

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE: 9 SEPTEMBER 2004

STENGTHENING FRONTLINE SERVICES UPDATE

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of the progress made in implementing the Strengthening Frontline Services report which was approved by Social Work Committee on 29 January 2004.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The proposals set out in the Strengthening Frontline Services report were developed in response to the national recruitment and retention crisis and to ensure that the organisation is fit for purpose and able to meet its statutory obligations.
- 2.2 In developing the Strengthening Frontline Services report three Departmental priorities were identified:
- Protection
 - Partnership
 - Performance
- 2.3 In describing the progress made in implementing the report, attention will be drawn to how each of these priorities is being promoted.

3. CHANGES TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT

- 3.1 The structural changes detailed in the report have in the main been implemented.
- 3.2 Locality teams have been established within Children and Families resulting in an increased effectiveness of local response to child protection issues. These teams will increasingly develop within a learning partnership framework.
- 3.3 In Community Care locality team arrangements have been consolidated with teams increasingly aligned with GP practices. This approach builds upon the work in relation to all Community Care service user groups being promoted under the auspices of East Ayrshire Joint Future Partnership and improve effectiveness in relation to adult protection issues.
- 3.4 Commissioning and contracting officers have moved across to Performance and Development and the distinct Performance and Development Teams have been established.

- 3.5 The creation of the Performance Team enhances the capacity of the department both to manage performance effectively and report on it fully.
- 3.6 The creation of the Development Team recognises the increasingly complex partnership dimension to the strategic planning agenda with key agencies such as Education and Health.
- 3.7 Reception and Anti-Poverty Services have been separated from each other and will transfer across to operations subject to the outcomes of their respective review processes.
- 3.8 The administration function has been reconfigured with a small number of posts regraded to ensure that it meets the needs of the organisation.
- 3.9 Additional supports in personnel and resource support are being explored to ensure the most effective and efficient use of frontline staff.

4. SERVICE REVIEWS

Anti-Poverty Services

- 4.1 Anti-Poverty Services are primarily those provided by Welfare Rights Officers and Money Advisors.
- 4.2 These officers had been located since 2001 within a combined Reception and Anti-Poverty Services function throughout Social Work offices across East Ayrshire.
- 4.3 The Review is being conducted by officers in accord with the principles set out in the Council's guide to carrying out a Best Value Review and constitutes a part of the Department of Educational & Social Services Best Value Review Programme.
- 4.4 The challenges that are currently being faced by the service have been identified.
- 4.5 Consultation with stakeholders is taking place.
- 4.6 Benchmarking to compare with other authorities is in progress.
- 4.7 It is anticipated that a full report will be presented to November Social Work Committee detailing the options open to the Council.

Reception Services

- 4.8 Reception services is the subject of an internal management review to determine the most appropriate operational model given the increasing focus on integrated and partnership working. Of equal importance is the need to ensure that frontline staff are fully equipped to address child and adult protection issues.

Training

- 4.9 The United Kingdom Centre for Continuing Professional Development has been commissioned to conduct an independent review of the Training Section.
- 4.10 The review will focus on identifying how the Training Team can meet the organisational development needs and priorities of the Department in the 21st Century.
- 4.11 Proposals in relation to the future shape of training will be brought to Social Work Committee in due course.

5. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Professional Social Work Posts

- 5.1 Social Workers were regraded with effect from 29th January 2004.
- 5.2 Early indications are that East Ayrshire's salary scale is competitive in relation to other authorities resulting in an improved recruitment position. Vacancies are currently running at around 12% compared to 24% in January.
- 5.3 Team managers were regraded with effect from April 2004 on the basis that they would assume greater personnel and financial management responsibility and salaries for this level of post are competitive with those of other authorities.

Senior Management Posts

- 5.4 Discussions are currently taking place with personnel around the possibility of interim solutions in light of one/two continuing vacancies.

Support Assistant Posts

- 5.5 Proposals have been developed in relation to Support Assistants which consolidates a range of vital non professional posts into a 'competency' based framework to maximise the support that can be provided to frontline professional staff.
- 5.6 A range of staff including Social Work Assistants and OT Assistants are included in the proposals which will encompass three grades of staff (AP1, AP2/3 and AP4). AP4 is a new grade for this kind of post which recognises the contribution that can be made by skilled non professional staff.
- 5.7 It is anticipated that the proposals will encourage the development of non professional staff, increasing their capacity to support professional staff through a clearly defined career path.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Costings were included in the Strengthening Frontline Services report and implementation of the report has been within this financial framework.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Nil

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Good progress has been made in the implementation of the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Members of the Social Work Committee are invited to:

- (i) note the progress made; and
- (ii) request the Executive Director to present reports to future Social Work Committees in relation to the outcomes of the service reviews.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director Educational & Social Services
24 August 2004
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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