

7. YOUTH NIGHT SAFETY: PILOT PROJECT

Officer responsible Community Relations Manager	Author Robyn Moore, DDI 372-2406
---	--

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of an interagency pilot project due to commence in February. The project focuses on providing a safe place for children and young people who have been found unaccompanied and in potentially unsafe situations in public places on Friday and Saturday nights.

BACKGROUND

For many years there has been concern expressed regarding children and young teenagers frequenting public places late at night and early in the morning. These children and young people are not accompanied by an adult and are potentially at risk. Sometimes the risk is increased when those wandering the streets are under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Sergeant Chris Roper (Christchurch Police Youth Aid Sergeant) has stated that these children and young people are "... often intoxicated and cause problems for themselves, other young people and the public in general. There have been a number of violent offences committed – in particular aggravated robberies and assaults."

Sergeant Roper has also reported that operations run by the Police on Saturday 24 November 2001, Friday 30 November 2001 and Saturday 8 December 2001 (Christmas in the Park) resulted in over 80 young people during the three nights being identified as at risk (as defined in Section 48 of the Children Young Persons and their Families Act) and returned to the custody of their parents, guardians or care givers.

During the year 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2001 the Police/Christchurch City Council Youth Work Project team returned home 89 young people from the central city area during their Friday night patrols. Most of these were intoxicated.

When front line police use Section 48 of the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act to deal with young persons at risk, it can be a very time consuming process especially when parents or guardians cannot be located. Going through the necessary processes to arrange accommodation for young people whose parents or guardians cannot be contacted, can keep police resources tied up for long periods at what can be a very busy time.

YOUTH NIGHT SAFETY CENTRE

The Christchurch Police, the Christchurch City Council and the Children Young Persons and their Family Service (CYPFS) have worked together to develop a system whereby children and young people found unaccompanied at night (and at risk as defined by Section 48 of the Children Young Persons and their Families Act) can be dealt with sensitively and efficiently. A District Health Board representative has also had input into the planning.

The pilot project will operate for eight weeks on Friday and Saturday nights and will then be formally evaluated. The project will commence on Friday 15 February 2002 and conclude on Saturday 6 April 2002.

The Youth Night Safety Centre will provide a venue where police (or other appropriate adults) can deliver children or young people considered to be at risk. The centre will have a duty social worker, a police officer and a youth worker available to ensure the young person is welcomed and that their parent(s) or guardian is contacted and asked to collect their child. If no parent or guardian can be located and/or significant care and protection issues are identified, the CYPFS social worker will ascertain suitable placement.

On occasion, a child or young person may have committed an offence and in such a case the person should be dealt with accordingly by arrest (where appropriate) and/or Police Youth Aid section follow-up. In these cases the Youth Safety Centre could assist with placing the child or young person with their parent(s), guardian or caregiver after they have been processed.

STAFFING THE PILOT

This is a partnership between Police CYPFS, and Christchurch City Council

CYPFS: One Social Worker

Police: One constable from the youth service

CCC: One Youth Worker (from the current City Council/Police Youth Work Project)

Staff will be rostered to ensure there are male and female workers on each shift.

COSTS

As staff are all being re-directed from other duties, costs for the pilot will be minimal and will be able to be absorbed within current budget allocations.

Should the pilot prove beneficial to the city, it will be necessary to revisit the funding question. However, CYPFS have indicated that in the case of a successful pilot they will examine possibilities for further service delivery and funding. This is by no means a guarantee but indicates strong commitment from CYPFS.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the report be referred to the Children and Youth Subcommittee for information.
 2. That CYPFS and the Police receive a letter of thanks for their efforts in establishing the pilot.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.