

Response to proposed AST for North and South Lanarkshire.

It seems strange to combine the fourth and fifth biggest areas of the current system, to better serve the needs of the Children of Lanarkshire. Indeed at present there is, without doubt, a policy of centralisation being implemented by SCRA. In my opinion there are not enough 'local' Hearing Rooms at present and to combine two very large geographical areas will in no way assist or support the Children and Families served by our System. We appear to be forgetting why the Hearing System was set up and who it was designed to serve.

I also fail to see any benefits for the current Panel Members of either Area. To my knowledge there has always been joint initial training and any particular shortfalls are dealt with on an ad hoc basis. The recommendation states that a joint AST would provide, ' a more outward -facing approach, without creating a structure so large that panel members would feel detached from any support that could realistically be offered. I think the opposite is the case, especially as the number of Panel Members would be greatly increased and there would be no specific Area officials of any kind.

As far as the former CPAC role is concerned, it would appear there is still not a complete understanding of duties involved in large areas. At present North Lanarkshire has two sub-committees, South Lanarkshire has none. As it is impossible to operate or indeed function as a CPAC without the immense support of the Local Authority staff, much of which is taken for granted and cannot easily be measured in either time or cost, it is by no means clear how this position will be maintained. The independence of the volunteer Members of the current CPAC arrangement would also appear to have been misunderstood. I think future AST members may not be able to support and indeed recruit their Panel Members with anything like the same freedom of choice.

To sum up, I do not think a joint AST for Lanarkshire would better serve anyone's needs and without the support of the Local Authority, the System simply cannot function.

John P. Maguire

CPAC Chair, North Lanarkshire.

