

**ABERDEENSHIRE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE RESPONSE TO
CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AREA
SUPPORT TEAMS BY THE NATIONAL CONVENER OF CHILDREN'S
HEARINGS SCOTLAND**

Aberdeenshire Social Work is committed to a range of partnership arrangements that exist throughout the north east. The North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee (NESCPC) is an example of a particularly effective partnership and we are developing a number of pan Grampian arrangements around the GIRFEC reform programme that bring added value to more local structures, systems and processes. It is therefore from a demonstrable record of success in and commitment to working across geographical and organisational boundaries that these comments are offered.

The ambition of the proposals to enhance support to Panels as a contribution to achieving better outcomes for children is welcome. Similarly, the establishment of national standards and consistency in areas including managing complaints, pastoral support to panel members, allowances are regarded as important in enhancing the quality of Panel members endeavours and experiences and thus, enhancing the role of Panels in securing better outcomes for young people.

It is however in the matter of the added value of a combined City and Shire model that our questions lie. In particular the comments from our CPAC colleagues on the unique contribution and cost effectiveness of an overarching City- Shire body alongside an essential local area substructure remain a significant challenge to the model's credibility. This is perhaps particularly so when the overall proposals recognise the scale and diversity of the City and Shire but seek a combination when for example Fife would remain a singleton area.

It may be that the consultation document was not intended to provide detailed information about aspects of the proposal but we would contrast this with the NESCPC arrangements mentioned above where there is a different degree of clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the NESCPC and its 3 local authority area sub committees. Overall, perhaps it is this lack of detail in important aspects of the proposal, including that of finance, that makes it difficult for Aberdeenshire to support the proposal for the City and Shire as it stands.

