

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: Information Services for Disabled People in North Lanarkshire
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 19 January 1999	
REF: JD/SS	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To set out proposals for the development of a baseline information service for people with disabilities in North Lanarkshire in pursuit of responsibilities which lie with the Social Work Department as part of its community care remit.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Information is a key component of Community Care legislation, and provision of good quality information is one of the main objectives of the current North Lanarkshire Joint Community Care Plan (1997 - 2000).
- 2.2 In 1992 the Department of Health set up the three year National Disability Information Project in England & Wales.
- 2.3 In June 1995 the Scottish Office published "Enabling Information : a report on improving access and raising standards in information services for disabled people and their carers in Scotland".
- 2.4 In 1996 the Scottish Office established the Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF) through the Social Work Services Group, to improve access to information and advice services for disabled people and their carers.

- 2.5 As well as working with information providers across Scotland, SAIF acts as an advisory body to the Scottish Office. They are currently seeking tenders for two pieces of work : the production of a quality standards package for Scottish disability information and advice providers; the production of a directory detailing the services available in each district in Scotland for improving the accessibility of information for disabled people and carers.
- 2.6 North Lanarkshire is committed to involving disabled people in the formulation and development of service policy.
- 2.7 'Modernising Community Care ; An Action Plan' which was published by the Scottish Office in October 1998 and which has been endorsed by the Council emphasises the importance of developing information for users and potential users of services.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Historically each of the two Disability Resource Centres had within its establishment an Information Worker post. In the predecessor authority's Monklands/Cumbernauld District, the Disability Action Project was established in addition to the DRC establishment. Staff were therefore employed at different grades and with differing remits.
- 3.2 During the 1997/98 round of discretionary services savings these arrangements were terminated.
- 3.3 This left a void for members of the community seeking information on disability issues, and for staff within the authority. The disabled community were particularly vociferous in their reaction to the loss of services.
- 3.4 Consultation has taken place with a number of representative groups throughout North Lanarkshire: Monklands Forum on Disability; Motherwell Disability Forum; North West Lanarkshire Forum on Disability; Alpha Project (Cumbernauld); Parkinson's Self Help Group; North Lanarkshire Coalition of Disabled People.

- 3.5 The consultation exercise also involved the Leader of the Council and Convener and Vice Conveners of the Social Work Committee who acknowledged the importance of the contribution made by this service and asked the Director of Social Work to bring forward proposals to reconstitute the services.
- 3.6 There were a number of criticisms levelled at the previous services which should be addressed in relation to the new proposals: Disability Action was perceived to have confined its service to the former Monklands area with no real impact within Cumbernauld; previous services were not always seen as receptive and accessible, both physically and attitudinally.
- 3.7 Key concerns related to a view that information services were inaccessible, and that they should seek to empower individuals seeking information and advice.
- 3.8 There is also a need for information to be available to officers of the authority, particularly those working with disabled people and their carers, but accessible to all staff.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 There is a need for high quality, accurate, and up to date information on all aspects of disability. This should be collated and disseminated in line with national strategy, and recommended best practice..
- 4.2 The new service should cover all areas of North Lanarkshire, with staff working in partnership with the voluntary sector to build on areas of previous good practice, and develop in line with the national picture.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 There should be established two Disability Information Officer posts, graded AP3, and located initially within the two Disability Resource Centres in Motherwell and Airdrie.

- 5.2 The main duties of these posts will be to provide an information service on issues relating to disability for disabled people, their carers, the wider community, and employees of North Lanarkshire Council. This will be achieved, by establishing an outreach service to disabled groups, day centres, and other relevant establishments.
- 5.3 To achieve this they will develop and maintain an information resource on all aspects of disability, including relevant services, legislation, and entitlements. This will involve linking with appropriate existing information agencies and resources (computer databases, etc.)
- 5.4 The key function will be a commitment to, and the promotion of, disability awareness, together with the provision of support to local forums and groups.
- 5.5 The service will be developed in line with local and national objectives, and in full consultation with North Lanarkshire Coalition of Disabled People, local groups and forums, and appropriate officers.
- 5.6 The service will be reviewed regularly, and initially six months from staff being in post. These reviews will involve disabled people at all stages.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Appointment of 2 staff at AP3 with associated staff costs will require expenditure of £40,000 which will be covered from existing care element transfer resources.

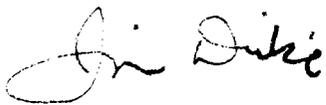
7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Two new posts at AP3, designated Disability Information Officers should be established, one post at the Disability Resource Centre in Airdrie and be at the Disability Resource Centre in Motherwell. Between them these posts will cover the full authority area on an outreach basis.
- 7.2 This report should be referred to Personnel Services Committee for further consideration and approval.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Committee is requested to approve the terms of this report including the establishment of 2 Disability Information Officer posts, graded AP3, at a total annual cost of £40,000.

- 8.1 The report should be passed to Personnel Services Committee for their consideration and approval.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
(January 1999)

For further information on this report please contact . Principal Officer () (TEL: 01698 332)

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title : Disability Information Officer

Department : Social Work

Responsible to: Disability Resource Manager

Accountable to: Service Co-ordinator

Grade: AP3

Base: Disability Resource Centre - Airdrie & Motherwell

Main Function: To provide an information service on all issues relating to disability, in line with local and national agendas.

Main Duties :

1. To provide an information service on issues relating to disability for disabled people and their carers, and the wider community.
2. To promote awareness of disability issues and support local forums and groups.
3. To develop and maintain an information resource on all aspects of disability, including relevant services, legislation, and entitlements.
4. To provide an information service on issues relating to disability for North Lanarkshire Council staff.
5. To develop the service in line with local and national objectives, and in consultation with North Lanarkshire Coalition of Disabled People, local groups and forums, and appropriate colleagues.
6. To establish an outreach service to disabled groups, day centres, and other relevant establishments.
7. To develop links with other appropriate information services, and resources (computer databases, etc.).

8. To undertake any such training programmes as may assist departmental and personal development.
9. To promote public understanding of the services of the Social Work Department and to encourage community involvement in the delivery of these services.
10. Any other duties consistent with the job as requested by the management.