

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 19 August 2002

**REPORT ON: RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SOCIAL WORK STAFF –
EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 622 - 2002

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Social Work Committee of the pressures facing the Social Work Department in recruiting and retaining staff. To seek approval to commission an external consultant to undertake time limited research, making recommendations which enable the Director of Social Work to deploy staff efficiently, make the most of the skills available within the staff groups and progress the Departments ability to attract and retain staff.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee: -

2.1 Note the contents of this report.

2.2 Instructs the Director of Social Work to seek bids from external consultants to undertake this work.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of commissioning an external consultant will be met from the additional Training Specific Grant allocated by the Scottish Executive during this financial year.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The recommendations made by the external consultant will assist the Social Work Department to make best use of their key resource, the staff group.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The external consultant will be asked to make recommendations regarding career pathways and enhanced opportunities for staff that are flexible and ensure the needs of service users are met to a high quality.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Background

6.1.1 In April 2002, the Minister for Education, Cathy Jamieson launched the 12 point Action Plan for Social Services Workforce. In the introduction to the social services briefing paper published in June, it was noted that the work undertaken by social workers and other social care staff was difficult and challenging. Social work services have undergone a number of radical policy changes within last two years and within this changing climate there remains an expectation that services delivered will be of a high quality, flexible and innovative. Delivering high quality services is dependant on having motivated, skilled and committed

staff. There will also be a requirement for social work staff to register with the new Social Services Council. To retain staff we must have a well thought out career pathway, provide support and enable continued skill development.

6.1.2 The Action Plan for Social Services Workforce set out five strategic aims:

- To introduce more effective ways of recruiting and keeping staff, in partnership with employers and other bodies.
- To introduce a new social work qualification at honours degree level, open to social service workers and people in other professions, to equip front-line staff to deal with increasing complex duties, working in multi-disciplinary settings.
- To develop the role of the Scottish Services Council in regulating staff and promoting training in order to protect and improve the safety and welfare of everyone using social services.
- To raise investment in learning and support for all front-line staff in local authorities and the independent sector.
- To negotiate boundaries for the new Sector Skill Councils relating to social services that support 21st century public service delivery.

6.1.3 The difficulty in recruiting and retaining social work staff, both those with professional and/or vocational qualifications is recognised nationally. Local Authorities are examining means of attracting both newly qualified students and experienced staff to their service and we are considering our strategy in this area.

6.1.4 It is currently estimated that in Scotland, 8% of social work posts are vacant, with 5% of home care worker posts vacant. These figures are expected to increase during the next decade. There is a need to address not only recruitment issues but also retention issues to ensure that these figures do not rise at greater pace than is necessary.

6.2 Retaining Staff Locally

6.2.1 As part of the process of continuous improvement within the Social Work Department a number of groups were established to examine different areas of potential improvement. Some actions have already been implemented for example, a rewards and recognition group has introduced actions such as job shadowing, a cross department group considered issues of retention and recommended staff development portfolios and career pathways for all grades of staff.

6.2.2 National policies are indicating changes in the roles and responsibilities of social work staff, with the introduction of Local Area Co-ordinators in the field of learning disabilities and Intensive Care Managers for older people. The skills that experienced social workers hold are also recognised in other authorities with the introduction of senior practitioner's posts. Social work staff want to make the best use of their skills in a way that makes a positive difference to the people who receive their services. We must be confident that we are using these skills in the most effective way and that we have a structure which supports this.

6.2.3 The commissioning of an independent consultant will assist to identify the tasks carried out within social work teams and how these tasks could best be distributed according to skill and qualification. It will enable career pathways to be identified for all grades of staff, facilitating the Department to draw on its own staff group to fill key vacancies. In addition the recommendations of the consultant will be used to advise the work on retention of staff within Dundee. A copy of the draft specification is attached in Appendix 1.

6.2.4 It is anticipated that the research will commence in October 2002 and will be time limited. The funding for this research will be provided through the Additional Training Specific Grant allocated to Local Authorities in support of the Action Plan for Social Services Workforce. This grant is a one-off allocation for the investment in training and support to front line staff. The commissioning of this specific research meets the criteria applied.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Director of Personnel and Management Services has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Action Plan for Social Services Workforce, April 2002 Scottish Executive
Briefing Paper on Social services Workforce, June 2002 Scottish executive

9.0 SIGNATURE

Director of Social Work

Date

RESEARCH SPECIFICATION (EXTERNAL CONSULTANT)

Introduction and Background

Dundee City Council Social Work Department recognises that there is currently a national recruitment and retention crisis within the field of social work and social care. National policies are indicating changes in the roles and responsibilities undertaken by traditional teams, for example the introduction of Intensive Care Management within Older People's Services and Local Area Co-ordinators for Learning Disabilities. Locally, other authorities have chosen to redefine the make-up of teams by introducing differing grades, such as Senior Practitioners.

The Department is committed to looking at flexible models of delivering services, which also provide greater opportunities for staff to develop their skills and careers. This could include both the redefining of current posts by making the best use of the skills and knowledge currently held by staff, while also developing a career pathway for all grades of staff.

A sum of money has been set aside to explore options, through commissioning an external consultant to examine and make recommendations regarding current working practices and structures. This should take into account the increasing demands on staff, along with the projected national shortage of professionally qualified workers.

Aims and Objectives

To examine and make recommendations on:

- a The range of tasks undertaken and the skills required, within identified teams. To take account of all grades of workers, including a review of the current roles of Social Work Assistants, Occupational Therapy Assistants and Criminal Justice Assistants.
- b The roles and responsibilities of professionally qualified Social Workers/Care Managers.
- c The correct complement of staff required to meet the objectives of the team.
- d The feasibility of establishing a career and qualification pathway for staff, from Social Care Officer to Senior Practitioner.

Methodology

An examination of at least four teams, including child care, criminal justice, community care and occupational therapy. Other methodology to be agreed.

Research Output

Final report which makes clear recommendations in accordance with the stated aims and objectives of this proposal.

Timetable

To be negotiated. Preferred starting date, no later than October 2002.