

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 21 August 2000**

**REPORT ON: YOUTH CRIME REVIEW : ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 523-2000**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This report advises members that additional resources are being made available to local authorities to combat youth crime and seeks approval to confirm Dundee City Council's acceptance of these new monies. The report outlines the community based alternatives which are in place and being developed in Dundee.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that The Social Work Committee:-

- 2.1 Note and approve the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Instruct the Director of Social Work to write to The Scottish Executive confirming Dundee City Council's wish to take up its allocation of additional resources.
- 2.3 Agree that detailed proposals for the use of these monies be developed in consultation with all the agencies represented on the Young Offender Group and instruct the Director of Social Work to bring back a report to Committee.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

From September 2000, local authorities are being allocated an additional £3.5 million through the Children's Services Development Fund. Dundee City Council's share of these new monies will amount to £148,000.

Using this money for community based alternatives to residential placements outwith Dundee will help to reduce the long term pressures on the corporate residential schools budget.

The typical length of time a case is held by the CHOICE Project (a community based alternative to residential school) is 6 to 9 months. The unit cost of this is between £3,000 and £4,500 depending on the length of time which the case is actually held. A similar period in a residential or secure establishment could cost between £63,000 and £94,000.

### **4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

The proposals within this report are in line with the Agenda 21 objectives and will ensure that some of the most vulnerable children and young people in Dundee will have their needs met locally.

### **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

Effective work with young offenders promotes the welfare of children and adults by creating a safer community with much reduced crime levels.

## **6.0 BACKGROUND TO YOUTH CRIME REVIEW**

6.1 In November 1999, an advisory group was set up to review youth crime. The Minister for Children and Education launched the advisory group's report: "It's a Criminal Waste; Stop Youth Crime Now" and the Scottish Executive's response on 9 June 2000. The Scottish Executive has accepted the recommendations of the advisory group which suggest that tough and effective community-based alternatives to custody for young people who repeatedly re-offend should be introduced.

An expansion to the range and availability of effective community-based interventions and programmes for persistent young offenders that can be used by Reporters and Children's Hearings, was one of the advisory group's key recommendations. The Scottish Executive agreed that this recommendation is central to the development of measures to address youth crime and to provide credible and effective alternatives to custody. It was recognised that this would require new resources.

### **6.2 Dundee's Response to Youth Crime Review**

In response to the advisory group's report, the first Youth Crime Strategy for Dundee 2000 has been developed by members of the Young Offenders Group, a sub group of the Strategic Planning Group for Children's Services in Dundee. A working draft of the strategy is now out for consultation.

The advisory group's report and the Scottish Executive's response to it is presently subject to public consultation and it is intended that Dundee City Council gives its views. The response on behalf of Dundee City Council will be reported to Social Work Committee in October 2000.

### **6.3 Local Developments to Reduce Offending by Young People**

Dundee City Council has developed a range of services to meet the needs of young people who offend and who may require to be looked after and accommodated by the authority. These include:-

- 1 Building a Secure and Close Support Unit in Dundee.
- 2 Improving the staffing ratio in four residential units for young people and changing their operational focus to avoid mixing children of very different ages and to separate long-term from short-term emergency placements.
- 3 Developing a Community Support Team to provide intensive home support to young people at risk of coming into the care system.
- 4 Expanding family placement services through developing the A.C.E Foster Care Scheme as a direct alternative to secure care.
- 5 Sharing decision-making between the Education and Social Work Departments through a special group which recommends young people for off-site provision at Connect 5, Castlepark and Balerno, or alternatives to mainstream school such as work experience or college attendance and jointly manages admissions to residential schools.
- 6 Setting up the CHOICE Project; a resource team which works with young people who offend.

All of these steps have been taken to meet the needs of Dundee young people through local services. The purpose of this has been both to lessen the need to send young people to residential schools in other parts of the country, but also to reduce the expenditure incurred in making such external placements which is provision of last resort.

More details are given below about the Secure and Close Support Unit; the Community Support Team; the A.C.E. Scheme and the CHOICE Project. This information will be shared with members of the Children's Panel at a training event on Tuesday 29 August 2000.

6.4 *Secure and Close Support Unit*

This specialist unit has a dual function within one building: secure care for up to 4 young people who are deemed a danger to themselves or others, and a high supervision/support facility for 5 others who are unable to be cared for within Dundee's other provision. The main objectives are to provide a high quality child care service whilst offering appropriate levels of control and security, with the aim of stopping disruptive patterns of behaviour while minimising the amount of time the young person requires in secure care.

The Social Work Department and the Education Department are collaborating in this venture, with three Education staff being based at the unit to teach the young people who are living in secure care.

The unit is short-term only and is not approved to provide secure care for young people who have been sentenced but can temporarily hold a young person on remand. The unit will prevent the need for some young people to be sent to secure or residential school placements outside Dundee.

6.5 *The Community Support Team*

The Community Support Team is a project funded by the Scottish Executive for 3 years through the Children's Services Development Fund. It offers intensive support in the evenings and at weekends to young people and families where there is a high risk of a child being accommodated by the Council.

The aim of this service is to help children to stay at home or in other community settings. In working towards this goal, the Team also actively works towards the return home of children who are looked after by the Council. The Team also works with young people returning home from external placements.

The work done with each child and their family is planned alongside the social worker. A programme may include individual counselling, support to a parent or include activities with the young person as a way of promoting their interest in local community pursuits. The intensive support will always attempt to strengthen family relationships, whilst addressing the responsibilities of the parent and the young person.

In its first six months the Team has worked intensively with 30 young people, supporting the successful return home of 11 young people whilst helping to prevent the need for a further 14 young people to be accommodated by the Council.

6.6 *The A.C.E. Scheme*

Dundee City Council has used some of the monies available from the Children's Services Development Fund to develop a small skill based fostering scheme. This scheme (A.C.E.) offers an Alternative family based Community Experience to young people aged 9-18 who would otherwise be placed in secure accommodation or residential school placements.

The foster carers recruited to the scheme have undergone a comprehensive assessment and training programme, and have recently commenced the SVQ level III in Working with Children and Young People. They receive a fee of £16,224 per annum plus allowances. A High level of 24 hour support is given.

The scheme can accommodate a maximum of 6 young people at any one time. Currently 4 young people are in placement, with 2 further placements scheduled for September 2000. The profiles of the young people currently placed include aspects of youth crime and high risk behaviour. The foster carers and other community support staff work in partnership to try and change this behaviour.

6.7 *The CHOICE Project*

The CHOICE Project (Challenging Offending in Communities Effectively) began taking referrals on 1 December 1998. The Project offers a range of programmes and services for children and young people aged 12-17 years who are involved in offending behaviour.

The Project's objectives are:-

to effect a reduction or elimination in the offending behaviour of the young people referred,  
to achieve a reduction in the number of placements of offenders in secure accommodation,  
to increase the numbers of 14 to 17 year olds whose cases are dealt with by the Children's Hearing system as an alternative to the Sheriff Court,  
to successfully divert young offenders from the Children's Hearing system.

To meet these objectives the Project provides a range of services and programmes, including:-

individual and groupwork programmes for serious and/or persistent young offenders (e.g. anger management, motor vehicle offending, victim awareness),

a dedicated drugs/alcohol related offending service,

a Court/Hearing overlap service, funded by Criminal Justice Services,

the Compass scheme for diverting from the Children's Hearing system young people at risk of developing an offending pattern, by involving them either in youth groups and activity programmes.

The Project has demonstrated success in meeting its objectives. To date, 63% of the 44 persistent young offenders have been helped to reduce or eliminate their offending behaviour. In 9 of those cases the reduction in offending has led to the CHOICE Project programme being an alternative to an expensive placement in secure accommodation. In addition, the existence of the Project has played a role in the young offender being referred back to the Children's Hearing system from the Court system on 11 occasions. The Compass scheme has to date diverted 24 young people from the Children's Hearing system preventing the need for statutory intervention in their lives.

## **7.0 USE OF NEW MONIES**

Detailed proposals for the use of the new monies will be developed in consultation with all the agencies represented on the Young Offender Group. These will include expanding the above services; funding new initiatives arising from the Youth Crime Strategy and/or purchasing specialist residential placements.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

8.1 The Director of Finance, Director of Education and the Director of Support Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **9.0 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

## **10.0 SIGNATURE**

Director of Social Work

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Date

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