

West Dunbartonshire Council

Report by the Director of Social Work Services

Council: 27 June 2007

**Subject: Advice and Support for Patients and Families
Affected by Cancer**

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To inform Council of ongoing discussions initiated by Social Work Services in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support to raise cancer poverty issues with the Scottish Executive and other key stakeholders including neighbouring Local authorities.

2. Background

- 2.1** The predicted increase in incidence in some common types of cancer in Scotland confirms the need for dedicated advice projects for patients and families affected by cancer. In West Dunbartonshire around an additional 500 people are diagnosed with cancer each year.
- 2.2** Meetings arranged by Des McNulty MSP (Clydebank & Milngavie) have taken place at ministerial level and with senior civil servants to discuss cancer poverty issues. As well as the Deputy Health Minister and Deputy Communities Minister; these discussions included senior officials from Macmillan Cancer Support, Director of Social Work Services, appropriate officers and civil servants.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The main subject under discussion is the proposition to establish models of advice & support for patients attending cancer treatment centres in Scotland. Pivotal to this is the proposal to establish a pilot project centred at Beatson Oncology Centre, Glasgow.
- 3.2** Macmillan Cancer Support has established that the standard of service delivered by the partnership in West Dunbartonshire is not available in all Local Authority areas throughout Scotland. Council officers and senior management at Macmillan have been working to examine the logistics of extending the advice & support facility to all patients attending the Beatson Oncology Centre, Glasgow through a pilot project. There have been a number of expressions of interest from other Local Authorities in taking a fresh approach to cancer poverty. Consultations have taken place with senior strategy officers at COSLA and the appropriate Executive Group has agreed to hear a joint presentation on cancer poverty from Macmillan and WDC. Following a productive intervention at the ADSW Standing Committee on Community Care a more detailed joint

presentation was made by Macmillan and WDC at a subsequent meeting. This resulted in the matter being recommended to the ADSW Executive Group for support.

- 3.3** A presentation from the Director of Social Work Services was heard by the Cancer Research UK; *Scotland Against Cancer Conference 2006* and generated great interest in the West Dunbartonshire proposals on cancer poverty at this event. Senior management and clinicians from the Beatson Oncology Centre also confirmed their interest in an on-site advice & support facility using this model.

The Director of Social Work Services has also been in contact with Dr. Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland regarding the need for improved service delivery for cancer patients. The influential West of Scotland regional Cancer Advisory Group, Chaired by Tom Divers, Chief Executive of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, has fully supported the project.

- 3.4** Senior civil servants were provided with essential background information on the development of the partnership between West Dunbartonshire Council and Macmillan Cancer Support adopted to address the needs of those affected by cancer within the local community. They were made aware that this is the first statutory sector partnership the charity has entered with a Local Authority in the UK. The project team has also developed and maintained close links with local acute hospitals, health centres, cancer clinics, other patient treatment centres and cancer charities.

- 3.5** It is now widely accepted that a cancer diagnosis frequently results in a drop in income as jobs are lost and savings are eroded. Daily living expenses are likely to increase due to, for instance, increased travel expenditure to and from appointments, parking charges and the cost of prescriptions, increased telephoned bills, heating and new clothes due to changes in weight during treatment. For those affected by cancer, financial concerns are a significant cause of stress. Providing services, which are easy to access and focused on those affected by cancer, ensure that these worries are alleviated as much as possible and those affected by cancer are supported in the process of claiming the money they are entitled to. This problem has been challenged successfully in West Dunbartonshire through joint working.

- 3.6** In partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support the Council, is working to develop policies and services to tackle cancer poverty. This includes:

- Raising awareness on the issues of unclaimed benefits and to begin to develop potential solutions to cancer poverty. To continue working with Macmillan Cancer Support to create a platform for discussion leading to improved advice services for cancer patients and carers throughout Scotland.
- Promoting the need for improved inter-agency working to provide cancer patients and carers with effective advice, advocacy and

information on welfare benefits, and crucially, to ensure that there is equity of provision for Scots irrespective of where they live.

- Utilising the experience and skills from current Macmillan advice projects to help shape improved service delivery throughout Scotland and to acknowledge the role of staff development & training within this process.
- Developing effective and sensitive services to meet the benefits advice and non-clinical, pastoral and social support needs of cancer patients and carers in Local Authority areas throughout Scotland.
- Continuing to raise awareness of the causes, effects & impacts of cancer and to play an informative role within communities in Local Authority areas throughout Scotland.

3.7 Following discussions which took place throughout 2006/07 up to £750k in new funding has been secured from Macmillan Cancer Support for the development of welfare rights services at the Beatson Oncology Centre, Glasgow. Up to £750k will be brought into the West of Scotland to run this venture and WDC will be the lead agency based at the Beatson Oncology Centre, Glasgow. This will require the Council to commit £90k of resources to the project. It will be matched by Macmillan with no loss to the Council and added value to our services.

3.8 The purpose of current partnership projects and proposed initiatives are to firstly, improve the advice & support given to cancer patients and secondly, to act as '*path finders*' in the wider development of financial advice and support services across Scotland. Experience gained from current projects has established the issue of unclaimed benefits seriously affecting cancer patients and their families; and has served to illustrate the critical success factors which need to be mainstreamed into the provision of advice services for this vulnerable group. A pilot project at Beatson could act as a benchmark for future service delivery using experience, patient opinion and acquired statistics to develop models of best practice which could be applied at cancer treatment centres throughout the UK.

3.9 Meetings are ongoing between the charity, senior civil servants and council officers to examine the proposals discussed at the ministerial meeting with a view to making progress on these matters. In addition to this; senior officials from the charity, supported by Council officers, have convened a series of productive meetings with Local Authorities which fall within the Beatson catchment area.

3.10 Discussions with health professionals, including cancer support nursing staff, confirms that there is a valuable resource premium in terms of welfare rights staff carrying out a range of functions, including time consuming form filling which allows specialist staff to concentrate human resources and efforts on medical activities.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** Possible recruitment of new staff. Possible movement of current staff to work at Beatson Oncology Centre Glasgow. Possible secondment of project manager to facilitate pilot project throughout Beatson catchment area. It is likely that some West Dunbartonshire Council staff will have to be seconded to the Beatson project.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The partnership arrangement with Macmillan provides matching funding and there will be no detriment to WDC.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** The proposed partnership arrangement offers the Council an opportunity to take part in a high profile service development which will help cancer sufferers and bring credit to West Dunbartonshire. Not pursuing the venture would be a wasted opportunity.
- 6.2** The operational risk is managing the new developments without compromising the high quality of welfare rights services available across West Dunbartonshire. This issue will be addressed fully in progressing of the Beatson Project.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1** The Committee is asked to support ongoing partnership working to achieve the aims set out within this report.

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Background Papers:	None
Appendix:	None
Wards Affected:	All