

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 17 November 2003

REPORT ON: NEW MONIES TO COMBAT YOUTH CRIME

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

REPORT NO: 743-2003

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The report seeks approval of proposals to spend new monies that have been made available to combat youth crime. It provides summary details of the proposed development of befriending and mentoring services. These services are intended to help prevent youth crime as part of the ongoing process of implementing 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:

2.1.1 Approves payment up to the value of £35,307 to Tayside Council on Alcohol to develop a mentoring service for children who are at risk of being involved in offending behaviour;

2.1.2 Approves payment up to the value of £15,000 to YouthLink Dundee to develop a befriending service for children who are at risk of being involved in offending behaviour;

2.1.3 Approves payment up to the value of £5,000 to Dundee Women and Children's Project to develop support services to children who are at risk of being involved in offending behaviour.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In 2003 the Scottish Executive awarded Dundee City Council the sum of £55,307 as youth crime prevention monies. The cost of purchasing these services will therefore be met in full from this award. The Executive has indicated that Dundee's allocation of specific Youth Crime monies will increase for the year 2004/05 and as such this will allow these services to be provided through that financial year, subject to satisfactory evaluation.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

The proposals in this report promote improved community safety and therefore the 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 at risk of being involved in offending behaviour. In addition, these proposals provide increased volunteering opportunities for adults within Dundee to develop skills in dealing with vulnerable children and using such skills to increase community safety.

6.0 MAIN TEXT

6.1 Background

As part of its commitment to youth crime prevention, the Scottish Executive awarded Dundee City Council the sum of £55,307 to expand the provision of resources within the City that would help prevent youth crime. The Executive requires that this fund is distributed to locally based voluntary organisations.

6.2 An inter-agency commissioning group drawn from Dundee's Youth Justice Strategy Group was established to oversee the distribution of funds. The commissioning group considered the priorities set by the Executive for expenditure, in addition to the other funding streams for service development in the area of youth crime work. As such the group sought to use this fund to increase the range of resources for children who were not yet at the stage of being involved in persistent offending. The group preferred that the fund be used to develop the skills of members of the community through structured befriending and mentoring schemes.

6.3 Research highlights befriending as having significant potential in guiding children and young people away from criminal activity. It allows children to be matched with a positive role model from within their local community, with the potential for the child to experience positive changes in their life and for such change to be sustained. Mentoring involves the volunteer befriender in a higher level of commitment to the child, several times per week if necessary, which may be required by children who are at greater risk of straying into offending. As these volunteers require training and ongoing support, the priority for the commissioning group was to fund organisations that had sufficient experience and infrastructure in working with children at risk of offending, and that had particular experience in developing a volunteer base.

6.4 The proposals from Tayside Council on Alcohol, YouthLink Dundee and Dundee Women and Children's Project met the criteria and were able to demonstrate how they would prevent and tackle youth crime through creating a combined total of 50 volunteer befriender/mentors between the 3 schemes.

6.5 It will be expected that these new services will work closely with statutory agencies, Council Departments and other voluntary agencies as part of the process of implementing Dundee's Youth Justice Strategy. The Strategy was approved by the Social Work Committee in December 2000 and included the following objectives:

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

To provide early intervention for children and young people deemed vulnerable to becoming drawn into offending behaviour;

To divert as many children and young people charged with offences as possible from further offending and the need for compulsory measures of supervision and/or prosecution by offering more effective alternatives

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 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.

8.0 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.

9.0 SIGNATURE

Director of Social Work

Date