

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel Committee - 16 August 2004

REPORT ON: Social Work Department - Staff Support Service

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

REPORT NO: 461-2004

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report proposes the establishment of a comprehensive and responsive staff support service to approximately 2000 employees of Dundee City Council Social Work Department and to contribute to local and national strategies to support staff.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the establishment of one post of Staff Support Officer, graded PO3-6, £26,250 - £28,578.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of establishing the above post will be £33,000 in a full financial year, including employer's costs. Additional costs of £35,000 will be required for purchasing services and delivering support to staff. The total cost of £68,000 will be funded from existing resources in the Social Work Department's revenue budget.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None .

6 BACKGROUND

Dundee City Council's Social Work Department was innovative in piloting a staff support service from May 2003 to April 2004. The purpose of this development was to build on ministerial initiatives to support front line staff that would positively change the culture of the organisation. Short term funding was provided by the Scottish Executive to enable this service to be piloted.

When the pilot was established in 2003, a Staff Support Officer was appointed to project manage and develop the pilot. Initially a questionnaire was designed and distributed to identify employees' health and wellbeing agendas. The responses indicated much interest in stress management, healthy-living, health checks, relaxation and complementary therapies. A working group of staff representing different sections and levels of the department was established and has convened regularly. Through this group a range of services and activities were developed.

Regular updates about progress and activities in the staff support service were provided using the departmental newsletter notice boards, email and attendance at team and management meetings. A random stratified survey assessed staff perceptions of the activities and initiatives that had taken place. Staff have been asked about the effectiveness of the staff support officer seconded to the pilot and the pilot itself.

A number of events and activities were developed and run during the pilot as described below.

Staff counselling service

The staff counseling service, which had been provided exclusively in-house since 1993, was expanded to offer increased flexibility, availability and choice. Female counsellors external to the organisation were recruited and a "mixed economy" of provision was developed. This now enables staff to have a choice of gender of counselor and consultation in-house or externally.

Health promotion and Scotland's Health at Work Scheme (SHAW)

Scotland's Health at Work scheme has provided a facilitative framework and benchmark for health-promoting activities. These activities and the provision of health-related information provided staff with opportunities to take increased responsibility for their health and well being. At the same time the emphasis is on delivering activities as fun and a "feel-good" factor in the workplace.

Activities included yoga taster sessions, Tai Chi and aerobics classes, a smoking cessation course, a Health Fayre, information session on meningitis and septicemia and written articles on cardiac issues, cancer prevention, diabetes.

A portfolio for the Bronze SHAW award has been submitted for assessment in June 2004. Indications are that the core and optional criteria are being met by SWD. The organisation intends to progress through silver to the gold award within a specified timescale.

Health Fayre

More than 200 staff attended a Health Fayre in December 2003 and another is planned in June 2004. Evaluation forms were completed and analysed from 126 staff. The first event was extremely successful with very positive feedback. A range of organisations contributed to the event.

Stress Management

Stress management courses were initiated as a response to the high levels of stress reported in the questionnaire responses and via team meetings attended by the post holder. A programme of courses was designed and delivered. Ongoing evaluation evidences the perceived benefits in increasing awareness of the causes of stress, enhancing staff members' ability regarding its management and providing coping strategies. A rolling programme is now envisaged, which will become part of the department's core and induction training.

Back Care Initiative

An initiative was developed to assist staff with back problems, through the provision of complementary therapy treatments. Additionally, onsite massage sessions have been provided for a number of employees. These initiatives are valued for offering a feel-good factor, whilst providing remedial and preventative therapy. This will contribute towards reducing sickness absence and is providing concrete evidence of a change in departmental culture in terms of valuing staff.

Input into team development days

Communication between the workforce and managers has been enhanced through continuous engagement with staff at all levels in SWD. This has contributed to the department's objective of developing a culture that supports staff in their day-to-day work, listens to them and increases their sense of being valued and supported by their employer. The successful co-ordination and integration of this project has only been possible by having a member of staff dedicated to this post. This has provided a focus for activities whilst enabling momentum to be developed and maintained.

Evaluation of the Pilot

A random stratified survey was conducted by telephone and email. Staff members were asked a variety of questions to establish their knowledge of the staff support service, their participation in events and their views on the future of the service. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of continuing the service and providing more opportunities for events and activities. Most of those consulted were very positive about the effect of the service on their health, well-being and morale.

Conclusion

The purpose of the pilot was to provide a staff support service and support front line staff. The pilot enhanced employees' sense of being valued, supported and cared for by their employer. The objective of devising strategies and organising and delivering programmes is to improve morale and improve staff retention and recruitment.

The initiative of staff support and health-promotion has begun to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of staff, with a beneficial effect on morale. Despite some initial, maybe skepticism cynicism, participation in events has been very good. This contributes to and supports the organisation's aim of modifying its culture and being perceived as a listening and caring employer.

The long term stress reduction will be measurable in the form of reduced sickness rates and less staff replacement costs. Better attendance at work through a healthier, less stressed workforce will improve the continuity and quality of care to service users.

Proposals

The project should now become mainstreamed into the Social Work Department's activities. This requires a staffing budget of £33,000 including employers' costs. Additional costs of £35,000 will be required for purchasing services and delivering support to staff. Total costs of £68,000 will be met within existing Social Work revenue budgets.

It is also proposed that the existing seconded member of staff who has carried out the duties for more than a year be appointed to a permanently established post, to the grade and salary commensurate with the revised job description.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the relevant trade unions have been consulted in the preparation of the report. The Assistant Chief Executive (Management) wishes to advise the Committee that a number of issues remain to be discussed with the GMB. However, the full time officer has indicated that he has no objection to the report being considered by this Committee.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

A. Baird
Director of Social Work

6 August 2004

J.C. Petrie
Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

6 August 2004

Appendix 1**DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL****JOB DESCRIPTION - SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT****IDENTIFICATION**

Post Title:	Staff Support Officer	Post Ref.:	
Section:	Human Resources	Grade:	PO3-6
Responsible to:	Section Leader, Human Resources		
Responsible for:			

JOB PURPOSE

To deliver a comprehensive and responsive staff support service to employees of the Social Work Department and to manage projects relevant to this service.

To contribute to the development of departmental strategies aimed at positively changing the culture of the organisation, thereby improving staff morale and aiding retention and recruitment.

PRINCIPAL WORKING CONTACTS

1. Staff in the Scottish Executive, ADSW and SSSC
2. Senior Staff in other Local Authority Departments and the Health Service
3. Senior Staff in central departments such as Support Services
4. Educational institutions, external trainers, instructors and therapists and Departmental Staff Development Officers
5. Staff at all levels in the Social Work Department

MAIN DUTIES

1. Devise strategies, organise and deliver services designed to support staff members' health and well being. Develop services according to needs identified by staff.
2. To represent the department on the Corporate Health Network Group. Take a lead role for the SHAW award and contribute to the corporate achievement of the silver and gold awards within an agreed timescale. Devise and sustain the SWD's strategy for achieving and maintaining the SHAW award.
3. Contribute to national and local strategies on supporting front line staff. Participate in and contribute to the work of the ADSW national reference group on supporting front-line staff.
4. Consult with senior managers and the workforce as a whole to ensure that a cohesive, responsive and integrated approach is taken to develop the staff support service.
5. Manage and maintain the staff support service within budget. Develop a network of accredited therapists and refer staff accordingly within a specified budget.
6. Prepare and contribute to reports to the Senior Management of the Department and Social Work Committee.

7. Assist and prepare responses to consultation documents produced by Central Govt, COSLA and other relevant bodies and organisations.
8. Design a stress management policy for the Department in collaboration with the Health and Safety Officer.
9. In consultation with the Section Leader, Staff Development, contribute to the design, and evaluation of stress management training programmes to staff at all levels in the Department.
10. Audit activities and provide evidence of efficiency of strategies. Contribute to the process of setting, reviewing and developing quality standards in the staff support service.
11. Research examples of good practice, UK, European and HR developments in staff support and health promotion.
12. Manage the counselling service including referrals, screening, assessment of needs and outcomes. Liaise with local and national voluntary and private sector providers of staff support services. Maintain and develop a network of counsellors ensuring quality and standards of practice conforming to BACP's code of practice.
13. To have a general responsibility for liaison with other Council departments, the Health Board and other purchasing agents regarding contracting for services.
14. Commission and conduct periodic surveys to provide information on services and publish results.
15. Remain aware of staff perceptions of the service by continuous evaluation and improvement, maintaining statistical information and presenting an annual report to the SWD Directorate.
16. Organise and chair regular meetings of a Departmental SHAW working group, representing staff across SWD and organise activities, information sessions and health fayres, ensuring accessibility for all employees.
17. To produce an annual work plan, which will be appraised and evaluated in consultation with the Section Leader Human Resources.

OTHER DUTIES

This job description is a broad picture of the post at the date of preparation. It is not an exhaustive list of all possible duties and it is recognised that jobs change and evolve over time. Consequently, this is not a contractual document and the postholder will be required to carry out any other duties to the equivalent level that are necessary to fulfil the purpose of the job.

Date prepared: 10/08/04
 Authorised:

Other duties being reviewed in relation to Civil Emergencies

Recruit a small team of counselling expertise. Organise and arrange initial and ongoing training and development as part of the Council's civil emergency responsibilities.