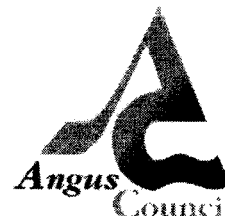


Your Ref:  
Our Ref: DM/SME



19 October 2011

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Dear Sirs

### **Consultation on Proposals for the Establishment of Area Support Teams**

Thank you for your correspondence dated 29 July 2011. Angus Councils welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals. This is a joint response and is sent by the Head of Law and Administration and the Head of Service, Social Work and Health.

I have enclosed, as requested, a completed Respondent Information Form.

#### **Section 4 Area support Teams - Proposed Structures**

I note that you are proposing an Area Support Team for Dundee, Perth & Kinross and Angus. You will no doubt be aware that Section 12 (3) to Schedule 1 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 states that "before establishing an Area Support Team the National Convener must obtain the consent of each constituent authority".

At the time of writing, I am not aware of the particular views of Dundee and Perth and Kinross Councils, however a situation could exist where one authority (or more) within a combined Area Support Team does not support the proposals. I would welcome clarification as to what would happen if this were to occur.

You will also be aware that an anomaly exists within the legislation regarding clerks of Area Support Teams being directly accountable to the National Convener. This is a flaw in the legislation that was highlighted at the time of the passage of the Bill through Parliament, however this remains. A resolution to this is required.

I also note from the consultation paper that the National Convener is hoping to establish Service Level Agreements with local authorities and to negotiate this before budgets are set for next year. Preliminary work has already been completed within Angus on the revenue budgets for 2012/2013. Again I would wish to obtain confirmation from the National Convener as to when these discussions are to take place in order that the financial implications for my Council can be identified.

I am aware that COSLA has taken the view that it would be more beneficial for individual Service Level Agreements to be agreed with each local authority as opposed to a single Service Level Agreement on behalf of all local authorities. However, until such time as a decision is taken as to which local authority within the Dundee, Perth & Kinross and Angus area is to undertake the clerking responsibilities for the new Area Support Team, it would be difficult at this stage to identify the scope and agree the terms of any Service Level Agreement.

As you will appreciate each local authority's revenue budget is under considerable strain with continuing pressure to achieve savings year on year. The clerking of the new Area Support Team will have considerable resource implications, not least with the organisation of the annual recruitment campaign. I would welcome therefore an early meeting to clarify and resolve the issues I have identified.

### **Section 3 Area Support Teams; the roles of members**

I accept there may be some benefits from establishing a Tayside Area Support Team as this may enable us to deliver more streamlined, consistent and efficient services to panel members. However, the benefits of local networks of support are recognised and valued in Angus. I share your view that an 'adequate number' of panel members should be appointed for each constituent authority. I query however whether one member from a Local Authority is adequate but accept that the legislation limiting local authority representation to 30% in an Area Support Team drawing together three local authorities makes this target difficult to achieve. As there are 3 local authorities merging in your proposal for Angus, I would reiterate the importance of there being adequate numbers of local representatives to ensure a system of effective support to panel members in each local authority area. Demands on panel members should also be proportionate given the geographic implications for travel.

I trust that you will find the foregoing comments helpful and look forward to receiving a copy of the revised guidance once the amendments have been finalised.

If you require any further information please contact Sheona Hunter (Head of Law and Administration) on (01307) 476262 or Tim Armstrong (Head of Service, Social Work and Health) on (01307) 462405.

Yours sincerely

Sheona C Hunter  
Head of Law and Administration