

Response to the National Convener, Children's Hearings Scotland, on proposals for Area Support Teams (ASTs)

North Ayrshire Council recognises the requirement to have Area Support Teams in place at the earliest possible opportunity, and would indicate support, in principle, for the formation of an Ayrshire-wide AST.

The Council supports the aims of the ASTs to provide more streamlined arrangements to ensure panel members are fully supported to a consistently high standard, and that children and young people have a high quality experience in hearings across Scotland.

The Council supports closer partnership working and integrated provision of services as recommended in the Christie Commission report on the Future Delivery of Public Services, and the aspiration to support Panel Members in their commitment to make independent reasoned decisions which are in the best interests on vulnerable children and young people.

The Council is reassured by the statement by the National Convener that the fundamental principles of Kilbrandon will remain intact and should be reinforced through the reform agenda, specifically that the decision makers in the Hearings system are local people who are specially selected and trained, making decisions about the children and young people in their communities.

However, such agreement is conditional upon further discussions between the three authorities and the National Convener, in terms of a Service Level Agreement, and the staffing, financial and operational issues arising from the establishment of an Ayrshire AST.

In this regard, North Ayrshire seeks, prior to commenting further on the proposals, clarification on the following points: -

1. What will be the exact nature of the duties and roles of the Area Support Teams?
2. What is the anticipated split of funding between Local Authorities and CHS?
3. What will the compulsory training consist of?
4. What will be the anticipated role of Clerks/support officers within the Area Support Teams?
5. What support the Convener expects/anticipates?
6. What CHS Staff will do in relation to what Local Authority staff do just now?
7. What will the National Convener do in the event that the Local Authorities cannot agree to the proposals?
8. In terms of Panel Members where will the delivery of training take place?
9. When is the approval of local authorities required by in terms of the proposals?
10. Is there a template for the SLA in terms of the proposed transfer of roles and functions?
11. Has an Equalities Impact Assessment been undertaken nationally?

