

6. PROJECT EARLY TRUST

Officer responsible	Author
Community Advocate, Burwood/Pegasus	Michael McNabb - Funding Adviser, DDI 941-8933

The purpose of this report is to inform the Board regarding the Project Early Trust's early intervention programme with primary school aged children.

BACKGROUND

The Trust was established in 1995 by eight primary schools in the eastern suburbs as a way of exploring options to address household and family issues/situations that were being identified by teachers as having negative impacts on the learning and recreational development of children.

Through the Christchurch City Council's Annual Financial Plan process the Trust has received "major grants" funding of \$30,000 (1999/2000), \$40,000 (2000/01), \$40,000 (2001/02) and \$25,000 in the current year. The Community Board allocated \$10,000 for the 2002/03 year as a contribution to the Project's shortfall due to a drop in funding from the Ministry of Education and the Christchurch City Council.

A copy of the Trust's September 2002 Evaluation Report has been circulated separately to Board members. The Trust's 31 December 2001 audited accounts and 2002 year projected income and expenditure budget are on file.

DETAILS OF PROJECT

The Trust has a meeting arranged with cabinet ministers Hon Phil Goff and Hon Lianne Dalziel regarding the Government's interest in developing a country wide pilot programme based on the successful early intervention work of Project Early.

The Project received 75 referrals in the 12 months ending June 2002. As at September 2002 the Project's two caseworkers had a current workload with 25 children and their parents/family. With the child, parent/family and school, the Project's Case Worker develops an individual programme agreement that includes agreed "achievement levels/indicators". Eighty percent of agreements reach these achievement indicators that are resulting in:

- Full re-integration of the child into the classroom.
- Marked improvement in their educational development.
- Improved and better managed parent/child relationships.
- Significantly improved social behaviours that result in the forming of much more positive friendships with the child's peers and neighbours.

The Project works closely with other community based and government sector social service agencies. This ensures a collaborative and resource sharing response to the needs of children, parents/families and schools in the eastern suburbs. Of the seven participating schools in Project Early only Aranui School has the Social Workers in School project also involved. The Field Worker in Schools project is not involved with these schools.

The seven primary schools currently participating in Project Early are all located within the Burwood/Pegasus Community Board area: Aranui (Ministry of Education Decile 1), Avondale (5), Central New Brighton (3), Freeville (4), North New Brighton (4), South New Brighton (6) and Wainoni (1).

Project Early's Management Team is made up of four principals from the participating schools.

In a recent article in the Christchurch Press on early-intervention programmes, Dr John Church, an education researcher at the University of Canterbury, stated that "preventative programmes such as Project Early were much cheaper and more effective in the long term when you compare the costs of such community based programmes with the costs of an absent and offending school aged child that will eventually involve agencies such as police, welfare, justice, social services, etc"; and "research shows that up to 50% of children who display anti-social behaviours as children will continue to have conduct problems as adults".

FUNDING ISSUES

The Trust is confident that they have now negotiated "secure" ongoing funding contracts with the Ministry of Education and with Child, Youth and Family. The Trust has received a strong "indication" from the Community Trust of ongoing funding support at the current level. Based on these three income levels, this would leave a \$35,000 shortfall on the Trust's January to December 2002-year operational expenditure budget. As indicated in their Evaluation Report, the Trust is keen to re-introduce Project Early with the early childhood sector following a very successful pilot programme with kindergartens in 2001. Such an annual programme cost will increase the Trust's overall annual operating costs by \$50,000.

December 2001 audited accounts show a surplus of \$67,313 on an operating expenditure of \$127,274. Net cash assets of \$109,990 represents nearly ten months of operating costs based on the Trust's 2002-year budget or nearly seven months of operating costs when the early childhood sector programme costs are added to the annual budget.

Due to one of those "quirky" situations in the way the Council administers community grants, the Christchurch City Council grant to the Project Early Trust (from a successful submission to the Council's Annual Financial Plan process) now sits with the Community Relations Unit's Metropolitan Advocacy Budget as a Metropolitan Community Funding line entry. As the participating schools are now all located in the one community board area (Burwood/Pegasus) this "technically" places the project outside the eligibility criteria for Council metropolitan funding. It is understood that this issue was raised during last year's Annual Financial Plan process resulting in discontinuation of Project Early's original three year funding allocation. A "late bid" during the Annual Financial Plan submission process was successful in gaining a one-off \$25,000 allocation for the 2002/03 year.

The Metropolitan Funding Subcommittee of the Council has clearly directed staff that any community funding recommendations made to the "draft" Annual Financial Plan can only be for metropolitan projects.

FUTURE FUNDING OPTIONS

Project Early is considered to be an innovative and very successful programme. The outcomes and achievements of Project Early clearly meet a number of outcomes and objectives of the Council's Strategic Objectives and the Council's Children and Social Well Being policies.

The following are some initial considerations in relation to future funding options:

- As the programme is being delivered solely in one community board area, any ongoing Council funding is now the responsibility of the Burwood/Pegasus Community Board.
- Included with the Board's submissions to the Council's 2003/04 Annual Financial Plan is the recommendation to "transfer" the current Community Relations Unit's Metropolitan Community Funding line entry for Project Early into a 2003/04 "Grants to Community Organisations" (formerly Major Grants) as per those allocations listed on page 101 of the 2002/03 Annual Financial Plan.
- The Project Early Trust could be supported in making their own submission to the "draft" 2003/04 Annual Financial Plan as the Council does allocate grants to "local" projects during this stage of the Annual Financial Plan decision-making process.
- As the programmes have a strong school and education influence, the Board may wish to advocate for the full operational costs of Project Early to be a priority funding responsibility of the Ministry of Education with a contributing allocation by Child, Youth and Family.
- From information gathered regarding government funding of community and social service sector "pilot" projects, the initial project that the pilot is based on does not attract such pilot project funding as the project is seen as already up and running.

Staff

Recommendation: For discussion.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That, given the resolution of the Board on 20 February 2002 to grant funds in 2002/03 as a one-off contribution, the Board consider the future funding of the Project Early Trust.