

COMMITTEE	Social Care and Wellbeing
DATE	22 nd April 2010
CORPORATE DIRECTOR	Fred McBride
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen Peer to Peer Project
REPORT NUMBER	SCW/10/021

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update Members on the inception of an Aberdeen wide, prison supported, community focussed, person-centred project that will help people coming out of prison with challenging lifestyles to aid their community integration by identifying a wide range of support in communities linked to making life-changes for themselves to become: -

Healthier
Financially stable
and
Job ready

through mentoring, advocacy, skills development, supportive through care, and peer support

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are recommended to: -

- 1 Endorse the formation of the Aberdeen Peer to Peer Project (P2P), the proposed membership and terms of reference of the multi-agency Project Steering Group (PSG)
- 2 Agree the allocation of £20,000 for this project from the 2010/2011 Revenue Budget, to be regulated by a Service Level Agreement between the City Council and the Scottish Prison Service
- 3 Agree to receive a progress report at the meeting of this Committee to be held on 2nd September 2010.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding from the mainstream budget of the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) accounts for the majority of the overall project spend in year one, and totals some £160,000, comprising some £140,000 for staff costs of the new team, and a one-off allocation of £20,000 as a contribution to the cost of the project. Support in-kind from other partner organisations has been made and will be also enhanced by the work undertaken by

the Bridges Project. The value of these commitments is highly regarded by Officers of the City Council.

The total cost of the implementation of the project in year one would involve a revenue contribution of £20,000 from the City Council. This sum was initially reserved by the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee at its meeting on 29th October 2009 – article 9 refers, and if Members are mindful to agree to the recommendations in this report, this sum will be regulated by a new Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the City Council and the SPS. Members are therefore recommended to agree that this level of funding is available as a contribution to the costs of the project in 2010/2011.

4 SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The development of locally based projects is regarded as one key element of regeneration that focuses on the needs of local people. One outcome of this project can be to help the community as a whole, complementing other social, environmental, economic development and physical initiatives that are underway. Involvement is being sought through a range of organisations, including the local churches, Aberdeen Foyer for those who attend to follow training, Station House Media Unit for learning and skills development, and the Robert Gordon University for Occupational Therapy and academic evaluation of the project.

This report places the development of the proposed Peer to Peer project in a national setting of emerging policy by the Scottish Government's recent Reducing Reoffending Programme Policy and the Protecting Scotland's Communities: Fair, Fast and Flexible Justice blueprint

5 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The development of this project as identified will help address a number of social and economic initiatives.

Vibrant, Dynamic, Forward Looking Aberdeen (VDFL)

This project will eventually work city-wide, and actively develops the delivery of VDFL under the aspects of Education, Housing, Economic Development, Culture, Arts and Sports, and the Environment as it will bring together key organisational and support staff from the partner and community organisations.

Single Outcome Agreement

This project will also assist in delivering on the Single Outcome Agreement related to National Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

Equality and Human Rights implications

A full equality and human rights impact has been produced. The project will formally record and risk assess strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in for all participants, inside and outwith the setting of the Prison. The evidence gathered will be linked to

community integration plans, shared as appropriate with partners and community organisations, and will also be used to challenge and reduce impacts of negative behaviours.

REPORT

6.1 Developing a locally focused response to the needs of offenders and ex-offenders

Continuing discussions with the Prison Visiting Committee and the Governor of HMP Aberdeen (Craiginches) Prison have identified a clear trend which records that a core presence in the prison arises from a limited number of communities in Aberdeen (from postcodes identifications), and in the significance of this measured trend, drugs and alcohol mis-use plays a major part in the pattern of repeat offending.

In multi-agency discussions with the Craiginches Prison Visiting Committee and partner organisations, Officers have identified a place for an intervention that can help break into a long-term cycle of challenging lifestyles and dependency that blights lives and communities. It could be argued these issues couldn't be fully addressed during prison sentences, but requires a holistic approach that works in conjunction with a community-based response to those un-met needs.

6.2 The need for an intervention project

One of the most significant issues being presented from the community and front-line staff is that of substance mis-use, and this has a considerable impact on both City Council and NHS mainstream funding. In reviewing policy and financial allocations for intervention approaches, Members were recommended to set aside a small budget of £20,000 –article 9 of the meeting held on 29th October 2009 refers, for an intervention project. Officers in discussion with the SPS and other partners have investigated the creation of a small-scale project that will create its own value locally in the City, and this report seeks an endorsement for a new initiative, the Aberdeen Peer to Peer (P2P) project.

The City Council had indicated its willingness to work with organisations across all sectors to support a small team with multi-agency support that will work with men and women who are subject to short-term imprisonment or early release. There is an imperative to act quickly to break into the vicious cycle of short-term incarcerations in prison, and to assist in the move away from a dependency culture.

Aberdeen Peer to Peer Project (P-2-P)

At the core of the project is a team managed and financed by the SPS that will work flexibility across a seven day week, and is linked to the creation of a women's community unit at Craiginches. The intended start date will be 1st May 2010 and the team will go on to work from the prison, community facilities and learning bases to

support, advise and mentor offenders and ex-offenders. A wider team involving partner organisations will assist in this approach, building on this new core staffing capacity. Key tasks to be undertaken will be to ensure -

- Completion of Community Integration Plans with offenders, including all aspects of risk assessment.
- Creation of or utilising existing information sharing protocols
- Co-ordination between existing organisations and their services
- Identification of gaps in service provision
- Consistency and continuity for offenders and ex-offenders

It is intended that a start is made with a small number of participants nominated by the Prison, and through project review, to increase this number as experience and ability is grown to deliver on a series of outcomes that will benefit the individuals involved.

P-2-P Project Steering Group (PSG)

It is proposed that the project team will be overseen by a multi-agency PSG from the participating organisations that has agreed to take this initiative forward. The PSG will provide support and direction for the project team, helping to build networks and links to other organisations. One key role to be undertaken will be to monitor and develop a series of outcomes for the team and for individuals, and will work with an academic/external organisation for validation of outcomes.

It is envisaged that a progress report will be made twice in the first year to the funding organisations on the progress being made by the project, and these reports will be incorporated into future reports to this Committee. The work of the PSG will should also include a review of similar intervention initiatives involving offenders and ex-offenders across Scotland that could bring benefits to the City, and to lead to the formation of a set of recommendations for the City Council and other partner organisation on how such a future project could be structured and funded.

The PSG will also be expected to examine all possible sources of external funding support for future years for such projects and should be tasked with including these findings in a report back to this Committee within the coming twelve months. The PSG is will also ensure that wider links to on-going projects and programmes across all sectors are made, such as the Community Signature, Family Signature and the Retail Rocks initiatives given the importance of employability as one of the key outcomes of this project.

The proposed (initial) membership of the PSG is recommended as follows: -

- Aberdeen City Council
- Scottish Prison Service
- Aberdeen Foyer
- Job Centre Plus

- Church of Scotland
- Robert Gordon University
- Station House Media Unit

In time, it is likely that other partner organisations will become interested in the P2P project as it builds its networks of support. Members are requested to allow the PSG to co-opt and to flexibility accommodate new and changing interests in the work to be undertaken by the PSG, with a view that it does not become too big or inflexible in its way of working.

The following, proposed terms of reference for the PSG are recommended for adoption

- The PSG would operate as a high level co-ordination and consultation group, addressing strategic issues and any major points of difficulty, ensuring that other stakeholders are informed of the P2P project enabling shared commitments to be enhanced
- The PSG would not have any powers that cut across the accountability and authority of the Social Care and Wellbeing Committee as one of the Investment Decision Maker in this project
- If a major issue could not be resolved within the PSG, PSG members should have recourse through their own structure of governance to the Craiginches Prison Visiting Committee
- The cycle of PSG meetings would be agreed to support the main project reporting requirements
- Should the PSG agree to make alterations to their remit proposed in this report, these would be included in a future report to the Social Care and Wellbeing for consideration

6.3 Outcomes from the P2P project

The following initial outcomes have been identified for adoption by the PSG, and will aim to achieve the following: -

- That mentoring and support will assist ex offenders enter the Job Centre Plus (JCP) Programmes currently being agreed (HMP Aberdeen has been offered 45 various employment opportunities as from May 2010) or any other employment related training programme as appropriate.
- Ensure that where the drugs relapse programme has not been completed while in custody that a place will be obtained in the community.
- That attendance at an agreed Further Education Programme takes place when an identified need has been agreed

- Where appropriate, ensure that family issues identified through the Family Signature Programme will be addressed or appropriate contact arrangements put in place.
- Assist with attending appointments e.g. with Housing Providers as agreed prior to liberation
- That an ongoing record of prisoner progress be maintained and built on in the event of readmission into custody.
- To provide an ongoing support line for prisoners (voluntary) on release (length of time to be specified)

Officers would expect the PSG to review these initial outcomes, and to enhance them as experience and knowledge from the project team is grown through working experience.

6.4 In Summary

Officers are firmly of the view that added values can arise from this project, resulting from the direct consequence of challenging and changing dysfunctional lifestyles that impact on communities of those who have been imprisoned, often in a pattern of repeat offences, e.g. house-breaking, anti social behaviour, vehicle damage. The individuals that become involved in the project can be supported to develop hope and self-esteem to work for an alternative future and appropriate lifestyle.

Members are therefore recommended to endorse the formation of the Peer to Peer Project with its own multi-agency Project Steering Group, and to agree to receive a report back in the autumn of 2010 on the progress of the project.

Members are also asked to note that Officers of the Northern CJA will be kept informed of the progress of the project by the PSG.

7 AUTHORISED SIGNATURE

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9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to South Area Committee on 28th May 2009 – article 4 refers
 Report to Social Care and Wellbeing Committee on 29th October 2009 – article 9 refers