

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 11 SEPTEMBER 2003

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ACTION PLAN 2002 – PROGRESS REPORT

Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide elected members with a progress report on implementation of the recruitment and retention action plan, approved by Committee on 23 May 2002.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 8 November 2001, Committee approved a report on strengthening frontline social work services. Amongst other things, that report highlighted the national crisis in recruitment and retention of staff with professional Social Work qualifications, reflected in East Ayrshire in significant vacancies for qualified social workers across the Social Work service. In response to that crisis, Committee approved a recruitment and retention strategy, involving the re-introduction of a secondment scheme for unqualified staff to access professional social work training through distance learning, primarily but not exclusively through the Open University.
- 2.2 On 23 May 2002, Committee also approved a recruitment and retention action plan, containing further measures aimed at recruiting and retaining qualified social workers and other professionally qualified staff in social work services in 2002. The measures contained in the action plan were a practical local response to meeting the particular recruitment and retention needs of the Council, consistent with the national initiative on recruitment and retention led by the Scottish Executive.
- 2.3 This report fulfils the undertaking given to Committee at that time to provide a review of the outcomes from the action plan in the following year.

3. PROGRESS WITH ACTION PLAN 2002

- 3.1 The main elements in the action plan relate to measures to enhance recruitment of new staff from outside the authority and measures to encourage staff to remain here once in employment with the Council.
- 3.2 For ease of reference, Appendix 1 sets out the action plan, incorporating priority actions, target outcomes and timescales.

Recruitment

- 3.3 The preparation and distribution of an **information pack for prospective new recruits** attending professional training courses in the west of Scotland, backed up by a recruitment drive involving visits and presentations, was designed to raise the Council's profile with students and to highlight the advantages of working in East Ayrshire. The target outcomes identified in the action plan have been met. Initial visits have been made to a number of courses in the West of Scotland. A further programme of systematic visits is planned for the period September-December 2003.
- 3.4 The implementation of a **new recruit incentive programme** was designed to offer a package of measures, some economic, others related to employment conditions, which have been shown in research to be relevant to what prospective employees value in an employer. Progress towards the target outcomes identified in the action plan has been slower than anticipated, with qualified social worker vacancies continuing to be high. This reflects the pattern nationally, where vacancy and turnover rates remain high. Progress with the retention target of 75% of new recruits by September 2004 will be reported to Committee at a future date.

Retention

- 3.5 The implementation of **eligibility for re-grading to senior practitioner** for experienced qualified social workers and occupational therapists was intended to provide an incentive to those staff to remain within the authority. It balanced the recruitment incentives scheme and also provided a career development path other than full line management. Target outcomes have been met in full, with 12 senior practitioners appointed initially. It is anticipated that further appointments will bring the number of senior practitioners in post to 15.
- 3.6 The introduction of a **financial recognition scheme for practice teachers, practice assessors and Mental Health Officers** was designed to enhance the Council's capacity to carry out supervision of student placements and to increase the availability of practising Mental Health Officers. Initial progress towards target outcomes has been mixed. In respect of Mental Health Officers, the number practising had risen from 12 at the time of the first report to Committee to 16 by September 2002, an increase of 33%. Subsequently, further increases in practising Mental Health Officers are being secured and it is anticipated that there will be 20 in practice by September 2004, an increase of 66% on the baseline number. In respect of practice teachers and practice assessors, progress has been slower than anticipated. Officers will continue to work on this aspect of the plan and a further report on progress will be presented to Committee at a future date.
- 3.7 The **extension of EAGER to all frontline social work staff** was designed to allow the development needs of the workforce to be identified and the capacity of staff to meet their responsibilities to be enhanced by a focused approach to training and development. Target outcomes are likely to be achieved. A

departmental implementation plan is being followed and allows for the target timescales to be achieved. Regular monitoring of progress is undertaken by Social Work senior managers and by the Training and Development Forum at corporate level.

4. POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL/PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The proposed measures are being implemented within the existing policy and legal frameworks which govern the delivery of the Social Work service at present.
- 4.2 The then Corporate Sub-Committee of Policy and Resources Committee approved the personnel implications arising from the action plan on 4 June 2002.
- 4.3 Any additional costs arising from the implementation of the action plan will be met from within existing resources by re-alignment of relevant budgets.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Committee is requested to:

- a) note the progress made to date with the action plan, as set out in Section 3;
- b) authorise officers to continue to work towards the achievement of the identified target outcomes; and
- c) instruct that a further progress report be presented to Committee at a future date, as appropriate.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
13 August 2003

For further information, please contact John Alexander, Principal Officer (Quality and Planning) (Tel. 6978)

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER : JOHN ALEXANDER, PRINCIPAL OFFICER
(QUALITY AND PLANNING)**

APPENDIX 1

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED STAFF IN SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

ACTION PLAN 2002

ACTION	TARGET OUTCOME(S)	TIMESCALE
<p>1. Distribute recruitment information pack to all professional social work and occupational therapy training courses in the West of Scotland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Packs to be available to all students currently in training • Recruitment drive involving presentations/ meetings at all social work and occupational therapy training courses in the West of Scotland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28-31 May 2002 • 4-28 June 2002
<p>2. Implementation of new recruit incentive programme, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • final salary pension scheme • progressive work/life balance policies • “sponsorship in training” scheme • continuous professional development portfolio • training “bursary” • protected workload • workload management scheme • supervision contract • discretionary enhanced placement on spinal column point • low cost car leasing scheme • preferential car loan rates • re-location scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill 50% of qualified post vacancies • Retain 75% of new recruits beyond 2 years from date of appointment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 September 2002 • 30 September 2004

ACTION	TARGET OUTCOME(S)	TIMESCALE
3. Implementation of eligibility for re-grading to senior practitioner (SO2 grade) on application, subject to formal selection, for all qualified social workers and occupational therapists with 3 years post-qualifying experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate formal selection scheme • Appointment of 12 senior practitioners in first year, distributed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 in Community Care • 4 in Children and Families/Criminal Justice • 2 in Quality and Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 September 2002 • 1 September 2003
4. Introduction of financial recognition scheme for practice teachers, practice assessors and Mental Health Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% increase in capacity to supervise and assess placements • 50% increase in availability of Mental Health Officer resources to fill rota 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 September 2002
5. Extend the East Ayrshire General Employee Review scheme (EAGER) to all frontline social work staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review all frontline fieldwork, residential and day services staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 June 2002 – 31 March 2004