

## **Aberdeen City Council Response to the Consultation relating to the Proposals for the Establishment of Area Support Teams**

Area Support Team (AST) Proposed Structures:–

### Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire

In Aberdeen City, the CPAC Clerk position is similar to virtually all the other local authorities in Scotland in so far as the CPAC/Children's Panel work undertaken by the Clerk is only a percentage of their job. The job title for the CPAC Clerk in Aberdeen is Committee Services Officer and he is part of a small team dedicated to providing committee support for elected members and officers etc within the Legal and Democratic Service.

In our opinion, combining local authority support for the proposed joint Area Support Team (Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire) into one full-time dedicated clerk would decrease the support which is presently offered by two part-time Clerks. Firstly, both local authorities currently are able to call on other administrative support members during busy periods for the CPAC and Panel, specifically during the national Recruitment Campaigns (usually August to November). In Aberdeen City up to 3 Clerical/Admin support officers are called upon during this busy period. Secondly Aberdeen City Council would not be in a position to support one full-time dedicated clerk to undertake the role for both authorities. Thirdly the two Clerks in question have built up considerable expertise, knowledge of the system, procedures, guidelines, support mechanisms and partner working relations with other organisations in this field, therefore the loss of one or potentially both officers would make no sense and would be detrimental to those voluntary members who require the best support possible. Finally, the creation of a single Area Support Team which is then sub-divided into a committee for each of the City and the Shire will, in effect, recreate the current situation but with the disadvantage of an additional layer of administration.

As mentioned in your proposal, Aberdeen City Children's Panel has a large panel membership (approximately 130 panel members), covering a large urban area which is distinct from the surrounding area. As such, the type of hearings and the social problems which exist in the city may be remarkably different from those experienced in rural communities. For the reasons above it is our belief that this proposed (Joint Urban/Rural) structure has no benefit for the children and families of Aberdeen and the voluntary members previously mentioned.

Aberdeen City Council (Corporate Governance, Legal and Democratic Service) would only be in a position to maintain its current excellent clerking, secretarial and administrative support for a single Aberdeen City Area Support Team and would urge the National Convener to reconsider her original proposal for a joint support approach.

Mrs. Valerie Watts, Chief Executive, Aberdeen City Council

