

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Social Work Committee – 21 August 2000
Personnel and Management Services Committee -
21 August 2000

REPORT ON: Social Work Department - Criminal Justice Services - Group Work
Proposal for Offenders

REPORT BY: Director of Social Work and Director of Personnel and
Management Services

REPORT NO: 457-2000

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report advises members of a new community-based group work development in Criminal Justice Social Work Services in Dundee.

It is proposed that the NCH Action for Children and the Criminal Justice Social Work Service combine to form a team, which will have responsibility for the delivery of a wide range of group-based programmes to offenders. NCH are already in partnership with Dundee City Council in the provision of an 'alternative to custody' scheme for young offenders. This new development will build on the success of their existing project to provide a single integrated service to all offenders, irrespective of age, who are the subject of community based court or parole orders.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Social Work Committee notes and approves the development proposals contained in this report.
- 2.2 It is recommended that the Personnel and Management Services Committee:-
 - 2.2.1 establishes a post of Senior Social Worker (£22,083 - £24,009) in the Criminal Justice Social Work Service;
 - 2.2.2 establishes a post of Social Worker (£17,322 - £22,083) in the Criminal Justice Social Work Service;
 - 2.2.3 deletes a post of Social Care Officer (£12,699 - £15,240) based in East Port House.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of the above recommendations to Dundee City Council will be met from the Criminal Justice Social Work budget, which is 100% funded by the Scottish Executive.

4 **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This report supports key theme 9, which acknowledges the right of “people to live without fear of personal violence from crime or persecution”.

5 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The proposal contributes to the range of sentencing options available to the Courts for all offenders irrespective of age, gender or ethnic origins. In this respect the proposal promotes the principle of equal opportunity.

6 **BACKGROUND**

In early 1998, HM Inspectorate of Probation for England and Wales published a report entitled “Strategies for Effective Supervision” which drew together the available evidence about the impact of the work of probation services with offenders. In November 1998, a further publication “Evidence Based Practice: A Guide to Effective Practice” translated some of the thinking behind the earlier report into practical guidance for operational managers.

By the end of that year, a steering group had been established in Scotland to promote the use of best practice in the community supervision of offenders. This group was charged with the task of providing leadership, direction and co-ordination in the development of effective practice and has representation from the Scottish Office, COSLA, the voluntary sector, academic institutions and the Scottish Prison Service. Audit Scotland has more recently been added to the agencies represented on the steering group.

- 6.1 In May 1999, guidance was issued by the Steering Group to encourage and assist councils in the development of effective practice in all aspects of supervision of offenders in the community. Central to the guidance was the promotion of group work with offenders as a cost efficient and effective means of providing services.
- 6.2 Dundee City Council welcomed the guidance from the Steering Group and recognised the importance of developing initiatives that address the issues of effectiveness, consistency and quality of practice within the Criminal Justice Service.

7 **PROPOSALS**

- 7.1 The Criminal Justice Social Work Service, in conjunction with NCH Action for Children, developed this proposal for a group-based service for all offenders who are the subject of Probation Orders or Parole Licence. The service will be delivered by a team of Criminal Justice social workers who will work alongside NCH social work staff to form an integrated group-work team. The team will deliver a range of groups, which will be available to offenders at medium or high-risk of re-offending and according to the assessed needs of the individual.

7.2 The aims and objectives of this initiative are:-

Aims

- To provide a credible community based disposal for all offenders who are assessed as being at a medium or high risk of re-offending and who are the subject of a Probation Order or Parole Licence.
- To offer a level of intensity of service through a modular group-work programme which is appropriate to the assessed level of need of each participating offender.
- To plan, implement and evaluate a series of modular group based programmes in partnership with NCH Action for Children.
- To provide a community-based service which positively influences the frequency and seriousness of offending of those who attend.
- To assist offenders in the development of skills, attitudes and behaviour which facilitates their positive participation in the community.

Objectives

- To enable offenders to reassess their values, attitudes and behaviour through encouragement and support, challenge and, where appropriate, confrontation.
- To encourage offenders to take responsibility for their choices, actions and their consequences.
- To acquire an understanding of the damaging consequences of their offending on the victims of their crimes.
- To provide offenders with the skills, knowledge and motivation to reduce the seriousness and frequency of their offending.
- To assist offenders in making more positive use of leisure time and community resources.
- Through a relapse prevention programme, to evaluate participants ability to sustain learning and motivation to continue with a non-offending lifestyle.

7.3 The knowledge, expertise and services of the group-work team will be available to residents of East Port House, (a residential unit for offenders) and the Choice Project (which works with persistent young offenders). Both of these projects share the common aim of reducing the seriousness of the offending behaviour of their client group and will benefit from the offence-focussed work undertaken by the group-work team. The group-work team will also have the responsibility to develop effective partnerships with other agencies, such as the police and drug and alcohol services, to expand the level of expertise available to them in developing offending behaviour programmes.

7.4 **Staffing**

The team will consist of a Practice Development Manager and two social workers, employed by NCH Action for Children and a senior social worker and four social workers employed by Dundee City Council. The responsibility for the operational management of the service will lie with the Service Manager of the Criminal Justice Social Work Service.

The posts of Senior Social Worker and Social Worker are not currently within the establishment of the Criminal Justice Social Work Service. It is intended to fund these posts in part from the Criminal Justice budget and in part by deleting the post of Social Care Officer from East Port House. The new posts will provide groupwork input into East Port House.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Support Services, Director of Finance and Sheriffs, Dundee Sheriff Court, have been consulted on this report. Consultation has also taken place with the trade unions.

9 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.

10 SIGNATURES

J. Roberts
Director of Social Work

Date

J.C. Petrie
Director of Personnel and Management Services

Date