

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE	Subject: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS, SENIOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 2 APRIL 2003	Ref: JS/Cttee/03 04	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the current position in relation to Social Worker staffing levels, and to seek approval for measures designed to recruit and retain these key staff, and to retain the other key staff groups of Senior Social Worker and Occupational Therapist.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. It has previously been reported to Committee that there is a national shortage of Social Workers.
- 2.2. The national position is likely to become worse over the next 3 years, as the required professional training for Social Workers changes from diploma level to full honours degree. The transition will result in fewer Social Workers graduating over this period.
- 2.3. Committee has already approved steps to assist future needs, through the establishment of the Social Work Entry Programme which allows graduates with experience of work in social care to be supported to train for the professional social worker qualification, the Diploma in Social Work (DipSW).
- 2.4. Social Work also seconds a number of existing staff to the DipSW. This programme has been expanded, alongside the establishment of the Social Work Entry Programme, to assist in meeting future needs.
- 2.5. 72 staff from the 2 programmes outlined above began professional training in February 2003, and will qualify in December 2005.
- 2.6. Committee has also given approval to Social Work to provide an incentive to newly qualified Social Workers joining North Lanarkshire. The scheme is being implemented.
- 2.7. The Scottish Executive is proposing to introduce a Fast-track scheme to train graduates with relevant degrees, during the transition from diploma to degree. 50 people are to be trained, with a maximum of 2 likely to come to North Lanarkshire. This initiative will have minimal impact on service in North Lanarkshire.
- 2.8. There remains considerable difficulty for Social Work in managing services over the next few years. 60 vacancies currently exist in North Lanarkshire, 30% of an establishment of 200, and Social Work is finding it increasingly difficult to meet statutory responsibilities, particularly in the service areas of child care and mental health.

- 2.9. The staffing difficulties facing North Lanarkshire have been exacerbated by 2 factors - an increasing demand for Social Workers due to national social policy developments, and competition with other authorities for available staff.
- 2.10. In the recent past, 2 of our major competitors for qualified staff have introduced incentive schemes to recruit newly qualified Social Workers. These have rendered the North Lanarkshire position uncompetitive. Some of the measures introduced will impact on the ability to retain experienced staff working within North Lanarkshire, and it is anticipated that we will see a further downturn in staffing levels, as a consequence.
- 2.11. The incentive schemes in other Councils are also likely to attract Occupational Therapists from North Lanarkshire. Although currently fully staffed, this is a key group where we have had major recruitment difficulties in the past.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1. To meet these difficulties over the next 2-3 years, a number of measures are proposed.
- 3.2. To retain existing Social Workers and Senior Social Workers, the key staff who have carried Social Work through this period of national shortage, it is proposed that all existing staff in these categories are provided with a sum equal to that already approved for newly qualified staff, in return for a commitment to remain working in Social Work in North Lanarkshire for a period of 3 years. Initially staff will receive a lump sum of £5,000 which will result in a tax liability of £1,450 at the end of the 3 years falling to the Council to pay.
- 3.3. To recruit Social Workers, they will be placed on a point of the scale, which is competitive with other authorities. The Head of Personnel Services has delegated authority to determine the appropriate salary placement. In implementing this there will be a need to review salary placings of current employees to ensure that they are not disadvantaged. This will be agreed with the Head of Personnel Services.
- 3.4. To retain existing Senior Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapists, provision of the same sum linked to a commitment to remain with Social Work in North Lanarkshire for 3 years, and a reviewed salary placing consistent with Social Workers.

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The approval of these measures will support Social Work to recruit and retain staff to meet its statutory obligations over the next 2-3 years, until the medium term measures described above reach full effect.
- 4.2. In the financial year 2002/2003, Social Work has saved £1,500,000 in salary for unfilled Social Worker posts. If the vacancy level continued in 2003/2004, a similar saving will arise.
- 4.3. The cost of the incentive designed to recruit new staff and retain existing staff will result in a maximum £1,500,000 being paid out in 2003/4. This can be spread over the 3-year period of the initiative in line with proper accounting practice. There will be an additional cost of £420,000 at the end of year 3 in respect of tax liabilities. These costs include that of the previously approved incentive scheme, covering the recruitment of newly qualified Social Workers. These costs will be contained within the previously approved budgets.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. Committee is asked to approve the measures outlined in Section 3, as essential to recruit and retain staff in key areas of service.



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2nd April 2003

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