

## DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE - 17<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2003

**REPORT ON:** FAST TRACK CHILDREN'S HEARINGS FOR PERSISTENT YOUNG OFFENDERS/PILOT SCHEME

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

**REPORT NO:** 157-2003

### 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report advises members that Dundee has been selected to pilot a scheme of Fast Track Children's Hearings for persistent young offenders and seeks approval to implement the scheme within the City.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:

2.1.1 note and approve Dundee City Council's involvement in the Fast Track Children's Hearing pilot scheme;

2.1.2 authorise the Director of Social Work to commission services as required from appropriate voluntary sector organisations.

### 3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Scottish Executive has agreed to meet all reasonable costs to Dundee City Council in piloting this initiative. These costs are outlined in the attached financial appendix. For start up costs in 2002/2003, Dundee has been awarded £13,285 with £822,750 awarded to fund full year operational costs. Dundee City Council will administer the funds on behalf of all bodies involved in the initiative.

### 4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The proposals in this report promote improved safety for local communities and the citizens of Dundee.

### 5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposed actions outlined in this report seek to promote the improved equality of opportunity and social inclusion of children and young people at risk of being involved in offending behaviour.

### 6 MAIN TEXT

#### 6.1 Background

6.1.1 In December 2000, Dundee City Council Social Work Committee approved Report No. 772-2000, "Youth Justice Strategy Dundee 2000/01 - A Strategy for the Prevention of Youth Crime". This included the following main objectives:-

To provide effective community based options, which reduce or eliminate offending, to as many children and young people who persistently offend as possible; and,

To achieve better outcomes in personal health and safety, education, employment and leisure for children and young people who are frequently charged with offences and to help them address the factors in their lives which contribute to their offending behaviour

6.1.2 In June 2002, the Scottish Executive announced plans to pilot new arrangements that involve fast tracking of persistent young offenders through the Children's Hearing system. In September 2002, the Scottish Executive published a progress report entitled "Youth Justice in Scotland" which highlighted the work of 12 local authorities that have demonstrated good practice in tackling Youth Crime. Dundee was highlighted as one of the local authority areas in Scotland that has identified its young offenders and has programmes in place to tackle their behaviour. In October 2002, Dundee was one of three sites chosen by the Executive as a pilot site for the new arrangements.

6.1.3 In December 2002, Audit Scotland published "Dealing with Offending by Young People", which examined how the youth justice system deals with young people involved in offending. The report suggested that the system takes too long to deal with cases, and amongst its recommendations is that efforts should be made to reduce the time intervals at all stages of the system.

## **6.2 Aim and Criteria of Fast Track Hearings**

6.2.1 The aim of fast track Hearings is to put in place a process which responds more quickly to referrals of persistent young offenders under 16, takes action to reduce re-offending and leads to an early cessation in offending. Panel decisions will lead to guaranteed places, if required, on programmes to reduce offending, thus securing better outcomes for those referred and identifying potential for future action.

6.2.2 These new arrangements will target young offenders involved in 5 offending episodes in the previous 6 months and will include both those subject to a supervision requirement and those who are not currently in the system. (An offending "episode" is one referral to the reporter.) Reporters to the Children's Panel will have discretion to include others with fewer offending episodes considered at risk of joining this group. This will include those whom it is alleged have committed serious offences.

## **6.3 Assessment and Programme Delivery**

6.3.1 It is proposed that every child who meets the criteria must undergo a formal assessment by the local authority. Assessments are required to identify the needs of the young person, assess the risk associated with the needs, including that of re-offending and identify how and by whom the needs might be addressed. This may include attendance on a specific programme or combination of programmes, or through involvement with social worker or other professional or voluntary bodies, or a combination of such actions. The report must be provided by the local authority to the Reporter within 20 days of the request by Reporter. The request by the Reporter must be within 2 days of the referral.

## **6.4 Implementation Arrangements**

6.4.1 This initiative will be delivered through a combination of existing and new staff, and overseen by a multi-agency implementation group, to which report no. 50-2003 refers.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 Consultation has been undertaken with all the agencies and organisations represented on the Youth Justice Strategy Group. The Chief Executive, Director of Support Services and the Director of Finance have also been consulted in the preparation of this report. The Trade Unions have also been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

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.

Alan G. Baird  
Director of Social Work

**Date 7 February 2003**

## SUMMARY FINANCIAL APPENDIX

	<b>Start Up Costs £</b>	<b>Ongoing Annual Costs £</b>
<b>Social Work</b>		
Support to Youth Justice Co-ordinator	3,000	39,500
Additional Assessment Services		71,700
Individually Designed Community Programmes		247,200
Alternative Care & Education Packages		90,000
Residential & Secure Placements		320,400
	<b>3,000</b>	<b>768,800</b>
<b>Children's Panel</b>		
Additional Children's Hearings Expenses	3,310	6,000
Support to Chair of Children's Panel		10,050
	<b>3,310</b>	<b>16,050</b>
<b>Tayside Police</b>		
Additional Staffing and Administration Costs	<b>2,500</b>	<b>20,800</b>
<b>Training &amp; Evaluation Costs</b>	<b>4,475</b>	<b>17,100</b>
<b>TOTAL ANNUAL FUNDING</b>	<b>13,285</b>	<b>822,750</b>