

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

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

**Social Justice Committee: 12 April 2006**

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**Subject: Home Care Service Provision – Adverse Weather Conditions**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform Committee of the effect of the recent heavy snowfall on home care service provision, and the action taken to ensure essential services to vulnerable clients were maintained.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** A heavy snowfall took place overnight from the evening of Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> March until Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> March resulting in an unusually deep covering of snow, which made travelling by car or on foot extremely difficult and dangerous. Throughout this period home care services required to be delivered to vulnerable clients in the community .

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** Initial telephone contact came from the West of Scotland Social Work Stand-by Service to alert the Section Head – Home Care regarding travel difficulties and communication from home care staff.

#### Action Taken

- 3.2** Organisers were contacted to assist with communication to staff and clients, and the prioritisation of available resources to ensure those most in need and at risk were identified and dealt with as quickly as possible. With co-operation and assistance, it was possible to reach physically office bases with access to the client and staffing computer information systems which resulted in accurate decision-making regarding the deployment of resources.

#### Home Care Staff

- 3.3** The home care staff who provided direct care services to clients included augmented home care staff, home helps, sheltered housing supervisors and mobile attendants. Recognising the importance of providing care to clients, and the inherent difficulty of doing this with the dreadful weather and road conditions many staff worked beyond their normal shift, or provided care to those in the local area rather than attempting to travel further afield.

Examples of the commitment shown include:

- Staff digging out cars to allow emergency response

- Staff remaining on site between shifts in sheltered housing complexes
- Staff carrying hot meals, and delivering them on foot
- Staff walking between clients to deliver personal care when cars could not gain access to a number of areas.

#### Outcome

- 3.4** As a result of excellent teamwork, and utilising the individual strengths and abilities of a committed workforce it was possible to deliver essential services to those most in need, despite atrocious weather conditions.

#### **4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1** Staff who were on stand-by for hospital discharge services were utilised in the first instance to ensure that an immediate response was available. Thereafter, requests were made to staff to provide support in their local area in order to reduce the necessity to travel.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** Staff who were not scheduled to work, but responded to requests to provide cover have been paid at the appropriate rate.

#### **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1** The response from home care staff illustrates the benefits of a highly valued home care service, provided by teams of dedicated home care staff who have been prepared to go the extra mile, in order to ensure the safety and well being of our vulnerable clients.
- 6.2** All staff who participated in organising and providing care during this period have been thanked personally by letter for the commitment and care they demonstrated.

#### **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1** Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

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Acting Director of Social Work Services

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**Wards Affected:** All wards were affected