

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE - 27TH JUNE 2011

REPORT ON: WHOLE SYSTEM APPROACH TO YOUTH JUSTICE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 284 - 2011

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform the Social Work and Health Committee of the implementation of a Youth Justice Whole System Approach agreed with all partners and the Government. Members will be aware of recent changes in the Social Work Department to strengthen services to adolescents and young offenders (Committee Report Number 662-2010). The Whole System Approach builds on these changes with the aim of developing fully integrated multi-agency processes and services for children and young people who have committed crimes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work and Health Committee;

2.1 Note the implementation of the Youth Justice Whole System Approach

2.2 Instruct the Director of Social Work to provide a review of progress in 12 months.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 The Whole System Approach

The Scottish Government Reducing Re-offending Programme aims to reduce offending and re-offending and enhance public safety as well as reduce the prison population. An accompanying document on Preventing Offending by Young People provides guidance on how agencies should be working together in both the child welfare and adult justice systems to prevent and reduce offending by children and young people aged 8 to 17 years. The Whole System Approach offers a staged, graduated and practical framework within which this guidance can be implemented. It attempts to ensure that multi-agency processes and services are in place throughout the systems so all identified young offenders are provided with timely and proportionate support. The graduated stages are;

- Early and effective intervention
- Diversion from Prosecution
- Community alternatives to secure care and custody
- Risk assessment and risk management
- Court processes
- Through care

This framework is consistent with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), which similarly promotes multi-agency preventative work with children and young people and holistic interventions which reflect types of need and levels of risk. It is also consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which promotes the limited use of secure care and custody for children and young people and improved support upon

release. Research indicates that community based, tailored support to medium and high risk cases, which target relevant needs in ways which reflect the learning style of the child or young person, are more likely to be effective than unstructured support or measures which focus only on restraint, such as imprisonment.

4.2 **Current Position**

In Dundee, there is a history of strong partnership working to support children and young people who offend and reduce youth crime. A Youth Justice Strategy Group (YJSG) consists of all key agencies to develop and coordinate services. It reports to the Integrated Children's Services Management Group and contributes to GIRFEC. In accordance with the national strategy, the Police already use a flexible scaled approach to decision making for under 16's; an Early and Effective Intervention Group meets weekly to screen referrals and consider support; diversionary services are in place for children aged 8 to 16 years; and there is a risk assessment and risk management protocol for high risk of harm cases. In 2009-10, these services contributed towards a;

- 34% reduction in the number of Police referrals to the Reporter, from 870 to 572
- 15% reduction in the number of offences involving a young person, from 1424 to 1206
- 30% reduction in the number of persistent offenders, from 47 to 33
- 29% reduction in identified victims of youth crime, from 900 to 640

More recent developments include a new Community Adolescent Team (CAT), which will work alongside the existing Youth Justice Team to target and support children and young people with at risk behaviours which have not yet escalated into offending. A new Fiscal Work Order pilot will also target low tariff offenders with no or one previous convictions, many of whom will be under 20 years old (Committee Report Number 240-2011). In addition, all young people aged 16-17 years sentenced by the Court to a Community Payback Order are now supervised by Criminal Justice, unless already subject to supervision through a Children's Hearing. To strengthen this, Action for Children will deliver programmes and Tayside Council on Alcohol will deliver mentoring.

4.3 **Programme Plan**

Whilst achievements have clearly been made and continue to be built upon, there is a gap in service delivery and outcomes for young people aged 16-17 years across the system as a whole. They are presently excluded from EEI processes, opportunities for their diversion from prosecution have been limited and there has been no formal link between EEI and diversion schemes. In addition, the number of admissions to secure care has fluctuated, different levels of support are available for children and young people in secure care when compared with those in custody and different risk assessment tools are used when a young person reaches 16 years. These areas for improvement require multi-agency solutions and an action plan which focuses on 16-17 year olds has been agreed. It includes;

- **Early and effective intervention** - extend current screening and support arrangements to 16-17 year olds and link these arrangements to diversion schemes so interventions can be considered from a broader range of both informal and formal options.
- **Diversion from prosecution** - standardise referral, assessment and enforcement processes between different diversion schemes, which are delivered by SACRO, a Youth Justice Team and also now Criminal Justice with the new Fiscal Work Order.
- **Community alternatives to secure care and custody** - use the existing Intensive Support and Monitoring Service, Youth Justice Team, Criminal Justice and the new Community Adolescent Team to identify, target and support high risk children and young people
- **Secure care and custody reintegration** - share, develop and improve practice between current secure care Looked After Children (LAC) processes, voluntary resettlement from short-term prison sentences and statutory through care from long-term prison sentences
- **Risk assessment** - implement a single, standard risk assessment tool for all children and young people aged 8-17 years who offend and specialist risk

assessment tools for children and young people who commit sexual and/or violent offences

The approach therefore further builds on existing processes and services by extending them to 16-17 year olds and should be sustainable on a long-term basis by re-configuring and/or re-targeting current resources. It also offers potential financial benefits through improved efficiencies and outcomes at different stages of the system. For instance, an increase in the number of children and young people identified and informally supported through the EEI process reduces the cost of formal diversion; an increase in formal diversion reduces the cost of prosecution in Court; and an increase in the proportion of intense support programmes or community sentences avoids the considerable costs of secure care and custody.

A multi-agency implementation group has been agreed and will report to the Integrated Children's Services Management Group.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website <http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equimpact/>.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Finance, Tayside Police, NHS Tayside, Scottish Prison Service, Children's Reporter, Safeguarding and Communities Reducing Offending and Rossie Secure Unit have been consulted in preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scottish Government Preventing Offending by Children and Young People: a Framework for Action; Youth Justice Whole System Approach in Dundee: Overview and Project Plan. Equality Impact Assessment

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DATE: 15th June 2011