

DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Interim Executive Director of Social Work and Health

Social Work and Health Committee: 18 November 2009

Subject: The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Contributing to Better Outcomes for Scotland: Guidance for Local Authorities

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The Scottish Government sought the Council's views on their draft guidance document "The Role of the Registered Social Worker in Contributing to Better Outcomes for Scotland: Guidance for Local Authorities". This reports sets out our comments in response to that consultation

2. Background

- 2.1** Changing Lives, the Report of the 21st Century Social Work Review, set out a vision for the future for social work services in Scotland. The delivery of safe, effective and innovative practice in social work services is identified as an important aspect and the purpose of this guidance to local authorities is to:
- highlight the role of social work in contributing to better outcomes for Scotland; and, particularly,
 - set out those social work functions which only registered social workers should be accountable for.

It also complements the Guidance on the Role of Chief Social Work Officer issued in February 2009.

The guidance has been drafted by the Changing Lives Practice Governance Group, which is one of the five change groups that were set up following the publication of Changing Lives. The Group is chaired by Andrew Lowe, Director of Social Work at the Scottish Borders Council, and includes a number of senior figures from the social work sector, supported by Scottish Government officials. In drafting the guidance, the Practice Governance Group has worked closely with key stakeholders.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The West Dunbartonshire Council response was compiled from comments from the Chief Social Work Officer and a focus group of our Social Workers.
- 3.2** The main points made were as follows:

There was an endorsement of the key requirements and expectations set out in the guidance and there was a suggestion that the document could be

‘future-proofed’ by locating the roles and tasks of social workers within the golden thread of national and strategic objectives in a less specific way.

Comment was made on the need to, perhaps, set up a clearer expectation that social worker’s assessments need to take account of existing resources and involved a measured approach which cannot be blind to budgetary restraints.

It was suggested that the guidance should include a duty for social workers to collaborate with other relevant bodies in all areas which involve the implementation of plans/case management

Finally it was suggested that more should be made in the guidance of the statutory role of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). This would provide the opportunity to emphasise the value base of social work and the duty of registered social workers to maintain their own professional development and to contribute to the recruitment /training of new entrants to the profession and to the development of unqualified staff.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1 There are no personnel issues for West Dunbartonshire Council.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications for West Dunbartonshire Council.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1 There are no risks at this stage to West Dunbartonshire Council.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This guidance is a useful and timely addition to material to be taken into account by our Departmental Workforce Planning group as it attempts to encapsulate the complexity of the role of the Social Worker in today’s ever changing professional arena, and manages to reflect the balance of views necessary to allow Social Work to be seen to make its unique contribution to better outcomes for the people who use its services.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 The Social Work and Health Improvement Committee is asked to:

Endorse the response made by the Council with regard to the proposed guidance.

Ask the Executive Director of Social Work and Health to take this guidance into account when drafting the new Departmental Workforce Plan.

Report on how this guidance was taken into account when the workforce plan is reported to this committee.

Stephen West,
Interim Director of Social Work and Health

Person to Contact:

Max Agnew, Section Head, Quality Assurance & Training Section.
Telephone Number (01389) 772196
E mail. max.agnew@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Paper

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/07/07140258/2>

Wards Affected: All council Wards.