

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee – 18 December 2006

REPORT ON: Innovations and developments in the support of ex-offenders

REPORT BY: Director of Social Work

REPORT NO: 704 - 2006

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides information on two new initiatives in criminal justice social work which are aimed at reducing re-offending and strengthening the provision of community-based services. The initiatives are as follows:

1.1.1 Grant from the Preventing Homelessness Innovation Fund to East Port House.

1.1.2 Grant for developing an intensive support service for women returning to Tayside from short-term prison sentences. This grant has been made to the Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership Resettlement Service which is managed by Dundee City Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

2.1 note the content of the report;

2.2 agree the policy initiatives outlined;

2.3 refer any staffing implications to the Personnel Committee for approval.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications for Dundee City Council as both initiatives are be fully funded from Scottish Executive grant awards. The sum of £59,568 has been awarded for one year from the Scottish Executive's Preventing Homelessness Innovation Fund for East Port House. The sum of £437,685 has been made available over a two year period from the Criminal Justice Grant to develop a service to support women returning to Tayside from short-term prison sentences.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Preventing Homelessness Innovation Fund Project will address the objectives of the anti-poverty strategy by developing the skills necessary to sustain accommodation including budgeting, dealing with rent arrears and moving people closer to the labour market.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The projects will encourage socially excluded groups to access services, in particular women.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Preventing Homelessness Innovation Fund

6.1.1 The Innovation Fund has awarded the Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership £59,568 for one year from January 2007. The Grant will be provided under section 90 (1.1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

6.1.2 The funds will be used to assist clients to develop social skills and independent living skills to access and maintain accommodation in the longer term. The project will use groupwork, and ex-clients will act as peer educators to deliver core modules based on their own experience.

6.1.3 The funds will provide for two support workers to facilitate the groupwork and provide training, travel costs and expenses for peer educators. Staff will be employed only for the duration of the project.

6.2 Intensive support to Women Prisoners

6.2.1 Ministers agreed in 2005-06 to allocate £2m to support drug treatment linked to criminal justice interventions. This money has been allocated specifically to help women offenders with addiction problems. The Tayside Criminal Justice Partnership has been awarded £437,685 over two years to provide an intensive support service to women leaving HMP Cornton Vale.

6.2.2 The new service will seek, in partnership with Scottish Prison Service (SPS), to identify all the women intending to return to Tayside who are serving sentences of less than four years, with a substance misuse issue. It is planned to base a member of staff in HMP Cornton Vale.

6.2.3 On release there will be one-to-one support offered to the women to develop motivation, coping skills and consider harm reduction issues. Their addiction problems will be assessed and addressed including, if necessary, access to detoxification services. Specialist drugs services will be provided by dedicated nurses contracted from the Tayside Drug Problem Service. Where applicable women will be offered offence-focussed work to address issues other than substance misuse which contributes to their offending.

6.2.4 The Scottish Executive plan to undertake research into the effectiveness of the service.

6.2.5 This service will be provided by one senior criminal justice assistant, four criminal justice assistants, two nurses and a half time clerical assistant. The nurses will be employed by Tayside Health Board.

6.2.6 These staff will be recruited on short-term contracts for the two-year period of the pilot project. It is intended that the service should be fully operational for April 2007.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance), Depute Chief Executive (Personnel) for Dundee City Council and the other authorities within the Tayside Criminal Justice Grouping have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Alan G Baird
Director of Social Work

Date: 7 December 2006