

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee - 20 December 2004
Personnel Committee - 20 December 2004

REPORT ON: Establishment of Substance Misuse Pre and Post Birth Assessment and Support Service

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

REPORT NO: 843 - 2004

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information about the proposed new pre and post birth assessment and support service and to seek approval for the establishment of two new Social Work posts within Children's Services. This joint initiative with Health aims to improve the identification of needs, assessment and support provided to substance misusing pregnant women and their unborn babies in Dundee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Social Work Committee approves the establishment of the substance misuse pre and post birth assessment and support service which would improve the identification of needs, assessment and support provided to substance-misusing pregnant women and babies in Dundee.

2.2 It is recommended that the Personnel Committee approve the establishment of the following posts until 31st March 2006:

2.2.1 one Social Worker post graded AP4/5 + 1 (£19,632 - £24,888)

2.2.2 one Senior Family Support Worker post graded SCP 27-30 (£19,632 - £21,732)

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The costs of the proposals outlined in the report are £4,860 in 2004/5 and £58,320 in a full financial year. This will be met from the Changing Children's Services Fund provided by the Scottish Executive for which funding has only been guaranteed until 2005/05.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 This new service is being funded from Scottish Executive monies. The aim is to develop new ways of working and to maximise the use of all available resources within Dundee to ensure that the needs of substance using women and their babies are appropriately met.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 To date the identification of pregnant substance using women, and their subsequent referral for assessment and support services, has neither been comprehensive nor systematic. These proposals will ensure that there is a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to needs identification, enabling effective support and timely intervention as appropriate, and promoting best possible outcomes for all women and their babies in Dundee.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 The number of pregnant substance-using women in Dundee continues to rise and experience shows that the true number is often underestimated.
- 6.2 There are a range of risks for the babies of women who have used drugs during pregnancy. These include risks to the health and development of the child, both pre-birth and during the withdrawal period immediately following birth. There may also be concerns about the ability of the women involved to provide appropriate care and protection for their babies. For some children the concerns about the level of risk involved are such that they cannot be discharged home from hospital with their mothers and may require to be looked after by the local authority.
- 6.3 Within maternity services in Dundee there is a protocol of care for the management of pregnant drug users. A local audit in 2003 showed that the implemented protocol of care has had some positive impact on maternity and neonatal services for substance-using women. However recent evidence suggests that the identification, assessment and referral of women by health services is often on an ad-hoc basis and determined mainly by the level of knowledge and experience of the individual professionals involved.
- 6.4 This can result in the late identification of need and a delay in the provision of services to women and their unborn babies. It means more specifically however that the time can be significantly reduced for Social Work services to engage with the women involved and carry out appropriate risk assessment and support work prior to birth.
- 6.5 At the present time there are insufficient staffing resources in the Child Protection Team to respond timeously to the needs of the growing number of babies referred in such circumstances. There is also no targeted provision of support services for pregnant substance using women available within Dundee's Family Support Centres.
- 6.6 It has been agreed therefore that there is a need to improve the capacity of Community Midwifery and Social Work Department Services to meet such growing needs within Dundee.

7.0 Proposed Pre and Post Birth Assessment and Support Service

- 7.1 It is planned to establish an integrated health and social work service whose primary aim will be to minimise the impact of the mother's substance use during pregnancy on the unborn child and contribute to safeguarding the interests of the baby in the longer term. The new service will also aim to improve the overall health outcomes and well being of substance using women themselves.
- 7.2 The new initiative will be based on a multi-agency approach to the early identification, assessment and support of substance using women from the early ante-natal period, throughout pregnancy and up to 6-8 weeks following delivery. The service will be staffed by a specialist Community Midwife, a Social Worker and a Senior Family Support Worker, whose role it will be to work together as a Team to develop a joint approach to assessing and meeting the needs of identified women and their babies, and produce an integrated health and social support plan for each family in accordance with their assessed needs.

7.3 This approach is in line with the findings and recommendations for best practice outlined by the Scottish Executive in the 'Getting our Priorities Right' and 'Hidden Harm' Reports published in 2003, and also in the Report of the Caleb Ness Enquiry.

8.0 Proposed New Social Work Posts

8.1 The Social Worker will be responsible for the co-ordination of the social work assessment, the drawing up of individual care plans and the provision, monitoring and review of individual support packages in accordance with the individual needs of each woman and her baby. The Social Worker will link in with the Child Protection Team and Children's Services Care and Assessment Teams across the city, as well as the Social Work Department's Drugs and Alcohol Team and other key providers of services for substance using women.

8.2 The Senior Family Support Worker will co-ordinate the development and delivery of parenting education, skills development and support programmes within the Social Work Department's 8 Family Support Centres in Dundee. These programmes will be provided on an individual or groupwork basis in response to the identified needs of substance using women and their babies pre and post birth.

8.3 The Social Worker and Senior Family Support Worker will work with the specialist Community Midwife as a team and will integrate the new models of assessment and support developed by them into existing service networks within Social Work and Health in Dundee.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Depute Chief Executive (Finance). Full consultation has also taken place with the Trade Unions involved and relevant staff groups in the Social Work Department.

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

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Director of Social Work

Date: 10 December 2004

James Petrie
Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

Date: 10 December 2004