

For further information please contact **Claire Gibson**, Project Co-ordinator for Opportunities for Change, **0131 652 2555**

The Opportunities for Change project has been developed in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council, Scottish Borders Council, West Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, East Lothian Council, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Scottish Prison Service, Scottish Courts, Includem and Venture Trust.

Includem is an independent organisation in the voluntary sector. Includem is a company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland (207985) and is a registered charity (SC0 30233).

**Opportunities
for change**

LOTHIAN & BORDERS COMMUNITY JUSTICE AUTHORITY

Opportunities for Change is a Community Justice Authority pilot project developed to better meet the needs of young offenders when they appear before the Sheriff Court. Many of these young people will have been or may still be subject to Children's Hearing 'supervision' and have experienced secure accommodation. The project recognises the difficulty for young offenders in transition between children's and adult services and aims to provide a robust and effective alternative to custody.

The project has been developed in partnership with City of Edinburgh Council, The Scottish Borders Council, West Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, East Lothian Council, SCRA, SPS, Includem and Venture Trust.

PROJECT AIM

Opportunities for Change aims to provide a robust and effective alternative to custody for young offenders in Lothian and Borders, creating safer communities through a reduction in re-offending and providing intensive support and supervision.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Opportunities for Change plans to achieve its aim by:

Preventing young people from being placed in custody.

Helping them to be maintained safely in the community, reducing harm to themselves and others.

Preventing or reducing the severity of offences committed by the young person.

Helping to create greater social inclusion opportunities i.e. health, housing and employment / training, increased motivation, confidence, and personal and social skills.

TARGET GROUP

Young people referred to Opportunities for Change will be aged 16 – 18 appearing before the Sheriff Court. The project will be a direct alternative to custody for young offenders who have exhausted existing options and require an intensive level of support and supervision within the community. Referral criteria such as number of offences, seriousness of offences and the level of risk posed to others will ensure that the service is aimed at young people who would otherwise be placed in custody.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The young person will receive immediate intensive support and supervision from the day the order is made for a six month period as part of a Probation Order. The intensity of the support will relate directly to the persistence and seriousness of their offending behaviour. The aim is to ensure that the young person can be safely managed in the community.

The support plan implemented by Opportunities for Change will complement the Probation action plan and you will receive weekly written updates from the Project Worker, along with verbal communication as and when required to ensure you are informed of the focus and progress of contact at all times.

Regular reviews of the support plan will ensure that you have an overview of the impact of the project and also allow for risk assessment and management.

The support plan will detail the intensive support and supervision provided to the young person and outline the focus of work which will place emphasis on individual responsibility, consequences and problem solving in a challenging yet supportive environment.

Wilderness-based personal development will include over 180 hours of activities, involving hill walking, rock climbing, kayaking and a broad range of other experiences, with the emphasis on transferring the skills and learning back with the young person to their community.

A key element will be promoting the connection between the young person and health, housing and employment / training.

Given the objective of providing direct and effective alternatives to custody, non-compliance with the project will be communicated to you on the first available working day.

REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT

Referrals to the Opportunities for Change project can be made by the Sheriff Court or the Social Worker completing the social enquiry report following the young person's appearance in Court. A referral can be made or discussed by contacting the Opportunities for Change Project Co-ordinator.

Upon receipt of the referral contact will be made with the young person, in partnership with you to arrange the first introductory meeting. Assessment for the project will take place during the deferment period for the preparation of the social enquiry report and will involve a minimum of three meetings with the young person to provide information on the project and assess their motivation to take part. Young people will be accepted regardless of their chaotic lifestyles and challenging behaviour as rigorous risk assessment and management plans will be completed in partnership with you. However, the potential consequences for non compliance will be fully explained

and discussed to ensure the young person is making an informed choice. The Opportunities for Change project staff will provide you with a short report assessing the suitability of the young person for the project and a representative from the project will be in Court at the point of sentencing to answer any questions the Sheriff may have. For further information please contact Claire Gibson, Project Co-ordinator for Opportunities for Change, **0131 652 2555**.

INCLUDEM

Includem works with Scotland's most vulnerable young people: challenging offending behaviour and supporting change. Our aims are to meet the needs of young people experiencing a troubled transition to adulthood and who have a history of, or are at greatest risk of, persistent offending. We engage young people in individual intensive packages of support and supervision in the community, available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. We seek to develop their interests in health, educational and other opportunities that in the long term will help them lead settled and productive lives.

VENTURE TRUST

Venture Trust works with people who want to change. The Trust's programmes of personal development engender in them a greater sense of personal responsibility, self worth and an increased ability to make positive changes to their lives. Participants enjoy an increase in confidence, motivation and consequential thinking. They develop personal, social and life skills, enabling them to progress to further education, training or employment.

THE INCLUDEM & VENTURE TRUST PARTNERSHIP

Includem's programme of intensive support and supervision encourages young people to take responsibility for their own lives and actions through social skill development, cognitive development and learning.

This approach complements Venture Trust's personal development method of delivery and results in a robust alternative to custody.

Venture Trust delivers programmes of group work and residential experiences to the most vulnerable and persistent young offenders. Includem's one-to-one intensive support and supervision facilitates change and promotes a model of continuity of care for the young person. This partnership will ensure that the learning and skills gained through outdoor activity and expedition are transferred back into the community.

This is a joint commitment to the reduction of offending by young people and the management of their behaviour in the community. It will be present from the point of referral and assessment to the transitional support and disengagement of the young person from the project.

