

Ballymun Concrete News

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Chief Superintendent Say's: Children Can Be Saved From Drugs And a Life of Crime. By: Seamus Kelly.

Children could be saved from a life of torment drugs and crime if detected early, said Chief Superintendent Jim Murphy of Santry Garda station in an exclusive interview with this reporter. Jim Murphy stated that there are specially trained gardai called Juvenile Liaison Officers, who work closely with children found using drugs. The Liaison Officers co-operate with parents, teachers, social workers, welfare officers, and personnel involved in child guidance clinics, public health clinics and the courts.

The Chief Supt believes, Liaison Officers are in a better position to assist young offenders away from a life of crime. "The Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme first set up in 1963, said Jim Murphy, in order to divert juvenile offenders from criminal activity. This saves the juvenile from having to go through the criminal justice system." According to the Chief Superintendent, over 86,000 juvenile offenders are included in the Diversion programme since its inception in 1963 to 1996. Of this total 83 per cent are male, and 17 per cent female. Some 89 per cent of these through the programme, reached 18 years old without being prosecuted for a criminal offence.

It is only in recent years that the age limit for inclusion in the programme was raised from 17 to 18. "A juvenile offender who is eligible for inclusion in the programme, is dealt with by way of a caution, as opposed to being prosecuted for a criminal offence. The Diversion Programme operates under the supervision and direction of the Garda national Juvenile Officer. This, he

added, is carried out by specially trained Gardai called Juvenile Liaison Officers at all Garda divisions."

Jim Murphy indicated that a caution may be administered in one of two ways. An informal caution is used where the criminal act committed by the juvenile offender is of a minor nature. "This, he said, is administered by the local Juvenile Liaison Officer and is normally carried out at the offenders home in the presence of parents or guardians. Where the criminal activity is of a more serious nature, Jim Murphy added, a formal caution is administered by the local District Officer (Superintendent). This takes place at the Garda station in the presence of parents or guardians."

The programme works on the basis of police discretion, which is a common law concept. (The children's Bill 1996 proposes that it would operate on a statutory basis). Jim Murphy stated the Diversion Programme: "could save a lot of hardship and pain for children and their families. And in particular save children from a life of crime".

Chief Supt Murphy is the man in charge of the North Division which includes three districts, 10 police stations, 450 Gardai and a population of over a quarter of a million people. Areas such as Coolock, Swords, Malahide, Ballymun, Santry, Dublin Airport, Clontarf, Howth and Raheny are his responsibility. His role covers Law Enforcement, crime Prevention, community Relations, Road Traffic (Operation Lifesaver). Serious Crime Investigation, and liaison with agencies in relation to the prevention of violence against women and the

protection of children are also under his management.



Gardai are not just about chasing criminals. They can help save the young, from a life of crime.

Editorial Note

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