

Children's Panel Chairs Group Response To the National Convener's Document On Area Support Teams

Introduction

The Childrens Panel Chairs Group discussed the proposals in the consultation document and reached the following deliberations.

Executive Summary

1. Sections 01 -04 Stipulates duties legislatively bound to the national convener. This is recognised by the CPCG as noted.
2. Sections 05 -07 Stipulates the pre-consultation process carried out by the national convener. This is recognised by the CPCG
3. Sections 07 -11 Stipulates the formation and recognition of the structure proposed by the national convener. This is noted by the CPCG

Background

4. Sections 1.1 -1-16 Stipulates the reasoning and benefits behind the reform of the Childrens Hearing System. At this time the CPCG note the reasoning behind this argument. However, as there is no explanation on how this would be achieved the CPCG can only note those sections
 - 4.1. The CPCG also note that the changes now being processed should explicitly explain where it will provide better outcomes for children, as this was the main focus of the Legislation.
 - 4.2. The CPCG welcomes any changes to legislation that improves the outcomes for children.
 - 4.3. Section 1.9 stipulates the national convener's statutory appointments on Area Support Teams. 1.10 stipulates that SCRA will have no appointments on Area Support Teams. The CPCG note this. However, there is no explanation of roles, duties or rules of the Area Support Teams on which the CPCG could comment specifically.
 - 4.4. Sections 1.11 – 1.13 stipulate the desirability of retaining all those currently providing support to the Children's hearing system. However, there are no details explaining how this would be achieved. 1.14-1.16 stipulate the desirability to work with the local authority to secure Service Level Agreements which will provide administrative support. The CPCG acknowledge that in small authorities this may be possible, however agree that in larger authorities this would be problematic. We also agree that two different administrative approaches will suffer inconsistencies across the country.

The Pre-Consultation Process

5. Sections 2. 2.1-2.4 The CPCG acknowledges the pre-consultation carried out by the national convener prior to the consultation document being produced. However, would like to stipulate that the pre-consultation has not produced any new information.

Area Support Teams –the Roles of Members

6. Sections 3, 3.1 – 3.1.12 stipulate the statutory roles of the area support teams. The CPCG would have liked more explanation as to the actual relationships within the area support teams. The statutory roles are widely understood to be those currently carried out by CPAC. However, the CPCG believe that the roles carried out by CPAC and those by Panel Chairs, are still misunderstood within this consultation document.

- 6.1. CPCG confirm that across the country there is an inconsistency in roles carried out by CPAC, local authority employees and panel chairs. This inconsistency has led to confusion on the proposed make up of Area Support Teams.
- 6.2. CPCG for example looked at the role of CPAC members. Only those appointed by the Scottish Government are legislatively transferred to the AST. However, the number of CPAC members needed in each area is derived from the number of panel members required to be monitored, usually 1 CPAC member to 12 Panel Members. Therefore the number of members required on an AST could be 50 or more. There is also the question of the panel members' role on the AST and that of other members. Within the AST there seems to be no description of member relationships and no clear definitions of any management structures.
- 6.3. CPCG understands that the CHS will develop national standards in relation to the members of the AST stipulated at 3.1.5. It would have been of benefit to the CPCG to have been provided with an outline of said proposals.
- 6.4. Sections 3.1.6 to 3.1.12 stipulate the role of the Panel Members on the AST, the complaints procedure and training of AST members. CPCG acknowledges these proposals. However, without clarity of these roles, we reserve the right to comment at future date.

Area Support Team – proposed structures

7. Sections 4.1 -21.6 stipulate the seventeen proposed Area Support Teams and the combinations of authorities in relation to each AST.
 - 7.1. The CPCG felt that each authority chair would be better placed to respond to these sections of the consultation.
 - 7.2. The CPCG as a group could not agree on any of the justifications in relation to each Area Support Team model.
 - 7.3. The CPCG agree that there is no consistency in modelling each Area Support Team, however acknowledges that this may be due to the individuality of each Authority.

Conclusion

8. As stipulated at part 7, the CPCG felt that as a group we could not agree on any part of the structural make up of each individual Area Support Team.
 - 8.1. Those authorities that have a "Stand Alone" Area Support Team wholeheartedly agree with the current make up.
 - 8.2. Those combined authorities seek clarity in the proposal in how those Area Support Teams will work.
 - 8.3. Once again, too much detail is missing in relation to each proposed Area Support Team.
 - 8.4. There are no details as to the relationships of members in "Stand Alone" authorities or combined authority Area Support Teams.
 - 8.5. There are also no details as to the relationship of roles within the Area Support Teams.
 - 8.6. The CPCG acknowledges that National Standards will be formulated at a later date.
However, stress the view that these seem to be being made up as we go along.
 - 8.7. 8.6 Though the CPCG understands that at some point a decision had to be made on the makeup of the Area Support Teams. We found it difficult to understand the need for another consultation period, since this process has been on the go since 2004 during the GIRFECT consultation.

8.8. The CPG agree that Service Level agreements are undesirable due to the nature of Service Level agreements.

8.8.1. In small authorities like Shetland with 19 panel members, a Service Level agreement of one clerk may work, whereas a Service level agreement in Edinburgh with one clerk with 190 panel members, would not work.

8.8.2. As at 8.8.1, to add more support to Edinburgh would mean creating a ratio of clerk to panel member. Combine this with the percentage of authority clerks time spent on Area Support Team duties. This would lead to confusion within the Area Support Team structure.

8.8.3. The CPG as stipulated at 8.8.1 8.8.2 deems this represents inconsistency of support across the CHS as a whole.

End

Friday, 21 October 2011

