

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel Committee - 18 October 2004

REPORT ON: Social Work Department - Staff Development Service

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

REPORT NO: 598-2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report proposes a revised structure for the Social Work Staff Development Service to meet the training and development needs arising from changes in the environment in which social work operates.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee approve the following recommendations:

- 2.1 the deletion of four vacant posts of Staff Development Officer graded PO1-4 (£24,888-£27,015);
- 2.2 the establishment of one post of Staff Development Officer (Practice Learning) graded PO1-4 (£24,888 - £27,015) for a fixed term period of two years.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Implementing these proposals will require a realignment of the existing budget for the Staff Development Service. The cost of the two year fixed term post will be met from additional Training Specific Grant made available by the Scottish Executive. There are no additional costs to the Council.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These proposals will allow access to training and development opportunities for all staff and will help staff at all levels to achieve their potential.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

- 6.1 Over the last few years, there has been significant change nationally in every area of social work. There have been several major new pieces of legislation, there has been the creation of the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care (SCRC) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC), and changed practice has been introduced in response to some serious and high profile incidents. Each of these changes brings a requirement for training and development, to ensure that the workforce is competent and confident to carry out their responsibilities and provide high quality, effective services.
- 6.2 This report identifies the appropriate staffing structure to enable the Staff Development Service to respond efficiently and effectively to the changed environment.

Vocational Qualifications (SVQ)

- 6.3 The SSSC is responsible for registering and regulating the social care workforce. As a condition of registration, staff are required to hold or obtain certain qualifications. For staff within the social care sector, where vocational qualifications predominate, and where the majority of the workforce is employed, registration and regulation brings the requirement for a carefully thought out and well managed SVQ programme. In addition, new standards and assessment approaches for SVQ will be introduced in early 2005.

Professional Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

- 6.4 Social workers are the first group of staff to be registered. Following registration, all social workers must undertake an average of 5 days per year CPD to retain their registration. Within the next few years, social work departments will be unable to employ unregistered social workers, therefore it is imperative for both social workers and their employers to ensure that CPD opportunities are available.

There have also been major initiatives recently aimed at recruiting and retaining professionally qualified staff. A new Honours degree has replaced the Diploma in Social Work, and a number of alternative qualification routes are now available. To support this, a new framework for practice learning has been introduced, which has major implications for practice teaching and learning within the Department.

Specialist Training

- 6.5 As services develop and evolve, there is increasing need for training in specialist areas e.g. mental health, child protection, autism, and substance misuse. In all of these areas, multi disciplinary working is involved, which presents a further challenge in providing appropriate training.
- 6.6 There is a high degree of specialist expertise needed to effectively plan and deliver training in these areas, therefore it is often necessary to commission external training to meet specialist training requirements.

Induction and Core Training

- 6.7 Induction and core training is required for every employee. This ranges from basic orientation to the Department, through health and safety training and anti-racist practice training, to report writing and customer care, depending on the job performed. This training has to be kept updated and routinely available, to take account of changing legislation, changing job content and turnover in the workforce.

Management Training

- 6.8 Good management at all levels is increasingly being recognised as vital to the delivery of high quality services. In all of the recent incidents where services have not been delivered effectively, weaknesses in management have been apparent. Many staff are now required to have a management component to their qualifications for registration with the SSSC. There is also a significant emphasis on improved governance and accountability, and on the active management of performance to achieve desired outcomes.

7.0 PROPOSALS

- 7.1 All of the foregoing demonstrates the need for a Staff Development Service that is responsive to change, flexible, knowledgeable in the field of training and development, and with a good understanding of operational pressures and concerns. It is also imperative that best use is made of the resources invested in staff development activities in tackling the many priorities.
- 7.2 The current staffing establishment includes eight posts of Staff Development Officer (SDO). This relatively high number of permanent posts ties up a lot of resource in fixed staff costs and therefore limits the flexibility to commission external training when appropriate. It is proposed to reduce the number of permanent Staff Development Officers to four. These officers will have a significant role in identifying training and development needs, developing strategies to meet these needs and providing expert advice on training and development matters. SDOs may also directly deliver and/or facilitate training when appropriate. All will be expected to have a suitable qualification in adult learning and/or training, and will be expected to keep abreast of changing legislation, policy and practice in order to anticipate any training implications.
- 7.3 There are no changes proposed at present to the posts of Staff Development Service Manager (1 post) and Administrative Assistant (2 FTE posts).
- 7.4 As mentioned in 6.4 above, the Department faces significant challenges over the next few years in implementing the new framework for practice learning. It is crucial to the recruitment and retention of staff across the service, and to safe and effective work, that a wide variety of practice learning opportunities is available. The new framework also changes the basis on which education providers will engage with employers to provide placement opportunities for students. A more formal contractual relationship will exist.

- 7.5 The next two years will be critical in establishing the necessary new arrangements, developing a strategy for continuing professional development, and turning into reality the clear expectation that all staff in the social work service contribute to practice learning. As this is a major remit in its own right, it is proposed to create one post of Staff Development Officer (Practice Learning) for a fixed term period of two years. The postholder would be expected to hold the Practice Teaching Award in addition to the standard qualifications. Their remit would be to develop the strategy and establish the arrangements as described above, and ultimately to ensure that a learning culture is embedded in the Department. This post will be reviewed prior to the end of the fixed term period, to determine whether this post is needed on a longer term basis.
- 7.6 The Scottish Executive has provided supplementary Training Specific Grant for each of the three years to 2005/06. This money is intended to enhance the training of the social service workforce and provide resources to co-ordinate the expanded training agenda. It is proposed to use this resource to fund the SDO (practice Learning) for the two year period.

Implications for Staff

- 7.7 There are currently four Staff Development Officers in post. As four SDO posts will remain under these proposals, the only impact on existing staff will be that the emphasis and balance of the tasks they currently undertake may change, within the limits of the job description. A revised job description has been prepared and evaluation has confirmed that the current grade of PO 1-4 remains appropriate.
- 7.8 The post of Staff Development Officer (Practice Learning) will be advertised internally in the first instance, as specialist qualifications are required. This may open up an opportunity for staff within the Department who have an interest in this area to widen their experience without leaving operational services on a permanent basis.
- 7.9 It is also hoped that the increased flexibility introduced by these proposals will allow other staff in the Department to be seconded for short periods to undertake specific pieces of training and development work. This will allow development opportunities for these staff, ensure operational realities are reflected in training and development, and contribute to the establishment of a learning culture throughout the Department.

8.0 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Trade Unions were consulted in the preparation of this report

9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 None.

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11 October 2004

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11 October 2004