

# DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Personnel Committee - 12 September 2005  
Social Work Committee - 19 September 2005

**REPORT ON:** Social Work Department - Review of Social Work Care Management and Assessment Services - Senior Practitioners

**REPORT BY:** Director of Social Work and Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

**REPORT NO:** 518-2005

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report outlines a proposal arising from a detailed review of roles, responsibilities, skills mix and structures within social work care management and assessment services. The report recommends the introduction of a new post of Senior Practitioner within the Social Work Department.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Personnel Committee approves:-

- 2.1 the establishment of 27 posts of Senior Practitioner, graded PO 1-4, £26,378 - £28,632;
- 2.2 the deletion of 14 posts of Social Worker, graded AP4/5 +1, £20,808 - £26,379;
- 2.3 the deletion of 13.5 posts of Care Manager, graded AP4/5 + 1, £20,808 - £26,379;
- 2.4 a review of the operation of the Senior Practitioner role be undertaken as outlined in paragraph 8.5 below.

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

- 2.5 notes the content of this report.

## 3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The net cost of the proposals in this report will be £6,020 in 2005/06 and £14,450 in the first full financial year. The costs of £1,050 (05/06) and £2,550 (full year) relating to Criminal Justice Services will be met from the 100% funding allocation from the Scottish Executive. The remaining additional costs of £4,970 and £11,900 will be met partly through resource transfer from Tayside NHS Board and partly through a realignment of the Social Work revenue budget as shown in Appendix 1. All figures are inclusive of employer's costs.

#### **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The introduction of these changes will improve the quality of services by retaining and recruiting key staff.

#### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The introduction of these proposals will improve career opportunities for existing staff.

#### **6.0 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 The Personnel Committee approved report no. 783-2003 on 8 December 2003. This report remitted the Assistant Chief Executive (Management) and the Director of Social Work to bring forward a further report reviewing the roles and responsibilities within fieldwork care and assessment services, including consideration of the skills mix of staff and appropriate structures.
- 6.2 Since January 2004, work has been going on to identify the most appropriate roles and structure for the future. Information was gathered from other local authorities, an analysis was undertaken of the tasks currently carried out by various grades of staff and account was taken of material produced by relevant bodies such as the Association of Directors of Social Work.
- 6.3 Social work and social care services are facing many changes in implementing a very challenging agenda, including Joint Future, new community schools, the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003, and the 21st Century Review. In addition, there is an ongoing emphasis on the protection of children and vulnerable adults, in the wake of a number of high profile cases of failures by Social Work departments and their partners. Standards and accountability are increasingly important, with the advent of the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care and the Scottish Social Services Council, and public scrutiny and expectations of the social work service are very high.
- 6.4 These challenges come at a time when there are significant problems nationwide in recruiting and retaining appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Dundee has not avoided these problems, although a number of measures were introduced in 2003 to help stabilise the situation (report no 783-2003 refers). These included the regrading of Senior Social Workers/Senior Care Managers and equivalent and the introduction on an interim basis of additional payment for practice teaching and MHO duties. The Council also took advantage of nationally funded initiatives to assist with recruitment, and have put substantial effort into a targeted recruitment campaign. Nonetheless, there is still a need to ensure a continuing supply of professionally qualified and experienced staff.

#### **7.0 THE STAFFING REVIEW**

- 7.1 The main objective of the staffing review was therefore to develop roles and structures that would allow the Department to fulfil its statutory obligations and to provide a safe and effective service with the resources at our disposal. There were a number of subsidiary objectives, namely:-

- to develop roles and structures that would be consistent across the Department and thus maintain the unity of the social work service
- to produce a structure that provided a clear career path for staff
- to ensure best value in the use of staffing resources, by examining skills mix
- to ensure we can meet our obligations in relation to specialist tasks, such as Mental Health Officer work and Practice Teaching.

7.2 The review covered the care and assessment teams in Children's Services, assessment and care management in Community Care and fieldwork teams in Criminal Justice Services.

## **8.0 SENIOR PRACTITIONERS**

8.1 Under the present structure, Social Workers and Care Managers have limited opportunity to advance beyond basic grade level. The only route open is to become a Senior Social Worker or Senior Care Manager. This job involves taking on more of a management role, including staff management, and withdrawing to some extent from direct practice. Not everyone is suited to or interested in such a role, and there are a limited number of such posts.

8.2 The majority of professionally qualified staff (58% as at January 2005) are at the top point of their scale. At the same time, due to the success of recent recruitment initiatives, there is an increasing percentage (16%) of staff who are recently qualified with only one or two years' experience. This presents a problem at both ends of the scale. At the top of the scale, experienced staff have limited options to progress and this raises the possibility of retention problems as staff seek opportunities elsewhere. At the other end of the scale, the increase in newly qualified and inexperienced staff, while helpful in terms of recruitment, places an extra responsibility on other team members and seniors to support and mentor these staff.

8.3 There is also a need to develop and maintain good standards of practice to ensure the best possible service is delivered. This would be helped by retaining experienced practitioners within the front line service, where they can share their expertise and assist colleagues to develop good practice.

8.4 To address all these issues, it is proposed to establish a new role of Senior Practitioner. The appropriate grade for this new role has been assessed as PO 1-4. The Senior Practitioner will play a key role in mentoring and supporting team members, in assisting with the development of staff and in demonstrating and sharing good practice. The posts will provide a career development opportunity for staff who do not wish, at least initially, to follow the management route.

8.5 A review of the operation of the Senior Practitioner role in practice will be undertaken within 18 months and any necessary staffing and budgetary adjustments made then to ensure the objectives of the staffing review continue to be met.

## **9.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There will be a minimal reduction in the overall number of posts available for professionally qualified workers. 0.5 FTE Care Manager post in Community Care will be replaced by a Support Worker post, thus maintaining the overall number of posts. Support Workers will be the subject of a separate report to Committee.
- 9.2 Staff will be recruited to the post of Senior Practitioner on the basis of internal advertisement and a comprehensive interview and assessment process. It is expected that initially not all Senior Practitioner posts will be filled, but that over time natural turnover and improved qualification levels in the workforce will remedy this.
- 9.3 Social Workers are now required to undertake a minimum amount of continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain their registration with the Scottish Social Service Council. Opportunities to achieve the essential qualification requirements for a Senior Practitioner post will be available as part of the Department's approach to CPD.
- 9.4 The establishment of Senior Practitioner will replace the interim payments to Social Workers involved in Child Protection Work (783-2003 and AN235-2005).

## **10.0 CONSULTATION**

- 10.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and the trade unions were consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

5 September 2005

Alan G. Baird  
Director of Social Work

5 September 2005

**Appendix 1****SENIOR PRACTITIONERS - Financial Implications**

Service	Current		Proposed	
	Social Worker/Resource Worker/Care Manager	Senior Practitioner	Social Worker/Resource Worker/Care Manager	Full year additional cost £
<b>Children's Services</b>	94.5	11	83.5	9,350
<b>Community Care</b>	72	13	58.5	2,550
<b>Criminal Justice</b>	39	3	36	2,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>205.5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>14,450</b>

## Funding sources:

	£
NHS resource transfer - Community Mental Health Team for Older People	850
Funding for implementation of the new Mental Health Act	1,700
100% funding for Criminal Justice Services	2,550
Virement from staffing budget for residential child care services	<u>9,350</u>