

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE: 29 JANUARY 2004

“DEALING WITH OFFENDING BY YOUNG PEOPLE: FOLLOW-UP STUDY”

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Elected Members on the content of audit reports on aspects of services provided to young people referred on offence grounds, and to seek approval for the action intended in response to identified areas for improvement contained within the auditor’s report.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As a follow-up to the report “Dealing with Offending by Young People” (published in December, 2002) Audit Scotland commissioned a number of private sector auditors to undertake an audit on how local authorities were performing in relation to recommendations contained in the report.
- 2.2 In East Ayrshire this follow-up audit was contracted to Price Waterhouse Cooper. During February and March of this year Price Waterhouse Cooper staff reviewed a total of 21 case files on children being supervised by East Ayrshire having been referred to a Children’s Hearing on offence grounds, and 30 cases on young people aged between 16 and 20 who were subject to a Probation Order.
- 2.3 In addition to the above activity, data on staffing levels in social services, and on a range of information which included information relating to the membership and structure of the Council’s multi-agency forum on youth crime, was forwarded to the auditors.
- 2.4 The follow up report, which was published by Audit Scotland on 6th November 2003, focuses on some of the key issues identified in the main report and reflects on the performance of all local authorities in relation to these.
- 2.5 The report was the subject of discussion at a meeting between the Justice Minister and Council Leaders and Chief Executives which focussed on the need for partnership working and performance improvement in this area.

3.0 AUDITOR'S REPORT

3.1 The follow-up report includes 6 tables which identify councils by name. In some of these there are indications that East Ayrshire has underperformed. In particular:

- Exhibit 1 – casefiles containing evidence of delivery of the required level of service;
- Exhibit 4 – availability of a record of contact between social worker and children on supervision;
- Exhibit 6 – care plans for children on supervision.

3.2 While remaining areas for improvement 2 of the exhibits show East Ayrshire performing better than the Scottish average;

- Exhibit 7 – action plans in criminal justice files;
- Exhibit 2 – data items readily available to youth justice teams.

3.3 In addition exhibit 8 indicates the high vacancy rate in children's fieldwork service: close to 20% in East Ayrshire the fifth highest in Scotland.

3.4 Amongst the National findings the report expresses concern that in around 25% of the total cases sampled there was either no evidence, or it was unclear, that children being supervised were receiving the appropriate level of service in terms of frequency of contact with supervising social worker, or that significant gaps occurred in their supervision.

3.5 Case-file management and poor record keeping was viewed as an area requiring attention and improvement. In particular concern is expressed at an apparent lack of visible care plans within casefiles.

3.6 With regard to the multi-agency teams set up by Councils to bring a strategic perspective to developments aimed at tackling youth crime .the auditors conclude that for many Councils there is a need to review membership with a view to introducing a stronger corporate approach at senior level.

4.0 AUDIT PROCESS

4.1 Interim findings provided by the auditors in July 2003 raised a number of concerns. With regard to the apparent lack of visible care plans within case files, there was a concern expressed at a meeting with the auditors which included Audit Scotland, that a more in-depth review of case files would have shown that care plans were present in more cases but were largely subsumed within e.g. social background reports. That they were not discrete, as required by standards, resulted in a downgrading.

5.0 COMMENT ON AUDIT FINDINGS

5.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that the audit has identified a number of areas for improvement, in respect of current arrangements, it is important to note the context within which current performance is set. In particular it is significant that:

- the difficulties relate in the main to children and family supervised cases rather than criminal justice supervised cases;
- the children and families staff vacancy rate [20%] is acknowledged by Audit Scotland in the report as the fifth highest in the country at that time;
- the 21 children and families cases of children who have committed offences are dwarfed by more than 300 supervision cases of children who need care and protection, which clearly receive higher priority from the depleted children and families teams;
- notwithstanding the high staff vacancy rate, all Children's Hearing supervision requirements are allocated to a worker.

6.0 MANAGEMENT ACTION

6.1 Shortly after receipt of the Audit Scotland report officers received a localised report from Price Waterhouse Cooper. Alongside a summary of key findings this report contained a series of recommendations requiring an action plan to be devised. In broad terms the proposed course of action, which is accompanied by nominated responsible officers and timescales for implementation, may be summarised as follows:

- poor case file management and recording will be addressed through the further development, implementation and monitoring of procedures and protocols relating to, for example, allocation, case

note content and style, case transfers, and reviews. A standardised, consistent approach to this issue will be introduced across all cases where the grounds of referral were offending. This will include the provision of a discrete care plan within the case file and a method of recording contact that is consistent and measurable;

- as yet no national standards exist which can be used as benchmarks to determine the level of service to be provided. However, drawing from the experience of criminal justice services and in anticipation of national standards being introduced at some point, local standards, against which monitoring will occur, will be introduced. These local standards will, amongst other other items, consider frequency of contact between the young person and his/her supervising officer, frequency of reviews, time standards for case transfer and for the submission of reports.
- structured risk assessments will be applied to all relevant cases to determine both priority and level of service to be provided. In certain situations, determined by this assessment, cases may be supervised by non qualified social workers. Where this is the case responsibility for monitoring of the work undertaken will rest with either a social worker at senior practitioner grade or by the relevant Team Leader.
- Enhancements currently underway within the SWIFT Management Information System will assist the process of monitoring progress in relation to the action plan.

6.2 Success in meeting all of the points contained within the action plan is dependant upon having available sufficient resources to meet all the requirements.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Contained within the reports from the auditors are a number of areas where improvements to services provided to young people referred on offence grounds are identified.

7.2 Key to any improvements is a need to implement a strategy for case file management and recording. Coupled with the further development of procedures and protocols many of the criticisms contained within the auditors report will be addressed;

- 7.3 An action plan focused on those areas identified within the auditors reports as requiring improvement ,complete with a designated responsible officer and implementation date, has been prepared;
- 7.4 Recognising that areas for improvement did indeed exist it was nevertheless the considered view that the audit process contained a number of process flaws which rated the Council's performance more poorly than it merited.
- 7.5 There is a need for ongoing discussion with Auditors regarding Standards / Actions and at National level through COSLA and ADSW.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 Elected Members are requested to:
- i) approve the action outlined at point 6;
 - ii) instruct the Director of Educational and Social Services to provide a progress report to a later meeting of the Committee during 2004 and;
 - iii) otherwise note the content of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services
19th December, 2003
Enc(1)
DF/SM

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

A copy of the national report distributed by Audit Scotland, and a copy of the localised report from Price Waterhouse Cooper are lodged with Member Services.

Action Plan

For further information please contact Donal Flannery, Service Unit Manager, Criminal Justice Services, Council Offices, Civic Centre, Kilmarnock (Tel. 01563 576907).

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: BILL EADIE, PRINCIPAL OFFICER
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES**

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ACTION PLAN

No	Para	Findings	Recommendation	Priority	Management Response	Responsible Officer	Implement -ation date
1	3.1.5	Although the policy for allocation should help to ensure that no serious or high-risk cases are unallocated, this presents a risk in terms of the lack of action being taken on them.	<p>The Council should test the practical application of the allocation process to ensure that the policy is being followed and that it is resulting in the application of a “triage” principal (i.e. the most serious cases being dealt with most quickly).</p> <p>Team Leaders should test the robustness of the process for recording and extracting information about case allocation to ensure that it provides the management information necessary to maintain clear control over the allocation process.</p>	H	<p>a) The proposed structural changes to children and families services is intended to ensure the appropriate allocation process is in place. All young people referred on offence grounds will be subjected to a structured assessment of their needs and needs to determine the nature and level of service necessary. Training for all relevant staff in the use of widely used assessment tool, “Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory”, will be completed by January 2004.</p> <p>b) The wider application of the SWIFT management information system, particularly in relation to youth justice services, will allow the relevant manager to monitor more closely the allocation process, and to ensure that locally introduced standards are being adhered to.</p>	Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice)/SUM Children & Families	April 2004

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ACTION PLAN

No	Para	Findings	Recommendation	Pri- ty	Management Response	Responsible Officer	Implement -ation date
2	3.1.10 - 3.1.18	<p>The available evidence suggests that there could be gaps in supervision and a relatively infrequent level of service provided to some clients.</p> <p>This means that some cases may not be receiving the level of attention required by the Children's Hearings.</p>	<p>Team Leaders should test the available evidence to determine whether it reflects the reality of the work being actually carried out.</p> <p>This may result in the need to ensure that more robust procedures are put in place so that all young people receive the level of service prescribed by the Children's Hearings.</p> <p>Team Leaders should ensure that all cases are discussed during review meetings and that social workers are required to present evidence to support their verbal reports (for example, contact sheets to demonstrate frequency of contact with the young person). They should ensure that, where priority cases require further attention, the details of these cases are discussed outside of the general case review meeting.</p> <p>Designing the adoption of standard agenda could give greater formality to structure to review meetings.</p>	H	<p>a) It is intended that a standardised, consistent format for casefile management and recording be introduced to all cases where a young person has been referred on offence grounds.</p> <p>b) All young people referred on offence grounds will be subject to a structured assessment to determine appropriate level of service. Procedures for monitoring the application of the YLS/CMI assessment tool, and the care plans which flow from this, will put in place. Cases can only be allocated if resources are available. The use of YLS/CMI will also assist in determining case priority.</p> <p>c) A standard for the regular review of all relevant cases will be introduced. As well as considering progress against care plans, these reviews will also consider whether other standards such as frequency of contact, are being adhered to. These reviews will supplement case discussion which takes place between team leader and case worker during formal supervision.</p> <p>d) Making use of the experience gained within Criminal Justices services a standardised format will be introduced to all formal review meetings.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice)/SUM Children & Families.</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice)/SUM Children & Families</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p>	<p>February 2004</p> <p>January 2004</p> <p>February 2004</p> <p>February 2004</p>

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3	3.2.5	<p>There is a poor standard of file maintenance and poor organisation of files.</p> <p>Files have to be maintained to a high standard so that it is possible for staff to pick up a newly allocated file and readily understand the history of the young person, their current situation and the agreed level of service to be provided to them.</p>	<p>The Council should ensure the implementation of standard filing procedures. This should involve providing protocols as to the standard sections that should be included within any file and working with front-line social work staff to ensure they understand the importance of file maintenance.</p> <p>The Council should examine the possibility of administrative and support staff becoming more heavily involved in the maintenance of files.</p> <p>The Council should examine the possibility of promoting increased use of IT for easy recording, storage and retrieval of information.</p>	L	<p>a) A standardised and consistent set of procedures and protocols will be introduced for casefile management and recording. The protocols will include monitoring arrangements to ensure adherence.</p> <p>b) Procedures and protocols will include a section relating to the involvement and responsibilities of admin in casefile management, subject to a departmental review of administrative support for staff.</p> <p>c) Enhancement of the IT capability of all staff working with young people who offend has been initiated.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice) SUM Children & Families</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) AP1/PO Children & Families.</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice)</p>	<p>February 2004</p> <p>February 2004</p> <p>March 2004</p>

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4	3.2.6 - 3.2.14	<p>Not all files contain documentation in the required format, such as Care Plans and contact sheets.</p> <p>It is a requirement that a Care Plan be produced for every young person on supervision. Contact sheets should be on file to ensure a clear understanding of the history of the case and the level of contact with the young person.</p>	<p>The Council should ensure that staff are reminded of the importance of producing relevant documentation and the risks and problems that can be created by not doing so. Record keeping could be written into staff job descriptions and form part of the annual appraisal process.</p> <p>Spot checks or “dip sample” could be conducted to ensure that necessary documentation is on file.</p>	H	<p>a) The introduction of a standardised, consistent casefile management policy, coupled with inclusion of discrete care plans and a format for recording contacts, will go some way to ensuring that all relevant documentation is readily available and easily accessed.</p> <p>b) Monitoring arrangements introduced to all relevant cases, will include casefile management procedures.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice) SUM Children & Families</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice), Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p>	<p>February 2004</p> <p>February 2004</p>

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5	3.3.3 - 3.3.6	<p>There are recruitment and retention issues within the Council, which has a higher than average number of vacancies.</p> <p>This contributes to problems with the level of service being provided.</p> <p>Specifically, we have noted that there are issues in relation to reallocation of cases and provision of a continuous service where an allocated social worker leaves.</p>	<p>The Council should continue to examine recruitment and retention issues to identify and evaluate initiatives for encouraging social workers to join and remain with the Council. In order to facilitate this process, best practice from other Councils should be accessed.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to identifying any administrative work that could be passed to support staff in order to give front-line staff more time for the client work they find so rewarding.</p> <p>The links between training and recruitment should be examined and the value of offering different types of training placements assessed.</p> <p>In addition, the Council should ensure that establishment levels are regularly reviewed through workforce planning so that there is an accurate and up-to-date understanding of the number and grades of staff required.</p>	M	<p>a) The Council is currently pursuing ways in which existing and newly introduced approaches to the problems of recruitment and retention of social workers, may be enhanced within context of a national shortage of qualified social workers.</p> <p>b) Protocols and procedures for casefile management will include responsibilities for admin staff and Admin Review.</p> <p>c) The Council has in place a policy for training of staff, and is offering appropriate training placements.</p> <p>d) Establishment levels are regularly reviewed by Senior Management Team.</p>	<p>Head of Social Work</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) API</p> <p>Training Manager Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>February 2004</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

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6	3.3.4	The evidence available suggests that there may be gaps in the services provided to clients, which are caused by the departure of social workers and a subsequent failure to reallocate cases to other qualified social workers.	<p>Team leaders should test the available evidence to determine whether it reflects the reality of the work actually being carried out.</p> <p>This may result in the need for team leaders to ensure the robust case handover procedures are put in place. These should include ensuring that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) case files are completely up-to-date; ii) all cases have been reallocated to another social worker; and iii) handover meetings between the departing and newly allocated social worker have taken place. <p>Final review meetings/exit interviews with departing members of staff should be used to ensure that all cases have been adequately handed over.</p>	H	<p>a) Sample monitoring of relevant cases will be conducted by the Team Leader (Youth Justice) and reported quarterly to Service Unit Manger (Criminal Justice).</p> <p>b) Casefile management procedures will include issues relating to case transfers.</p> <p>c) Casefile management procedures will include reference to case transfers.</p> <p>This to be based on prioritisation of need and availability of resources.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) Team Leader (Youth Justice) SUM Children & Families</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p>	<p>February 2004</p> <p>February 2004</p> <p>February 2004</p>

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7	3.3.4	<p>There was some evidence to suggest social work assistants were being made responsible for cases rather than qualified social workers.</p> <p>This is not compliant with the good practice expectations that all cases are allocated to a qualified social worker.</p>	<p>The Council should ensure that the role of social work assistants is fully scoped and understood throughout Social Work Services so there is clarity as to what assistants can and cannot be responsible for.</p> <p>Team leaders must ensure that case handover procedures do not allow cases to be allocated to unqualified assistants.</p>	H	<p>a) Where social work assistants act as front line staff their work will be overseen by social workers (senior practitioners) or relevant Team Leader.</p> <p>b) It is not appropriate in all cases that a qualified social worker be allocated. In many cases social work assistants and other support staff act as the main point of intervention and contact appropriately. In such cases the work of these staff is overseen by a social worker (senior practitioner) or relevant Team Leader.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice) Team Leader (Youth Justice)</p>	<p>January 2004</p> <p>January 2004</p>

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8	3.4.3 - 3.4.6	<p>The Council is failing to meet the national target of delivering 75% of Social Background Reports (SBRs) within 20 working days of request.</p> <p>This means that in a significant proportion of cases, Reporters are not being provided with this vital information quickly enough.</p>	<p>The Council should continue to review and evaluate the process of responding to request for SBRs.</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - scrutinising the process of logging request for SBRs; - evaluating the process by which requests for SBRs are passed to social workers and, in particular, how case workload is taken into consideration when making these allocations; - examining the management information available in relation to the production of SBRs to ensure it is sufficiently detailed to highlight any problem areas. 	H	<p>a) The department has in place a mechanism for monitoring the progress of SBR requests.</p> <p>b) The elements being monitored will be broadened to ensure managers have a comprehensive set of data which will highlight progress on improvement, and where problems areas remain.</p>	<p>Principal Officer (Children & Families/Criminal Justice)</p> <p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>February 2004</p>

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9	3.5.5	<p>The Youth Justice Team does not produce an Action Plan or Annual Report.</p> <p>The lack of strategic documentation could lead to a lack of clarity as to the aims, objectives and terms of reference of the Team. Equally, the Team may not be formally recognising, publishing and evaluating their performance on a yearly basis.</p>	<p>The Youth Justice Team should produce an Action Plan and an Annual Report.</p> <p>This should included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - setting clear targets/deliverables for the year ahead; - regular measurement of performance against targets; - clear allocation on responsibilities for meeting these targets; and - annual evaluation of performance. 	L	<p>a) Youth Justice services will produce an agreed action plan for 2004/2005 following consideration of the audit of youth crime services which the Council has commissioned from Glasgow University. An Annual report will be published.</p>	<p>Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice)</p>	<p>March 2004</p>

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10	3.5.8 - 3.5.11	<p>Audit Scotland have identified 26 data items that Youth Justice Teams require to perform their functions.</p> <p>The Youth Justice Team does not have access to all these data items.</p> <p>Inadequate data can mean that it is difficult for the team to understand demand (including future demand through environmental scanning) for services and then match provision to that demand.</p>	<p>The Team Coordinator should examine ways in which the data available to the Team could be improved.</p> <p>This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reviewing available data to gain robust understanding of where the key gaps are; - identifying the sources from which missing data items could be accessed; - working with these sources to facilitate their providing data to the Team; - reviewing best practice from other local authorities to assess their methods of data collection; - evaluation of nationally available data to assess its utility. <p>High-level sponsorship from the Chief Executive's office could facilitate this process.</p>	L	a) Where relevant information is available this will be provided. It needs to be acknowledged that some data is not held by the Council.	Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice)	Ongoing

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11	3.5.12 - 3.5.19	<p>A number of key agencies (e.g. the Chief Executive's Office, Voluntary Agencies and Community Education) are not represented on the Youth Justice Team.</p> <p>The Scottish Executive has recommended that these agencies be represented to ensure a truly joined-up approach can be take to youth justice issues.</p>	<p>The Team Coordinator should assess the value that including these other agencies would bring to the Team.</p> <p>High level sponsorship from the Chief Executive's Office could facilitate ensuring these agencies are represented.</p> <p>It may be appropriate to include these agencies as part of a wider Steering Group and convene a core working group to drive forward the operational issues the Team has to deal with.</p>	L	<p>The Council will conduct a review of the Youth Justice Strategic Team with a focus on broadening membership, ensuring roles and functions of different partners are understood, and develop a strategic plan for youth justice services for a three year period 2004-2007.</p>	<p>Principal Officer (Quality & Planning), Service Unit Manager (Criminal Justice)</p>	February 2004