

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee - 19 June 2000
Personnel and Management Services Committee - 19 June 2000

REPORT ON: Social Work Department - Fintry Community Nursery - Staffing Structure

REPORT BY: Director of Social Work and Director of Personnel and Management Services

REPORT NO: 349-2000

1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the implementation strategy for the decision taken at the Policy and Resources Committee on 9 March 2000 regarding the transfer to Education provision of the existing childcare provision at Fintry Community Nursery from August 2000.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee approves:-

- 2.1 the termination of the lease on the property at 29 Grampian Gardens rented from Abertay Housing Association;
- 2.2 the matching of children and families currently receiving a service with alternative childcare provision offered in the local area by the Education Department, or purchased from other local childcare providers;
- 2.3 the redeployment of staff as outlined in the report.

It is recommended that the Personnel and Management Services Committee approves:-

- 2.4 the deletion of 1 post of Centre Worker, graded SCP27-35, £17,322 - £22,083;
- 2.5 the deletion of 3 posts of Assistant Centre Worker, graded SCP12-18, £11,685 - £13,305;
- 2.6 the deletion of a part time post of Domestic Assistant (22 hours per week), graded MW1 (£189.96 per week).

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The phasing out of services at 29 Grampian Gardens will result in a saving of £98,000 in a full financial year. It will be necessary to allocate up to £8,000 of Childcare Strategy monies identified in Report No. 371/99 for linked childminding places to meet the cost of childcare services, which are not available through nursery school provision. No additional costs will be incurred in providing alternative services to families from existing Education Department provision. The Social Work Department revenue budget 2000/01 has been adjusted accordingly.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no agenda 21 implications.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These proposals will ensure that children and families living in Fintry will continue to have access to appropriate childcare and educational services. This will allow the opportunity for parents to enter or remain in training, education or employment and will continue to promote economic regeneration in the Fintry area.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Fintry Community Nursery was established in 1992 to offer low cost childcare for student and working parents in the Fintry area. At the outset it was the view that the level of local need was such that the service would be fully utilised to the benefit of children and families living in the Fintry area.
- 6.2 However over the years not all the places available have been taken up and there has been a pattern of underusage of Fintry Community Nursery as a resource. For example, in April 1997 only 31 of the 36 places on offer were in use. The following year the decision was taken to reduce the total number of places provided to 30, but in April 1999 only 26 of the 30 places had been taken up. This pattern of underusage has been a consistent feature of service delivery in recent years, reflecting a reducing level of demand for Fintry Community Nursery services.
- 6.3 One of the significant causes of this fall in need and demand has been the increase in the number of children aged four, and now those aged three who are being offered places in local nursery schools. The provision of nursery schooling for young children over three has offered a resource to local parents which has presented as a direct alternative to the service being provided at Fintry Community Nursery. As a result many children who may otherwise have continued to receive a service have moved to take up a place in nursery school, thereby reducing the demand for services at Fintry Community Nursery.

- 6.4 A further important consideration which needs to be taken into account when reviewing Fintry Community Nursery as a resource is the nature of the premises at 20 Grampian Gardens, which are rented from Abertay Housing Association for the Centre's use. The building itself, which comprises a block of six converted flats, is not ideal for use as a Community Nursery. The individual playrooms are small, allowing very little space for indoor physical activity and the outside play area, which has a concrete surface, is neither an attractive nor a stimulating play environment for active, developing young children. Fintry Community Nursery occupies the ground and middle floors of the building, with the playrooms being located upstairs. As a result, great care has to be taken by staff in supervising the movement of children up and down the flight of stairs between the ground floor dining facilities and the outside play area. The layout of the building also means that there is no disabled access to the playrooms.
- 6.5 At the same time it is important to note that the nature of the service offered at Fintry Community Nursery is different from that provided by the Social Work Department's nine Child and Family Centres. This has been particularly significant since 1997, when the resources of the Child and Family Centres were refocused and were assigned a key role in providing family support services to children in need and their families. As such the service provided at Fintry Community Nursery does not match closely with the Social Work Department's priorities.
- 6.6 Given the increased availability and usage of nursery school provision for children over three, the reduced level of demand and usage of childcare resources at Fintry Community Nursery and the unsuitability of the building at 20 Grampian Gardens as premises for a Community Nursery, it is proposed that the services provided at Fintry Community Nursery be phased out from August 2000. It is recognised that there are a small number of children who may be too young for nursery school provision, or who may have additional extended hours or holiday care needs. It is proposed that for these children alternative or additional services be commissioned on an individual basis through Childcare Strategy monies. Such funds have been provided to local authorities to develop the provision of flexible, affordable and accessible childcare services for parents in accordance with local area need. Childcare Strategy funding will allow the opportunity to commission services from other local providers, to develop the use of home based services more closely aligned with individual need and to promote best value in the use of available resources.

7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- 7.1 Social Work and Education Department staff have undertaken a joint assessment of the needs of children and parents currently receiving a service at Fintry Community Nursery with a view to identifying alternative local provision for each family from August 2000. The future childcare needs of a small number of families who had previously registered for a place at Fintry Community Nursery have also been identified.

7.2 Work is now nearing completion to match each child on an individual basis with appropriate alternative childcare services in the Fintry area. The majority of children will be moving on to local nursery schools and a small number will be provided with other forms of community based childcare provision, such as a service from Whitfield Early Years Centre. Such services will be commissioned on an individual basis to meet assessed needs, and the limited costs involved will be met from the Childcare Strategy Fund.

8 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The phasing out of service provision at Fintry Community Nursery will require the redeployment of all staff to suitable posts in the Social Work Department. Vacant posts at other Child and Family Centres have been identified for the three Assistant Centre Workers and one Domestic Assistant from August 2000.

9 PROPOSAL

9.1 It is proposed that the services provided at Fintry Community Nursery are phased out from August 2000, that all the children are moved to appropriate alternative childcare provision in the local area and that all staff are redeployed to vacant posts within the Social Work Department. This will allow the appropriate refocusing of Social Work Department resources upon children in need, the promotion of nursery schooling as a resource for children aged three and over, and the use of Childcare Strategy Funds to pilot the commissioning of other forms of local childcare provision in line with local need. This also accords with the general policy of promoting more integrated social work, childcare and education provision across the City.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Director of Education. Close consultation has also taken place with the staff group at Fintry Community Nursery and detailed discussions have taken place with parents on their individual childcare needs. The trade unions have also been consulted.

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

12 SIGNATURE

J. Roberts
Director of Social Work

Date

J.C. Petrie
Director of Personnel and Management Services

Date