

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **Report by Acting Director of Social Work Services**

**Children's Service Committee: 11<sup>th</sup> October 2006**

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### **Subject: Recruitment and Retention: Staffing Position for Qualified Social Workers**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is to update members on the staffing position for Qualified Social Workers since this was last reported to Committee in September 2005 and to inform members of the successful return from training of 14 social workers.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Members will recall the range of actions put in place since June 2003 in order to address the critical shortage of qualified social workers, particularly in Children and Families Teams.
- 2.2 One of those actions was to invest in supporting existing members of staff through their qualifying training, a process often referred to as "growing your own".
- 2.3 The Scottish Executive also took action to tackle the staffing crisis by introducing the Fast Track Scheme, a government sponsored accelerated route through social work training.

#### **3. Social Workers returning from Training this Year**

- 3.1 Ten staff have qualified through the Open University DipSW programme and four workers have graduated through the fast track route.
- 3.2 The focus on directing resources towards Children and Families work, with eleven of the returning social workers going into child care posts, means that the position at the moment is that there are no vacancies in Children and Families Teams.
- 3.3 Vacancies in Community Care have also been assisted by three returning workers going into Community Care Teams. There are still 3 vacancies in Community Care but a recent advert has had a good response and it is expected that recruitment to these posts will be successful.

#### **4. Future Action**

- 4.1 Although the immediate staffing crisis as experienced over recent years has been resolved for the moment, staff turnover inevitably means that vacancies will arise and considerable effort is being made to address the longer term issues of Workforce Planning.
- 4.2 The Department's commitment to supporting existing staff through training has succeeded in improving our staffing position and this strategy will continue in order to meet the anticipated need for new staff in the future. The Fast Track Scheme is not continuing beyond this year's intake and three students have been recruited for West Dunbartonshire. Candidates have been selected for secondment through the Open University course and will graduate over the next few years.

#### **5. Personnel Implications**

- 5.1 None other than those noted throughout this report.

#### **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The return of qualified workers will mean fewer agency staff will be required. Agency staff are more costly but not all posts have been covered in this way.
- 6.2 All posts now filled have been budgeted for.

#### **7. Conclusion and Recommendation**

- 7.1 Committee is asked to
  - i) note the success of the Council's initiative to support staff through their professional social work training.
  - ii) Endorse the continuation of this strategy to address future needs.

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