

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	SUBJECT: 'MODERNISING COMMUNITY CARE - AN ACTION PLAN'
FROM: J Dickie Director of Social Work Gavin Whitefield Director of Housing	
Dates of Social Work Committee: 24/11/98 Housing Committee: 2/12/98	
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Committee of the publication in November 1998 of a Government action plan for community care, entitled "Modernising Community Care - An Action Plan". The report has been prepared in consultation with the Director of Housing.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Chapter 1 of the document describes the government's concerns about the need to modernise community Care. There is a strong emphasis on the need to improve joint working across all organisations as one of the most important themes of the new agenda for community care.

3 SHORT TERM ACTION PLAN

- 3.1 Chapters 2 - 4 of the document set out a action plan for community care which is to be implemented in the short term.

Better Decision Making (Chapter 2)

- ◆ Agencies with statutory responsibilities are exhorted to build better partnerships with people who use services and their carers.
- ◆ Strategic plans should develop into detailed care and housing strategies for the area, not just to cope with hospital closures; have measurable targets and timescales as well as strategic vision.
- ◆ Strategic plans need to reflect joint strategies, policies and joint investments which are included in the planning systems of different agencies, including Health Improvement Plans. The NHS Joint Investment Fund may be able to assist the development of joint commissioning.

- ◆ Agencies must avoid seeking efficiencies which merely pass the cost of care on to another agency. Instead, the best use of the community care £ should be the most important factor and incentives need to be created to achieve this.
- ◆ Bureaucracy has to be reduced. The Government expects to see less money spent on administration and more on developing services.
- ◆ Decision making has to be faster; the Government considers it to be too slow and inflexible and wants to see greater delegation of decisions and financial responsibility.
- ◆ Authorities need to develop new and uniform approaches to buying and budgeting based on delegated budgets and improved client information.

3.2 **By December 1999, the statutory organisations are expected to introduce new approaches to and improve decision making. This will be reflected in new requirements for Community Care Plans for 1999 and onward.**

Caring for People at Home (Chapter 3)

- ◆ Resources must be shifted to home based care, particularly for frail older people.
- ◆ New resources must be targeted to home care.
- ◆ Major changes are expected in the home care service. The Government wants a modern, flexible care service which can meet a wider range of needs and provide support when it is needed. The service may be provided directly or bought in.
- ◆ There should be joint reviews by health and social work of the community health and social care services required in their area.
- ◆ Joint health, social work and housing teams should target people at risk of being placed long term in a residential or nursing home.
- ◆ Waiting times for equipment and adaptations must be reduced.
- ◆ Services such as community alarms and respite should be used to support people in their own homes.

Working together locally

- ◆ Statutory agencies are exhorted to make clear connections between high level strategic and resource decisions at area level.
- ◆ Administrative arrangements should not be made more complicated in implementing local health co-operatives.
- ◆ Develop local approaches to joint working through local plans.
- ◆ Seize the opportunity presented by new NHS structures to promote closer joint working and greater co-ordination and co-operation across social work, community health and primary care boundaries.
- ◆ Create a balanced 'tartan' of services for the area.
- ◆ Identify areas for task sharing.

- 3.3 Every area must have effective local structures in place and working by March 2000.

4 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Assuring Quality and Effectiveness (Chapter 5)

- 4.1 Chapter 5 of the document deals with assuring quality and effectiveness, and sets out the steps to be taken at a national level to improve the infrastructure for community care. This is to be achieved through:

- ◆ The Best Value regime
- ◆ Sharing of good practice
- ◆ Developing service standards (a White Paper will be produced on regulating the social care workforce)
- ◆ Joint Training
- ◆ Development of information systems for local and national needs.

New Powers for Joint Working (Chapter 6)

- 4.2 Chapter 6 looks ahead at whether new powers are required to support working across boundaries.

- 4.3 Views are invited on:

- ◆ **Whether extra powers may be necessary to encourage co-operative working.**
- ◆ **Whether there are barriers to pooling budgets**
- ◆ **Whether local authorities and health boards want to have lead commissioning powers**
- ◆ **Should any transfers of roles or resources be formally approved by the Secretary of State?**
- ◆ **Would people receive more consistent and suitable care packages if the existing powers were widened, for example to extend the role of NHS Trusts to provide some social care? If so, should the Secretary of State set conditions for using these powers?**
- ◆ **How to extend pooled budgets and lead commissioning to include housing with health and social work agencies**
- ◆ **How to secure firm agreements on linking capital and revenue funding for supported housing.**

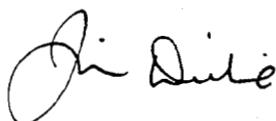
- 4.4 The document reiterates the principle that NHS services are free and social work services may be charged for. Wherever there are joint services, there will need to be clear understandings about charging.

5 IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The document has been circulated to local authorities, Health Boards and NHS Trusts and Scottish Homes with a covering letter which contains a statement that in order to assist authorities to implement the Action Plan, Ministers have identified £5 million in 1999/2000 which will be made available to authorities committed to taking forward the recommendations. The Scottish Office proposes that each authority will have an allocation in line with its share of Grant Aided Expenditure for Community Care, provide a written statement of commitment is submitted by 19 November 1998. Thereafter, authorities will be required to submit detailed targets and progress reports with the level of funding in subsequent years being dependent on performance in the first year and satisfactory plans for the second year.
- 5.2 In a subsequent letter to local authorities, the Scottish Office advised that a statement of commitment in principle was being sought by 19 November so that allocations of the additional money could be included in next year's Grant Aided Expenditure allocations. Following consultation with the Conveners of Social Work and Housing a short statement of commitment was submitted to the Scottish Office by the Director of Social Work.
- 5.3 Committee should note that the additional sum of £5 million was included in the increased allocations for social work which were recently communicated to local authorities.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Committee is asked to note:
- a) the contents of the report;
 - b) that following consultation with the Conveners of Social Work and Housing, the Director of Social Work submitted a statement of commitment to the Action Plan in time for the deadline of 19 November; and
 - b) that implementation of the Action Plan will be subject to further discussion with other agencies and reported to a future Committee.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
17 November 1998

For further information on this report please contact K Somers, Head of Social Work Development Tel 01698 332010.