

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 24 OCTOBER 2005**

**REPORT ON: NATIONAL AUDIT OF SEX OFFENDER CASES**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 625 - 2005**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides information on the outcomes for Dundee City Council of the National Audit of Sex Offenders undertaken on the direction of the Minister for Justice. This followed the publication, in April 2005, of the report into the management of post release supervision of a sex offender in North Lanarkshire.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

2.1 Note the contents of the report.

2.2 Approve the improvement plan to develop services relating to the risk management of sex offenders.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The Criminal Justice Social Work Service of Dundee City Council, in conjunction with the services of Angus and Perth & Kinross Councils, is preparing funding estimates for the required service improvements which will be submitted to the Scottish Executive.

### **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 This report supports the policy objective of reducing crime and ensuring people are safe and feel safe in their communities.

### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no equal opportunity implications.

### **6.0 MAIN TEXT**

6.1 The Minister for Justice directed that investigations be made into the management of the post release supervision of a sex offender in North Lanarkshire following his conviction for the abduction and assault with intent to rape of a two year old child. The offender had previously been convicted of a similar offence against a 91 year old woman. The report of the investigation was published in April 2005.

6.2 The report highlighted the complexity of the challenges faced by agencies responsible for the supervision of high risk offenders. It concluded that even optimal work might not have prevented the offence. The report however, indicated deficiencies in aspects of the management of the case which applied to all of the responsible agencies and at all stages of the offenders supervision in prison and in the community.

6.3 In accordance with the Minister's directions an audit was conducted, by the Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership, of registered sex offender cases in Angus, Dundee City and Perth & Kinross areas. The audit report will be signed by the three Chief Executives of the Tayside Partnership and forwarded to the Scottish Executive.

#### 6.4 **Dundee City Council Audit**

6.4.1 35 cases were audited by the Dundee City Council Criminal Justice Social Work Service, 11 had been released from custody on statutory supervision, the remaining 24 had received a community based sentence.

6.4.2 These were cases for which the service had statutory responsibility at some point since October 2004. Among the main audit findings were that:-

- A risk assessment was completed in 97% of the cases
- 94% of the assessments were thought to be of an acceptable standard or better
- 18% of those released from custody appear to have completed cognitive behavioural programmes, in custody, designed to reduce their risk on release
- 75% of offenders sentenced to community based disposals had completed, or were in the process of completing, a cognitive behavioural programme. (It should be noted that not all community based disposals are appropriate for programme work e.g. community service).
- 94% of the cases were assessed as having achieved, at least, an acceptable standard of supervision
- 94% of cases were assessed as having achieved, at least, an acceptable standard of inter-agency working

6.4.3 More generally, the audit highlighted continuing issues relating to the frequency and type of contact social workers will have with high risk offenders. The obligation on social workers to make home visits to high risk offenders is of particular concern. The audit demonstrated that there are fewer home visits made than are required. There are obvious issues relating to staff safety in this context, but procedures exist to reduce the risk to staff in making home contact. Since the audit, further training has been given to all staff which promotes best practice and safe working. The position will be monitored to ensure required improvement takes place.

6.5 The Partnership was the subject of an Inspection by Social Work Inspection Agency in 2004, which dealt with arrangements for managing high risk offenders locally. The Inspection concluded that "The Partnership is working hard to manage the risk presented by sex offenders. All three authorities have taken steps to ensure better information sharing. Staff take seriously the need to supervise sex offenders rigorously and to deal robustly with non-compliance. The Partnership is fortunate in having a dedicated resource for working with sex offenders." The Partnership was also set some challenges to improve practice, specifically:

- To provide common operational procedures, including a common definition of high risk and mechanisms for triggering case conferences
- Each authority should seek to involve all agencies in the development and review of management plans
- Improving achievement of National Objectives and Standards

## **6.6 Service Improvement Plan**

- 6.6.1 Dundee City Council has been selected as a pilot site for the ViSOR project. ViSOR is a shared national database to register risk assessment and contribute to the risk management of sex offenders and violent offenders. It holds information on individuals convicted of sex offences and will contribute significantly to the effectiveness of information sharing between the police and social work. The Criminal Justice Social Work Services and Tayside Police have agreed joint protocols to ensure the effective use of ViSOR.
- 6.6.2 In support of the ViSOR system Criminal Justice staff have been identified and given specific responsibility to manage the information exchange with Tayside police on sex offenders. Information held on ViSOR will also be available to other council services and departments to help reduce the risk to children and vulnerable adults.
- 6.6.3 Agreement has been reached between the Criminal Justice Social Work Service, Tayside Police and the Housing Department of Dundee City Council to jointly risk assess and manage all registered sex offenders through a risk assessment and risk management case conference. The conference will be responsible for the development of a joint action plan which will ensure the rigorous, well co-ordinated supervision of sex offenders. Other agencies with a contribution to make will also be involved as required.
- 6.6.4 A standard single framework for risk assessment will be adopted by the three Tayside Partnership Councils. The Scottish Executive have recently introduced a new risk assessment protocol, Risk Matrix 2000, which will be implemented by the three councils when staff are trained in its use. Approximately one-third of Dundee criminal justice staff have already had training and been accredited to use Risk Matrix. Tayside Police have adopted the same risk assessment procedure which will allow us to be clear in our classification of the risk of individual sex offenders.
- 6.6.5 A common framework to audit the quality of work being undertaken with high risk offenders will be introduced across the Partnership. This will help to ensure that any deficits in service quality will be identified and dealt with.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Director of Housing and Tayside Police have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The following Background Papers were relied upon on preparation of this report:

An Investigation into the Management of the Post-Release Supervision of a Sex Offender in North Lanarkshire.

Performance Inspection of Tayside Partnership Criminal Justice Social Work Services.

Report No 383-2005 which went to the Social Work Committee on 20 June 2005.

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Director of Social Work

Date: 10 October 2005