

AGENDA ITEM No. 23

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: TRAINING OF STUDENT SOCIAL WORKERS – ESTABLISHMENT OF SOCIAL WORK ENTRY PROGRAMME	
From: J DICKIE, DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: MAY 9 TH 2002	Ref: JS/CR/0205PT	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the current position regarding the training of Student Social Workers and to seek approval for the creation of posts which will improve training opportunities and promote the recruitment of staff. Effectively, this will be a policy to 'grow our own' social workers within North Lanarkshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. This report is closely associated with reports, presented to Committee in the last cycle, which concerned the introduction of the concept of Senior Social Work Practitioners, and the 'Scheme for Secondment to the Diploma in Social Work'. All of these reports are related to the efforts made to recruit, develop and retain qualified social workers within North Lanarkshire Council. Committee will be aware, from previous reports, of a national shortage of qualified social workers.
- 2.2. This report brings forward proposals to deal with one of the central problems associated with the training of student social workers - a shortage of social workers able to provide practice teaching placements for students. The problem is circular - a national shortage of social workers means that social workers are over stretched in the workplace, and unable to devote the time needed to provide the practice teaching time needed by students undertaking social work training. Practice teaching placements typically last for 55 days in year 1 of training and 85 days in year 2.
- 2.3. Placements are provided in connection with the Social Work Department's membership of the West of Scotland Consortium for training of social workers. This membership is needed due to the inter-dependency of Councils and Universities to train students.

The provision of high quality placements is important in encouraging students to come to work for the Council, but it is a component of the work that the Social Work Department provides placements for students who eventually work elsewhere.

The proposals contained in this report will link the development of students to ongoing employment with the Council.

- 2.4. It is proposed that the Social Work Department increase its ability to provide practice teaching placements, and that the proposals contained in this report are linked with the current arrangements to second staff to study for the Diploma in Social Work by distance learning. As will be seen from the proposals below, this will also help the management of residential and day care services.

2.5. The Scottish Executive has provided an additional £211,000 specific grant for training for front line services. It is proposed that some of this grant be used for the arrangements suggested below.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Currently the Social Work Department second staff to the Diploma in Social Work Programme at Robert Gordon University. This offers the opportunity to experienced staff, who have undertaken appropriate in-service training, to enter the programme at the half way point, the course then taking 18 months to complete rather than 3 years. There are limited places available through Robert Gordon University.
- 3.2 The Open University and Caledonian University also offer distance learning programmes but the Social Work Department has been unable to make use of these due to the shortage of practice teachers, and practice teaching placements, within the Department. The Universities will only accept people for these programmes with the backing of an agency, which will offer practice teaching placements.
- 3.3 It is proposed that, with additional staffing to provide practice teaching placements, the Social Work Department access the programmes at all of the universities noted above.
- 3.4 It is proposed that 3 posts are created to manage and provide practice teaching placements across the Social Work Department. These would be located within the Training Section of the Social Work Department and titled Practice Teaching Co-ordinator at Grade PO5, and 2 posts of Senior Practice Teachers at Grade PO2. They would work in conjunction with social work managers and social workers able to provide placements for both existing staff and for new social work entrants, in close co-operation with the Universities involved.
- 3.5 It is proposed that 15 posts of Peripatetic Care Worker at Grade RW12/16 are created across the Social Work Department, in each year of the next 3 years, to create a pool of 45 staff, selected at entry to develop experience and be supported in professional development. The target group will be graduates, and others, who are assessed as suitable to enter Social Work, and to move on to professional social work training. Preference would be given to graduate applicants.
- This would provide a balance, for secondment to the distance learning programmes, between new social work entrants with higher level educational qualifications, and existing staff with a depth of experience. At full capacity, 30 – 35 staff, experienced and new entrants, will be able to complete the Diploma in Social Work each year.
- 3.6 During the period of development and secondment to the distance learning programme, the staff will be used flexibly over 7 days, providing necessary cover within residential and day care settings to supplement core staffing. Over a period of 12 - 18 months they will gain experience in the various fields of residential care, day care, and fieldwork.
- 3.7 The costs will be largely offset by savings in current arrangements for providing temporary cover in residential and day care services.
- 3.8 The graduates appointed to posts of Care Worker would, during the period of professional training through distance learning, continue to work with the Department to provide service.
- 3.9 After satisfactory completion of the Diploma in Social Work, the individual would be contracted to work with the Council for a period of 2 years.
- 3.10 This would both serve the needs of the Department in providing service, would meet the needs of graduates in gaining a range of experience before professional training, and would improve the recruitment of qualified social work staff.

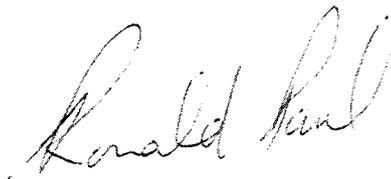
4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The cost of these proposals would be £110,000 for the 3 staff to be involved in management and delivery of practice teaching, £5,000 for course fees, over 3 years, for each person seconded, and £50,000 additional cost for Care Workers. The cost for practice teachers and course fees will be met by the specific grant provided by the Scottish Executive. The cost for care workers can be met from within existing care budgets.
- 4.2. It is anticipated that these proposals will, in the medium term, have a significant impact on the recruitment of social workers to the Council, producing social workers with not only the professional qualification, but with a well rounded experience of the range of social work services provided by North Lanarkshire Council.
- 4.3. The proposals will complement efforts being made to recruit social workers in the short term, and the development of Senior Practitioners, recently approved by Committee, to promote retention.
- 4.4. The proposals will support the Social Work Department in its capacity to meet its statutory responsibilities, and the requirements which will be imposed through the introduction of Regulation of Care.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. The Committee is asked to:

- Approve the posts of Practice Teaching Co-ordinator, Grade PO5, 2 posts of Senior Practice Teachers, Grade PO2, Clerical Assistant, Grade GS1/2, and 15 posts of Peripatetic Care Worker, Grade RW12/16 in each of the next 3 years.
- Remit this report to the Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub Committee for consideration.



J.D. **Jim Dickie**
Director of Social Work
April 15th 2002

For further information on this report please contact J Scott, Manager of Resources and Information TEL: (01698 332037)