

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE - 28 JANUARY 2019

REPORT ON: PROPOSED NEW "PAUSE" SERVICE FOR DUNDEE

REPORT BY: CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER

REPORT NO: 43-2019

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks approval to introduce a new service, Pause, for women who have had multiple children removed from their care.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i Approves the establishment of a pilot Pause Practice in Dundee, subject to confirmation of funding, which will be informed by a steering group involving relevant partner agencies.
- ii Instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to report back to Committee no later than October 2021 regarding the evaluation and longer term sustainability of a Pause Service for Dundee.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Funding is being made available to introduce a 2 year pilot Pause Practice in Dundee (called 'Pause Dundee') and probably 1 other local authority area in Scotland. Funding is only available for this specific project and would commence from the 2019/20 financial year.

3.2 The cost of a Pause programme for the 2 year pilot period is £300,000 per annum. It is anticipated that funding will be provided by the Big Lottery, Scottish Government and the Robertson Trust. The Robertson Trust funding will use a Social Bridging Finance (SBF) model as outlined in paragraph 4.4.1.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Background

4.1.1 Pause is a charity that operates in a number of local authority areas in England and Northern Ireland. The charity supports local areas to set-up and deliver Pause Practices, which work with women who have experienced, or are at risk of, repeated pregnancies that result in children needing to be removed from their care. Pause Practices offer an intense programme of therapeutic, practical and behavioural support through an integrated and systemic model. Each woman has a bespoke programme designed around their needs. Participation in the programme is voluntary, but with a requirement for the woman to take a "pause" from pregnancy so that they can use their time on the programme to effectively tackle destructive patterns, develop new skills and avoid further trauma. This helps them set in place strong foundations on which they can build a more positive future for themselves. Pause Practices are delivered in each area via a local partner agency (either the local authority or a third sector organisation). The Pause national charity has grown since the first pilot service began in 2013, with 21 Pause Practices reaching 25 local authority areas. In each area where there is a Pause Practice, agencies have come together to support its development and delivery, and help confirm the target population for a service.

- 4.1.2 A national external evaluation of the pilot Pause Practices concluded that women who access support from Pause had a very significant reduction in pregnancies, with a very high level of confidence that the reduction is directly attributable to women's engagement with the programme. The evaluation also found that participants' access and engagement with services, including health, housing and substance misuse, generally increased and was associated with improved outcomes for some women.

4.2 Scoping Work

- 4.2.1 The Scottish Government and Pause held an event during 2017 to raise awareness of the model in Scotland. Following some initial scoping work by officers which clarified that Dundee had a substantial population who could benefit from the service model, Dundee agreed to be a site for a formal scoping project, which involved a review of casework and a cost/benefit analysis. This work was funded by the Robertson Trust and the Big Lottery.

- 4.2.2 The scoping report highlighted the significant needs of the group of women who would be the potential focus of 'Pause Dundee'. The key findings are as follows;

- Between October 2012 and October 2017 a cohort of 113 women in Dundee had 341 children removed.
- 73% of women have had two or three children removed.
- The average number of children removed per woman is 3.0. In other Pause scoping exercises to date, the number of children removed per woman has ranged from 2.7 to 4.4 across a number of different areas.
- The average age of the women is 33, with over 50% of the women being aged between 32 and 38.
- In terms of intervals between births, 31% of women gave birth to another child within 1-2 years of a previous birth, and 23% within 2-3 years of a previous birth.
- The women have many complex and often inter-linking needs. 62% of the cohort have mental health needs (not necessarily diagnosed), 40% have experienced domestic abuse, 54% have issues with drug misuse (49% of which was heroin use) and 58% have criminal justice issues.

- 4.2.3 It is likely that quality of life of participants would improve, with improved family relationships including the potential for improved relationships with children who have previously been removed from their care. The report estimated that delivering Pause could help avoid between 6 and 10 pregnancies over 18 months. There are also potential significant consequential cost savings to a variety of agencies if these vulnerable women's needs are better met, eg through less incidences of domestic abuse, substance misuse and offending; fewer housing problems such as eviction; and greater likelihood of a positive contribution to society eg through increased employability. Estimates indicated that this would help reduce the significant costs associated with permanently removing these children into care – between £914,035 and £1,656,689 over a five year period (depending on age range worked with). The scoping report concluded that Dundee City Council could potentially realise substantial cost savings by delivering a Pause programme.

- 4.2.4 The service aims to work with some of the most vulnerable women within Dundee. Without the Pause intervention, costs to the local authority are likely to increase cumulatively, since children removed often remain in care for extended periods of time. The data collated gives an indication of the resource implications expended by other partners in engagement with a woman and her children, particularly in addressing physical and mental health needs, drug and alcohol addiction, insecure housing, domestic abuse and other criminal justice issues.

4.3 Planned Implementation

4.3.1 The scoping report highlighted the need for a multi-agency approach when dealing with vulnerable women with such complex needs, but noted a real desire from partner agencies for positive outcomes for this group of women. Relevant services and developments that can therefore contribute to improved outcomes for this group of women will include:

- Health and Social Care
- Substance misuse services
- Justice responses including the proposed Women's Custody Centre
- Violence Against Women Services
- The multi-agency New Beginnings Team
- Family Nurse Partnership

4.3.2 Senior stakeholders from relevant services in Dundee have attended information and briefing sessions about the findings of the scoping report, which received favourable feedback. To implement this programme successfully, a steering group of local stakeholders will be formed to ensure that all relevant services are actively involved in ensuring strong strategic connections and that key services are available and provided to the service recipients if required.

4.3.3 The provider of the Pause Dundee will be TCA (Tayside Council on Alcohol). Using criteria developed by the Robertson Trust, the Pause national charity and Dundee City Council officers, TCA were awarded the contract to provide this service in Dundee.

4.4 Sustainability

4.4.1 It is anticipated that the primary funder of the proposed 'Pause Dundee' will be the Robertson Trust. The Trust has developed the Social Bridging Finance (SBF) model, which is a model of grant funding which supports third sector delivery of services whilst also ensuring the long-term sustainability of services which can evidence success through the development of a contract with the public sector. The contract ensures that funding of the service is sustained by the local public sector commissioner, providing that agreed success criteria have been met. Independent grant funding is provided for the demonstration period, alongside an independent evaluation to enable the outcomes to be evidenced. The primary use of these outcomes and indicators will be to retrospectively review Pause Dundee's impact at the end of the demonstration period.

4.4.2 Council officers are currently in discussion with Pause, the Robertson Trust and TCA about the specific success criteria for Pause. Such criteria is likely to include:

- Levels of engagement
- Positive feedback from participants
- High levels of women who do not get pregnant during the programme
- Positive impact on participants, including self-esteem, increased lifestyle stability, improved engagement with services and improved family relationships
- The ongoing need for the service across the Council area

4.4.3 During the period of the pilot phase, work will also be ongoing to identify and confirm the financial assumptions made about savings contained within the scoping report; work with the evaluators to identify social benefits and relevant cost savings across partner agencies; clarify the ongoing demand for the service within Dundee; and engage with neighbouring authorities about any collaborative approaches for this service user group.

4.5 Conclusion

4.5.1 The introduction of Pause Dundee will provide a unique opportunity to take advantage of external funding to provide an innovative and intensive service to some of Dundee's most vulnerable women. This investment in preventative work aims to shift resources to meet needs and thereby prevent the need for higher costs elsewhere.

- 4.5.2 This opportunity will also allow Dundee to be at the forefront of this innovative service and test out the Pause model in a Scottish context, providing vital evaluative information that will help clarify its longer term value within the Scottish social services and health landscape.
- 4.5.3 Clearly the work of Pause will be cross cutting and will also impact on both Justice and Health and Social Care and they will require to be represented on the Steering Group. A report will also be presented to the Integrated Joint Board outlining the initial proposals.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.
- 5.2 A copy of the Impact Assessment is available on the Council's website at www.dundee.gov.uk/iia/reports.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 6.1 The Council Management Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

Jane Martin
Chief Social Work Officer

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