

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee - 18 April 2005
Personnel Committee - 18 April 2005

REPORT ON: Performance Inspection of Criminal Justice Social Work Services

REPORT BY: Director of Social Work and Assistant Chief Executive
(Management)

REPORT NO: 245-2005

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the Social Work Committee on the key findings and recommendations arising from the inspection of criminal justice social work services within the Tayside Partnership. The inspection was conducted by the Social Work Services Inspectorate in September 2004 and is the fourth in a series of inspections of practice of all local authorities providing criminal justice social work services across Scotland. Copies of the Report are contained within the members' lounge. The report also seeks approval from the Personnel Committee to establish a new post.

The Partnership has three months to submit an action plan to the Social Work Services Inspectorate detailing how the recommendations will be progressed.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:-

2.1.1 note the findings and recommendations contained in the report;

2.1.2 require that the Director of Social Work prepare an action plan addressing the recommendations contained in the report;

2.1.3 require the Director of Social Work to provide an update to Committee on progress in relation to the action plan.

2.2 It is recommended that the Personnel Committee approves the establishment of a post of Service Manager, graded PO15-18, £37,461 - £40,098.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications for the Council. The Inspectorate have, however, recommended that the formula for allocating funding for the provision of criminal justice social work services be reviewed to take into account factors such as rurality and high crime areas such as Dundee. It is envisaged that this work will be progressed by CoSLA, the Association of Directors of Social Work and the Scottish Executive.

- 3.2 The cost of the post of Service Manager will be £47,000 and this will be met through a combination of existing and new monies through the 100% funding arrangements for social work services in the Criminal Justice System. There will be no cost to Dundee City Council.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The policy objective of reducing crime and ensuring people are safe and feel safe are reflected in the proposals.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 Inspection Process and Main Findings

- 6.1.1 Inspectors examined the quality of assessments prepared for Courts and the Parole Board and assessed the standard of supervision of offenders on probation, community service and parole and non-parole licence. They interviewed managers, practitioners and offenders. They also spoke to Sheriffs, other agencies within the criminal justice system and the beneficiaries of the Community Service Scheme. They observed practice and reviewed case files. For the file reading exercise inspectors used a four-point scale: very good, good, adequate and poor.

The following summarises some of the key findings:-

- Social enquiry reports were deemed to be of an adequate or above standard in 85% of cases and were well evidenced in terms of conclusions in 86% of cases;
- Reports for the Parole Board were deemed to be of an adequate or above standard in 91% of cases and appropriately described likely supports available on release in 100% of cases;
- Most cases had a plan for supervision which focused on offending and offending related needs and the standard of case recording was viewed as encouraging;
- In most sex offender cases supervision focused consistently on offending however, practice in relation to violent offenders was less well developed and compliance issues were not so well managed;
- There was a high level of satisfaction from beneficiaries of the Partnership's community service schemes however, within Dundee, there was felt to be insufficient individual placements and the range of activities for squads was considered too narrow.

6.2 Key areas for improvement

- 6.2.1 The report highlighted several areas for improvement, a number of which had already been identified by the Partnership as requiring attention. Consequently work to address many of the issues is already underway. All of the recommendations have been accepted and an action plan is currently being prepared for onward submission to the Scottish Executive. One of the significant observations contained within the report relates to the effectiveness of the Partnership specifically whether or not it has contributed significantly to the delivery of more consistent standards of work across the three authorities. This is an area which will be addressed through the Partnership Steering and Management Groups.
- 6.2.2 In terms of reports, it was felt that staff preparing social enquiry reports should do more to probe the offender's account of their offending and circumstances surrounding it. These are issues which have arisen in the inspections of other areas. Within Dundee, there is also a need to provide more focused advice to the courts about sentencing options.
- 6.2.3 The issue of risk assessment arose throughout the report and it was suggested that the Partnership should adopt a single validated framework for risk assessment. It is, however, anticipated that the Scottish Executive will issue guidance in the near future and it is expected that a single risk assessment tool will be introduced nationally. The Partnership will be guided by this development.
- 6.2.4 It was suggested that the Partnership should progress plans to introduce more offence focused groupwork, particularly for those on probation.
- 6.2.5 It was recommended that the Partnership should build on the systems, processes and practices which have been developed to secure improved compliance with National Standards and that common systems of measuring performance and monitoring quality should be introduced.
- 6.2.6 It was suggested that the number of personalised placements available to Community Service should be increased and the range of activities available to work squads should be widened. This recommendation applies particularly to Dundee where there are relatively few personal placements and traditionally work squads have worked on a paired basis which means they are too large to undertake, for example, decorating work or gardening for elderly people. This practice will have to be reviewed.
- 6.2.7 Across the Partnership, where practice is weakest, senior managers must move quickly to establish and maintain proper oversight of the performance and direction of services.

6.3 Role of Service Manager

- 6.3.1 In order to progress the recommendations contained within the report and manage new developments such as the introduction of Community Reparation Orders, it has been suggested that an additional Service Manager post be established within Criminal Justice Services. Although the service has developed considerably over the last 6 years, there has been no increase in management cover and Dundee now manages a number of services across the Tayside Partnership.

6.3.2 The postholder will manage a combination of teams, both within Dundee City Council and across the Tayside Partnership. This will consolidate and enhance Dundee City Council's commitment to the Tayside Partnership. The postholder will also have responsibility for developing approaches to training and continuous professional development within Dundee City. As part of the Service's performance management strategy, the Service Manager will plan and implement auditing, best value and effective practice across all criminal justice service areas.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), the Partnership Management Team and the trade unions have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 The following background paper was used in the preparation of this report:-

Performance Inspection of Criminal Justice Social Work Services: Report on Tayside Partnership: Social Work Services Inspectorate 2005.

Alan G. Baird
Director of Social Work

6 April 2005

J.C. Petrie
Assistant Chief Executive (Management)

6 April 2005