

REPORT TO: HOUSING COMMITTEE – 15TH JANUARY 2001

REPORT ON: DUNDEE FAMILIES PROJECT: FUNDING  
ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

REPORT NO: **686-2000**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To advise members of the interim evaluation report findings and confirm future funding arrangements for the Project.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Housing Committee notes the findings of the interim report.

2.2 That Housing Committee notes the funding requirements to continue Dundee Families Project for the forthcoming two years.

**3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 Deficit funding for D.F.P. for the two-year period 2001-2003 will total £257,215. This will be met from allowances made in the Housing Revenue Account and the General Services Account as outlined in the report.

**4. LOCAL AGENDA IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Provision of services to families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness is consistent with a number of Dundee 21 themes including protection of health and access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable everyone to play a full part in society.

**5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Provision of services to homeless families or those threatened with homelessness ensures equality of access to safe supported accommodation for vulnerable families who are in need of the services on offer.

**6. BACKGROUND**

6.1 Dundee Families Project was established with Urban Programme funding in 1996. The aim of the Project is to assist families who are homeless or at severe risk of homelessness as a result of anti-social behaviour. The Project is managed by N.C.H. Action for Children Scotland in partnership with Dundee City Council's Housing and Social Work Departments.

- 6.2** The Project operates from premises in St. Mary's Dundee where staff offices and core block accommodation for three families is located. The core accommodation enables families to receive intensive support to address behavioural difficulties which have led to their homelessness. The Project also operates a small number of dispersed flats which are set up on demand and are used as move-on accommodation from the core block. In addition, an outreach service is provided to selected families at risk of eviction by the City Council due to anti-social behaviour.
- 6.3** Besides offering individual and family support or counselling, the Project offers a range of group activities. These include:
- After school groups
  - Young persons groups
  - Cookery groups
  - Parenting groups
  - Parenting skill groups
  - Craft groups
  - Anger management groups
  - Resident support groups
  - Tenancy workshops

## **7. EVALUATION RESEARCH**

- 7.1** The evaluation research has been funded on a partnership basis by the Scottish Executive, Dundee City Council and N.C.H. Action for Children Scotland. The City Council's contribution was £15,000.
- 7.2** The research is being managed by the Scottish Executive, and has been undertaken by the University of Glasgow's Centre for Child and Society together with the Department of Urban Studies. The research was commissioned due to the high level of interest from Central Government and other local authorities into alternate methods of dealing with anti-social behaviour. It is anticipated that, should the final research findings show that the Project's work has resulted in a more cost effective and socially inclusive method of dealing with anti-social behaviour, the Project may be replicated in other local authority areas.
- 7.3** The study began in May 1999 and the final report is due to be published in June 2001.

## **8. INTERIM EVALUATION REPORT FINDINGS**

- 8.1** A copy of the interim report is available in the members lounge. The main findings of the interim report are summarised as follows:
- The Project has received over 100 referrals since opening. An internal analysis was carried out on the first 73 referrals up to the end of February 1999. One in 6 of these referrals were deemed to be inappropriate, leaving 61 families with 121 children who received a service, mostly on an outreach basis:
    - ◆ Outreach preventative service - 47 families
    - ◆ Core block service - 7 families
    - ◆ Dispersed accommodation - 7 families

- Slightly more than half the families were homeless at referral (34) and, in many of the other cases, the Housing Department had taken legal action towards eviction (16). A number of families were being supported by Social Workers due to concerns about the welfare of their children.
- 45 of the 73 cases have been closed. Only one of these cases was described as unsuccessful in that the service was withdrawn as a result of non co-operation by the parent. Three families were successfully reintegrated into mainstream housing, and 47 outreach cases successfully concluded, thereby preventing possible eviction in all cases and possible intervention by the City Council in terms of having to accommodate children in local authority care.
- In an analysis of 34 closed cases more referrals came from the Social Work Department (18) than the Housing Department (13). Two referrals were described as joint, with only one coming from elsewhere (Children 1<sup>st</sup>). This pattern contrasts with the Projects 1998 Annual Report, at which time more referrals had come from Housing. The relative shift from Housing to Social Work was apparent in these closed cases, since Housing had referred 9 of the first 12 cases either singly or jointly, but only 6 of the subsequent 22.
- At the time of referral, about one-fifth of the families (9) were in City Council homeless accommodation and two more were staying with friends or relatives. Most of the others had a City Council tenancy with two being in private accommodation and three living in other forms of housing. Nine of the families were identified as having significant rent arrears and two were recorded as overcrowded. Less than a quarter of the cases (9) had actual homelessness as a reason for referral though 14 were, to a greater or lesser extent, under threat of eviction.
- In two-thirds of cases (24), anti-social behaviour was given as at least part of the reason for referral. In the case of half of the families concerned, childrens behaviour was also highlighted as a concern. Besides housing and A.S.B., the other main factors prompting referral were related to family relationships and care of children. Only three referrals were explicitly about preventing family breakdown or reuniting families, but in most others concern was expressed about care and control of children. Domestic violence to women was mentioned in 7 cases. School non attendance was present in 7 cases.
- Family characteristics revealed that two-thirds of households were headed by a lone parent. Virtually all families were described as poor and relied on state benefits. Only two families were found to be in paid employment. Nearly half of the families in the sample were identified as having drug or alcohol misuse present. At the time of referral four of the families had all their children living away from their parents. A further twelve families had at least one child living away, either with relatives or looked after by the City Council.
- In terms of outcomes of the work with the families, of the 34 cases studied only 5 were recorded as little progress or non co-operation. Housing and Social Work Department said that they recognised progress or confirmed that initial behaviour or home management problems had not recurred. None of the families were in homeless accommodation at the end of contact and, of the ten families who had children looked after in residential or foster care at the start, five had their children back with them.

## 8.2 The interim research report's conclusions state:

- That all but a few families actively worked with are successful in terms of improved functioning and goals achieved.
- That residents of St. Mary's have accepted the Project's core residential service, and that it has caused very few difficulties to people living nearby.
- That key staff in other agencies regard the work of the Project highly in that it is seen to engage well with families who have major difficulties and carries out work effectively with them.
- That the Project not only is dependent on inter-agency collaboration but that it has promoted and improved collaboration.
- That external respondents believe the Project is working very well, with just a few issues requiring attention.

## **9. PROJECT FUNDING**

- 9.1** As previously stated, Dundee Families Project was set up using Urban Programme funding. This funding ceased in April 2000 and an application for extension funding for year 2000-2003 was made through the Social Inclusion Partnership funding scheme.
- 9.2** S.I.P. funding has been approved for the period April 2000 to April 2003, however, revenue funding has been approved on a tapering scale as there was an expectation that the City Council should move the Project towards a mainstream funding position.
- 9.3** In year 2000-2001 the City Council's expected contribution to the Project was £66,243, however following negotiation between the partners, which resulted in a reduction in staffing costs and an increase in Project income, this sum was reduced to £29,243. This deficit was met by a combination of grant from the Housing Revenue Account and the General Services Budget.
- 9.4** There appears to be little scope for a further reduction in staffing costs or for any significant increase in Project income in the forthcoming years, consequently the deficit funding requirements for the next two years are:

2001-2002	-	£ 95,486
2002-2003	-	£161,729

It is recommended that the costs be met on a 50:50 share basis from the Housing Revenue Account and General Services Account respectively.

## **10. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1** The interim evaluation report on Dundee Families Project is extremely positive and suggests that the Project is making a significant difference to the lives of a number of families who, without Project services, may have found themselves excluded from mainstream society. Although unable to quantify the sums involved, the research highlights the savings accruing to the City Council through prevention of evictions, maintaining and repatriating children who were looked after with their families and through prevention of repeat homelessness applications. The Project has ensured that many families have been provided with the right support to enable them to continue to care for their own children. In other cases it has contributed to children, who have been looked after by the local authority in a care setting, being able to return to their families and so removing them from public care.

- 10.2** The Project has, over its lifespan, received several accolades and is acknowledged as a ground-breaking pioneer in the field of anti-social behaviour and social inclusion. The Project is also an example of joined up working as it provides an integrated service made available through joint work by Housing, Social Work, and a national voluntary organisation. The planning, development and practice of the Project has resulted in improved relationships between Housing and Social Work and with other Social Work Services. The Project was recently cited as an example of best practice by Wendy Alexander, Minister for Social Inclusion and she has recommended that the Project be replicated throughout Scotland.
- 10.3** The final evaluation report is expected to be completed by June 2001, and it is anticipated that a fuller analysis of the costs and benefits of the Project will be included at this point. In the meantime, there is a need to address the funding requirements of the Project for the forthcoming two years.

**11. CONSULTATION**

- 11.1** All Chief Officers have been consulted on this report.

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 12.1** There are no background papers.

**ELAINE ZWIRLEIN**  
**DIRECTOR OF HOUSING**

**SIGNATURE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_