

## Perth and Kinross Council

### Consultation Response to the Proposals for the Establishment of Area Support Teams

#### **1. Introduction**

We acknowledge that the Children's Hearings System (CHS) is undergoing a period of reform. We are fully supportive of the need to work in partnership with the CHS and other local authorities within Tayside in order to improve the lives, outcomes and opportunities for the most vulnerable children and young people in our area, and we welcome the opportunity to respond to your proposals.

#### **2. General Comments**

We note that the Area Support Teams (ASTs) will be supported by paid staff, in line with the current support provided by clerks to the Children's Panel Advisory Committees (CPACs), and we welcome the positive comments regarding that support and function.

We have some concerns regarding the intention to negotiate a service level agreement (SLA) with each local authority in relation to the transfer of that role and function in order to support the work of the ASTs, and it would have been helpful if a copy of the proposed service level agreement had formed part of the consultation proposals in order to gain a better understanding of the requirements.

Perth and Kinross Council has no members of staff who are dedicated to providing support to the CPAC. As you acknowledge, these staff can have a wide range of duties which makes calls on their time. The current Clerk to the CPAC also has responsibility for providing support to elected members; support for both members and officers in relation to statutory committees and meetings of the council; delivery of the registration service; and also support for community councils. The members of staff who provide the administration and support roles for the CPAC and Children's Panel Chair have key roles within the committee and members' services teams. Without the benefit of knowing more about the proposed SLA, it is not clear how the provision of a dedicated clerk for the AST might impact on the other duties undertaken by this group of staff in Perth and Kinross Council.

Your proposals state that *'you will discuss with each constituent authority the arrangement for the provision of the clerk functions, which may require a contribution from each local authority for the provision of a full time clerk to an AST.'* However, again without the benefit of knowing more about the proposed SLA, it is not clear what type of contribution might be required.

### **3. Dundee, Perth and Kinross and Angus Proposal**

Angus, Dundee City and Perth and Kinross Councils are currently working on a number of joint initiatives including joint training arrangements, and Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), and we would therefore support your proposal to have one Area Support Team for the Tayside area. We would agree that there are benefits to be gained by a Tayside model, including the delivery of a modernised approach, supporting panel members, and developing existing learning and good practice.

We are pleased to note that you have acknowledged that the demographics of Dundee are different to those of Perth and Kinross and Angus; and that there are concerns that some authorities might lose their identities within a larger grouping - a view shared by the Perth and Kinross CPAC. We are not convinced that this will be adequately addressed through the establishment of AST sub-committees, and this will need to be discussed locally.

### **4. Conclusion**

Whilst we are supportive of your proposals for the Tayside area, we have not had the opportunity of discussing the details with Angus or Dundee City Councils. There are a number of issues which require further clarification before meaningful discussions can take place; these include the details of the service level agreement you intend to negotiate with local authorities, and more information on the level of expected financial/resource commitment you require.