

The Shetland Children's Panel Advisory Committee (CPAC) wishes to submit the following response:

It is welcomed that the reforms are intended to benefit panel members and others involved in the Children's Hearings system, particularly with regard to raising the profile and understanding of the system amongst employers.

It is also welcomed that it is hoped to retain existing CPAC Clerks and administrative staff to support Area Support Teams as this will help to provide continuity and retain existing knowledge and experience.

However more clarity is required regarding the duties and roles of the members of the AST. It is queried if all AST members will have the same rights and status as part of the core membership when their roles are very different? For example, will the Clerk have voting rights? Will Panel members have the same roles and responsibilities when they are unable to be involved in recruitment decisions and monitoring? Will specific AST members carry out pastoral roles or deal with complaints, or will this be a duty of the AST as a whole? If so, what consideration would be given to the position of the Panel member who is part of the core membership?

It is welcomed that there is to be a Panel member on the AST. However as Panel members are unable to carry out monitoring and recruitment duties, it is felt that the core membership of the AST will have to be increased, as it will otherwise be difficult to carry out some of the duties that will be required of it. It is noted that the proposed model for the Orkney AST includes four National Convener appointees, and the Western Isles proposed AST model includes five National Convener appointees. It is felt that the number of National Convener appointees for Shetland will need to be increased likewise in order to enable the AST to carry out what will be required of it.

It would also need to be clarified if it is any Panel member, or if it is the Panel Chair (or Vice Chair) that it is intended to be included in the core membership of the AST. Currently the input of the Panel Chair or Vice Chair is welcomed at meetings, as they tend to have a broad overview of the Panel, and it is felt that it would be appropriate for the Panel Chair (or Vice Chair) to be included in the core membership.

With regard to the specific reference in paragraph 14.8 of the consultation paper to an additional joint annual event to be organised and hosted in turn by island ASTs, it is felt that there would need to be more clarity regarding who would fund this event and who would be invited to attend. As well as a financial cost, there is a large time commitment required from those involved in both organising and attending these events, and it is questioned if it is necessary to hold an additional event.

