

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services (Housing and Regeneration Services)

Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee: 13 June 2007

Subject: Working for Families Fund: Progress

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to bring the Committee up to date on the progress of the Scottish Executive's Working for Families Fund in West Dunbartonshire.

2. Background

- 2.1** Members may recall that in December 2003, West Dunbartonshire Council received notice that it had been awarded Working for Families funding. The funding allocation was £600,000 in 2004/05 and £600,000 in 2005/06. The funding was extended until 2008, the allocation being a further £600,000 for 2006/07 and £600,000 for 2007/08.
- 2.2** The key purpose of this Fund is to enable local authorities, through their economic development channels, and their partners to tackle poverty and employment issues by ensuring that childcare is not a barrier to parents entering education, training or employment. The funding should reach those in most need and who are motivated to move towards employment, or improve their employment position. Target client groups are parents on low income, parents with other stresses in the household and lone parents.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Two job share co-ordinators, a part-time administration officer, and a full time administrative assistant are in post to manage and administer the Working for Families Fund. These staff report to the Section Head Economic Development in Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services and to a Working for Families Steering Group.
- 3.2** Since the Fund was started 928 parents have registered with the Working for Families Fund in West Dunbartonshire. In the year to April 2007, 508 parents were registered. On this basis, the Fund is well on track to achieve its target of 1164 registrations by March 2008.

- 3.3** The Scottish Executive has also set an annual target of 250 parents achieving a major transition (e.g. moving from unemployment into a suitable job). In the year to 31 March 2007, a total of 259 parents achieved a major transition. Significant numbers of parents have also made good progress towards achieving a major transition.
- 3.4** A Working for Families conference was held on the 31 January 2007. The conference was held in St Margaret's Hospice in Clydebank and was attended by various partners and agencies within West Dunbartonshire. The purpose of the conference was to increase awareness of the assistance available from Working for Families and to review good practice through presentations from the co-ordinators and focus groups facilitated by some of the projects.
- 3.5** At present it is unclear whether or not funding for Working for Families will continue beyond March 2008. The Scottish Executive are currently looking at the evaluation report prepared by the Employment Research Institute (ERI) at Napier University and are preparing options for consideration during the Spending Review to be conducted in the late summer/early autumn.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** As has already been highlighted, funding is limited at present to March 2008. All staff are currently on contracts which will end at 31 March 2008. Approval has been granted by the Scottish Executive to allocate a small amount of money to pay for staff costs for the first quarter of the financial year 08/09. This has been done in the financial projection submitted to the Scottish Executive. This allocation should ensure that, should the Fund not be extended, it can be wound up in an orderly manner.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** Since the full costs for the Fund are covered by a grant allocation from the Scottish Executive, there are no financial implications.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** It has not been necessary to carry out a risk analysis for this project.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** A large number of parents have been assisted since the start of the Fund being operated in West Dunbartonshire to move into training, education or employment. Feedback from the Executive and ERI suggests strongly that Working for Families has engaged with clients who have not accessed any other services.

7.2 Should the Fund cease operation in March 2008, then it is clear that, particularly in the more deprived areas of West Dunbartonshire, whilst the issues that face existing clients and parents in the future will continue, the ability of the Council through this Fund to assist will cease. It has been suggested that Councils may wish to write to Ministers and MSPs to argue for the continuation of the Fund in the light of the real benefits that it has made.

8. Recommendations

8.1 **The Committee is asked to note the continued significant progress of the Working for Families Fund in West Dunbartonshire which has been recognised by the Scottish Executive and which is continuing to assist a large number of parents within West Dunbartonshire.**

8.2 **The Committee agrees to instruct the Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services (Housing and Regeneration Services) to write to the appropriate Minister (copy to local MSPs) indicating the tangible benefits of the Fund and arguing for its extension.**

Irving Hodgson

Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services
(Housing & Regeneration Services)

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Person to Contact: Seumas Macfarlane, Team Leader, Economic Development Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton G82 3PU
Tel. No.: (01389) 737166.
E-mail – Seumas.macfarlane@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendices: None

Background Papers: West Dunbartonshire Working for Families Annual Report 2007

Wards Affected: All