

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	SUBJECT:  "Moving Forward With Care" - Social Work Services Inspectorate Report on Community Care Services for Older People in Angus, Dundee City and Perth & Kinross
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 21 January 1997	
REF:	

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report advises members of the contents of "Moving Forward with Care", a recent Scottish Office Inspection into community care services for older people in Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross, and proposes the response of North Lanarkshire Council.

**2. ORIGINS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INSPECTION**

- 2.1 This Inspection had its origins in the Scottish Office Inspection into Assessment and Choice in Community Care Services for Older People in Lanarkshire, published in March 1996.
- 2.2 The Lanarkshire Inspection Team raised issues concerning unit cost comparisons and value for money associated with the divergence between the costs of local authority homes and the lower rate paid for independent sector care, and concluded that there should be further examination of the value for money questions raised by their report.
- 2.3 "Moving Forward with Care" is of relevance to all local authorities in Scotland in that it sets out the approach of the Scottish Office Inspectorate to value for money issues concerning the provision and purchase of residential services for older people. The timescale for responses has been extended to allow the report to be considered by Social Work Committee in the January cycle.

**3. CONTEXT**

- 3.1 In setting the context for the Inspection, the report identifies the following factors:
- ♦ the increase in the numbers of older, more dependent people in the population;
  - ♦ rises in the levels of care services in Scotland over the last fifteen years, including a 300% increase in nursing home provision over an eight year period. Nursing home places now exceed the number of residential places in Scotland;
  - ♦ issues of assessment and choice, which are perceived by the Inspection Team to be the central issues;
  - ♦ the importance of using money efficiently, particularly when resources are scarce;

- ♦ the Government's general policy on charges for local services, which is that those able to meet all or part of the economic cost should be expected to do so.

3.2 A major omission from the context described in the report is the broader financial context within which the transfer of funding responsibilities from the Department of Social Security to local authorities is being managed. In particular, no reference is made to the problem of the 'care gap' inherited by local authorities. This is the difference between the DSS residential rates (and therefore the funding transferred to local authorities as turnover occurs in residential homes) and the costs to independent providers of providing residential care.

3.3 Whilst the Scottish Office has recognised the existence of the care gap, the Scottish Office has failed to make additional funding available to local authorities within the DSS transfer to address the scale of the problem. Efforts were made by Strathclyde to address the issue by uprating the price paid for residential care to the higher DSS rate for frail elderly, paid as the minimum for residential places.

## 4. REMIT OF THE INSPECTION

4.1 The remit for the Inspection team was to examine the three Councils' arrangements for providing and purchasing community care services and to assess the effectiveness of their approach to ensuring value for money in these arrangements.

## 5. THE MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 The report sets out general conclusions and recommendations, addressed in turn to each of the three local authorities concerned. The recommendations covered:

- ♦ Quality of Care and Standards
- ♦ Value for Money
- Planning, Provision and Purchasing of Services
- Information.

5.2 One recommendation was made to Tayside Health Board. This concerned the sharing of nursing home inspection reports with local authorities.

5.3 Three recommendations were addressed to the Scottish Office, two of which related to production of good practice guidance on information systems. The third concerned further review of progress in the three areas covered.

5.4 The main conclusions and recommendations are detailed in the Appendix to this report, together with the proposed response of North Lanarkshire Council. The areas covered by the Inspection Team's recommendations include:

- ♦ revised inspection standards should focus more on the care received by older people who move into residential care;
- ♦ authorities should review the implications of the differing costs of their own residential services and the prices paid to the independent sector;
- ♦ local authorities should consider the role and need for local authority direct provision of residential care, taking account of issues of quality, demand and cost;
- ♦ local authorities should consolidate social care for older people requiring intense support within the community, through the development of domiciliary care services;

- ♦ there should be regular formal meetings with independent sector providers, to help develop a shared understanding of each other's motivation, intentions and requirements;
- ♦ unit costs of local authority services should be publicly available;
- ♦ authorities should make clear to service users that they can contest charging assessments;
- ♦ authorities should monitor the effects of charging policy (e.g. in home care) via cancelled services etc.;
- ♦ aggregate need should be linked to service provision;
- ♦ strategic and financial planning cycles should be aligned;
- ♦ information to service users should be improved;
- ♦ community care budgets should be devolved to community care teams;
- ♦ there should be more joint working on inspection between local authorities and health boards;
- ♦ the Health Board should make final inspection reports of nursing homes available to local authorities;
- ♦ The Scottish Office should produce good practice guides for local authorities on how best to provide information to older people about services and associated charges and management information systems.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR NORTH LANARKSHIRE**

- 6.1** All of the issues listed in the preceding paragraph have potential implications for North Lanarkshire. In particular, the Inspection promotes much greater use of the independent sector, especially in the provision of residential care but also in domiciliary care, at the expense of the public sector.
- 6.2** Elected members may already be aware that the experience in North Lanarkshire, supported by analysis of residential home placements since 1st April 1996, is that the majority of people when offered choice will opt for a local authority rather than an independent home. That such choice is offered within North Lanarkshire is supported by the findings of the Inspectorate report "Changes and Choices for People and Agencies", which states that "scant evidence was found to suggest that social workers were limiting choice for people moving into residential or nursing home care". The lack of weight given by the Inspection Team to respecting the choice of those who wished to have the option of public sector care is therefore a matter of serious concern.
- 6.3** The role and contribution of public sector care is undervalued throughout the report to the point of apparent bias on the part of the Inspection Team. The report contains no analysis or commentary on the uneven spread of private sector development, or to the imbalance created by uncontrolled development of nursing homes to the exclusion of other private sector activity.
- 6.4** The important role of public sector provision, within a mixed economy of care, needs to be reaffirmed, namely:
- ♦ contributing to the setting and maintenance of high standards of care;
  - ♦ ensuring that there is the necessary range of provision within each area;

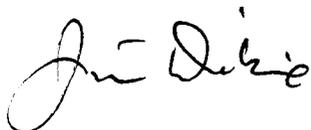
- ♦ affording the widest possible choice for service users;

6.5 The issues covered by this Inspection therefore raise major policy issues and it is proposed that the Director of Social Work should prepare further reports on these issues in order that Committee should have the opportunity to give full and careful consideration to the matters raised.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is asked to:

- endorse the comments set out in the Appendix to this report as the Council's response to the Inspection report;
- note that while the issues raised by the Inspection have implications for North Lanarkshire, these should be the subject of full and careful consideration before action is taken;
- agree the Director of Social Work to bring forward further reports as necessary dealing with the policy issues raised by the Inspection, for the Committee's consideration.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**January 1997**

*For further information on this report please contact K Somers, Head of Social Work Development (TEL: 01698 332024)*

## "MOVING FORWARD WITH CARE"

### RESPONSE OF NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL TO MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Quality of Care and Standards

1. The Inspection concluded that residential homes in all sectors were generally providing a good quality of care and, for the most part, meeting the standards laid down by the respective local authorities. It recommended that standards should be revised to provide an improved focus on the quality of care that residents receive.

*Comments: North Lanarkshire Council is striving to ensure that the focus of standards should be the quality of care residents receive and their satisfaction with this. It should be noted that whilst standards of care may be good in the majority of establishments, the Social Work Department in North Lanarkshire has had to deal with a number of serious complaints from service users and their families regarding the quality of care provided in several private nursing homes and in one private residential establishment. There is therefore no scope for complacency in the area quality of care or standards.*

#### Value for Money

2. The Inspection concluded that the costs of running the local authority homes were consistently in excess of the prices the authorities pay to purchase such care in the independent sector. It did not examine the relative costs of local authority, voluntary sector and private sector care. With the important exception of single rooms, it did not find that the Councils' own homes generally provided a better standard of care. The Inspection Team therefore concluded that there was scope for achieving good quality care at lower cost by making greater use of independent sector provision.
3. Staffing was identified as the major cost of providing residential care. The independent homes were found to maintain as good or better staffing levels than the Council homes. We conclude therefore that they either operate at a loss (as the Inspection Team understood some of the voluntary sector homes do) or that they pay staff significantly less (as private sector homes were understood to do).
4. Individual recommendations were made to each of the three local authorities to urgently review their strategies for the provision and purchase of residential care services for older people, in the light of the finding that the cost to each Council of directly running its own homes was in excess of prices paid to independent sector providers for equivalent care.

**Comments:**

- (i) *A significant proportion of elderly people who require care make the choice to be cared for by local authorities. The report is fundamentally flawed in that it appears to disregard issues of choice for those whose choice is public sector care.*
- (ii) *A major inadequacy of the report lies in its failure to examine comparative costs across different sectors. This is acknowledged without satisfactory explanation.*
- (iii) *The report does not compare like with like by comparing the cost of local authority care with the price paid for independent care. It fails to recognise that the central issues relate to the perverse funding system promoted under the DSS funding regime for residential care costs, perpetuated by the failure of central government to adequately fund the care gap.*
- (iv) *The report encourages consideration of market forces at the expense of other considerations. At the same time it fails to consider the impact on prices and standards if market forces are simply allowed to dominate.*
- (v) *The findings and recommendations of the Inspection Team on the issue of value for money appear to be lacking in depth and balance, and will require careful consideration by local authorities when they are determining future strategies for the provision and purchase of residential care services for older people. It will be particularly important for local authorities to determine the views and preferences of older people and give these weight in strategies for the future.*

**Planning, Provision and Purchasing of Services**

5. Service planning across the three local authorities was identified as requiring significant improvement, with a stronger alignment needed between service and financial planning. In all three councils the most recent Community Care Plan failed to meet the requirements of the Direction on Purchasing. The Inspection recommended that each of the Councils should extend their experience in commissioning and purchasing residential care to include day, domiciliary and respite care.
6. The Inspection Team considered that it would assist local authorities to make informed decisions about purchasing nursing home care if the Health Board could make inspection reports on nursing homes available to them, and made this specific recommendation to Tayside Health Board.

**Comments:**

- (i) *The Inspection's Teams observations on the need for improvement in service planning, with a stronger alignment between service and financial planning are likely to be valid in many local authorities. The situation described is a reflection of the complexity and scale of the demands of community care planning, which is still at a developmental stage in most areas.*

- (ii) *The Community Care Plan inherited by North Lanarkshire requires further work to comply with the Directions on Purchasing. This will be addressed in the forthcoming North Lanarkshire Community Care Plan.*
- (iii) *The recommended sharing of nursing home inspection reports is wholeheartedly endorsed. The current lack of sharing of information by the Health Board is a major difficulty. It is to be hoped that this issue will receive further consideration within the Scottish Office with a view to guidance which requires sharing of inspection and related reports.*

## **Information**

- 7. The Inspection Team concluded that lack of information was a crucial factor effectively limiting the successful implementation of community care at a number of different levels in all three areas covered by the Inspection. Major deficiencies were identified in the provision of information to service users, in the provision of information to staff involved in assessment and to service managers, and in the provision of information to and communication with private providers.
- 8. The report recommends that the Scottish Office should:
  - (i) commission a good practice guide on the provision of information for service users;
  - (ii) review with COSLA by April 1997 the role and work of the Standing Group on Community Care Information Requirements, with a view to dissemination of good practice in management information.

### **Comments:**

- (i) *Issues relating to community care information have been identified within North Lanarkshire as requiring improvement. First priority is being given to improving information for service users and carers, and the Council has taken steps to increase and co-ordinate resources for public information. Management information systems are also being addressed, although this has proved to be a major task following local government reorganisation.*
- (ii) *The Inspection Team commented that the method it had chosen to measure need within the populations under investigation was one of a number of possible methods. It failed to comment on the limitations of using prevalence rates based on national surveys, in this case the General Household Survey, as a means of assessing the needs of local populations. It would have been appropriate for the Inspection Team to have made explicit reference to the risks of distortion of the local needs analysis through application of unrepresentative prevalence measures, and to desirability of using data sets relevant to the areas under investigation.*
- (iii) *It should be noted that the Social Work Department together with independent sector representatives have agreed and established regular liaison arrangements and high priority is given on both sides to regular and meaningful communication. The recommended action by the Scottish Office in relation to good practice guidance is supported.*