

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE : 14 SEPTEMBER 2000**

#### **'IT'S A CRIMINAL WASTE : STOP YOUTH CRIME NOW'**

##### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the outcome of a review into youth crime, the Scottish Executive's response to the recommendations contained in the report, the intended action to be taken by the Educational and Social Services Department and to seek approval to refer additional staff bids to Personnel and Property Sub-Committee.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In November 1999 the Scottish Executive commissioned a review into youth crime by an Advisory Group. The Group's remit was to:
- (i) assess the extent and effectiveness of options currently available to Children's Hearings and Courts in cases involving persistent offenders and;
  - (ii) to look at the scope for improving the range and availability of options aimed at addressing the actions of persistent young offenders
- 2.2 The Advisory Group's report 'It's a Criminal Waste : Stop Youth Crime Now', and the Scottish Executive's response were made public in June 2000.

### **3.0 REPORT OF THE ADVISORY GROUP**

- 3.1 The report sets out a number of objectives pursued by the Advisory Group. These can be summarised as:
- (i) Improved community safety e.g. a reduction in youth crime
  - (ii) greater emphasis on prevention, diversion and effective intervention.

It is also clear from the report that the avoidance of custody and the prevention (or at least the delay) of entry by young people into the adult criminal justice system is an objective of the Group.

- 3.2 In setting out their recommendations the Advisory Group sought to ensure that the deeds as well as the needs of young people who offend are addressed. The report makes nine recommendations for early implementation and four for medium to longer-term action.
- 3.3 Of the nine recommendations for early implementation three have an immediate implication for local authorities. These are:
- (i) the expansion of the range of quality, community based programmes for persistent/serious young offenders which can be accessed by the reporter and children's hearings;
  - (ii) the expansion of diversion schemes;
  - (iii) development of local arrangements to co-ordinate multi-agency activity to address both the needs and deeds of young people who offend

#### **4.0 RESPONSE OF THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE**

- 4.1 The Scottish Executive have accepted all of the recommendations contained in the Advisory Group's report. Most are agreed for early implementation while a few, they suggest, require more work.
- 4.2 The Scottish Executive, accepted as central the key proposal from the Advisory Group that there requires to be an expansion to the range of offence focused community based intervention programmes, and acknowledged new resources require to be made available.
- 4.3 The mechanism by which the Scottish Executive intends to make new resources available to local authorities is through the Children's Service Development Fund. £3.5m is being made available nationally. The indicative sum likely to be received by East Ayrshire is £92,000 for this current financial year. An annual increase in this sum is anticipated over the next few years.

The Scottish Executive require local authorities to respond by the end of September 2000 with proposals on how they intend to take forward the recommendations.

#### **5.0 ACTION BY EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

- 5.1 In this first phase of the Youth Crime Initiative it is proposed that the following action is taken:

### **Expand current service provision to better manage young people who are serious/persistent offenders in their community**

In 1998 East Ayrshire established a team of two social workers, managed by a Service Officer, which combined the skills and knowledge of both criminal justice and children and families staff. The team's key objective of seeking to prevent/reduce offending behaviour clearly fits the public safety agenda. This is a key feature of the Advisory Group's recommendations and the Scottish Executive's response. With the additional resources being made available the Council will seek to extend the range of services which this team of staff are capable of offering. It is proposed that an additional social worker, having a primary remit to consider substance misuse issues, be added to the Young People Who Offend Team. This would fit closely with one of the key strategy aims of ADAT.

The Ayrshire Alcohol & Drug Action Team to deal with such matters of social exclusion as homelessness, health, family relationships, employment and training. It is proposed that an assistant post be created, and located within this team.

It is intended to provide the team with a sessional budget to engage staff as required to act as mentors and positive role-models.

Clerical support of a 17½ hour GS1/2 will be required.

### **Develop a scheme whereby some young people may be diverted from the Hearing system**

Responding to the preventative element of the youth crime initiative it is proposed that East Ayrshire enter into discussion with SACRO (Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders), and with neighbouring Councils, to develop a Reparation and Mediation Scheme. The scheme would offer a diversion programme to the reporter, for some minor and first time offenders. This would avoid the need for a hearing but would confront the young person with the consequences of their actions for victims, communities and for themselves.

### **In Partnership with Health and neighbouring authorities improve services which address the mental health difficulties of young people at high risk of offending behaviour**

To deal more effectively with adolescents who have mental health problems, some of whom may be engaged in offending behaviour and who pose particular difficulties for communities, it is proposed by Ayrshire & Arran Health Board to develop an Adolescent Mental Health Team for Ayrshire. The three Ayrshire Councils will jointly fund a social worker post

for this team. It is recommended that £8,000 from these new monies be allocated to fund East Ayrshire's contribution to this post.

- 5.2 Initial discussions have begun with representatives from a number of key departments and agencies to determine the best way to progress the Advisory Groups' recommendations on developing multi-agency practice.

## **6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The costs associated with the proposed developments contained in Section 5 will be fully met by the additional funding made available through the Children's Service Development Fund.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The Scottish Executive has responded positively to recommendations made by an Advisory Group looking into youth crime. To take forward the developments arising from the recommendations an additional £3.5m nationally is being made available through the Children's Service Development Fund. Of this, East Ayrshire is likely to receive £92,000 this year. It is proposed East Ayrshire seek to develop services to young people who offend in three main areas:

- (i) expand current services offered by the Young People Who Offend Team
- (ii) develop a scheme to allow minor and some first time offenders to be diverted from the Hearing system;
- (iii) contribute to services for young people experiencing mental health problems

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- (i) approve the action being proposed in response to the recommendations;
  - (ii) refer to Personnel and Property Sub-Committee for further consideration;
  - (iii) agree that the Director of Educational and Social Services report back on progress being made and;

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

28<sup>th</sup> August 2000  
JM/BMD/DF/MK

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Report of Advisory Group on Youth Crime, and the response of the Scottish Executive.

For further information on the report please contact Bernadette Docherty, Head of Social Work (Tel: 01563 576917) or Donal Flannery, Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), (Tel: 01563 576907).

### **AGENDA**