

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE: DISABILITY RIGHTS TASK FORCE REPORT
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 22nd August 2000	
REPORT AUTHOR: Brian McAteer	
REF:	

1 CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the Council's response to the Scottish Executive consultation on the recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force. The Committee is asked to note the report.

2 BACKGROUND

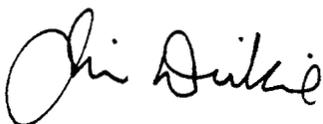
- 2.1 In April of this year, the Scottish Executive Equality Unit invited local authorities and other organisations to consider the recommendations of the Disability Rights Task Force, and how they should be implemented in devolved policy areas.
- 2.1 The Social Work Committee of 6th June considered a report on the consultation process, and determined that the Director of Social Work, in consultation with the Convenor, prepare a response and submit a further report thereon to a future meeting of Committee.

3 ACTION TAKEN

- 3.1 Prior to submission of the response, the Departments of Housing, Planning and the Chief Executive were invited to submit comments. At the request of the Convenor, the Department also invited local organisations representing service users to contribute their views on priorities for implementation.
- 3.2 Following this consultation, the Department submitted the Council's response. A copy of the response is appended to this report.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
31 July 2000

For further information on this report please contact , Duncan Mackay, Principal Officer (Planning and Development) (TEL: 01698 332072)

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**NORTH
 LANARKSHIRE**
 COUNCIL

Our Ref: JN/DMACK/BM
 Your Ref:
 Date: 30 June 2000

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Director of Social Work
 Jim Dickie

Graeme Bryce
 Scottish Executive Equality Unit
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Dear Mr Bryce

DISABILITY RIGHTS TASK FORCE REPORT: RECOMMENDATIONS

I refer to the letter and enclosures circulated by the Scottish Executive Equality Unit in April of this year. The letter invited local authorities and other organisations to consider the recommendations contained in the final report of the UK wide Disability Rights Task Force (DRTF) in order to assist the Executive to reflect Scottish circumstances in implementing the recommendations in devolved areas. The comments contained in this letter have been prepared by a number of departments of the Council and represent a single response.

A preliminary observation is that the consultation package may have benefited by the inclusion of the Executive Summary from the DRTF report. This would have helped put the recommendations in context, and given emphasis to points made strongly in the report, such as the importance of a sustained communication programme to challenge negative attitudes and ignorance towards disabled people, and the mutual value to employers and employees, service users and service providers of implementing the proposals.

In general terms, the Council welcomes the document and the commitment to "comprehensive and enforceable" civil rights. The following are specific comments on the recommendations.

Chapter 4: Education. The Council has already responded to the DRTF recommendations on education through its response to the "SEN and Disability Rights in Education Bill" consultation process.

Chapter 5: Employment. The Council supports the recommendation in 5.8 that all disabled people have civil rights in relation to employment regardless of the size of the business. Similarly, the recommendation in 5.21 that there should be good practice guidelines in relation to voluntary work is welcome, as is the recommendation 5.23 that the public sector should have a duty to promote equalisation of opportunities for disabled people in employment.

The Council notes the emphasis contained in the accompanying discussion document on moving away from day centre provision to a more employment oriented and inclusive approach. The Council has promoted a Supported Employment Project in partnership with other agencies to enable this shift to take place, placing 20 people in the past year in real jobs in all sectors of the local economy. At present, equal opportunities legislation can be cited to deny people with disabilities the opportunity to access employment. The Council therefore particularly welcomes the recommendation in 5.25 that existing local government legislation be amended to allow for some positive action schemes in relation to employment.

Chapter 6: Access to Goods, Services and Premises: The Council supports the proposal to create action plans in order to widen public discussion on equalisation of opportunities.

Chapter 8: The Environment and Housing: The Council supports the recommendations contained within the report, particularly recommendation 8.1 which proposes a review of the Part T (Scotland) Technical Standards of the Building regulations. The consultation paper states that it is important that houses are designed so that elderly and disabled people can remain in their own homes for life. The Council supports the 'Varying Needs' standard and would like the adoption of these standards to be made compulsory. Currently, new build social housing developments, which are generally carried out on a partnership basis with Scottish Homes and Housing Associations, are built to Varying Needs standards. The Council also aim to incorporate these standards wherever possible when refurbishing its own stock.

Recommendation 8.9 of the report states the importance of taking into account the needs of disabled people at a strategic level. The Council's Housing Plan includes a Community Care Strategy, which identifies the key issues and priorities in relation to the needs of people with disabilities. In addition the Council is establishing database records of adapted properties to ensure the best use of this stock, as suggested in Recommendation 8.11. On a practical level the Council provides equipment and adaptations for disabled tenants and, in conjunction with Scottish Homes and Lanarkshire Health Board, provides grant assistance to disabled owner-occupiers through the Care and Repair scheme.

Chapter 10: Local Government, Health and Social Services. In line with 10.4 on facilitating the involvement of disabled people in decision making, the Council involves the local disability forum and community care forum, in addition to specific service user groups, in the community care planning process, and in service development initiatives. For example, at present a Joint Equipment and Adaptations Working Group including social work, health, housing and service user representatives are engaged in examining how provision might be improved. The Council, in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council and Lanarkshire Health Board, funds the Lanarkshire Community Care Forum and has recently funded an additional worker to help develop the role and effectiveness of service user groups.

The Council has implemented a number of initiatives which involve disabled people in the provision of services, including involvement of service users in developing planned packages of care - with an emphasis on implementing supported independent living programmes. A difficulty identified here is that the Independent Living Fund (ILF) has a narrow eligibility criteria which can work against those in highest need. Other initiatives include the development of a pilot direct payments scheme and the introduction and extension of the Care and Repair Scheme referred to above. However, the Council is aware that further efforts are required to fully meet the objectives embodied in the recommendations.

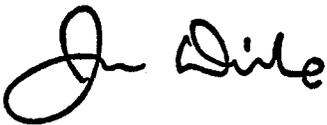
The Council is fully committed to recommendation 10.5. For example, the Mission Statement of the Social Work Department emphasises its “commitment to equal opportunities”, and states that services are based on “the principles of normalisation, empowerment, safeguarding rights, choice and high quality” and ensuring “assessed needs are central to social work services”. The Council’s Equal Opportunities Policy commits the Council to ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment or is placed at a disadvantage on any grounds, “including race, colour, nationality or ethnic origins, religion, sex, sexuality, marital status, age, disability or membership of a trade union.”

The Council supports the recommendation in 10.13 that the D.R.C. work closely with health and social work in broadening the awareness and practice of promoting equality of opportunities.

Finally, with regard to 10.17, the Council has entered into a partnership project aimed at developing services for young people at the point of transition between school and adult services. The project has key representation from Social Work, Education, Community Services, Health and other agencies/ departments as required, along with service users and their families.

I trust these comments are useful and apologise for the delay in submitting them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Dickie', written in a cursive style.

Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work