

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Social Work Services, the Director of Education and Cultural Services and the Acting Director of Housing Regeneration and Environmental Services (Housing & Regeneration Services)

Council: 28 February, 2007

Subject: The One Plus Organisation - Services provided in West Dunbartonshire

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform Council of contingency plans for continuity of services in West Dunbartonshire following the liquidation of the voluntary sector provider One Plus.

2. Background

One Plus was recognised as a valued service provider across several local authorities in the West of Scotland. The organisation provided a range of services including childcare provision, homecare services, children and families services and training programmes.

At the end of 2006 it began to emerge that the organisation was experiencing financial difficulties. The Scottish Executive supported exploration of a "rescue package" with those local authorities commissioning services but unfortunately circumstances were such that this was not financially achievable. The Scottish Executive is involved in investigating how the organisation reached the position they are in. The Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) will be investigating the finances of One Plus and meeting with the liquidator.

One Plus went into liquidation on 22 January, 2007. A statement issued by One Plus is attached as Appendix 1. It should be noted that the statement reflects the organisation's internal view of their situation. The outcome of independent investigations is awaited.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** One Plus has been a valued key partner in providing care and support to vulnerable adults, children and families in West Dunbartonshire. Service users included older people, lone parents, adults with mental health issues, learning or physical disability and families with children under 5 years.
- 3.2** Packages of care range from a few hours per week to intensive, flexible support 7 days per week, to support individuals to be maintained in their own communities. Tasks include personal care, supervising meals preparation, promoting socialisation, healthier lifestyles and independence, budgeting,

parenting skills, family relationships, escort to appointments or nurseries, children's safety and wellbeing. One Plus staff provided the flexibility and capacity to deliver services to meet individual assessed need, for example, at specific times.

3.3 Additionally One Plus provided an Out of School Care Service to support child care for working parents and an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) training programme to support local people gain a qualification which would enhance their employability.

3.4 Risk Management and continuity of service to these vulnerable groups is a key issue. For some service users who receive homecare support, failure to provide continuity of services would present a significant risk to both vulnerable adults and young children. For others, continuity of care staff who have built up skills, knowledge and relationships with clients is acknowledged to be a key factor in the success of care plans. Closure of the Out of School Care facility would have significant impact on the parents' employment. Lack of opportunity to complete the ILM training programme and gain qualifications would adversely affect the employability prospects of the 21 trainees participating.

3.5 Significant partnership planning was undertaken within a short timescale to reach solutions

3.6 Details of services provided and continuity plans are as follows:

- Young Families Support Service
This service, which is funded by the Changing Children's Service's Fund, supports vulnerable families with children under 5 years and is provided in partnership between One Plus, Health, Social Work and Education. Local Authority funding has supported the Community Health Partnership to employ 5 One Plus care workers on fixed term contracts to ensure continuity of service. Management and professional direction will be provided by a senior health visitor already involved in the project. Service was resumed from 5 February 2007. Work will be undertaken by partner agencies to redesign the service.
- After School Care Service - Whitecrook
One Plus provided an Out of School service in Whitecrook, offering 24 places. An alternative provider has been identified and service offered from 5th February 2007. Families were offered support and funding was made available from Childcare Strategy Project Support and (HRES) Working for Families staff to find alternative placements in the interim period.
- Home Care Services
Services supported vulnerable adults in the community. Services have either been provided from within Social Work services, with some One Plus staff being employed where continuity of carer was a factor, or commissioned from other providers.

- Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) – Childcare/Special Needs ILM
One Plus was commissioned by the Working for Families team in HRES Economic Development to deliver a training programme to support local people gain qualifications in childcare and special needs services. The funding package included money from the Working for Families Fund and other partners including Scottish Enterprise Dunbartonshire. 21 Trainees currently participate. HRES's West Dunbartonshire Council's Skillseekers have taken over the project from 29 January 2007 and have since employed the One Plus Project Manager as the Project Key Worker. Working for Families supported continuity of placements for the trainees in the interim period.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** Legal Services provided advice on the employment of ex One Plus staff by the Council. Five care staff were taken on by Social Work Services Learning Disability Section, initially on fixed term contracts to ensure essential continuity of care. One member of staff of the ILM project has been taken on by the HRES's Skillseekers section for a fixed term. All parents, who are also Working for Families clients, have been provided with support via Key Workers with Job Search and childcare costs.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** Initially a sum of £56,250 was paid in advance to One Plus by West Dunbartonshire Council which it was hoped would help them to continue providing services. The costs for these reprovisioned services however have had to be met by the Council. When it was evident there was no possibility of One Plus being able to recover, payment of invoices totalling £30,951.18 were withheld.
- 5.2** There have been no additional costs where services have been provided from within council homecare services or commissioned from alternative providers. Employment costs of staff taken on by Social Work Services have been met from existing budgets.
- 5.3** Additional funding was provided from the Working for Families Fund to support continuation of ILM trainees in placement and interim childcare provision. Employment costs of the project key worker taken on will be met from Working for Families Fund.
- 5.4** Financial support of up to £22,000 is required to facilitate employment of 5 ex One Plus Care Staff by the Community Health Partnership till end of March 2007. It was opportune that additional funding for Children's Services became available from the Scottish Executive and has supported this cost.

5.5 Funding beyond March 2007 will be sourced from the Changing Children's Services Fund.

5.6 A grant of £1,800 from Childcare Strategy Project Support was given to assist with the first two months rental of Whitecrook C.E. Centre to ensure the Out of School Care Service opened as quickly as possible and the transition was as smooth as possible for the children and their families.

6. Risk Analysis

6.1 The issues outlined in paragraph 3 above reflect the vulnerability of the client groups receiving services from One Plus. Significant risks could present, including safety and wellbeing of vulnerable adults and protection of children should there be no continuity of services. Doing nothing was not an option; doing less would not be effective.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Council is asked to:

- (i) To note the significant partnership working undertaken to ensure continuity of services to vulnerable service users.
- (ii) To approve actions taken

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Appendices: Press statement from One Plus

Background Papers:

Wards Affected:

All Council wards are affected. Ward 1 is mostly affected by the Out of School Care provision based in Whitecrook