

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: INITIATIVES PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 23 August 2001	Ref: CMacK/LMcA	

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. To seek Committee approval for initiatives detailed within the report being proposed to promote Social Inclusion.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Social Work Department promotes Social Inclusion in its everyday work by ensuring that residents of North Lanarkshire have their incomes maximised by assisting in Benefit take-up.
- 2.2. Maximisation of income assists individuals to become, and remain, socially included, assists the Council in revenue income and assists the local economy by maximising the money spent locally.
- 2.3. The Department's Welfare Rights Officers undertake initiatives targeting specific groups in the community which may be experiencing social exclusion. This report proposes to develop an ongoing programme of benefit take-up campaigns and to mount a series of targeted initiatives which are detailed in section three of this report.

## 3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. There are a number of areas, and care groups, which require periodic campaigns to ensure consistent and continuing benefit take-up. It is therefore proposed that a series of initiatives be launched to ensure income maximisation for these groupings.

### 3.2. Older People

- 1) In collaboration with Housing and Property Services, it has been agreed to identify those older people who receive Housing and/or Council Tax rebates whose income is recorded as less than Income Support Level and offer them assistance to claim their potential entitlement to additional benefit. Those people identified by this exercise will be contacted by letter indicating that they may be entitled to other benefits and offered a benefits check.
- 2) In addition to targeting those with a possible entitlement to Income Support, the Social Work Department has arranged for a supply of information leaflets to be available for older people at a number of outlets.
- 3) It is acknowledged that there has to be a continuous effort to raise awareness and to remind people of their possible benefit entitlement. As part of this awareness raising exercise, it is proposed to carry out two specific initiatives, which will be ongoing. As people reach their 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, many may be frailer and therefore more entitled to a wider range of benefits and support and are likely to be less able, or willing, to claim their entitlement without assistance.

4) It is therefore proposed that:

- In collaboration with Housing and Property services, to identify all persons who will reach their 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday and send them a Birthday Card from North Lanarkshire Council. Along with the card, will be included a separate offer of a Benefits Check.
- Create a calendar to be sent to all 80+ persons identified above, with scenes of important events in social history which have occurred during their life, to which many of them will have contributed, e.g. NHS, Welfare State. Included will be information regarding Council Services which promote Social Inclusion.

Both initiatives have been successfully run in West Dunbartonshire and the costings received from that Authority indicate that all expenditure on these initiatives can be met from existing budgets.

### 3.3. People with a Disability:

After the campaign for older people it is intended to mount initiatives for the following groups:

- 1) **Young People with Special Needs:** Conduct a benefits take-up campaign in all schools which provide services for young people with special needs.
- 2) **Carers:** Carers provide a vital service helping to keep people in the community. In conjunction with carers organisations it is proposed to mount an Invalid Care Allowance Initiative. Invalid Care Allowance may be paid to some carers in specific circumstances. The upper-age limit for receipt of Invalid Care Allowance will be abolished within the year. A take-up campaign for Carers could result in the maximisation of income for this often, socially excluded group.

### 3.4. General:

- 1) In conjunction with Trading Standards, who have the responsibility for providing and promoting Money Advice, examine the possibility of promoting Welfare and Money Advice to Council employees by use of an insert into, or printing onto, the "paylines" of Council staff thus promoting Social Inclusion. To be discussed further with the Department of Administration.
- 2) As an area which previously had a history of heavy industry there are likely to be a lot of people who may be suffering from an industrial disease and/or the effects of an industrial accident, who have not made claims under the Industrial Injuries Scheme. To address this it is suggested that a press campaign be run inviting enquiries and offering support to pursue potential additional benefits.

### 3.5. Monitoring:

In order to advise the Social Work Committee of the outcome of these initiatives, a monitoring framework will be established to enable the Director of Social Work to bring forward reports to brief Committee.

## 4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1. There are no new Personnel implications.

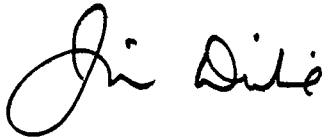
4.2. There are no known legal implications.

4.3. The initiatives are all within the aims and objectives of the Councils Social Inclusion Policy. It is expected that the costs of the initiatives will be met from existing Social Work budgets.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. The Committee is requested to:

- 1) Approve the initiatives to promote benefit take-up and Social Inclusion.
- 2) To request the Director of Social Work to bring forward reports detailing the outcome of the initiatives.
- 3) Otherwise note the contents of the report.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**14 August 2001**

*For further information on this report please contact: George McNally, Manager Social Work Strategy  
TEL: (01698 332063)*

Appendix 1

Initiative	Objectives	Start	Finish
Income support for older people.	To maximise the incomes of older people by alerting them to their entitlement and assisting them in making claims for identified Benefits.	August 2001	December 2001
Birthday Card and Calendar	To raise awareness of Benefit entitlement for those in the 80+ group in the community and to assist them in making claims for identified Benefits. This is a group who, often, cannot, or will not, claim their full entitlement without a reminder, and assistance.	October 2001	February 2001
Young people with special needs.	To ensure that young people with special needs receive their full entitlement as soon as possible and to help ensure that they maintain full entitlement.	February 2002	May 2002
Carers	To raise awareness of Benefit entitlement for this group, who are often unaware of what may be available to assist them in their caring function.	May 2002	August 2002
Council employees	To combat the difficulties created by debt, and non-claiming of Benefits experienced by many people, including North Lanarkshire Council employees, by raising awareness of the assistance which is available.	October 2001	February 2002
Industrial Injuries	To address a perceived need generated by the history of heavy industry in the North Lanarkshire Council area.	January 2002	May 2002