

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: AUDIT SCOTLAND "DEALING WITH OFFENDING BY YOUNG PEOPLE"
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 27 FEBRUARY 2003	Ref: SD/JM	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the recommendations contained within the Audit Scotland Report "Dealing with Offending by Young People" the report was published on 5 December 2002.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Review of Youth Crime and the Scottish Executive's response were published in June 2000. This report made recommendations about the way young people should be worked with in their local communities to reduce crime and increase community safety.
- 2.2. Financial resources were announced for the period 2000-2005 to ensure local authorities could progress the implementation of the recommendations of the Review.
- 2.3. In June 2001 Audit Scotland published the report "Youth Justice in Scotland". This was an initial review of what is known about children and young people who offend, their offences and how their behaviour is dealt with in Scotland.
- 2.4. This report proposed a performance audit be undertaken to review the extent to which services meet accepted good practice and make recommendations as to how these services may be improved. The report "Dealing with Offending by Young People" is the result of that study.
- 2.5. Audit Scotland carried out an audit of practice of work with young offenders in 6 Local Authorities in Scotland. North Lanarkshire was one of the authorities involved. Case records were examined, interviews took place with managers, focus groups were convened with practitioners, interviews and meetings also took place with the Scottish Reporter's Administration, Police, Education, voluntary and independent sector providers.
- 2.6. In June 2002 Scotland's Action Programme to reduce Youth Crime was published and reported to Committee in August 2002.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

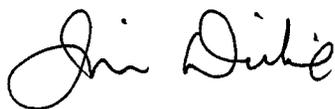
- 3.1. The report makes 38 recommendations to the Scottish Executive and other agencies involved with young people who offend.
- 3.2. These recommendations can be summarised into 5 key areas:
- 3.2.1 **Time taken**: it takes too long for young people to proceed through the Children's Hearing and Criminal Justice Systems. Time standards exist within the Hearing System, and must be monitored and reported. The recommendation advises that consideration must be given to time standards within the Criminal Justice system. (Fast track pilots for specialist Children's Hearings and Youth Courts are to be implemented in 2003.)
- 3.2.2 **Variation in decision making**: decisions on what should happen to young people should be based on good quality information and data and reflect good practice. The recommendations include – a national system of police warnings should be adopted, systems must be developed to enable information to be shared and transferred between all agencies involved in youth justice, the quality of social background reports must improve, social workers will require further training and support particularly in the use of risk assessment.
- 3.2.3 **Variation in service provision**: many young people do not get the services they need to tackle their offending behaviour. Recommendations include;
- more programmes developed around the "What Works" principles
 - a national system of accreditation for specialist programmes should be adopted for young people
 - independent inspection programme required to provide regular information on the quality of services
 - agencies to subscribe to a single set of performance indicators
 - The Scottish Executive should consider developing legislation to ensure the statutory provision of aftercare for all young people leaving prison.
- 3.2.4 **Youth Justice spend**: 37% of Youth Justice spend is directed at tackling offending behaviour and 63% is spent reaching decisions about young offenders. Recommendations include;
- The Scottish Executive should review the potential for a shift in resources from decision making to tackling offending behaviour
 - The Executive should review whether spend on residential and custodial services can be shifted to community based services
 - The nature of how secure places are commissioned should be reviewed
 - The Scottish Executive should address the inconsistencies between Grant Aided Expenditure and budgets so that Local Authorities have a clearer lead on what expenditure is expected on children's services
- 3.2.5 **Staffing in children's services**: there is a growing problem in finding social work staff to provide the core supervision service for children. The report recommends the Scottish Executive and Councils urgently tackle the shortage of social workers in children's services.
- 3.3. There will be two follow up stages. Local audit work will take place across Scotland in the first half of 2003 and a national report will be published in the summer of 2003. The second stage of follow up work will assess progress in implementing the report's recommendations and will take place in two to three years.
- 3.4. Audit Scotland will monitor progress in implementing the required changes on behalf of the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission.

- 4.1. North Lanarkshire's allocation from the Youth Crime Review for 2002/03 is £357,000. This amount will increase to £714,000 in 2003/04.
- 4.2. Previous reports have been submitted to Committee detailing the spend of these resources. Developments include; the establishment of a young people's mediation and reparation service by SACRO, intensive services from Includem Offenders Project, the expansion of the New Start Scheme, development of a youth justice team in each of the six area teams and more recently commissioning of a group conferencing service and partial funding of the reconfiguration and expansion of Community Service to a new Restorative Justice Service working with offenders over 14 years of age.
- 4.3. North Lanarkshire is adopting a common assessment tool, Youth Level of Service Case Management Inventory (YLS-CMI) for work with all young offenders allowing appropriate targeting of service, as well as monitoring, review and evaluation of intervention.
- 4.4. The Department will adopt the core programme of "Offending is Not the Only Choice (Youth Version)" which is designed using the "What Works" methodology and based on the principles of effective practice. Members of staff are currently undergoing the training programmes required to implement both the assessment tool and the programme.
- 4.5. The pilot Youth Court is likely to be based in Hamilton Sheriff Court which will have implications for three North Lanarkshire area teams, Motherwell, Wishaw and Bellshill. Indications from the Executive are that there are likely to be additional resources provided to service the Court and the young people involved. The Department has made a bid for additional resources to work with these young offenders. The report of the feasibility group has not yet been made public but is expected in the short term.
- 4.6. Youth Justice is an integral part of the corporate agenda on children's and young people's services. The Children's Services Strategy group has a sub group which is the designated multi agency youth justice team in North Lanarkshire.
- 4.7. The report highlights the difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff into children's services. This is a national problem and is not particular to North Lanarkshire. North Lanarkshire has made strenuous efforts to counter the difficulties caused by the shortage of qualified staff, back filling posts with social work assistants, and promoting and funding the Social Work Entry programme.
- 4.8. As part of the follow up work by Audit Scotland, North Lanarkshire is being audited in January and February 2003.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the content of the report
- (ii) request the Director of Social Work to provide a further report detailing progress of youth justice services, policy and strategic developments



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Director of Social Work
9 January 2003

For further information on this report please contact Susan Devlin, Manager, Children and Families and Criminal Justice TEL: (01698 332032)

A copy of the Report and Executive summary is available in the Members Library.