

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL  
REPORT**

<b>TO:</b> Social Work Committee Housing & Property Services Committee	<b>Subject:</b>  <b>SUPPORTING PEOPLE: TRANSITIONAL HOUSING BENEFIT SCHEME</b>
<b>FROM:</b> Jim Dickie, Director of Social Work Gavin Whitefield, Director of Housing and Property Services	
<b>DATE OF COMMITTEE:</b> 18 April 2000 (Social Work) 3 May 2000 (Housing and Property Services)	
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b> George McInally	
<b>REF:</b> JD/GMcI/DH	

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Committees of a Scottish Executive circular which gives guidance to local authorities on the implementation of Supporting People, Transitional Housing Benefit scheme.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 A report on Supporting People was presented to the Social Work Committee at its meeting on 25 January 2000. The report detailed the arrangements for providing housing benefit to meet reasonable charges for support services which are designed to assist people with special needs to maintain their tenancies.

**3 SUPPORTING PEOPLE GUIDANCE**

- 3.1 The new scheme will be introduced fully in 2003. Over the next three years, transitional arrangements will apply. During this period, the amount of housing benefit which is required in respect of Supporting People will be used to inform the totality and distribution of funds from 2003. Local authorities therefore have a direct interest in ensuring that all those entitled to housing benefit for support service charges receive the correct amount of funding and that this is identified under the transitional scheme.
- 3.2 Housing benefit for support services can now be paid to people who are private sector tenants, however, such people need to have a valid community care assessment although this can be in a simplified format.
- 3.3 The opportunity exists under the new scheme, for example, to pay for support costs to care leavers if they are over 18, who stay on as tenants or lodgers with former foster carers, whilst preparing for independence, and others who will qualify include tenants in private sheltered housing.

- 3.4 The Scottish Executive circular sets out a summary of the suggested action which local authorities should take to ensure that people who qualify for assistance with support costs receive payment:
1. Set up arrangements to respond to requests for simplified community care assessments from private sector tenants in supported housing and avoid delays.
  2. Alert staff to potential demands for simplified community care assessments and what will be involved.
  3. Set up liaison and joint working arrangements with Housing Benefit Sections bearing in mind the need to obtain the tenants consent where personal information is being disclosed.
  4. Review support arrangements for private sector tenants in supported accommodation given the greater scope to claim housing benefit for support costs.
  5. If providing rented accommodation with a support element, identify charges for support and consider whether these will be met under the transitional scheme.
  6. Link with Welfare Rights Service and/or appropriate external advice agencies to maximise benefits via a comprehensive benefits check.
  7. Identify resource implications (both costs and any savings) to the authority and gain a fuller picture of private sector tenants who will need support under the post 2003 arrangements.
- 3.5 The Social Work and Housing and Property Services Departments are working together to ensure that they are not only complying with the terms of the Scottish Circular but that steps are pursued to ensure that every opportunity is taken to maximise the additional Housing Benefit which can be claimed for support services. This action is essential to attract the necessary funds which will be allocated to the Council in 2003.
- 3.6 The transitional scheme provides the opportunity to secure funding for relevant support services to assist and support vulnerable groups to sustain tenancies in supported accommodation. In order to maximise the opportunities afforded by the new scheme, a task force approach with dedicated input from Social Work and Housing staff is likely to be required. Liaison with voluntary sector providers of housing and support will also be required.

- 3.7 It is proposed that the necessary arrangements and resourcing implications of maximising the benefits of the new scheme should be the subject of further discussion between the Conveners of the two Committees with their Directors.
- 3.8 It will be essential that arrangements are put in place for close monitoring of the progress which is being achieved in the implementation of the transitional housing benefit scheme. The monitoring will be conducted jointly between Social Work and Housing and Property Services Departments to ensure that the new support services payments are applied across the full range of accommodation which qualifies for the payments. This action will be necessary to ensure that the strategic objectives of the Departments' budget are being met.

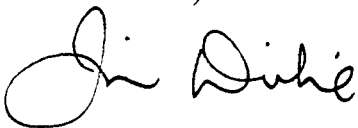
#### 4 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Committee is requested to:-

- i) note that arrangements for implementing the new scheme will be the subject of:
  - a) discussions between the Conveners of Social Work and Housing and Property Services;
  - b) the subject of future reports to the Committees in due course; and
- ii) otherwise approve the terms of the report.

#### 5 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 5.1 i) Supporting People Report, Social Work Committee 25 January 2000.
- ii) Scottish Executive Circular CCD1/2000



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 (6 April 2000)



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