

ANGUS COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE

21 AUGUST 2003

PUBLIC INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT 2002/2003

REPORT BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

ABSTRACT

This report advises members of the Social Work and Health Committee of the Public Information Annual Report which gives details of the progress made in the area of public information and makes recommendations for the continued improvement of this service. A copy of the Annual Report is appended to this committee report.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work and Health Committee:

- i) notes the content of the Public Information Annual Report
- ii) approves the future recommendations detailed in the Annual Report

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The important role of information in the provision of Social Work services and the need for a strategic approach to the production and distribution of information was recognised in the Social Work Committee report 416/97- A Strategy for Public Information and then in the subsequent committee reports 426/00 and 77/02.

These reports highlighted the number of functions served by information, the importance of involving users, carers and their representatives and the growing emphasis on choice.

Public information about Social Work services helps empower users and carers and forms the foundation for public participation and appropriate use of services.

The provision, design and distribution of information are therefore an integral part of the planning and delivery of our services. The Public Information Annual report details the work that has been undertaken within Social Work, in the area of public information, during 2002/2003. It also gives details for future development in the public information field.

3 PUBLIC INFORMATION ANNUAL REPORT 2002/2003

Public information is the means by which we make the citizens of Angus, our customers, aware of the support and services provided by Social Work. Information can be provided in many ways and it is important to recognise that while leaflets are a

fundamental and necessary means of providing information they have their limitations.

The printed word is not accessible to people with a visual impairment, learning disabilities or literacy problems. In addition, individuals whose first language is not English can experience difficulties when accessing information about services.

This Annual Report provides details of the variety of formats used by Social Work to inform the public and highlights the main ways in which the public, in Angus, access information about Social Work services. Production and distribution methods are also described.

In addition, comprehensive recording systems have been developed in order to accurately monitor and evaluate the use of Social Work information and service user/public feedback received through the public information route.

As indicated throughout the annual report, the overall uptake of public information continues to rise in a variety of ways. At present, requests for alternative formats remain low in comparison to the overall uptake of leaflets and factsheets. However, electronic information via the Angus Council website is being accessed on a regular basis. Social Work information was not available on the website during 2001/2002 and therefore there are no figures for comparison.

At present leaflets/factsheets, personal face to face contact and the telephone still remain the most popular means of accessing Social Work information.

It should be noted that as public awareness of Social Work services grows there is the potential for a continuing increase in the demand for information. Therefore, as information providers, we must recognise that information needs to be available not only in a range of formats, but also in differing levels of detail. To ensure that this can be achieved within the resources available, the planned and strategic approach, which has been undertaken in the production and distribution of information, should continue.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

In order to build on the progress made in the area of public information, continue to meet our statutory requirement and ensure the continual improvement of public information, further developments under consideration are:

- Undertake a review of the public information available and identify gaps in light of national care standards.
- Develop a more targeted approach to the distribution of information based on the information gained from the public information reports. This will minimise the wastage in information production and prevent a build-up of unused information.
- Continue to develop the range of information, application forms and feedback facilities available on the Council's website.
- Have input with regard to information, to the development and ongoing maintenance of a dedicated Social Work intranet site.
- Develop links, through client specific organisations, with hard to reach/vulnerable groups to establish their information needs and provide channels to enable user feedback.
- Further develop the range of alternative formats for information with specific regard to children and young people and adults with learning disabilities.

- Continue to explore alternative methods of establishing customer/public feedback about services.
- Develop links with our planning partners and voluntary and community organisations to consider, where appropriate, the production of joint information.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

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

8 CONCLUSION

The Public Information Annual Report detailed in this report continues to highlight our continued commitment to producing clear, accurate and accessible information about social work services. The recommendations detailed in the report will enable us to continue to improve and further develop our information service.

R Peat
Acting Director of Social Work

NOTE: No 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 any material extent in preparing the above report.