

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 20 November 2000

REPORT ON: THE REVIEW OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE CASES

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 728-2000

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the results of the independent review/audit of Criminal Justice cases as agreed in Report 140/2000.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

- 2.1 Note the results of the review and instruct the Director of Social Work to implement the recommendations developed in response to the audit's recommendations.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Director of Social Work commission a further audit in April 2001.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications for Dundee City Council arising from this report, as the Criminal Justice Social Work Services is 100% funded by the Scottish Executive.

4.0 AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report supports key theme 9, which acknowledges "people to live without fear of personal violence or crime, or persecution".

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These proposals meet the Council Equal Opportunities Policy.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

- 6.1 The review was commissioned in February 2000 by an external consultant with expertise in this field. It included the case files of all sex offenders supervised by Dundee City Council Criminal Justice Social Work and a number of other offenders considered to have the potential for dangerous/violent behaviour. In all the review covered 24 cases. The review considered the quality of the casework as recorded in the files with particular attention paid to risk assessment procedures and protocols, supervision, case monitoring, the quality of case records and the quality of intervention undertaken by the Social Work Department.
- 6.2 The review report concluded that overall the work seems to be of "a good professional standard" and the auditor recorded that he had "been impressed by the openness of the managers at all levels in collaborating with his review and their preparedness to consider

targets of practice improvements. The audit report also states that “there are examples of excellent practice in respect of the supervision of some PDO’s. These include standards being exceeded in respect of domiciliary visits, clear liaison with other treatment agencies and the police, the referral of cases (by practitioners) to managers for consideration, proactive case management and clear use of sanction for non-cooperation/breach behaviours”.

- 6.3 The analysis of potentially dangerous offender cases highlights two particular areas. The first is the requirement in the National Standards document for visits to be made by the case responsible social worker to the home of the offender. There are a number of cases where the social worker, for reasons of personal safety, is reluctant to interview a dangerous offender at his home. We would normally ensure that social workers visited in pairs, but even this may not be sufficient to guarantee the safety of the workers, particularly if the offender has an alcohol or drug problem. The only alternative to the home visit is to increase the number of office based contacts. In this respect the frequency of contact with all potentially dangerous offender cases exceeded the requirements laid out in the National Standards document.

The second area relates to the regular reviews of work done in each case. The National Standards require periodic reviews between the offender and supervising officer. In respect of potentially dangerous offenders it is often more appropriate to call a risk management meeting involving other agencies. In a number of cases, multi-disciplinary risk management case conferences replaced the formal reviews as required by National Standards.

- 6.4 The report pointed out areas for continuing improvement emerging from the audit and made the following recommendations for the Criminal Justice Service.

Recommendation 1

“That an agreed protocol be developed to assess the motivation of each offender to address offending behaviour”.

Action Taken

The Director of Social Work and Tay Project staff are currently formalising the current methods used to assess client motivation, much of which is contained in the Risk Assessment procedure and initial induction phase of work.

Recommendation 2

“That record sheets designed to assist in case management be used consistently with entries kept up-to-date”.

Action Taken

The paper work concerned with the management of potentially dangerous offenders has been redesigned to include, in particular an improved system of risk assessment. We are currently exploring the possibility of using a computerised system for recording and updating information on potentially dangerous offenders.

Recommendation 3

“That a review be undertaken of the tools used to assess both need and risk in non-sexually violent offenders, and with particular reference to those offenders with mental health problems, including Psychopathy”.

Action Taken

At the Social Enquiry Report stage, all offenders are now screened for risk of serious harm and risk of reconviction. This has been achieved by modifying an assessment model used by Hampshire Probation Service and since April 2000 this has informed all initial assessments.

Recommendation 4

"That contact sheet AO44 be redesigned to prompt clarity of recording and ease of case management/managerial oversight".

Action Taken

All recording systems in relation to Potentially Dangerous Offenders are presently under review and a new contact record sheet will be introduced by the end of this year.

Recommendation 5

"That the Tay Project 'Detail Record' sheets be reviewed to ensure they are fit for the purpose".

Action Taken

This task has now been completed.

Recommendation 6

"That local agreement be secured as to the meaning of the national standard for 'weekly attendance' and local standards be set accordingly".

Action Taken

This has been clarified. Weekly may be either 7 days or any day in the week following the contact. Local Standards have now been established which resolve both this and other ambiguities contained within the National Standards document. The local standards we have set for potentially dangerous offenders are more stringent than the National Standards we work to at present.

Recommendation 7

"That all social background reports should detail a risk assessment of that offender, a statement of their criminogenic needs and an action plan which links risk management (including treatment and surveillance strategies) to the need and risk assessments. Reviews of the action plan should be recorded clearly on the 'Probation Review' documentation".

Action Taken

Current practice meets this recommendation.

Since April 2000 risk assessment has been a standard element within Social Enquiry Reports and Parole assessments.

All sex offenders are assessed using the Tay Project Risk Assessment Protocol, which is based on current research. This protocol has been piloted for the past 18 months, recently reviewed and should be in its final format by March 2001.

Registered sex offenders are subject to regular stringent reviews by Social Work, the Police and any other agencies, which can contribute to a reduction in risk.

All other potentially dangerous offenders are subject to a risk management meeting within one month of an Order being imposed or release from prison.

Sex offenders subject to Tay Project conditions will undergo both a Tay Project review every 3 months, in addition to a Probation review. Minutes from these reviews will be held in the case file and must be signed by the offender.

Recommendation 8

"That offenders should sign and date the Probation Order as per national standards".

Action Taken

Supervising officers have had guidance and clarification on this issue and must record any reason for the failure of the offender to sign the Order.

Recommendation 9

"That family protection unit officers be invited as a matter of routine to case review meetings and in any event sent a copy of the minutes/record of those meeting".

Action Taken

The Police are routinely informed and involved in any issue related to Potentially Dangerous Offenders.

Recommendation 10

"That minutes of Registered Sex Offender Review meetings be held on the social services file".

Action Taken

It is the responsibility of the Police to convene these meetings. Relevant information from these meetings is contained within the social worker's file.

Recommendation 11

"That statutory reviews and Tay Project Reviews be recognised, organised and recorded as discrete events, each having a particular purpose".

Action Taken

Sex offenders subject to Tay Project conditions will undergo both a Tay Project review every 3 months, in addition to a Probation review. Minutes from these reviews will be held in the case file and must be signed by the offender.

Recommendation 12

"That a review be undertaken of the interface between the working arrangements of the Bridge Project and Adult Services team".

Action Taken

The Manager, Criminal Justice Services has met with Bridge Project staff and has agreed a protocol for collaborative working with young sex offenders.

- 6.5 The development of systems to assess, supervise and monitor all potentially dangerous offenders is being addressed in Dundee as a result of this external audit. However, the work of Lord MacLean's Committee and Lady Cosgrove's Expert Panel on Sex Offenders will further guide the development of more effective practice nationally.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation is taken place with the Chief Executive, the Director of Support Services, and the Director of Corporate Planning.

8.0 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. However reference has been made to Committee Reports Nos 970/1998, and 822/1999.

9.0 SIGNATURE

Director of Social Work

Date

