

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 Support Workers and Social Work Assistants

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

REPORT NO: 524-2005

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 concentrates on the arrangements required to assist professionally qualified staff in care management and assessment.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Personnel Committee approves:-

- 2.1 the establishment of 25 posts of Support Worker, graded SCP 19-24, £16,515 to £18,966;
- 2.2 the deletion of 17 posts of Social Work Assistant graded GS3/AP1, £14,466 - £16,116;
- 2.3 the deletion of 6 posts of Social Care Officer graded SCP16-23, £15,404 - £18,381;
- 2.4 a review of the operation of the Support Worker role be undertaken as outlined in paragraph 8.6 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 £22,790 in 2005/06 and £54,700 in the first full financial year, both figures being inclusive of employer's costs. These costs 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.

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 SOCIAL WORK ASSISTANTS

8.1 The Social Work Department currently has a permanent establishment of 23.5 FTE posts of Social Work Assistant. At present, Social Work Assistants are graded GS3/AP1, currently £14,468 to £16,115.

8.2 Social Work Assistants play a very valuable role in supporting professionally qualified staff in both Children's and Community Care Services to carry out their role. Their duties cover a wide and varied range, from transporting children to assisting families with budgeting to carrying out simple assessments. At present there is no mandatory qualification for this group of staff and they are not yet required to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council.

8.3 One of the objectives of the staffing review, as outlined above, is to ensure best value in the use of staffing resources, by examining skills mix. One way of doing this is to identify tasks that need not be carried out by a professionally qualified worker, and establish a suitable alternative means of undertaking these tasks, thus releasing scarce Social Worker/Care Manager resources.

8.4 To this end, it is proposed to establish a new role of Support Worker. Support Workers will carry out higher level support tasks, under the supervision of social workers or care managers. The appropriate grade for this new role has been assessed as SCP 19-24, currently £16,515 to £18,966. Support Workers will be expected to have, or to gain, qualifications that will make them eligible for entry into the second year of the Degree in Social Work. This will provide a clear career path for those who are able to, and wish to progress to gain a professional qualification, thus achieving another of the objectives of the staffing review.

8.5 To complement this role, there will still be a need for a range of lower level support tasks, such as transportation and practical support to be carried out. It is therefore proposed to retain 6.5 posts of Social Work Assistant, at the current grade, to carry out these tasks. This also provides an option for staff who have an important contribution to make to the service, but who do not aspire to progress towards a professional qualification.

8.6 A review of the operation of the Support Worker 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 no reduction to the overall number of posts available. Staff will be recruited to the post of Support Worker on the basis of internal (to Social Work) advertisement and interview. Staff who do not apply for, or are not successful in gaining one of these posts will remain as Social Work Assistants. It is expected that initially not all Support Worker posts will be filled, but that over time natural turnover and improved qualification levels in the workforce will remedy this.
- 9.2 Training and development will be offered to allow staff to progress towards professional qualification if they are willing and able to do so. A number of staff have recently been allocated funding support to allow them to gain further credits towards the first year of the social work degree and similar opportunities will be available each year.

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

- 11.1 None.

J.C. Petrie
Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

5 September 2005

Alan G. Baird
Director of Social Work

5 September 2005

Appendix 1**SUPPORT WORKERS - Financial Implications**

Service	Current		Proposed		Full year additional cost £
	Social Work Assistant/Social Care Officer	Support Worker	Social Work Assistant	Social Care Officer	
Children's Services	10.5	4	6.5	0	3,600
Community Care	31	21	0	12	51,100
Total	41.5	25	6.5	12	54,700

Funding sources:

	£
NHS resource transfer - Community Mental Health Team for Older People	20,900
Reduction of 0.5 Care Manager post (see report no. 518-05)	14,700
Virement from Home Care budget	15,500
Virement from staffing budget for Family Support Centres	<u>3,600</u>
	£54,700