

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES SERVICES SELECT COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2001 AT 10.30 AM**

YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS FOR SATURDAY COURTS

Report of the Director of Social Services

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1. Purpose of the Report

To advise Members of the initiatives taken to resolve difficulties encountered in covering appearances at unscheduled Saturday Courts by young people at risk of remand to the Local Authority or custody.

2. Summary

2.1 Since the concern was raised over Saturday Courts, the following initiatives have taken place:

Agreement between Youth Justice and Social Services Emergency Duty Team as to which agency covers the Court and under what eventuality.

- a. If a young person known to the Youth Offending Team is appearing, the Youth Offending Team will look to cover the Court, given advanced notice by the police, and that the young person is likely to be remanded in custody or care of the Local Authority.
- b. If a young person is appearing “overnight” and they are likely to be remanded to custody or care of the Local Authority, the Duty Team will attend.

In other circumstances, where the matter is one of straight bail, it is anticipated that a parent or guardian would attend, including care staff, if the young person is in Local Authority residential care already.

- 2.2 In order to enhance the ability of the Emergency Duty Team's timely appearance, correspondence was sent to the police requesting that the Emergency Duty Team is contacted as soon as it is known that a Court appearance may require a Remand in Custody or Remand to Local Authority Accommodation is likely. This will enable the team to attend for the Court, rather than only finding out about it at 10.00 o'clock.
- 2.3 To enhance the ability of the Emergency Duty Team to assist in offering to the Court options beyond either Custody or Local Authority Secure Accommodation, agreement has been arrived at for the EDT to have each weekend a Bail Remand Scheme place – either in a hostel for 17+ or foster home for under 17. These places have, until now, been in response to the government's alternative to remand in custody arrangements and are now being extended to allow Courts an option other than a Remand to Local Authority Secure Accommodation.

There has been an 80% success rate in cases where young people have been placed on the Bail Remand Scheme in the county since January 2000.

A meeting took place between the Youth Offending Team Managers and the Team Leader of the Emergency Duty Team and a written protocol was agreed with the EDT. The scheme started on 8 December 2000.

These places are expensive and difficult to recruit. They are therefore only available where a decision has been made that, if a place were not on offer, a Remand to Custody or LA Secure Accommodation would be inevitable.

- 2.4 Discussions within the department, following a review of the Crime and Disorder Act and European Human Rights Act expectations, have led to a reordering of Emergency Duty Team priorities of this work against its other duties, to enable appearances at Court when necessary.
- 2.5 There will be a dialogue with Courts via user groups and Youth Justice/Magistrates/Clerks, meetings to inform them of the enhanced service and encourage Courts to require attendance only where Remand in Custody or Remand to Local Authority Care or Secure Accommodation is anticipated. It is not thought that, where a straight bail decision is the probable outcome, a representative of the Local Authority should be required.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 This is an opportunity to enhance services to young people and Courts in offering a representative of either the Youth Justice Service or the Local Authority to Courts where a young person makes an unscheduled Court appearance and is thought likely to require either a remand to Local Authority or remand to secure accommodation.
- 3.2 There will be a regular review of the initiative through the Court user groups locally and between the Youth Offending Team Managers and Emergency Duty Team Manager.

1. Background

- 1.1 Concerns were raised by Members that, when young people appeared at unscheduled Courts or overnight into Court on Saturdays, there was no social work or youth offending team presence.
- 1.2 The Members agreed to form a task group to re-establish the situation, consisting of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Councillor Wing. Officers were asked to review the situation and propose a way forward.
- 1.3 Investigations showed that for most of these young people it was anticipated that straight bail would be the likely course, with a parent or guardian in attendance. However, for more complicated matters, where the Court was likely to require a remand to either Local Authority Care or a remand to custody, there was an inadequate system for timely intervention by the Local Authority and a lack of ability to offer the range of services afforded to scheduled Courts.
- 1.4 The way forward, as described in the summary part of this report was put to the group, who accepted this as a possible solution.

2. Financial Implications

The cost of this additional provision will be dependent upon the degree of intervention required. The number of times the service is used will be monitored and associated costs established. It is anticipated that these will be balanced by savings on out of county fostering or Local Authority secure placements through the use by Courts of the Remand Fostering Scheme.