

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Acting Director of Social Work Services

Social Justice Committee: 12 April 2006.

Subject: 21st Century Social Work Review – “Changing Lives”

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the outcome of the 21st Century Social Work Review and outline the Scottish Executive's plans to deliver the review's implementation.

2. Background

- 2.1 The 21st Century Review was commissioned by Scottish Ministers and reported in February 2006. Its overall aim was to look at all aspects of social work in order to strengthen its contribution to the delivery of integrated services.
- 2.2 It had 6 main objectives :
- to identify clearly the role and purpose of social workers and the social work profession;
 - to identify improvements in the organisation and delivery of social work services;
 - to develop a strong quality improvement framework and culture supported by robust inspection;
 - to strengthen leadership and management giving clear direction to the service;
 - to ensure a competent and confident workforce;
 - to review and, if necessary, to modernise legislation.

3. Findings

- 3.1. Social work services must be designed and delivered around the needs of people who use services, their carers and communities.

This requires:

- standards for access to social work services led by those who use services and their carers;
- participative and empowering assessment;

- recognition of unpaid carers as partners and providers of care alongside professionals;
- seamless transitions between different parts of the service for people who use services and their carers;
- services provided from premises that are fit for purpose; and
- that we further our understanding of the implications of developing personalised social work services.

3.2 Social work services must build individual, family and community capacity to meet their own needs.

This requires:

- the development of community capacity;
- an increased role for social work services in building the social economy;
- effective use of tested approaches to increasing the capacity of individuals, families, groups and communities;
- an expansion of volunteering, peer support and self help groups; and
- more widespread application of group work.

3.3 Social work services must play a full and active part in a public sector wide approach to prevention and earlier intervention.

This requires:

- increased long term investment in prevention and early intervention;
- joined up approaches to prevention and intervention;
- prevention to be part of everyone's job; and
- the development of anticipatory services to improve outcomes for people with predictable needs.

3.4 Social work services must become an integral part of a whole public sector approach to supporting vulnerable people and promoting social well-being.

This requires:

- effective community and corporate planning incorporating social work services;
- harmonisation of local service boundaries wherever possible;
- services to be commissioned and developed at the most appropriate level to ensure effectiveness, efficiency and best value;
- an integrated policy framework which rationalises information, planning and funding streams; and
- simplification of governance and funding arrangements across the public sector to promote integrated working.

3.5 Social work services must recognise and effectively manage the mixed economy of care in the delivery of services.

This requires:

- new commissioning models based on partnership and delivery of personalised services;
- more effective partnership working between commissioners and providers; and
- effective joint working to address the needs of people who use services.

3.6 Social work services must develop a new organisational approach to managing risk, which ensures the delivery of safe, effective and innovative practice.

This requires:

- clear accountability frameworks which make explicit the accountabilities of the social worker;
- social workers to exercise professional autonomy within a clear framework of professional accountability;
- a new approach to social work governance;
- a strengthening of the governance and leadership roles of the chief social work officer;
- structured approaches to manage untoward incidents that enable learning from mistakes;
- a research and development strategy for social work; and
- evidence based risk assessment and management tools.

3.7 Employers must make sure that social workers are enabled and supported to practise accountably and exercise their professional autonomy.

This requires:

- the reserved functions of social workers to be set out in regulations;
- practitioners to be equipped to exercise professional autonomy and accountability;
- the implications of personalisation to be considered and reflected in social worker education programmes;
- new career pathways in practice and professional leadership linked to an agreed competence framework; and
- the continued development of a national recognition and reward framework for social workers, reflecting career pathways and competence.

3.8 Social work services must develop a learning culture that commits all individuals and organisations to lifelong learning and development.

This requires:

- full implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of the Social Service Workforce in Scotland: A Plan for Action 2005-2010;
- further investment in lifelong learning across the social service workforce;
- social service workers to maintain a personal portfolio as an up to date record of their skills and competence;
- social service workers to have access to regular, quality professional support, challenge and consultation;
- newly qualified professionals to have a period of more intensive initial support; and

- stronger links between employers and higher education institutions.

3.9 Social work services should be delivered by effective teams designed to incorporate the appropriate mix of skills and expertise and operating with delegated authority and responsibilities.

This requires:

- employers to invest in building and sustaining effective teamwork;
- a team based approach to performance improvement;
- budgetary and decision making authority to be delegated as near to the front line as possible;
- the development of a new para professional role;
- teams to have the right mix of skills to operate efficiently and effectively;
- social service workers to be treated as a mobile workforce
- investment in increasing the capacity of teams to respond to growing need; and
- an integrated approach to workforce planning and development.

3.10 Social work services must develop enabling leadership and effective management at all levels and across the system.

This requires:

- a national framework for developing leadership and management;
- a leadership style that gives staff, users and managers the power to develop creative solutions;
- strengthening of strategic professional leadership;
- development of academic leadership and
- development of effective citizen leadership.

3.11 Social work services must be monitored and evaluated on the delivery of improved outcomes for people who use services, their carers and communities.

This requires:

- a performance improvement framework for all social work services, based on outcomes;
- elimination of unnecessary information gathering;
- development of tools to share learning and support practitioners to improve and evaluate outcomes;
- an annual performance improvement report, peer assessed and published by chief social work officers; and
- inspectorates to use performance improvement frameworks as a means of reducing the regulatory burden on services.

3.12 Social work services should develop the capacity and capability for transformational change by focusing on re-designing services and organisational development.

This requires:

- new capacity for service redesign and organisational development;

- organisational development capacity in social work services;
- evidence based models of service redesign to support performance improvement;
- proactive use of technology to transform the delivery of services; and
- national and local fora to support the development of social work.

3.13 The Scottish Executive should consolidate in legislation the new direction of Scottish social work services.

4. The Scottish Executive's Response

4.1 Final publication of the 21st Century Review was delayed until a considered response from the Scottish Executive had been prepared. The key commitments from the Minister for Education and Young People, Peter Peacock, were as follows:

- establish a system for setting national priorities in social work services as the basis of providing clarity of purpose and prioritising future action;
- deliver a culture of continuous improvement in service delivery through a new performance improvement framework;
- establish a rolling process for driving social work service redesign at the local level on an inter-agency basis;
- invest in developing the leadership the profession will need into the future;
- strengthen the role of the Chief Social Work Officer and emphasise a responsibility for professional leadership and governance;
- create the framework and support for front line social workers to have more devolved authority and operate more autonomously within an accountable framework;
- support the creation of new opportunities for skilled front line social workers to remain in front line practice for their whole career;
- encourage the development of a new para-professional role to work under the direction of social workers and equipped to work across professional boundaries, promoting joined up working;
- ensure that people who use services and their carers have ever greater choice and involvement in decisions about their own care and the design and delivery of services, through new approaches to the co-production of services;
- expect our universities and colleges to work together and with stakeholders to review current programmes of education and training to ensure they equip our next generation of workers with the skills they will need to meet the demands of modernised practice and that our universities and colleges are active participants in the change process;
- legislate to give Ministers and Parliament powers in setting national priorities and the performance improvement framework and provide a new foundation for social work services based on improving personal and community wellbeing;

- deliver additional resources to support the change process following further consideration of a detailed implementation plan and steer required changes in a co-ordinated way through a Cabinet Delivery Group of key Ministers;

4.2 'More of the same won't work'

The Minister has accepted the main conclusion of the 21st Century Review that 'more of the same won't work'. The main concerns about the performance of social work were that:

- we are not making the most effective use of our skilled social workers;
- we have a social work profession lacking confidence in itself, with uncertainty about its role and a lack of sufficient attention to development over many years;
- high profile service failures have led to tragedy and consequently driven services to a more risk averse culture than that needed;
- services have become over managed, yet under led, limiting and constraining the practice and autonomy of social workers at the front line and acting as a barrier to people receiving the type of help and support that they need, when they need it;
- there is not sufficient focus on achieving clear outcomes for people, with the result that too much effort is placed on processes and not enough on securing outcomes; and
- there is insufficient clarity about priorities and under-developed performance improvement systems.

4.3 The Minister's long term goal in setting out the foundations of the change programme is to ensure that services are:

- delivered as part of a whole joined up system;
- personalised to meet the needs of the people who use them and their carers; and
- focused on prevention and early intervention rather than crisis management.

It is evident that the Review's conclusions and the Minister's response lock the expected changes in social work services into the wider reform of public sector services; and see the integration of services as a key objective.

4.3 The delivery strategy to develop the changes required includes at Cabinet level a Cabinet Delivery Group of key ministers to oversee the change and the establishment of a National Social Work Services Forum bringing together practitioners, academics, leaders from social work and partner agencies.

4.4 A variety of regional and local networks will be formed to support the work and each local authority will have a 'local level practitioner for a' to give all sectors a voice in influencing changes.

- 4.5 The Scottish Executive Social Work Policy Divisions will manage the work of the review implementation and the Social Work Inspection Agency will ensure that inspection processes drive change at local levels.

5. Scottish Executive Visit to West Dunbartonshire

- 5.1 As part of the delivery programme the Scottish Executive is meeting representative groups in all local authority areas. The visit to West Dunbartonshire is planned for 27 April 2006. The programme and invitations to a broad range of interested parties, including key elected members, will be sent out shortly.
- 5.2 The visit is intended to allow all partners to examine the review's findings and explore how implementation can be pursued locally. The visit presents an opportunity to assess how well we can deliver change locally and to consider areas of the review that need further discussion and debate.
- 5.3 Initial reactions drawn from discussions across the Department of Social Work Services indicate that we have service strengths which will help deliver the 'transformational' agenda :
- good partnership working to promote public sector integration and joint services;
 - a training and workforce development plan that can be used to generate a 'learning culture' and help secure retention of key staff;
 - our 'trainee' model to second unqualified staff to achieve professional training recognises the contribution and potential of untrained staff;
 - a commitment to restructure management arrangements that can take account of the reform agenda;
 - the Council's budgetary commitment to enhance social work pay and conditions and promote a proper career structure for social workers;
 - quality assurance systems;
 - an effective contribution to community and corporate planning;
 - investment in social work services and effective financial management;
 - a mixed economy model of service delivery and joint commissioning.
- 5.4 There are parts of the analysis and findings within the 21st Century Review, however, which have been viewed by staff as difficult to accept or achieve:
- there is concern that the Review does not address properly the full range of social work services and functions nor does it reflect adequately the key role of local authorities;
 - the critique of risk averse management and the need to enable the autonomy of professional social workers seems simplistic;
 - the legal , practical , and financial implications of 'personalisation' have not been addressed fully;
 - the resource implications of effective preventive work and support for unpaid carers have not been assessed fully;

- the coherence of social work services across different agencies, services, and settings has to be protected;
- the Executive's wide range of portfolio holding ministers reflects the complexity of the services;
- the Review highlights the danger of the burden of scrutiny and bureaucratic demands of monitoring but it is the Scottish Executive which is the main source of the overload

5.5 Both Cosla and ADSW have welcomed the review and the opportunity to be full partners in its delivery. The Scottish Executive's visit is welcomed as part of this process of exchange and learning.

6. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

7. Personnel

7.1 There are no Personnel implications.

8. Recommendation

8.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.



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Background papers: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/02/02094408/0>

Affects all wards