

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: EUROPEAN FUNDING APPROVAL OF EQUAL INITIATIVE
From: JIM DICKIE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 22 AUGUST 2002	Ref: JD/GMCI	

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To inform the Social Work Committee of the successful outcome of the grant application to the European EQUAL Programme, which had been submitted in respect of Supported Employment initiatives and to seek approval to proceed with the recruitment of the associated posts.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In May 2002, Committee considered and approved a request to provide match funding for two separate European applications for supported employment initiatives.
- 2.2 The first application is under the EQUAL Programme and is a new initiative in supported employment further developing the good practice learned from transnational exchanges with the Basque Region of Spain. Committee in August 2001 considered and approved a report on a visit by officers of the Social Work Department to the Basque Country. The report indicated consideration was being given to the submission of a Transnational Partnership bid through the Equal Programme.
- 2.3 In the period following this report, work was undertaken to develop the application to the Equal Programme. In addition a delegation from the Basque Country visited North Lanarkshire in February this year and concluded the arrangements for the Transitional Partnership bid.
- 2.4 The origins of the Council's supported employment operation has been focused on service users (predominantly with a learning disability) attending Council run day centre facilities. A study of people using services in North Lanarkshire, in the public and voluntary sector indicated that there are over 1,000 people (of working age) using services who either have a physical or learning disability or suffer mental health problems. To date 50 people, mainly with a learning disability, have secured permanent employment through the Council's supported employment operation. There is potential through the EQUAL initiative to develop on this success particularly in developing new models of operation and approaches to employers to increase the opportunities available.

- 2.5 The EQUAL initiative plans to develop and expand the employment opportunities available to people with disabilities. This will involve researching and applying new and innovative approaches, in particular through engaging / negotiating with employers directly to develop group employment opportunities for small teams of disabled people to undertake specific areas of production within e.g. a manufacturing or service operation as happens elsewhere in Europe.
- 2.6 The EQUAL programme has now been approved with implementation set for late September.
- 2.7 The second application was made under ESF Objective 3 Programme to further develop the Partnership Employment Project (PEP) whose current SIP funding ends 31st March 2003. The outcome for this application will not be known until Autumn 2002, with funding being required from 1st April 2003 if the ESF application is successful.
- 2.8 The Council's European Funding Unit, who are providing a lead role for the EQUAL Development Partnership in Scotland has informed the Department that the EQUAL application has been approved and the project can now proceed.
- 2.9 The total cost of the Equal application over the period of funding is £272,082. The Council will receive European funding of £91,572. The remaining £180,510 is being met through agreed funding of £72,00 (£24,000 per annum) and in-kind contributions of £108,510.

3 PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Supported Employment is a key policy of the Council. It provides the opportunity for people with disabilities to access real jobs paying real wages. The successful application to the Equal Programme will enhance the opportunities of developing new and innovative approaches to supported employment in North Lanarkshire. The dissemination of good practice developed through the EQUAL Programme will have implications for service developments across Scotland.
- 3.2 With Programme funding now approved it is proposed to move towards implementation of the initiative, with one of the first steps being the recruitment of staff.

4 FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Funding has been agreed for the following posts:

Senior Supported Employment Officer	PO 2 (F/T)	£33,640
Job Coach	AP3 (F/T)	£20,300 + 7.5% irregular hours allowance
Clerical Assistant	GS1/2 (P/T 17.5 Hours)	£7,250

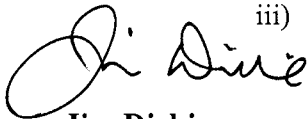
Provision exists within the Social Work estimates and European Funding to meet this expenditure. These posts are temporary (30 months) for the duration of the project.

- 4.2 This initiative will also be the first European funded project which the Department has managed. The Department will require to put in place appropriate financial and programme monitoring systems which will satisfy European Programme guidelines and audit procedures.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Committee is requested to approve:-

- i) The creation of the temporary posts as detailed in section 4.1 of the report, with application of 7.5% irregular hours payment for the post of Job Coach.
- ii) To request the Director of Social Work to bring forward in due course a further report advising of the outcome of the remaining application relating to the PEP Project.
- iii) To remit the report to the Policy & Resources (Personnel) Sub Committee for consideration.
- iii) To otherwise note the report.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
August 14th 2002

For further information on this report please contact George McNally, Manager Social Work Strategy (TEL: 01698 332555)