

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: RECRUITMENT OF SOCIAL WORKERS
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 27 FEBRUARY 2003	Ref: JS/Cttee/03 02	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to obtain the approval of Committee for measures to improve the recruitment of social workers.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. It has previously been reported to Committee that there is, in Scotland, a national shortage of Social Workers.

- 2.2. This Council has approved a number of measures to improve recruitment and retention of social workers

- improving the starting salary point for newly qualified workers
- introduced robust arrangements for the post qualifying training and development of staff
- introducing senior social work practitioners
- secondment of unqualified staff to professional training
- introduction of the Social Work Entry Programme to recruit and train staff as social workers

The Social Work Entry Programme, and secondment of existing staff to training for the DipSW through distance learning, will have a pay-off, but this will be in the longer term, the first significant numbers qualifying in 2005.

- 2.3. The immediate situation is that, in spite of the above measures, vacancies have now reached a high level. Whereas in previous years recruitment roughly matched exit, last year saw a marked slowdown in recruitment.
- 2.4. An increasing number of Councils are offering lump sum payments to newly qualified SWs, the latest in the West of Scotland offering a £2000 payment to current final year students. Other authorities already offer this figure, but the most significant competitor is a neighbouring authority, which offers £6000 spread over 3 years. We have seen this have a direct impact on recruitment to NLC in the past year, with students having applied here but opting to go to the neighbouring authority, due to the financial support offered.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 It is proposed that North Lanarkshire Council offer a sum which matches that of the neighbouring authority, for those students graduating as social workers this year, and that we offer a portion of the money, at a level to be agreed with the Head of Personnel Services, to students starting their final year in Autumn 2003 to secure their employment with North Lanarkshire for the following year.

- 3.2 If successful, it is proposed that this arrangement continue in future years, with evaluation of its effect on an annual basis.
- 3.3 It is also proposed that Social Work develop a recruitment package, which includes a wider range of benefits for social workers. This would include assistance with accommodation, access to leisure services and, when consideration of HR policies is completed through the Corporate HR Working Party, a range of flexible working practices. The Department will shortly begin a pilot on an improved flexi-time system.
- 3.4 As a Council, North Lanarkshire is considering improved practices, which will benefit recruitment. We would wish to be in a position to utilise these to ensure that competitive conditions of service can be offered, in comparison with other authorities.

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The proposals are designed to improve recruitment to key posts of social worker.
- 4.2. The costs will be met from within existing budgets.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. Committee is asked to approve the proposal at 3.4 above.
- 5.2. To remit the report to Policy and Resources (Personnel) Sub-Committee for consideration.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
17 February 2003

*For further information on this report please contact J Scott, Manager of Resources and Information
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