

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Report on the Progress of the Review of Home Care Services
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 20 January 1998	
REF: AJ/JJ	

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise committee of the current position on the review of Home Care Services being undertaken by the Social work Department.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Home Care Services is the generic term used to describe a range of services provided within a person's own home. The most familiar of these services is Home Help, though home care also encompasses Flexi-Care schemes, Alert Support, Sitter Services and Community Meals, amongst others. A major review of home care was initiated by Strathclyde Regional Council Social Work Department in 1993, but despite extensive negotiations with the trade unions concerned, it was not pursued to conclusion.

2.2 Following reorganisation, it was considered a priority of the Social Work Department to reactivate a review of home care services, since the need for change identified in the original review continued to be necessary. Much had been learned, however, from weaknesses in the approach adopted by the previous authority, and it was decided that, as a starting point, consultation should be undertaken with the employees who would mainly be affected by any change. A questionnaire was sent to all home helps, seeking their views on aspects of the previous review with which they were unhappy, and areas in which they thought change was needed in current ways of working. The questionnaire was agreed by the trade unions, and completed anonymously. approximately 1100 were circulated. The response rate was 51 per cent.

2.3 Consultation meetings were also held with self-selected groups of home helps from each of the main geographical areas of the council, which were chaired by the Director or the Head of Social Work Services.

Home care organisers and home help organisers were also consulted in a series of meetings.

2.4 The views of users and carers were also obtained through the normal processes of community care consultation.

- 2.5 At the end of this process, a detailed report was prepared, drawing together information about current practice and deployment of home care staff, and highlighting the main areas of concern.

3. KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 There is an increasing demand for the provision of care at home by many community care client groups. Older people, in particular, now wish to remain at home for as long as possible, rather than opt for the alternative of institutional care. Research studies across Britain confirm this preference and also confirm that this is only a satisfactory choice for the older person in particular if they are also provided with appropriate support and assistance for themselves and their carers.
- 3.2 In order to meet this demand, home care services need to be available routinely on a 24-hour per day basis, and to provide a full range of social care support, including personal care.
- 3.4 There needs to be closer joint working with health professionals, most importantly with community nurses.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE HOME CARE REVIEW

- 4.1 Following the collection of information on the current deployment of home care services, and consultation with staff and users, a small group of staff were given the task of formulating proposals for the reconfiguration of home care services.
- 4.2 The overall objective of this work is to ensure that North Lanarkshire Council can provide a high quality home care service, delivered by a skilled, trained work force, which is focussed on the needs of vulnerable people.

It is anticipated that this will involve a shift in emphasis towards more provision of assistance with personal care such as bathing, going to the toilet, dressing and feeding. The traditional areas such as housework and pension collection will continue to be provided for those who are assessed as needing this support, or for relief of carers.

- 4.3 It is intended that this shift in emphasis should be achieved within the 'Best Value' framework, enabling the council service to be competitive with independent provision, but without erosion of conditions of service.

5. FOCUS OF WORK AND METHODS

- 5.1 The priorities set for the working group to address were eligibility criteria for services, definition of home care tasks, future management arrangements for home care and community care, and out of hours services.

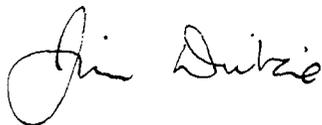
- 5.2 Prior to the group being set up, there was consultation with the three main trades unions about the approach being adopted, and it was agreed that regular consultation would take place with them as draft proposals became available. They also provided written comments on the general direction which they favoured, almost all of which was consistent with the departmental position.
- 5.3 There is ongoing contact with relevant staff, in testing out the practicability of proposals as they are developed, and adjustments have been made in the light of these discussions.
- 5.4 Full discussion has taken place with Lanarkshire Health Care Trust on the respective roles of community nurses and home helps, and it is now intended to develop joint policies with the Trust on areas such as incontinence, specialist feeding and the administration of medication.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 There is a high degree of consensus amongst home care staff, trade union representatives, service managers and users and carers about the need for change within home care services, in order to better meet the needs of vulnerable people, particularly frail older people. Change is also necessary to ensure a more efficient, competitive and cost effective service is provided by the local authority.
- 6.2 The main areas for change, as indicated above, are currently being considered and will be the subject of separate reports to committee, as proposals are finalised. Briefing meetings for members will be organised prior to submission of reports to committee, to enable some of the more detailed aspects of proposals to be considered.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 Committee is asked to
- note the content of this report
 - approve the organisation of briefing meetings for members.



J Dickie
Director of Social Work
6 January 1998

For further information on this report please contact A Jay (Head of Social Work Services) (TEL: 01698 332004)