

ITEM No ...8.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE - 27 JANUARY 2020

REPORT ON: PROGRESS REPORT ON PAUSE DUNDEE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GENDERED SERVICES APPROACH TO SERVICE PROVISION

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

REPORT NO: 44-2020

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report follows the report approved by Elected Members on 28 January 2019 (Article IX of the Minute of the Children and Families Services Committee and report no 43-2019 refers) and describes the progress made in establishing the new Pause Dundee service over the last 12 months. It also notes the ongoing development of a "Gendered Services" approach to services for women with multiple and complex needs in the city.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- i) Notes the progress made to establish Pause Dundee and welcomes its work with vulnerable women in Dundee to date.
- ii) Instructs the Executive Director of the Children and Families Service to provide a further 12 month update in January 2021.
- iii) Supports the continued development of a gendered services approach for all women with multiple and complex needs in Dundee.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no new financial implications arising from this report. Report 43-2019 sets out the financial parameters relating to the establishment and sustainability of Pause Dundee. This involves a social bridging model where, if the programme is positively evaluated, then this project would be mainstreamed and require to be funded from existing resources.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Background

- 4.1.1 The previous report explained the background to Dundee's interest in establishing a Pause service in the city. Pause is a charity which supports local areas to set-up and deliver local Pause Practices, which work with vulnerable women who have had 2 or more children removed from their care due to concerns about the child being at significant risk of harm.

The report outlined how the programme forms part of a continuum of support for vulnerable women who have so far been unable to engage with other services and are at risk of further pregnancies and the similar removal of other children from their care. It places a strong emphasis on informed voluntary engagement and pro-active, holistic support.

During an initial engagement period of up to 4 months, women are provided with support to meet their personal needs, including support to access other services. Where the woman considers this is sufficient for them, or if they do not wish to progress to the full Pause Programme, each woman is supported to engage with mainstream services.

Where women do decide that they wish to engage with the full programme, the support includes contraception. If, at any stage after starting the programme, the woman decides that

she does not wish to complete the programme, she still receives support to access other services. For instance, support from their GP, substance misuse services, employability advice and if they become pregnant, from New Beginnings.

4.1.2 Since January 2019, a multi-agency Project Board has coordinated developments and Tayside Council on Alcohol (TCA) began delivering the service in partnership with other services in June 2019. Staff induction and training took place over summer 2019 and the first women commenced the programme in August 2019.

4.1.3 The core engagement work with the women has been taken forward by a project leader and 3 project workers, who have now worked with 32 women who meet the project criteria of having had 2 or more children removed from their care. There are currently a variety of women who are at different stages of engagement, including;

- Individualised support, whereby varying levels of advice and assistance has been provided on a shorter term basis but where the women do not wish longer term support from Pause;
- Commencing on the core programme, whereby women have committed to long term work with the Pause programme

4.1.4 The Pause Programme therefore forms a core part of a continuum of services designed to protect vulnerable women and children from harm. There are very clear service choices and pathways for women who are at risk of becoming pregnant again but may want to stabilise their lives and take a pause from pregnancy, or who wish to avail themselves of other support.

Where vulnerable women who meet the criteria become pregnant, the New Beginnings service, which consists of midwifery, health workers, drug treatment, mental health/learning disability support and social workers, ensures that both their needs and the needs of the unborn child and baby are effectively addressed.

4.2 **Feedback to date**

4.2.1 An independent evaluation has been commissioned by the Robertson Trust and will focus on the social bridging funding model. Additionally, the outcomes for women will be reported to the Project Board for scrutiny. In the interim, 6 months into the programme, women who have commenced on the programme have reported major improvements in various aspects of their lives:

- Better engagement with services such as health services, social work, benefits and housing
- Re-establishing contact with children who have previously been removed from their care
- Improvement in the quality of contact with their children
- Financial stability
- Housing stability
- Improved self-esteem and sense of hope

4.2.2 Even though the women do not look after their children, for some of them it has been possible to start to repair and improve relationships, especially if the children are placed with family members or in temporary foster care. This has a profound effect on their mental wellbeing and also supports the child to make sense of their world in the immediate and longer-term.

4.2.3 These early indications of positive outcomes demonstrate the value of investment in this group of particularly vulnerable women. It is anticipated that, over time, the team's absolute focus on these women will produce broader, longer term positive outcomes across a wide range of issues including parenting, relationships, mental health and employability.

Case Study

One woman, in her 20's, has experienced the removal of 2 children during the last few years, after concerns about the impact of domestic abuse, neglect and chaotic parenting on the children. Support had been provided in the form of a refuge facility, parenting programmes and 1:1 guidance from a Social Worker but the concerns persisted and the Court authorised the permanent placing of the children with a relative. She was then referred to the Pause Programme and following a period of early discussions and engagement, she has recently said she would like to fully participate. Since then, her relationship with the relative who now cares for the children has improved considerably; her financial circumstances have stabilised to the extent that she was able to buy Christmas presents for the children; contact with the children has increased; and although she remains anxious in public places, her confidence has improved markedly. Support will continue and also now includes counselling.

4.3 Related Developments

- 4.3.1 The commencement of Pause has coincided with key agencies coming together to raise the profile of the broader group of women with multiple and complex needs. These typically include women who often do not access services and who frequently present themselves only at times of crisis, which makes it difficult to provide support which sustains longer-term change.

These women have distinct underlying needs which include experience of domestic abuse, including coercion and control; prostitution; sexual exploitation; child care responsibilities; and repeated removal of children in their care. Inevitably, this impacts on their mental health, substance misuse, offending, financial inclusion and other related issues.

- 4.3.3 This was recognised by the Commission on Women Offenders Report published in April 2012, which made 33 recommendations on gender related practice specifically within the criminal justice system. This led to the innovative development of a local Women's Team at Friarfield House, along with the Scottish Prison Service development of Community Custody Units.

More recently, the Drugs Commission has recognised the importance of gender based practice across all services to address the needs of vulnerable women, allowing them to access and benefit from the right services at the right time. The needs of women are forming a key part of the Drugs Commission action plan.

4.3.4 Conclusion

The Pause Programme is providing an innovative and intensive service to some of Dundee's most vulnerable women. The initial indications are that it is meeting these women's needs and producing positive outcomes. In particular, it has been especially encouraging to have such positive feedback from the women who have started the programme.

Going forwards, the Pause Programme will both inform and be informed by wider developments on support to vulnerable women, along with the Robertson Trust evaluation. The pilot continues to position Dundee at the forefront of innovative services for vulnerable women and allows the city to test the model in a Scottish context. A further report will be provided in January 2021.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This Report has been subject to an assessment of any impact on equality and diversity, fairness, poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 The Council Management Team and Chief Social Work Officer were consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.

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January 2020