

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 17 JUNE 2002

REPORT ON: DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF YOUTH CRIME

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 536 - 2002

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

This report seeks approval for a proposed partnership between Dundee City Council Social Work Department and Victim Support to develop a dedicated service for victims of youth crime. This new initiative is part of a range of new services under the umbrella of Dundee's Youth Justice Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Social Work Committee,

2.1 Notes the contents of the report and in particular:

2.2 Approves payments up to the value of £30,230 for Victim Support to establish a Development Officer for victims of youth crime.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scottish Executive has awarded Dundee City Council the additional sum of £83,230 in 2002/03 as youth crime monies with the specific aim of expanding the provision of restorative justice services. The cost of purchasing this service will be met in full from this award. The Executive has indicated that Dundee's allocation of specific Youth Crime monies will increase by £170,000 for year 2003/04 and as such this will allow this new service to be provided through that financial year.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

The proposals in this report promote improved community safety and the feelings of well-being of the citizens of Dundee.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

The proposed actions outlined in this report seek to promote the improved equality of opportunity and social inclusion of children and young people involved in offending behaviour.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Background

The concept of restorative justice relates to measures that are designed to give victims of crime an opportunity to express their views about the impact of the offending on them and their families, and to encourage offenders to accept responsibility for the harm they have caused.

6.2 In December 2000, the Social Work Committee approved the Youth Justice Strategy, which included the following objectives:

To foster and increase community safety in all sectors in Dundee; and

To respond to the needs and rights of the victims of youth crime in all aspects of the strategy.

6.3 In January 2001 the Scottish Executive launched its Scottish Strategy for Victims, which included the following objectives:

To provide for the emotional and practical support needs of victims;

To provide for the information needs of victims; and,

To encourage participation in the criminal justice system.

6.4 In January 2002 the Scottish Executive published its "Action Programme to Reduce Youth Crime 2002", in which the Executive indicated its intention to introduce a range of measures that would give victims of youth crime and their communities greater confidence in Scotland's system of Youth Justice. One of their key action points is to give victims an appropriate place in the youth justice system, with a stated aim to expand provision of restorative justice schemes. Funding to do this was announced in March 2002.

7.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICE FOR VICTIMS OF YOUTH CRIME

7.1 In support of the objectives outlined above, it is proposed that funding from the Scottish Executive be used to develop a new type of service for victims of youth crime. Victim Support Dundee has agreed to provide a dedicated Development Officer to facilitate the exchange of information between the victim of youth crime and the young offender. Involvement in this exchange will be voluntary.

7.2 The focus of this intervention is to give the victim of youth crime the opportunity to express their views. With the victim's consent, the Development Officer would ensure that the social worker who has contact with that child can fully appraise that child of the consequences of their actions. The child and parent would then be asked by the social worker for their response. In some cases it may be appropriate for the child to write an apology and an explanation for their actions, noting also their appreciation of the consequences of their actions. The exchange would take place through the child's social worker and the Development Officer.

7.3 The Development Officer's role would also include the provision of information to victims about the workings of the Children's Hearing system, when such information has been requested. In addition, victims who are identified as in need of support can be referred to the local Victim Support service for follow-up. It is anticipated that close working relationships would be created with SACRO, the Reporter service, and Dundee City Council services that deal with young offenders. Estimated demand for this service is approximately 500 cases per year.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 Consultation has been undertaken with all the agencies and organisations represented on the Youth Justice Strategy Group. The Director of Support Services and the Director of Finance have also 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

Date

31 May 2002