

**ANGUS COUNCIL****SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE.....(27 May 1997)****COMMUNITY CARE PLANS (INFORMATION) DIRECTIONS 1997****REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK****ABSTRACT**

This report brings forward a proposed response to the Secretary of State on the recently issued Directions on Information. A report was approved at the meeting of the Social Work Committee on 15 April 1997 which instructed the Director to bring forward a proposed response.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report
- ii) confirms its support for the principle of establishing genuinely comparable information on the value for money considerations of providing residential care
- iii) requests the support of CoSLA in seeking the revocation of the Community Care Plans (Information) Directions 1997 and in establishing consultation and dialogue on the future funding and commissioning of care in the community in Scotland.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

Reference is made to report no 418/97 by the Director of Law & Administration and Director of Social Work wherein Committee was advised of the Community Care Plans (Information) Directions 1997 issued by the then Secretary of State on 12 March 1997.

Directors of Social Work were advised in an accompanying circular issued on the same date by the Scottish Office Social Work Services Group that these Directions came into force immediately albeit that the citation and commencement section in the Directions indicated that they would come into force on 1 April 1997.

Committee was advised however that the practical impact of these new Directions in Angus would impinge on the first review of the forthcoming Joint Community Care Plan and the 1988/89 budget cycle.

The Social Affairs Forum of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities at its meeting of 7 March 1997 received reports based on drafts of the proposed Directions and expressed considerable concern at the unreasonable and unsatisfactory process of consultation on this issue and grave concern about the content of the information required to be published in the draft Directions. These concerns remain valid since the final format of the Directions require local authorities to set out information which makes unrealistic comparisons between the cost of caring for people in local authority care with the theoretical cost of caring for these residents in private sector homes. The approach taken in establishing relative costs within the Directions and the accompanying circular has been widely criticised by the Association of Directors of Social Work and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. A similar approach adopted in the recent report of the Social Work Services Inspectorate on Community Care Services for Older People in Angus, Dundee City and Perth & Kinross has been criticised in the recently issued report of the House of Commons Scottish Affairs Committee on the Implementation of Community Care in Scotland. The Scottish Affairs Committee concluded that "the range of potential savings has not been adequately estimated" and that "in any event, in the short term there is unlikely to be a sufficient saving of resources from increased private sector purchasing to compensate significantly for the financial problems facing councils in the funding of community care".

### 3 PROPOSAL

The recently issued report of the Social Work Services Inspectorate on Community Care Services in Angus, Dundee City and Perth & Kinross found no evidence of bias against private sector providers.

The over-riding objection to the terms of the Community Care Plans (Information) Directions 1997 is that the information required will provide a simplistic and wholly misleading impression of the relative cost of residential care which will confuse public understanding of what are extremely complex issues. There are a number of important initiatives underway which may form the basis for an informed and mature consideration of the future of residential care. The Accounts Commission are in the process of undertaking a major value for money study into commissioning residential care which will provide an independent assessment of this complex issue. The recent report of the Scottish Affairs Committee has expressed serious concerns about the confusion over the level of resources available for community care; the efficiency of the deployment of available resources; and the lack of robustness of some of the funding mechanisms currently in use.

In the light of the above and given the undue haste with which these Directions were issued it is proposed that Angus Council should make representations to have these Directions revoked and to seek genuine consultation on the future direction of care in the community in general and the nature of the mixed economy of residential care in particular.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

#### **5 CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

#### **6 CONCLUSION**

The Community Care Plans (Information) Directions 1997 are widely regarded as being based on a flawed approach to value for money comparisons in the provision of residential care. They will not assist the process of making informed decisions about the future shape of the mixed economy of residential care.

8 May 1997

W B Robertson  
Director of Social Work

#### **NOTE**

The undernoted background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

House of Commons Session 1996/97  
Scottish Affairs Committee: Second Report  
"The Implementation of Community Care in Scotland"

