

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL  
REPORT**

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: MENTAL HEALTH AND FINANCIAL INCLUSION DEMONSTRATION PROJECT
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 27 OCTOBER 2005	Ref: GF/JD	

**1. Purpose of Report/Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of progress in establishing the Mental Health and Financial Demonstration Project funded by the Scottish Executive.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. In January 2004 the Deputy Minister for Communities announced that the Scottish Executive would be establishing a number of 2-year partnership projects across Scotland to look at new ways of making money advice (and welfare benefits advice) more accessible and available to those people who suffer from mental ill health and related issues.
- 2.2. The Executive commissioned the Scottish Development Centre for Mental Health and the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) to prepare a short study to consider how money and debt advice services could be better targeted to the needs of this group. On the basis of this study, North Lanarkshire Council was identified as the preferred bidder to pilot a demonstration project in relation to identified need and the existing provision of advice services in the area.
- 2.3. A formal project bid was jointly developed by Social Work, the Planning and Environment Department and SAMH and submitted to the Scottish Executive in October 2004. Formal approval was received the following month.
- 2.4. The objective is to create a national demonstration project, which can explore the key issues of accessibility of advice services, the positive health impacts of increasing money advice and income maximisation services, and the role that improved welfare benefits advice can have in promoting employability.
- 2.5. The general approach being taken by the project is not to develop another service but to examine how existing services can be better equipped to offer advice to those experiencing mental health problems i.e.:
  - Mental health aware advice services
  - Benefit aware health services
  - Mental health aware employment services
  - And employment aware money advice services
- 2.6. The project will also aim to offer a best practice model for integrating mental health service users into the design and delivery of local advice services.

- 2.7 The two year demonstration project will have an annual budget of £200,000. The proposals include the establishment of a small project team to deliver the aims and objectives of the initiative. The team comprises a Project Co-ordinator, two Bridge Workers, and a clerical administrator. The project team will be employed and managed on a day to day basis by SAMH.

### **3. Proposals/Considerations**

- 3.1 A management group involving key stakeholders has now been established. The group is jointly led by the Social Work and Planning and Environment Departments and involves NHS Lanarkshire, Routes To Work, Lanarkshire Links, SAMH and North Lanarkshire Information and Advice Forum.
- 3.2 The Scottish Executive has appointed the Scottish Poverty Information Unit at Caledonia University as the external assessors for all the demonstration projects funded through this programme.
- 3.3 Recruitment has taken place and all of the staff team took up their posts on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 2005. The Project Co-ordinator and one of the Bridge Workers have been appointed to the project on a secondment basis from the Social Work Department.
- 3.4 The Team has secured an office base within the Council's Contact Centre in Merry Street, Motherwell. They will be located along with the Mental Health Advice Line worker also being managed through SAMH.
- 3.5 A stakeholder event was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 2005 to formally launch the initiative. The event attracted over 40 participants from a range of relevant agencies as well as a significant number of service users.
- 3.6 The project is now moving into an engagement phase with various stakeholder agencies and service user groups around how existing services can be better equipped to offer advice to those experiencing mental health problems.

### **4. Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications**

- 4.1. There are no financial/personnel/legal or policy implications for the Council.

### **5. Recommendation**

- 5.1. The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**7 October, 2005**

For further information on this report please contact Gus Ferguson on telephone 01698- 332560