

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 19 AUGUST 2009**

### **A PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTION PLAN FOR SOCIAL WORK SERVICES IN EAST AYRSHIRE**

#### **Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek approval of a Public Relations (PR) action plan for social work services in East Ayrshire Council, with a view to developing an increased understanding of the positive and challenging work undertaken by social work staff.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Historically, media coverage of social work has presented the profession with considerable challenges. There has been continued high profile reporting of individual protection cases and a lack of interest in day to day work and plans to improve provision.
- 2.2 Research highlights that the general public (and some stakeholders/partners) are not clear about the role and contribution of social work, including the role of the qualified social worker (MORI, 2005).
- 2.3 The Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW) and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) have jointly developed a public relations campaign to improve understanding of social work services in Scotland. The campaign is targeted at the general public and all stakeholders/partners.
- 2.4 There is a need to ensure public trust and confidence in the service. It is also important to recognise and value the work of social work staff in ensuring that people are recruited and retained in the profession.
- 2.4 The campaign is designed to support the objectives of “Changing Lives” (2006), the review of social work services in Scotland, which was previously reported to Social Work Committee on 23 March 2006 and 2 November 2006.
- 2.5 The national campaign was launched at the Scottish Parliament by Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, and is being supported by Pagoda Public Relations during 2009/2010. It is also being supported by the Association of Social Care Communicators.

2.6 Public Relations and Communications practitioners for all Scottish local authorities meet on a regular basis to discuss local input into the national campaign. East Ayrshire Council is represented by the Communications and Customer First Manager.

### **3. DEVELOPING A PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY IN EAST AYRSHIRE**

3.1 There are positive examples of work taking place in East Ayrshire to highlight the role of social work in key priority areas for the Council, for example, the recent corporate parenting seminars for senior staff and elected members, and community engagement in respect of our work to support older people and people with learning disabilities.

3.2 The attached draft action plan has been developed to build on the work taking place. It is proposed to target a range of stakeholders in the implementation of the action plan, including elected members, the wider public, senior Council staff and partner agencies.

3.3 Together with colleagues from the Corporate Communications Team, the intention is to plan and deliver a range of events and to maximise opportunities to promote a positive and real understanding of the role of social work. The work will include: -

- Identifying, recognising and celebrating success;
- Delivering seminars/events which promote awareness and develop understanding;
- Maximising opportunities for press coverage of positive stories and developments.

### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications for the Council, and the costs of seminars/events will be met within existing budgets.

### **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The proposals within the draft action plan are consistent with national policy outlined in "Changing Lives", and reflect the objectives of the recently launched national PR social work campaign.

### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no specific legal considerations in implementing this action plan.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The work of social work staff involves the identification, assessment and management of risk to individuals, families and communities. The nature of this work means that social work staff work with a wide range of people, some of whom will be the most marginalised and excluded in society. Success will be a feature of the work, but equally, difficult and challenging situations also happen, that at times pose specific risk to individuals and reputational risk to the Council.
- 7.2 In developing a PR action plan, it is recognised that in promoting the positive aspects of work, the intention is to achieve an improved understanding of the role of social work, much of which involves individual achievement and success in peoples' lives. This will however need to be balanced with an appreciation that difficult situations will occur, some of which may unfortunately attract negative attention by the media.

## **8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 In implementing the action plan, it will be important to engage with community planning partners to ensure their commitment to involvement and participation in key events.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 9.1 The provision of effective social work services is an important element in promoting inclusion in our communities.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- i) approve the draft action plan (attached) and otherwise;
  - ii) note the contents of the report.

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services  
3 August 2009

Members requiring further information should contact Susan Taylor, Head of Service:  
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**Implementation Officers: Susan Taylor, Head of Service: Children, Families and Criminal Justice and Eddie Fraser, Head of Service: Community Care**

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTION PLAN**

**AUGUST 2009**



**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTION PLAN**

**1. AIM**

1.1 This Public Relations (PR) action plan for social work services in East Ayrshire sets out to develop increased understanding of the role and function of the social work service, and specifically the role of the qualified social worker.

**2. OBJECTIVES**

2.1 The action plan will achieve the following objectives: -

- To involve the social work workforce in developing and implementing the action plan;
- To engage with people who have used services to encourage involvement in promoting the value of the social work service (as appropriate);
- To plan, implement and evaluate a range of events which seek to improve understanding of social work;
- To maximise opportunities for positive media coverage of key achievements and developments.

**3. TARGET AUDIENCE**

3.1 This action plan will be targeted at a wide range of key stakeholders including: -

- Elected members;
- Wider public;
- Senior staff within the Council;
- Community planning partners;
- Partner provider agencies (independent sector)

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES  
PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTION PLAN**

ISSUE		ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	TIMESCALE
1	Champions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Champions will be identified across the social work service who will play a key role in implementing the action plan through the delivery of seminars etc</li> </ul>	Head of Service (CF & CJ) Head of Service (CC)	30 September 2009
2	Positive Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individuals, families and communities will be (where appropriate) supported to share their story, with particular reference to the impact on their lives of social work support.</li> </ul>	Senior Managers (CC) and (CF) x4  Service Manager (CJ)	Ongoing action, with review every 8 weeks from 30 September 2009
3	Awareness raising seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To plan, implement and deliver a range of awareness raising seminars for the range of stakeholders with a focus on: -               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role and function of social work, and specifically the qualified social worker</li> </ul> </li> <li>Events will also address key priority areas such as: -               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Protection</li> <li>Adult Protection</li> <li>Public Protection</li> <li>Corporate Parents</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Head of Service (CF & CJ) Head of Service (CC)	September 2009 to June 2010
4	Celebrating Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive achievements and developments will be identified, recognised and celebrated.</li> </ul>	Senior Managers (CC) and (CF) x4  Service Manager (CJ)  Communications and Customer First Manager	Ongoing action, with review every 8 weeks from 30 September 2009
5.	Promoting Career Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create local opportunities for engaging with young people about a career in social work/social care by engaging with schools and colleges.</li> </ul>	Head of Service (CF & CJ) Head of Service (CC)	September 2009 to June 2010, then review