

Social Services Committee
25 February 2003

IRVINE, 25 February 2003 - At a Meeting of the Social Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Alan Munro, Margaret McDougall, Ian Clarkson, Stewart Dewar, Drew Duncan, Jane Gorman, Alan Hill, Elisabeth Marshall, John Moffat, Margaret Munn, David O'Neill and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

B Docherty, Corporate Director; S Paterson, Head of Service (Children, Families and Criminal Justice); L Skehal, Head of Service (Community Care); D MacRitchie, Principal Officer (Children and Families Fieldwork) (Social Services); A Grossart, Finance Manager (Finance); J Stevenson, Communications Officer; M Adams and J Bannatyne, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor Munro in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Jack Carson and Donald Reid.

1. Presentation: Children and Families Fieldwork Service

The Committee received a presentation from the Principal Officer (Childcare and Families Fieldwork) on the structure of the Children and Families Fieldwork Service.

Children and Families Teams are responsible for the protection and assessment of children who are at risk as a result of family breakdown or who have been referred to them. Various new developments and initiatives being taken forward by the service were highlighted.

Noted.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 January 2003, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

3. Eligibility Criteria for Children and Families Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the proposed introduction of Eligibility Criteria for Children and Families Services.

Social Services is a targeted service provided for children and families on the basis of their assessed need.

A priority is given to helping those most at risk or who present a risk to others either through voluntary arrangements or statutory powers. To ensure that services are properly targeted to those families and young people in most need, eligibility criteria require to be introduced which are linked to a framework of tiered or staged intervention.

The eligibility criteria will be based on an assessment as to whether the case falls into a high, medium or low priority category. This will determine whether the services of a qualified Social Worker or a Social Work Assistant are required. Details of the framework and the eligibility criteria to be applied to Children and Families (Fieldwork) were given in appendices to the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the eligibility criteria as set out in the relevant appendix to the report.

4. Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002: Community Care (Joint Working etc) Regulations 2002

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Social Services) on the new Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 and the Community Care (Joint Working etc) Regulations 2002 which have been introduced to promote and improve joint working across health, housing and social care.

The provisions of the Act are in three parts, the first enabling aligned budgets to operate more flexibly by allowing payments between NHS bodies and local authorities and vice-versa. The second creates a framework in which local authorities and NHS Scotland may delegate functions and pool budgets, while the third establishes a mechanism for Ministerial intervention as a last resort where performance is unsatisfactory. Although the Act allows the joint working arrangements to extend to any function of a local authority or NHS body, the arrangements would apply initially only to Adult Community Care Services.

The Committee agreed (a) that the newly established Joint Community Care Board considers the implications of this legislation in the development of local partnership arrangements; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Social Services) report to a future meeting on the scope for maximising the opportunities available under this legislation.

5. North Ayrshire Council Panel of Safeguarders: Fee Structure

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals to introduce revised fees for Safeguarders from 1 April 2003.

In terms of Section 41 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Council is required to maintain a Panel of Safeguarders to "safeguard the interest of the child in the proceedings" and to arrange for the payment of appropriate fees and allowances to

the Safeguarders.

Following a comprehensive review undertaken by COSLA in conjunction with the Scottish Safeguarders Association proposals for a revised fee structure have been put forward.

The average cost of Safeguarders fees in the last three years has been approximately £5,000 per annum and it is estimated that the new fee structure would result in annual expenditure of approximately £10,000. There is provision for this additional expenditure.

The Committee agreed that the revised fees detailed in the appendix to the report be implemented as from 1 April 2003.

6. Revenue Budget 2002/2003: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Social Services at the end of December 2002 and on projections for the end of the financial year 2002/2003.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.