

## **DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE – 24<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2013**

**REPORT ON: COMMISSION ON WOMEN OFFENDERS**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK**

**REPORT NO: 269 - 2013**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The Social Work and Health Committee agreed a report in August 2012 (CR 291-2012) which summarised the findings from the Commission on Women Offenders and detailed the approach being taken locally. It was agreed that a progress report would be provided within a year. This report therefore summarises key developments and advises of additional funding to support further expansion of the approach. Members are reminded that the Commission made a total of 37 recommendations which placed a focus on the development of multi-agency centres to coordinate and deliver a consistent range of services to women across the criminal justice system, alongside wider structural reform in the management, commissioning and delivery of adult offender services. There has recently been a national consultation on the reform of community justice and the position of Dundee City Council was approved by the Policy and Resources Committee in March 2013 (CR 106-2013). It is anticipated that the outcome of the consultation will be announced later in the year.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Social Work and Health Committee:

- Notes the additional funding awarded by the Scottish Government to develop services for women offenders as described in paragraph 3.0 of this report and endorse the approach being taken locally.
- Requires the Director of Social Work to progress the establishment changes outlined in paragraph 4.4 of this report.

### **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications for Dundee City Council as the service will be awarded an additional £236,000 of ring-fenced funding over 2 years in 2013-14 and 2014-15. The successful bid has been informed by the principles of Best Value and sustainability, whereby performance will be monitored and multi-agency services continued to be delivered beyond then if they are able to demonstrate positive outcomes which reflect continued local priorities in the Single Outcome Agreement.

### **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

4.1 The Government accepted 33 of the 37 recommendations arising from the Women's Commission and agreed to pilot Community Justice Centres to coordinate work from a range of agencies, including substance misuse, mental health, housing, debt, education and employment. The Government said it would also progress the related recommendations to create multi-disciplinary teams, involved in the assessment and planning of services to women, from diversion from prosecution through to alternatives to custodial remands, community sentences and resettlement from prison.

In addition, the Government accepted proposals for women to have a named key worker as a single point of contact, intensive mentoring, supported accommodation and improved assessment and treatment of mental health. In terms of the operation of the system as a

whole, it accepted a number of proposals including the roll out Fiscal Work Orders and strengthened approaches to diversion and bail.

4.2 This type of approach has already been progressed within Dundee and a dedicated Women's Team, consisting of Social Workers, Support Workers, an NHS Nurse and Tayside Council on Alcohol (TCA) Mentors, has been established to focus on the distinct needs of women offenders. The team works alongside other co-located services at Friarfield House, such as the Police and key third sector providers with supported accommodation for more vulnerable women being provided at East Port House. The approach was commented on positively by the Commission in its final report and the Team has reached the final of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Care Accolades Awards for 2013.

4.3 Locally, the Team has continued to provide distinct services to women offenders across the criminal justice system. It has increased its range of expertise through the secondment of an Apex Guidance Worker to provide support to overcome barriers to employment, funded through European Social Fund monies and the extension of mentoring services in a Public Social Partnership with TCA, funded through Change Fund monies. Typically, the team works with an average of 130 women at any time, with around 10 subject to diversionary measures, 90 subject to community sentences and 30 in prison at HMP Edinburgh and Cornton Vale. As a result of all developments, it is engaging with women more effectively across the criminal justice system. When comparing 2011-12 with 2012-13, the following was achieved:

- Formal diversion - referrals from the Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service increased by 63%
- Custodial remands – reduced by 35%
- Court Reports - nil reports submitted to the Court reduced by 10%
- Prison sentences – reduced by 42%
- Community sentences – an increase in woman who successfully completed Orders increased by 19%
- Resettlement – women engaging with voluntary services increased by 90%

4.4 The Team has now been successful in receiving additional funding from the Government to extend the approach and formally develop as a pilot Community Justice Centre. As such, a total of £118,000 in each of the years 2013-14 and 2014-15 will be used to fund a Partnership Development Worker, responsible for coordinating holistic approaches; a Mental Health Officer, responsible for advising and training front line staff and providing specialist services; and a Welfare Rights Officer, responsible for promoting financial inclusion. Although the funding is for 2 years only the planned approach will be very much to develop sustainability by using the additional monies to skill staff and services up to be more responsive to the needs and risks of women offenders and improve outcomes. The focus is therefore on developing an appropriate range of resources throughout the City as opposed to delivering services from a specific building.

The Development Worker will have a particular focus on implementing an early and effective screening approach and on improving links with the Crown Office and Scottish Prison Service to improve diversion and resettlement.

4.5 There will be an emphasis on sustainable partnership working through the demonstrable achievement of key outcomes relevant to both the criminal justice and health and social care agenda, in order to continue to deliver services beyond 2015. The Government will work with the service to develop and monitor a framework to measure the following key outcomes:

- The harm to communities caused by women offenders will be reduced
- Individually targeted areas of social capital for women offenders will improve
- The proportion of women offenders completing mandatory interventions will increase
- The women will identify the supports as having made a positive difference to their lives

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

## **6.0 CONSULTATIONS**

The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Head of Democratic and Legal Services.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report to Social Work and Health Committee (CR 291 2012)  
Report to Policy and Resources Committee (CR 106-2013)

The Scottish Government Response to the Commission on Women Offenders is available at [www.scotland.gov.uk/About/commissionwomenoffenders](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/commissionwomenoffenders)

Jennifer G Tocher  
**Director of SocialWork**

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> June 2013