

To: HOUSING AND SOCIAL WORK SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: REVIEW OF MONKLANDS RECYCLE FURNITURE INITIATIVE
From: HEAD OF SOCIAL WORK DEVELOPMENT		
Date: 7 MAY 2008	Ref: GF/DM	

1. Purpose of Report

This report considers the appropriateness of Social Work to continue to provide a recycling furniture initiative and proposes the closure of the Recycle Project.

2. Background

- 2.1 Social Work currently provides a small furniture recycling service, Monklands Recycle. The project was established in 1990 through the then Urban Programme as a local anti-poverty initiative.
- 2.2 The original reason for establishing furniture provision was the abolition of single payments as part of the 1986 Social Security Act. Single payments were often used to pay grants to claimants for the purchase of furniture and other household goods. At the time there was a view that the loss of the single payment facility would result in more children being at risk of being taken into local authority care, though this proved unfounded.
- 2.3 The project had been established as a Social Work initiative and following its Urban Programme funding the project went onto mainstream funding through Social Work as opposed to community or voluntary sector grants funding. It retained its Urban Programme criteria and geographical coverage in Monklands.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 When Monklands Recycle was first established there were no other furniture recycling initiatives. Since then a number of voluntary sector providers have been established covering the whole of North Lanarkshire. These organisations have already established relationships with the Council through the creation of a Public Social Partnership Initiative in relation to provision of furniture and other services relating to homelessness. This has contributed to a declining use of Monklands Recycle.
- 3.2 The continued funding of this service has had the effect of drawing Social Work into what can be perceived as an income maintenance role through the provision of furniture for service users. There is no statutory requirement for Social Work to make provision for furniture; indeed it confuses a key Social Work role (that of income maximisation) with income maintenance. There is no element of grant-aided expenditure designated for this purpose.
- 3.3 In 2006/7 Monklands Recycle, made 185 deliveries, an average of fewer than 4 per week. This raises significant questions in terms of value for money. At a service cost of £127,756 this works out at an average cost of approximately £690 per referral.

- 3.4 In light of the above, it is proposed that the Monklands Recycle project be closed. Should Social Work require to access such services on behalf of vulnerable individuals or families then Committee should note that this could still be accessed via any contractual relationship that would exist with Housing and Social Work Services, through the outcome of the Public Social Partnership exercise; or by using existing powers to make a payment for such purposes directly to the individual concerned.

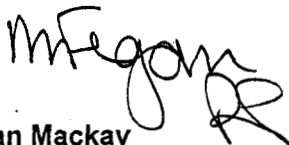
4. Financial / Personnel / Legal / Policy Implications

- 4.1 Social Work is required to make savings of £2.5m in 2008/2009. Closure of the Recycle project will result in savings of approximately £100,000 to contribute to the overall savings target. There will be dilapidation costs involved for the premises. The proposal was previously approved as part of the Council's planned efficiency savings for 2008/9.
- 4.2 Posts within the current staffing establishment - consisting of a Manager (vacancy), Admin Officer, two upholsterers, a driver/storeman and part-time cleaner – will be deleted. Employees affected will be supported through the Council's redeployment process.

5. Recommendations

Committee is requested to:

- (i) Approve the closure of the Recycle Project and deletion of associated posts;
- (ii) Remit this report to Policy & Resources (Human Resources) Sub Committee for their consideration.



Duncan Mackay
Head of Social Work Development
3 March 2008

For further information on this report please contact Gus Ferguson (tel: 01698 332560)