

# **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AREA SUPPORT TEAMS**

## **RESPONSE BY HIGHLAND CHILDREN'S PANEL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **Introduction**

Highland CPAC had been given the impression, during the visit by the National Convener on 16 June 2011, that Option 1 - Highland Panel/CPAC remaining unchanged – would be the accepted one. However, if Option 2 is the outcome we will not oppose joining with the Moray Panel/CPAC.

The Options referred to by the CPAC in dialogue with the National Convener were as follows:-

- Option 1 - the present Highland Panel be unchanged but supported by a professional support team based in Inverness;
- Option 2 – expand the Highland Support Team to include Moray; and
- Option 3 – expand the Highland or Highland/Moray Team to include North Argyll.

### **Consultation Document**

(N.B. The numbering refers directly to the paragraphs numbered in the Consultation Document)

### **Background**

1.13 and 1.14 (and 11.7)

The provision of the services of a Clerk and administrative support have been clearly specified for the Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire proposal (1 fte clerk and 1 fte Panel Secretary) and Highland would support equivalent administrative help/assistance being the minimum standard for other Area Support Team (ASTs). There is uncertainty about the roles of the Clerk and the administrative support and these need to be clarified.

### **Area Support Teams – The Roles of Members**

3.1

It is suggested that the members of the AST might be broadly similar to those who currently form part of the CPAC. However, it is felt that an assumption has been made and it should be made clear that not all CPAC members will want to transfer, as is already evidenced in Highland. There is potential for many to leave and Highland are aware that a portion of its CPAC will not elect to transfer.

Clarification of the training of Area Support Teams needs to be made as a matter of urgency.

### 3.1.5

It is proposed that members of the ASTs should have:-

- an interest in child welfare
- an understanding of the Children's Hearings system
- appropriate skills to act in a constructive monitoring role
- gained practical experience of recruitment, investigating complaints
- good knowledge of the organisation and the management of training.

These criteria suggest two different types of people are being sought and it would be extremely difficult to find individuals who would possess all of these qualities. While every effort would be made to fill as many of the criteria as possible, full compliance is likely to prove restrictive. It is also important to acknowledge that a balance of skills needs to be maintained during the transition period.

### 3.1.6 and 3.1.8

Composition of AST – Highland CPAC welcome the inclusion of Panel Members on ASTs. However, given its size, both geographically and in terms of numbers, there needs to be a minimum of two Panel Members from Highland appointed to the AST. Should the decision be taken that Highland join with Moray, Moray too would be able to appoint one Panel Member, resulting in a total of three Panel Members on the AST.

In Highland, there are a number of partnership meetings/activities involving the Panel and these are not all held in Inverness. Consequently, it has proved necessary, to date, in Highland, for the Depute Panel Chair to assist the Panel Chair. The success of this arrangement has been clearly demonstrated by the excellent relationships the Panel and CPAC have with other organisations.

## **Highland and Moray**

### 12.7

The comment “the disparate geography of the area is a major factor and in formulating my proposal for a joint Highland/Moray AST, I wanted to avoid creating additional burdens for members and panel members in terms of having to travel greater distances to meetings or hearings” is referred to. By combining Highland and Moray we appreciate that there will not be a need for Panel members to travel but there will be a requirement for AST members to do so.

## **Conclusion**

The information supplied in this response is meant to be constructive and Highland CPAC acknowledges the difficulties and challenges facing the National Convener and the Board of Children's Hearings Scotland in determining the way forward.

