

Children's Hearings Scotland Board Paper

Agenda Item 3.2

Date of Meeting	19 January 2012.
Paper number	CHS1112-037
Title	ASTs – short-term action plan
Purpose	The purpose of the paper is to note and monitor progress in relation to ASTs.
Options	Note and monitor progress in relation to ASTs.
Recommendations	The Board is recommended to— Note and monitor progress in relation to ASTs.
Attachments	
Author	Project Manager
Contact Details	<u>kit.wyeth@scotland.gsi.gov.uk</u>

ASTs – short-term action plan

Update and proposed activity

It is apparent that, following the conclusion of the AST consultation in October 2011 all local authorities, even those who are supportive of the proposed AST structure as it affects them, require further information before they will be willing to formally agree to a Partnership Agreement in respect of the support they will provide to the AST at local level. There is a need to answer the many questions that LAs have as a result of the AST consultation and give them more detail about how the AST arrangements are expected to work and what role it is envisaged that LAs will play in supporting them.

Considerable time has therefore been spent in recent weeks developing a package of papers that will help give local authorities the information they need. The package comprises:

- **Background information on the 2011 Act and what it means for local authorities** – it is clear from discussions that many LA officials, in particular the more senior decision makers and budget holders, don't have a detailed knowledge or understanding of the Act or the AST proposals and the implications for LAs. This short paper will provide that;
- **Responses to the key questions and comments from local authorities as part of the AST consultation** – a number of issues and concerns remain outstanding, this paper is designed to address these and add further clarity on how the AST arrangements will operate.
- **A paper setting out draft roles and responsibilities for those working in ASTs** – this paper is a revised version of the roles and responsibilities paper that has now been de-coupled from the National Standards and takes account of feedback from CPAC colleagues.
- **A draft Partnership Agreement** – David Hume has prepared a draft of this given his extensive experience from the LA perspective of operating these kind of agreements. He has recommended a relatively short "partnership agreement" type of document focusing on what both sides will offer to the other, rather than a detailed, more traditional Service Level Agreement. This suggestion has been well received in informal discussions with LA colleagues. The draft agreement is sufficiently flexible to allow variations to be made to reflect local needs and circumstances.
- **An individual letter to each local authority.** These letters will be specific and tailored to each authority setting out what the proposed AST involving that authority might look like, what the contribution of the authority might be and an estimate of the cost to it. The letters will respond to any specific issues raised by that authority in its response to the AST consultation as well as any other issues or concerns that we know that authority has. The letters will also confirm the arrangements that have been agreed for signing off the Partnership Agreement with that authority.

Separately, discussions have begun with local authorities on both the substance of the AST arrangements and the process for putting agreements in place. This has been welcomed by the authorities in question.

It is hoped that once this package of information is made available to local authorities progress towards agreement can take place. David Hume, Kit Wyeth and Alison Gough will all be involved in this work. For those areas where things appear relatively straightforward it is hoped that telephone and email communications will be an effective means of securing agreement. It nevertheless remains our judgement that further face to face discussions will be needed with many authorities before agreement will be reached.

Timetable

W/b 16 Jan: initial discussions with LA named contacts re: substance of AST issues and matters to be resolved; and processes for agreeing Partnership Agreements with each authority

W/b 16 Jan: discussions with Cosla re proposed plan of action and any areas of mutual action and assistance.

W/b 23 Jan: discussions with Training Officers re need to postpone training for AST members (currently scheduled for March) with a view to moving it to summer 2012

w/b 23 Jan: finalising AST papers and consultation/clearance with David Hume and Sponsor Team.

27 Jan: suite of papers on ASTs sent to named contacts within LAs

27 Jan: Kit Wyeth to attend SOLACE meeting to discuss ASTs

Feb: follow-up meetings and phone conversations with LA contacts.

Feb: development of proposals for AST structure and Partnership Agreements in the light of discussions with LAs.

17 Feb: agreement with Training Officers on training arrangements for AST members

17 Feb: deadline for comments on draft roles and responsibilities

End Feb: have an agreed AST structure

End Feb: Have draft, individualised Partnership Agreements available for all 32 local authorities

End Feb: AST members roles and responsibilities agreed and published, including clarity on the role of the LA clerk

End March: formal agreement from LAs to AST structure and Partnership Agreement

Summary

This is very much an outline timetable for seeking agreement around ASTs which represents our best estimate of things at this stage. It may well be subject to change. Until we begin some of the more detailed discussions it is hard to predict how difficult and complex some of conversations will be and what particular issues and challenges will arise.

Some slippage in gaining formal agreement (for example to the end of May) should not mean that the go-live date is unachievable. It will however place increased pressure on important related activity such as appointing and training AST members and planning at local level for the operation of ASTs.

Kit Wyeth
Project Manager
Children's Hearings Scotland
18 January 2012