

**East Renfrewshire Children's Panel Advisory Committee**

**Chair: Catherine Smith**  
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Barrhead,  
East Renfrewshire  
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Date: 18 October 2011

**TO:**

AST Consultation  
Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2E South  
Victoria Quay  
EDINBURGH  
EH6 6QQ

Dear Sir/Madam

**CONSULTATION ON ESTABLISHMENT OF AREA SUPPORT TEAMS - JOINT RESPONSE FROM EAST RENFREWSHIRE CPAC AND CHILDREN'S PANEL**

In response to the consultation document issued on the establishment of Area Support Teams (ASTs), the following joint response is submitted from East Renfrewshire Children's Panel Advisory Committee (CPAC) and Children's Panel (CP). The response from East Renfrewshire Council is being prepared and sent separately.

Summary

Before providing detailed comments, we wish to stress that we do not consider that valid arguments have been made which suggest, in terms of outcomes, that local children and families and Hearings volunteers would be better served if volunteers fall under a larger AST. The joint AST covering East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire has been proposed despite East Renfrewshire Panel Members having access to inter-authority training, as they will in future, and the local adoption of and an on-going commitment to adopting further standardised practices which are evidence of an outward-facing approach having been taken in our area. Again focussing on outcomes, our strong view is that there is no guarantee that the current, positive experience of volunteers on a range of fronts will be matched or improved upon or that outcomes for local children and families in our area will be better if the proposals are implemented. Their implementation could even be detrimental to our area. Having reflected carefully on a wide range of issues, it remains very unclear to us where local gains would actually be made. The real and additional benefits to East Renfrewshire of a joint AST arrangement have not been sufficiently specified or demonstrated. Therefore, we wish to propose, as an alternative, that an AST for East Renfrewshire alone be created.

An executive summary of our detailed response below is attached (see Appendix 1).

Detailed Comments

Whilst considering our response and taking account of the specific proposal to establish a single AST covering East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire and the need to explore issues relating to this in-depth, East Renfrewshire CPAC convened a meeting of Office Bearers from both areas on 9 September 2011. The CPAC Chairs from both areas, the East Renfrewshire Joint Panel Chairs, the Renfrewshire Panel Chair and Officers from both local authorities involved in support attended. A wide range of issues was discussed and views were expressed at the meeting, including on current arrangements in each area both operational and otherwise; reactions to the consultation document; related benefits and concerns; the extent to which alternative proposals were considered appropriate locally and

otherwise; and some issues relating to Officer support for ASTs. The outcome of those discussions has informed the preparation of this response.

In the first instance, East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP wish to highlight that a few comments in the AST consultation document are either factually inaccurate or could be misleading to, or misinterpreted by, those who are not familiar with detailed arrangements in this area. It is of local concern that at least some of these appear to have shaped or justified the formulation of the AST proposals for this area, at least in part.

The issues concerned and related comments from East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP are listed below:-

- Paragraph 18.3 states that the Authority Reporter services Hearings for both Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Children's Panel which take place in Paisley, Renfrewshire. With a very few limited exceptions (e.g. some emergency Hearings), all East Renfrewshire Hearings currently take place in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire, and have done so for some time for the benefit of local children and families. Before that the vast majority of local Hearings took place at East Renfrewshire Council Headquarters. It would be accurate to say that the Authority Reporter covering East Renfrewshire is based in the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) Offices in Paisley, Renfrewshire, and that there is no SCRA Office in East Renfrewshire.

However the Authority Reporter and related Hearings arrangements for East Renfrewshire are essentially separate from those of Renfrewshire, with it being understood that there is still a dedicated team working for East Renfrewshire. It is acknowledged that SCRA's new management arrangements for West Dunbartonshire are that these now rest jointly with the East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Authority Reporters based in Paisley. However, the Authority Reporter working in East Renfrewshire has stressed to us that it is not anticipated that this arrangement will have any impact on day to day operations for East Renfrewshire Hearings.

- Paragraph 18.3 also states that there have previously been joint arrangements in place to have concurrent panel members in place between areas for specified periods of time, giving a clear impression that East Renfrewshire has been involved in such an arrangement. East Renfrewshire Panel Members have never been involved in any concurrent panel member arrangements with any other area. It is understood, based on the discussions on 9 September 2011 that some Renfrewshire panel members were involved in a concurrent panel membership scheme with Inverclyde at one point, but only for a short period of time.
- Paragraph 18.6 proposes that the membership of the AST, as a minimum, is 15, 10 of whom would be current CPAC Ministerial appointees (7 from Renfrewshire CPAC; and 3 from East Renfrewshire CPAC). It is understood that there are only currently 5, rather than 7, Renfrewshire CPAC Ministerial appointees. Further comments on the proposed membership of the AST are provided later in this response.
- There is an inconsistency in the paper as it appears to be the case that at least part of the justification for establishing some proposed ASTs that cover areas that mirror exactly current CPAC boundaries (e.g. Fife) is that the areas concerned have contributed to national and other groups. Similar comments are not attributed to at least some other areas where this is arguably and strongly justified, including East Renfrewshire.

This inconsistency could be attributable to a local response provided to a question posed in a previous questionnaire issued by the National Convener which asked about joint/cross-boundary working and which appeared locally to relate to concurrent panel membership arrangements with which East Renfrewshire panel members have never been involved. It is the case that successive East Renfrewshire CPAC Chairs and the Clerk have contributed significantly to

discussions on practice, developments and initiatives at a national level such as and amongst other things through regular attendance at the Children's Panel Advisory Group (CPAG); the previous CPAC Chair's membership of the National Standardisation Working Group; the Clerk's membership of the CPAG Policy and Development Group since its establishment; and the Clerk and a previous CPAC Chair's membership of various CPAG National Seminar Planning Groups. Meetings of the Children's Panel Chairman's Group have also been attended.

We feel strongly that the extent to which local support has been provided by some areas, including East Renfrewshire, to promote and progress work led at a national level has been inaccurately portrayed. In addition, weight appears to have been given inconsistently to this in relation to the development of the AST proposals.

At this stage, we wish to stress that some recent developments are welcomed in East Renfrewshire. For example the establishment of a figurehead for panel members is regarded as a positive and welcome development, as is the flexibility which panel members will have to move between areas in future, subject to them wishing to do so, without the need for the bureaucratic formalities associated with establishing concurrent panel membership schemes between areas having to be pursued.

Reflecting a significant contribution already made by East Renfrewshire to supporting the development of standardised practices and an outward facing approach that has been adopted locally to this, standardisation initiatives, which are a central theme of AST proposals, continue to be fully supported in East Renfrewshire and will be in future. Amongst other things, such initiatives have resulted in welcomed, efficiency gains locally. For example, there is less need now than in the past to review and discuss how some issues relating to recruitment, monitoring and reappointment of panel members should be progressed and for related administrative support for this to be provided. Reflecting East Renfrewshire's on-going support for standardisation, a number of ideas for further standardisation have been put forward locally for consideration at a national level in recent weeks in response to a request for these.

Moving on to the detailed proposals in the consultation document, East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP do not support the proposed establishment of an AST covering East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire. We wish to propose, as an alternative, that an AST for East Renfrewshire alone be created.

This view is being expressed against a frequently voiced background of concerns locally, and in some areas elsewhere, that the continuation of current arrangements that are known to work well in areas such as East Renfrewshire appear to have effectively been sacrificed under the proposals, when the focus should have been placed instead, and should always have been placed, on addressing issues in areas elsewhere where operational problems were said to exist. It is acknowledged, unreservedly, locally that there is always room for improvement within the Hearings System, both at a national and local level, and this will continue to be the case, a review of practices locally and the adoption of changes arising from the standardisation programme having been fully embraced by East Renfrewshire CPAC and Panel Members, evidencing and reflecting the importance we attach to continuous improvement.

Specific comments are as follows.

- When representatives of East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP met with the National Convener in June, we emphasised strongly that the Hearings System in East Renfrewshire was considered, by us, to operate extremely well at present. For example, we stressed, amongst other things, that support provided by East Renfrewshire Council and many Officers based within it to East Renfrewshire CPAC and Children's Panel, and the Hearings System generally, was very highly valued by us. Reflecting the value attached to that support, turnover of panel members has been relatively low in East Renfrewshire since 1996 through which, for example, the substantial costs associated with pre-service training for panel members have been

minimised and there has not been a need to progress the time-consuming and resource intensive recruitment of new panel members every year.

- Excellent communication and harmonious working relationships exist here, and have always existed between all key stakeholders locally. As we have emphasised to the National Convener and others previously and repeatedly, we consider that the many positive aspects of these local working arrangements are directly attributable to the small size of the Panel and CPAC operation in this area and the particular and positive approach of key local stakeholders, including East Renfrewshire Council and a wide range of Officers within it, to the Hearings System, which has allowed excellent working relationships to be formed and focus to be placed by all on addressing the needs of vulnerable children and families locally. Irrespective of this, the proposals suggest that the creation of an AST for East Renfrewshire is not an option, without any guarantee or assurance having been provided by those promoting change that the positive experience enjoyed locally by East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP volunteers at present will be improved upon or even matched under a joint East Renfrewshire/Renfrewshire AST under which new challenges will required to be faced. The management of relationships with two local authorities (which may differ in their approach to the Hearings System as a whole) is just one of these challenges.
- At the meeting we convened on 9 September 2011, views were shared on operational arrangements in both areas, including on recruitment, reappointment and monitoring. The difference in scale of the tasks associated with these in both areas at present and related implications for us became apparent very quickly. On the basis of those discussions, we have concluded and are concerned that the workload of East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP volunteers is likely to increase unacceptably in future beyond that at present. At the same time, there will be a mismatch in terms of the scale of influence that East Renfrewshire CPAC members will have at AST discussions, based simply on the balance of the membership of the AST.
- With reference to Paragraph 18.2 which comments on the number of panel members which the proposed East Renfrewshire/Renfrewshire AST would support (approximately 110 (83 from Renfrewshire; and 27 from East Renfrewshire (the current membership of East Renfrewshire Panel is now slightly less than that), and despite some assurances having been given on where panel members would actually serve, it is of concern that the extent to which they would continue serving for the benefit of the local authority area to which they were appointed (either for the time-being or in future) remains both unclear and unspecified. Furthermore, the extent to which flexibility is expected of panel members to serve outside the local authority area to which they were appointed and what is really meant by their 'local area', has not been specified sufficiently.
- Against this background of continued lack of clarity on the extent to which Panels will remain 'local' under the new proposals and a pressing need for more definitive clarification from the National Convener on intentions, some views were expressed by Renfrewshire delegates in support of amalgamating the East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Panels on the basis that they could see no merit in maintaining separate ones if a single AST covering both areas was established. They argued that this would enable all panel members to be available to serve on Hearings in both areas, assisting for example to address issues such as gender imbalances that may exist in the Renfrewshire Panel. They commented also that their understanding was, until the meeting we convened with them, that all East Renfrewshire Hearings took place in SCRA's Offices in Paisley, Renfrewshire which, as referred to above, is simply not the case. We clarified the position at the meeting.

There is not support amongst panel members in East Renfrewshire for an amalgamation of both Panels and we consider there to be a real risk that many valued panel members will be lost to East Renfrewshire, and therefore to the Hearings System, if that were to be pursued. Key reasons for this include that there are real concerns that the particularly positive experience that East Renfrewshire

panel members have had and continue to have in terms of the approach of the East Renfrewshire Community Health and Care Partnership and the Education Department of the Council to meeting the needs of local children and families; implementing Hearings decisions; making resources available; and addressing the very few concerns that are expressed from time to time by the Joint Panel Chairs on behalf of panel members at liaison meetings with social work and education managers on issues that they feel need to be addressed, will not be replicated elsewhere.

Our conclusion is based, in part, on information provided to us on 9 September on the arrangement of social work teams in Renfrewshire, the extent and frequency of liaison meetings between representatives of these teams and Panel representatives; and on the types of issues discussed. It was clear that these did not reflect the position in East Renfrewshire. Furthermore, there are also considered to be challenges for East Renfrewshire panel members simply having to deal with two local authorities, rather than one in the future, which East Renfrewshire panel members wish to avoid and which could make planning the content of local training difficult and require panel members to attend some sessions outwith East Renfrewshire. It is our view that some local training, specific to the local authority area, would need to continue to be provided in any case as the approach of East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire social work services are unlikely to be similar and may be radically different. The extent to which this is the case remains unknown and unspecified in the consultation document and it is our view that it has not been fully considered.

- Overall, insufficient weight appears to have been given to the high quality and value attached to current service and support arrangements in place locally simply, it would appear, in favour of creating a larger AST of which East Renfrewshire representatives would become only a relatively small and minority part. Even if the over-estimation of the current number of Ministerial CPAC appointees in Renfrewshire was addressed, the current extended size of Renfrewshire CPAC and related impact on the AST proposed creates a risk that those representing East Renfrewshire would be unable to influence the outcome of at least some discussions which will have a direct impact, possibly detrimentally, on our current area. If there is a mechanism to address the imbalance over time, that is not clear.
- On a related issue, Paragraph 18.6 of the consultation document refers to the proposed minimum membership of the AST, the proposal being that a minimum of 15 members will be appointed. A review of the proposed, minimum membership of all 17 proposed ASTs reveals that a number of anomalies have been created. For example in contrast to the proposed East Renfrewshire/Renfrewshire AST in respect of which a minimum AST membership of 15 is proposed (for an area of around 110 panel members), the minimum number of proposed AST members for the North and South Lanarkshire AST (for an area covering 240 panel members) is only 12. Other anomalies of this nature are reflected in the document, those relating to Glasgow being most striking.
- It appears to be the case that the size of the Panel and related statistics, such as those provided in Appendix 2 have, for most areas, been used as a justification for the proposals put forward. However the factual position is that the Glasgow AST would deal with a substantially larger number of panel members than any other by a large margin, whether established on a joint or stand alone basis. Despite reference elsewhere in the document to the discounting of a super-structure (Paragraph 4.2. refers), no similar argument has been made or appears to have been considered for splitting Glasgow into smaller teams, although arguably, on the basis of the justification for proposals for at least some other areas, that approach should have been promoted. Why scale as an issue is raised for some areas, and not for Glasgow, remains both unclear and illogical.
- Taking account of Paragraph 3.1.7 and particularly the scale of the task of providing pastoral support to a Panel such as the size of the current Renfrewshire Panel, we share a view and concern expressed by our counterparts in Renfrewshire, that it

would be difficult to identify a single panel member who would be willing to be a member of the AST and carry out this pastoral role, on a voluntary basis. From East Renfrewshire's perspective, it is also of concern that, due to this, it also appears that scope remains to either appoint additional panel members to the AST from Renfrewshire to cover this responsibility on a shared basis (potentially further imbalancing the membership of the AST in favour of Renfrewshire), or to expect panel representative(s) from East Renfrewshire to share this task, but for panel members from outwith their own area. A whole range of issues could impact on the scale of this task in what appear to be two quite radically different areas. As stated elsewhere in this response, the small scale of the Children's Panel in East Renfrewshire and exact nature of the working relationships that have been formed where people are well known to each other makes taking on pastoral responsibilities more manageable and meaningful.

- Looking at issues from a different perspective, our view is that the real and additional benefits that would be realised locally from a joint AST arrangement have not been sufficiently specified or demonstrated. In reaching this conclusion we have taken account that:-
  - Reflecting an outward facing approach, standardised procedures with which CPAC Members are involved, as developed nationally, have without exception, been adopted and embraced locally, generating efficiencies and improving consistency across Scotland;
  - As reflected in Paragraph 18.4 of the consultation document, panel members from East Renfrewshire already have opportunities to attend pre-service and some in-service training on an inter-authority basis, allowing experiences to be shared with panel members elsewhere and they will continue to have such opportunities under the future arrangements for providing and funding such training;
  - Steps are being taken at a national level to improve the consistency of the experience which panel members will have when they attend non-local training, as currently provided by the Children's Hearings Training Units, which are not in the control of ASTs;
  - Valid arguments have not been made at a national level which suggest that the interests of volunteers serving in East Renfrewshire or local children and families would be better served simply by them falling under an area covered by a larger AST;
  - Some concerns that it was argued were expressed regarding the reimbursement of expenses for volunteers in a few areas (outwith East Renfrewshire) are being addressed at a national level and in a way that is completed unrelated to the establishment of ASTs;
  - Our Authority Reporter is involved not only in East Renfrewshire Hearings, but also in attending other meetings at a single local authority level, including of the East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee which has a key role in addressing the needs of vulnerable children and young people in our geographical area;
  - Panelpal is now being used in East Renfrewshire in connection with the rota, with there being plans to roll out its use for other purposes, resulting in some administrative efficiencies and other gains in ways that are arguably becoming more standardised with other areas;
  - Taking account of comments made above on access to inter-authority training, the willing adoption of standardised practices and our on-going commitment to further standardisation, it is not clear where other gains would be made locally; and

- It is our firm view that the proposals reflect a departure from progressing issues in a local setting, this being a key element of the Kilbrandon Report published in the early 1970s which envisaged the involvement of local people in the Children's Hearings System.
- Under the terms of the proposals (Paragraph 3.1.3 refers), one of the current local authority appointee members of East Renfrewshire CPAC (an elected Member) who has close oversight of children's social work issues services would be ineligible to serve on an AST. We consider this regrettable since the involvement of such an elected Member has been highly valued locally in the past for various reasons. It is not that matters will be unable to be raised with such an elected Member, they will simply have to be raised through a member of the AST, creating what seems to be an unnecessary barrier. Whilst a potential conflict of interest is acknowledged, since elected Members do not directly influence the independent decisions made by panel members, the proposal seems unnecessarily restrictive, especially as the potential list of criteria for the appointment of local authority representatives on ASTs (Paragraph 3.1.5 refers) seems quite extensive and at risk of ruling out a significant number of elected Members from participating.
- It is not clear if the Authority Reporter will be permitted to attend AST meetings (Paragraph 1.10 refers).
- Paragraph 18.3 comments on the lack of any real existing joint and cross boundary CPAC or Panel working arrangements at present between Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Children's Panels or CPACs. Arguably this is because there has been no valid reason or need for this, although it is acknowledged that the Authority Reporter for East Renfrewshire is based in SCRA's Offices Paisley.
- Although the new Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 Act removes the statutory role of local authorities to provide support to the local CPAC and Children's Panel, the AST proposals reflect an expectation on the part of the National Convener and others that local authorities will continue to support the newly created ASTs, but with their accountability, including that of the Clerk, to be to the National Convener. It is specified that it is the National Convener's intention to negotiate Service Level Agreements with local authorities, but until all relevant issues regarding that are considered, discussed and resolved, it is impossible for us to comment fully on these proposals since proposals associated with the creation of the AST and related support arrangements are inextricably linked in our view and should, therefore, have been put forward together in sufficient depth.

On a related issue, the exact extent to which the functions of the new ASTs will be the same or different to those carried out by current CPACs and the extent to which additional burdens could be placed on ASTs, Clerks and related Officers under the direction of the National Convener remains unclear which is of concern.

It was clarified by the National Convener just after the meeting of the first Children's Hearing (Scotland) Board earlier this year and through the consultation document (e.g. Paragraphs 1.13 to 1.16) that she expects Clerks to become members of the AST and therefore to be directly accountable to her. The National Convener clearly considers the support of Clerks and administrative staff to be critical to the successful establishment and operation of ASTs. There is a lack of clarity why it is being proposed that the Clerk should be a member of the AST, as there is quite a fundamental difference between being a member of such a body and providing support to it.

We share views expressed to the National Convener by Officers of East Renfrewshire Council that there are a number of issues that may not be straight forward to resolve between the National Convener and local authorities which are willing to enter into Service Level Agreements on support arrangements, including regarding exact support needs and arrangements; the Clerk's role; and related

management and accountability arrangements amongst others as there may be impediments, or at least difficulties, associated with the arrangements operating exactly as suggested or implied in the consultation document. That includes regarding individual staff because, as we discussed at the meeting on 9 September, no single officer in East Renfrewshire or Renfrewshire provides support as the primary function of their remit, far from it, with those providing support at present being responsible also for a wide range of other duties unrelated to the Hearings System. The response from East Renfrewshire Council to the consultation document may comment on such issues further. In the interim, and pending resolution of the types of issues referred to above, commenting more fully on these issues, as we would wish to, is impossible.

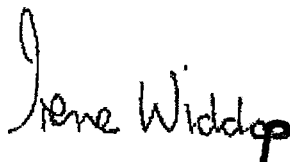
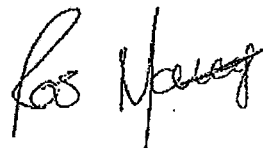
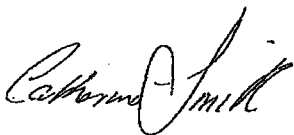
In conclusion, having adopted standardised procedures and being supportive of further developments in this field, members of East Renfrewshire CPAC and Children's Panel remain strongly of the view that there are not considerable benefits, if any, to be gained for East Renfrewshire from a joint AST arrangement with another authority, even its close geographical neighbour Renfrewshire or from East Renfrewshire CPAC and CP Office bearers having to contribute to the resolution of issues that may be attributable solely to the approach of another local authority.

Going further, for reasons commented on in this response, our strong view is that there are arguments that suggest that the proposed arrangement is likely to be detrimental to East Renfrewshire. We do not consider that valid arguments have been made in the consultation document, or before, that suggest that the changes proposed for East Renfrewshire would impact positively, or at all, on local children and families, panel members or CPAC volunteers in East Renfrewshire (and possibly negatively on CPAC and Panel volunteers), this being an issue that should be taken into account and underpin any change, such as that proposed.

We accept, unreservedly, that joint arrangements may be considered warranted, beneficial and appropriate in some areas, but find it difficult to extend arguments in favour of these to our own area given our current position and for reasons specified in this response, complemented by our wish to preserve the Hearings System in East Renfrewshire.

The proposals require further thought, giving due consideration to wishes and views expressed at a local level.

Yours faithfully



CHAIR OF EAST RENFREWSHIRE CPAC AND JOINT EAST RENFREWSHIRE PANEL  
CHAIRS

**SUMMARY OF RESPONSE BY EAST RENFREWSHIRE CPAC AND CHILDREN'S PANEL**

- With few exceptions (e.g. some emergency Hearings), all East Renfrewshire Hearings take place in Barrhead, East Renfrewshire not Paisley in Renfrewshire as documented.
- East Renfrewshire has never been involved in a concurrent panel membership scheme, but the document implies that it has.
- It is understood that there are currently 5, not 7, Ministerial appointees on Renfrewshire CPAC.
- There are inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the paper about the extent to which areas have contributed to national initiatives. The documented position on this appears to have justified some proposals for stand-alone ASTs, but positive comments have not been attributed fairly to some other areas where merited, despite strong justification (including regarding East Renfrewshire).
- Some developments are welcomed and positive, such as the establishment of a figurehead; the flexibility panel members will have to move between areas if they wish to without bureaucracy; and further standardisation (as always supported locally).
- The creation of a joint East Renfrewshire/Renfrewshire AST (despite the close geographical proximity of these 2 areas) is not supported.
- It is proposed, instead, that a stand-alone AST be created for East Renfrewshire.
- Valid arguments have not been made which suggest to us that local children and families and Hearings volunteers would be better served, or that there would be a positive impact on East Renfrewshire, from volunteers falling under a larger AST.
- The change is proposed, despite local access to inter-authority training and the adoption of and an on-going commitment to standardised practices locally, which East Renfrewshire helped create, reflecting an outward-facing approach.
- There is no guarantee that our current, positive experience on a range of fronts will be matched, or improved upon, under the proposed arrangement. The proposal could even be detrimental to East Renfrewshire.
- It is unclear where local gains would actually be made. Real and additional benefits to East Renfrewshire of a joint AST arrangement have not been sufficiently specified or demonstrated.
- Excellent communication and harmonious and supportive working relationships exist between all key stakeholders locally as has always been the case.
- The success of local arrangements is directly attributable, in part, to the small scale of the local Panel and CPAC arrangements and the particular and positive approach of a wide range of key local stakeholders.
- Overall, insufficient weight has been given to the high quality and value attached by us to the current service and support arranged for us simply in favour of creating a larger AST of which East Renfrewshire would be a small and minority part.

- The balance of the membership of the AST would be in favour of Renfrewshire, resulting in a mismatch of influence.
- East Renfrewshire volunteer workload is likely to increase unacceptably to us, including due to the need to manage relationships with two local authorities, the approach of which could differ radically.
- There may be a need for us to contribute to resolving issues that did not need to be addressed before relating to the approach of another authority.
- The current local approach has helped retain and reduce turnover of panel members.
- Focus should always have been placed on areas where operational problems were said to exist.
- There is still a lack of absolute clarity about the extent to which panel members would be expected to serve outside East Renfrewshire.
- East Renfrewshire does not support combining the East Renfrewshire Panel with the Renfrewshire Panel. There would be a real risk that valued panel members will be lost to East Renfrewshire, and the Hearings System, if that happens.
- Some local training, specific to the local authority area, would need to continue to be provided, which does not seem to have been fully considered.
- There are various anomalies about the proposed minimum membership of ASTs relative to the size of various Panels. For example, why scale is an issue for some areas, and not Glasgow, is unclear and illogical.
- The scale of the pastoral support role in Renfrewshire means that identifying one panel member willing and able to do this would be difficult. Scope remains to appoint additional panel members to the AST from Renfrewshire (further imbalancing the AST membership) or to expect someone from East Renfrewshire to share this task, but to support panel members unknown to us.
- Various issues could impact on the scale of pastoral support needs in what seem to be two quite different areas. The small scale of the East Renfrewshire Panel and working relationships formed makes pastoral care more manageable and meaningful.
- Steps are being taken, at a national level, to improve the consistency of panel member experience at non-local training (as currently provided by Children's Hearings Training Units) and regarding the processing of their expenses, but progressing this falls outwith the control of ASTs.
- The proposals reflect a departure from the Kilbrandon philosophy.
- It is regrettable that a local authority elected Member with close oversight of children's social work services would be ineligible to be an AST member, as such appointees have been valued by the CPAC. This creates a barrier to resolving issues that may arise and is unnecessarily restrictive.
- The lack of any real, existing joint and cross boundary CPAC or Panel working arrangements between Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire reflects that this has not actually been required.
- For practical reasons, it is likely that some operational arrangements would best be made locally, even if a joint AST is established.

- The full extent to which AST functions will be the same as, or differ from, those of CPACs; additional burdens to be placed on ASTs, Clerks and related Officers; and total workload under the direction of the National Convener remains unclear.
- Officer support arrangements may not be straight forward to resolve, including because no single officer in East Renfrewshire or Renfrewshire provides support as a primary function of their remit.
- There is a need for further specification and clarity on the roles and functions of the Clerk, and on related support staff and associated workload issues, before a definitive view can be offered on these issues.
- There is a need for further clarity on why a paid officer, the AST Clerk, should be a full member of the AST.
- It is accepted unreservedly, that joint arrangements may be considered warranted, beneficial and appropriate in some areas, but extending this argument to East Renfrewshire, in this case, is difficult.

