

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 4 FEBRUARY 2004

REVIEW OF WOMEN'S AID SERVICES IN EAST AYRSHIRE

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Education Committee of the outcomes of the review of Women's Aid Services in East Ayrshire, and to approve the recommendations.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Social Work Committee of 23 May 2002 it was agreed to transfer the funding of Women's Aid from Section 10 grant aid to mainline funding supported by the development of a Service Level Agreement.
- 2.2 In January 2003 it was reported that Kilmarnock Women's Aid had been funded by the Scottish Executive to replace the Kilmarnock refuge, regrettably Cumnock and Doon Valley were not successful in the same funding process.
- 2.3 At the Social Work Committee of 27 March 2003, the Committee agreed to review the services delivered by Kilmarnock Women's Aid and Cumnock and Doon Valley Women's Aid and to report the findings to Committee. Although the responsibility for the supervision and monitoring of Women's Aid has been with the Community Learning and Development Service since 2000, reporting of budgetary matters, until November 2003, was through Social Work Committee.

3. REVIEW PROCESS

- 3.1 The review group was established with representation from key Council Services i.e. Social Work, Housing and Finance lead by Community Learning and Development as the supervising service. In addition Kilmarnock and Cumnock Women's Aid collectives were both represented on the review group.
- 3.2 At their initial meeting in October, the review group agreed their remit as *“review the need for the services provided, consult with users of the service and other stakeholders, to compare what is offered in East Ayrshire to at least one other similar service and to consider options for service delivery”*.
- 3.3 The roles and responsibilities of each of the group members were also agreed and two sub groups were created. One sub group was remitted to consult with service users and agencies that access Women's Aid services across East Ayrshire. The second sub group was established to detail the existing

services including staffing and budget and to assess whether the service meets the corporate aims of the Council.

- 3.4** The findings from the sub groups were reported to the Group and used to inform the final report. The final report was compiled by the Chair of the Review Group and issued to the group members for comment. Comments were received from Women's Aid Kilmarnock and Women's Aid Cumnock indicating concerns about the merging of the two groups, recommendations regarding the Women's Centre and clarification regarding further review of staffing.
- 3.5** Although both Women's Aid groups have concerns about an overall East Ayrshire Women's Aid being established, it is proposed that arrangements are put in place to work with both collectives to establish one East Ayrshire organisation. This will bring benefits in terms of economy of scale and value for money, particularly in relation to prevention, training, administrative systems and the interface with other agencies and services.
- 3.6** The full report showing the process of review and resulting recommendations is available in the Members' lounge. The main recommendations of the report are attached as Appendix 1.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** In light of the recommendations to review the staffing structure and office accommodation it is recommended that the funding level remains at £266,552 plus inflation. A further report will be presented to Committee at a future date following the outcome of the office, accommodation and staffing review in Women's Aid.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Nil

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Nil

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1** Members of the Education Committee are asked to:

- (i) agree the level of funding as at paragraph 5.1;
- (ii) approve the findings of the review;
- (iii) ask the Director of Educational and Social Services to return to Committee with the outcome of the office, accommodation and staffing review; and
- (iv) note the content of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

14 January 2004
KG/JW

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Social Work Committee – 27 March 2003
2. Social Work Committee - 23 May 2002
3. Education Committee - 11 November 2003
4. East Ayrshire Women's Aid Service Review – January 2004
5. Scottish Partnership on Domestic Abuse: National Strategy to address Domestic Abuse in Scotland

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104 or Anne Jackson, Principal Officer, Communities, Tel: (01563) 576126.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR

**EAST AYRSHIRE WOMEN'S AID : KILMARNOCK AND CUMNOCK
SERVICE REVIEW : JANUARY 2004**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Service Review group wishes to record their appreciation to Women's Aid Kilmarnock and Cumnock for their co-operation and assistance during the review process. At all times the members of the group were shown courtesy and respect by staff and service users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. While it is apparent that both Kilmarnock and Cumnock Women's Aid groups co-operate with each other it is equally apparent that they remain two separate bodies. There are clear benefits to the economy of scale to be derived from an East Ayrshire Women Aid and it is recommended that the two co-operatives merge their resources into one group to be known as East Ayrshire Women's Aid.

To facilitate this it is recommended that future funding from East Ayrshire should be allocated as one figure to East Ayrshire Women's Aid.

- II. When the new Kilmarnock Refuge is built East Ayrshire will meet National Standards with Refuge accommodation, however it is recognised that accommodation options are limited. Current discussions should continue to develop 'scatter' units to accommodate women with older male children, additional needs or other issues that would impact their suitability for refuge accommodation.
- III. The current office accommodation in Kilmarnock and in Cumnock is not suitable for access by women with buggies or physically disabled women. Relocation of both offices should be seriously considered. Attention must continue to be given to addressing local need and it is therefore recommended that relocations in both north and south of the authority are progressed. Attention should be given to locations in order to maximise accessibility and profile of Women's Aid.
- IV. The Women's Centre in Kilmarnock is not accessible to women with buggies or physically disabled women, there are also clear benefits to relationships with other agencies where Women's Aid support community based courses as takes place in Cumnock. If it is not possible to relocate the Women's Centre along with the office, consideration should be given to offering and supporting women in an outreach capacity within a dedicated group, sensitive to the discrete needs of this group, using existing local facilities e.g. community centres, libraries etc.
- V. The recommendations prepared by Kilmarnock group regarding the Children's Workers should be implemented immediately. In addition, in light of the formal merging of the two groups, further reviews of staff roles should be undertaken to ensure that improved understanding of both groups and good practice continues to be shared and implemented.

- VI. In light of the significant changes identified in this report it is recommended that Women's Aid carry out their own review of accommodation including office changes and a review of staff roles and responsibilities. Following this review it is recommended that consideration is given to the future funding level.

January 2004