'. The establishment of a co-located unit would enhance the Council's abilities to meet the requirements of the North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee's Child Protection Guidelines.

(c) **Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

- (i) **Staffing** – the initial social work staffing complement for the unit is proposed as two full time permanent qualified social workers to undertake joint investigations and follow-up work. The staff will be supported by one permanent 30 hour administrative post (a grading assessment would be required by Personnel Services). The provision of new Social Work posts will allow existing area social work teams to concentrate on other core activities in preventing problem escalation in allocated casework.

It is proposed to provide support and supervision to the social work posts by amending the job description of a Senior Social Worker post in the Moray West Social Work Team to include responsibility for the Child Protection Unit. The post will be vacant from 1 April 2008.

The social work complement of the unit could expand in the future based on operational demands and experience.

It is Grampian Police's intention for three Detective Constables, one Detective Sergeant and, in the medium term, it is expected a researcher will be recruited to join the team, all who work in child protection, to be accommodated in the CPU.

- (ii) **Property** – it is proposed that the Child Protection Unit will be based in temporary accommodation in the first instance and then housed within a new purpose-built facility.

Grampian Police have identified temporary office space for the co-located staff and a Council owned property has been identified as a potential interviewing facility. While such

accommodation is not ideal as it is spread over two sites, it allows the Unit to be established pending the completion of a permanent base.

- (iii) **Risks** – in addition to the unit providing high quality child protection investigations and so offsetting strategic and operational risks to the Council, the CPU will allow area social work teams to concentrate further on other high tariff cases including those that may result in out of area placements.

It should be noted that there has been a steady increase in child protection referrals to Social Work from 173 in 2002/03 to 458 in 2006/07, an increase of +165%. This represents a considerable increase in investigative workload. Moray will be subject to HMle inspection of Child Protection Services in 2008.

(d) Financial Implications

- (i) **Capital** – these have been estimated at £25k to adapt an existing property for temporary usage by the Child Protection Unit and £525k for the new build. These costs will be spread over two years 2008/09 and 2009/10.
- (ii) **Revenue** – these relate to social work staff and operating expenditure. The full year costs are estimated as follows:-

Item	Cost	Notes
X2 WTE Social Workers	£95k	Qualified posts (including travel and operational budget)
X1 30h administrative post	£21k (Grade 5)	Final cost subject to grading assessment.
Operating costs for building	£20k	May be less in purpose built facility
Gross Revenue Costs	£136k	

Grampian Police will contribute by way of Revenue funding towards the operating costs of the building and rent on an equitable basis to be agreed according to use.

(e) Consultations

Katrina McGillivray, Senior Personnel Adviser, Lorraine Paisey, Principal Accountant, Margaret Forest, Senior Solicitor (Litigation and Licensing) and John Black, Head of Estate Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility. The CPU proposal has been developed with the knowledge and support of the Moray Chief Officers Child Protection Group and Grampian Police.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The establishment of a co-located Children Protection Unit in Moray will enhance the quality of investigations in alleged child abuse cases. This is a high risk area of intervention within social work and clear and effective working relationships with the police are essential to providing an optimum service. In addition the management of child protection investigations through a Co-located Unit will allow area social work teams to concentrate on planned work in a more predictable fashion and assist in working with families to prevent problems escalating and in minimising the use of out of area placements.**

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Background Papers:	with author
Ref:	w:\ Directorate\ Children and Families\ Committee\ Education & Social Service Committee\ November 2007\ Committee Report – Co-located Unit – 28.11.07

Co-located Unit – Background

Child protection investigations in Moray are routinely carried-out as joint-investigations with Grampian Police. The police have an established Family Protection Unit in Elgin and social workers are drawn from the Department's four area child care teams to participate in investigations as a high priority.

The outcomes of such investigations for alleged perpetrators can be an appearance in court and for children the risks may be such that their names be entered in the North East of Scotland Child Protection Register through a Child Protection Case Conference.

The need to effect child protection investigations to the highest possible standards is self-evident. The information gathered from co-located units in Aberdeen, Forfar, Dundee and Edinburgh is that such joint-working adds to the quality of investigations and outcomes for children.

The benefits of such arrangements are seen to be as follows:-

- (i) The accommodation of police and social work on the same site allows immediate access to each other in the planning, execution and debriefing of investigations.
- (ii) This enhances information sharing, working relationships and the development of good practice.
- (iii) Clear formal lines of communication and accountability.
- (iv) Victims of abuse attending a discrete purpose-designed location to receive the services of agencies in one place. This helps minimise trauma.
- (v) To allow area social work teams to concentrate on planned work with existing clients and so provide a more predictable and effective service.

These benefits can be set against the five main failings, recognised as prevalent in the most high profile child protection tragedies and highlighted in the Scottish Executive publication 'It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright!' These are poor interagency working, absence of information sharing, lack of proper assessment or communication, lack of accountability and poor training of staff carrying-out child protection work.

The proposal is to co-locate officers from Grampian Police with Social Workers from the Moray Council to form a Joint Child Protection Unit. This does not imply the joining of the two services but co-location allows much clearer liaison, planning and co-working.

The description of the facility as a Co-Located Unit for Social Work and Police is intentional. The Social Workers and Police Officers will work together but they will continue to have separate duties and responsibilities. The importance of retaining separate facilities albeit in the same building was stressed as an essential prerequisite for any joint investigation unit by the other units visited. Where Social Workers and Police Officers form a single team experience has demonstrated a tendency for roles to become blurred. The Co-Located Unit has therefore been designed to ensure close working but with staff teams based in separate facilities.

Co-Located Unit – Operation

A key development in preparing Social Workers and Police Officers for responding to allegations of abuse has been the introduction of Joint Investigative Interview Techniques training (JITT). This nationally approved training not only focuses on the preparation for and interviewing of children but also on the presentation of evidence in court. The importance of this latter aspect of the training is linked to the introduction of guidance about supporting vulnerable witnesses and the impact on children and young people who may be required to give evidence in cases where abuse is alleged. There is nothing more devastating for a child or young person or indeed their family for a case to be lost because of the inadequacy of the evidence presented by the professionals involved in the investigation.

The planning that precedes any investigation significantly influences the quality and effectiveness of joint interviews. The Social Workers and Police Officers involved in the majority of the current investigations are based in separate offices. The planning for those investigations is therefore often done over the phone and whilst this does not necessarily mean that the investigation is flawed it does preclude the involvement of other key agencies such as Health and Education in the planning process. The Co-Located Unit would enhance the investigation planning. It would also help to facilitate the debrief process that is an equally important part of the investigation.

In preparing for interviews with children and young people who may have been or who have been abused includes consideration of a suitable venue. Unfortunately it is not always easy to find a venue that helps a child or young person talk about what has happened to them. The Co-Located Unit has therefore been designed to include child friendly interview facilities and a waiting room for those who are there to support a child or young person.

Interviews of children and young people who have been or may have been the victim of abuse are not currently video recorded. However it is anticipated that the recording of all victim interviews will become a requirement. The Co-Located Unit has therefore been designed to facilitate the recording of all interviews.

Social Workers based at the Co-Located Unit will be involved in working with children, young people and their families following the investigation process up to and potentially beyond the stage of an Initial Child Protection Case Conference. There may also be occasions when they will continue to work with the family beyond the Initial Case Conference. This work will not involve the Police Officers based at the Co-Located Unit. Police Officers will also be involved in the investigation of historical abuse cases in which Social Workers will have no role other than providing any relevant background information retained in Social Work databases. Therefore although much of the work coming to the unit will be done jointly there will also be single agency work undertaken by those based at the Co-Located Unit.

The number of Child Protection concerns referred to Social Work and to the Police has increased significantly in last few years as awareness of risk has increased among the public and other professionals. Although the members of the Co-Located Unit will deal with many of the Child Protection referrals received other JITT trained Social Workers and Police Officers will continue to be involved in some interviews. The Co-Located Unit has however been designed to facilitate a gradual move towards the majority of the referrals being dealt with by this unit.

Co-Located Unit – Facilities

The following accommodation requirements are based on a projected future staffing compliment of 3 Social Workers, 3 Police Officers, a Police Team Manager, a Social Work Team Manager, a Family Support Worker, a Police Analyst and a Social Work Administrator. They are also linked to the requirement for separate office and administrative facilities essential for the operation of two discreet services as well as the need for specialist interview facilities. The interview facilities require to have a separate entrance and separate toilet facilities but with a connecting door to the general office accommodation.

Police requirements

- 1 x 1 person office (Detective Sergeant) (7-9 m²) *(based on assumption that interview planning/debrief room used for meetings)*
- 1 x 3 person office (3 Detective Constables) (16.5 m²) *(based on 5.5 m² per person)*
- 1 x 1 person office (Police Analyst/ Administrative Officer) (7-9 m²)
- secure filing space capable of holding at least 20 secure filing cabinets (12 m²)

Social Work Service requirements

- 1 x 1 person office (Team Manager) (7-9 m²) *(based on assumption that interview planning/debrief room used for meetings)*
- 1 x 4 person office (3 Social Workers, 1 family Support Worker) (22 m²) *(based on 5.5 m² per person)*
- 1 x 1 person office (Administration) (7-9 m²)
- secure filing space capable of holding at least 10 secure filing cabinets (6 m²)

Joint Facilities

- Interview planning/debrief/meeting room (10 m²)
- Kitchen facilities (12 m²)
- Equipment store (4 m²)
- Toilet Facilities - Gents (1 x 4 m²) Ladies/Disabled (1 x 6 m²)
- Parking for 8/9 cars

Interview Suite

- 1 x (soundproofed) purpose designed interview room linked to an anteroom capable of holding video-recording facilities. (1 x 10 m² / 1 x 4 m²)
- Waiting room (1 x 4 m²)
- Toilet Facilities - Gents (1 x 4 m²) Ladies/Disabled (1 x 6 m²)
- Separate entrance

The above would suggest the need for a property with a minimum of between 148.5 m² and 156.5 m².