

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE - 17 MAY 2006

PROPOSAL TO SET UP JOINT TEAM INITIATIVE WITHIN SUPPORTING PEOPLE FRAMEWORK

Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the establishment of a Joint Team with staff from the Pension Service, part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), based within the Supporting People Team.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 One of the key aims of the East Ayrshire Community Plan is to eliminate poverty in the local authority by *“supporting and improving the systems that are in place to maximise income from benefit and provide money advice”*. The Eliminating Poverty Action Plan specifically states that *“activity will be focused on exploring options for a joint team involving staff from DWP and the Council in this respect”*.
- 2.2 The Community Plan also states *“Partnership, based on mutual trust and equality, is the key to community planning. The major problems facing the area cannot be dealt with by public agencies working in isolation within their own limited budgets.”*
- 2.3 The Eliminating Poverty thematic group was established with the purpose of reducing poverty throughout East Ayrshire by various methods, particularly through increased uptake of benefits.
- 2.4 In July 2005 an Accord was agreed between CoSLA, the Pension Service and the Scottish Executive setting out a basis for joint working, the sharing of resources and co-operation using a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- 2.5 The MOU allows the formal sharing of information for a specific purpose to ensure reduction in duplication, thereby creating a more efficient service with the shared aim of improving benefit services for pensioners.

3. TEAM STRUCTURE

- 3.1 The focus of the team will be to concentrate on income maximisation for all East Ayrshire residents aged over 60.
- 3.2 The proposed Joint Team will comprise one full time member of staff from the Pension Service and the equivalent resource commitment from the local authority.

3.3 Staff will continue to be managed by the existing line managers.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES / PERFORMANCE MONITORING / TIMESCALE

4.1 The introduction of a Joint Team specifically to increase benefit take up should achieve for older people:

- Reduced poverty
- Better quality of life
- Greater control and choice
- Longer and healthier lives
- More independence
- More flexible retirement policies
- No discrimination

4.2 Performance monitoring will be within the established DWP framework and will be based on the following critical success factors:

- The Joint Team should genuinely add value across a range of specific key indicators as defined by DWP e.g. numerical measures including Additional Pension Credit Applications, Attendance Allowance/Disability Living Allowance Applications, all other Social Security Benefits Applications and “effective face to face contacts”.
- The DWP will quantify the “Additional Application Success Rate” as a percentage of successful applications against applications taken.
- Joint Team intervention should result in an overall net additional uptake of benefits and will be measured by the DWP Local Services Statistics System using RAG ratings. The LSS System will provide information detailing Joint Team year to date performance and will also record significant outcomes.
- Targets are set at national level by the DWP National Performance Improvement Team and Local Senior Management Teams. The Local Service Manager will then identify cluster targets for performance monitoring purposes. Local factors are still to be negotiated and are dependent on the resource commitment of the Joint Team. (National targets are made known at the end of April, beginning of May and will be made available to Committee as soon as possible.)
- The project will be evaluated at three monthly intervals for the first year and at six monthly intervals thereafter.
- On completion of a training needs analysis and subsequent provision of appropriate training, it is proposed to begin the project in June 2006. Existing DWP expertise will assist with this timescale. Thereafter the project should continue on an indefinite basis. There is no limit to the

availability of funding to resource the team as ongoing costs will be met through current staffing arrangements.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Implementation costs for equipment ie additional furniture, PCs, laptops, mobile phones, licensing etc will be met in full by the DWP.
- 5.2** The local authority will be required to meet maintenance costs (although these are expected to be minimal) and travel expenses for local authority staff. This is within the scope of the current Supporting People admin budget.
- 5.3** There are no additional staffing implications for the local authority.
- 5.4** All costs can be met within current budget provision.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** These proposals would be in line with the objectives outlined in the Community Plan, the Local Housing Strategy and the Community Health Plan.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1** The introduction of a Joint Team will serve the older community of East Ayrshire Council by attempting to ensure everyone over pension age is given the opportunity to receive their full benefit entitlement. Not only will this help reduce poverty and increase the quality of life for older people, it will afford the opportunity to develop stronger links with partners in the DWP and Health with a view to the expansion of joint working in the future.
- 8.2** Regular reports will be submitted to Committee advising of ongoing progress – initially six monthly and annually thereafter.

9. RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1** It is recommended that members:
 - (i) Approve the establishment of the Joint Team as set out in Paragraph 3 above;
 - (ii) Note that reports on progress will be submitted to future meetings of this Committee; and
 - (iii) Otherwise note the contents of this report

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CMCA/LA

List of Background Papers

Nil

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