

The Children's Panel
— Life Changing.



Area Support Teams: Functions, Roles and Responsibilities

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Background

- 1.1 The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) aims to improve the lives, outcomes and opportunities of Scotland's most vulnerable children and young people by bringing together certain functions associated with Children's Hearings. The Act, which came into force in June 2013, created the role of National Convener and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS).
- 1.2 The National Convener operates independently, has a limited number of statutory functions and, for the first time, acts as an ambassador and advocate for Scotland's 2,700 volunteer Children's Panel members, to ensure that they are supported to a consistently high standard. Children's Hearings Scotland is the dedicated non-departmental public body that has a duty to support the National Convener in the delivery of the functions conferred on her by the 2011 Act.
- 1.3 The 2011 Act empowers the National Convener to establish a national Children's Panel for Scotland to replace the existing 32 local authority Children's Panels. It established Area Support Teams (ASTs) which are responsible for supporting the National Children's Panel at local level. The ASTs replaced the Children's Panel Advisory Committees (CPAC) as of 24 June 2013.
- 1.4 These reforms were driven by the desire to build on the best aspects of the current arrangements. The ethos of the system and the role of the three specially trained, lay panel members, who make decisions in the best interests of the child or young person who comes before them, was not changed. The changes were designed to place the child at the centre of the hearing and ensure that their voice and experience is heard. They aim to ensure that the rights of others are respected and that the hearing complies with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- 1.5 CHS has a vision of a Children's Hearings System where everyone works together, making sure that all children and young people are heard, respected, valued, cared for and protected. We want to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people in Scotland who may be at risk and we strive to do this by supporting the Children's Panel, working with partners, and using our influence to drive improvements across the Children's Hearings System. In doing so, we will adhere to our core values (right).
- 1.6 The 2011 Act stipulates that the National Convener must secure the agreement of local authorities in order to establish ASTs to support the work of panel members in the Children's Hearings System at a local level. The Act also allowed for CPAC members, who were appointed by Ministers, to transfer across to the relevant AST. In addition, the 2011 Act gives each local authority the right to appoint a member of an AST, as well as the power to make further suggestions for appointment that the National Convener must consider. The majority of AST members, however, must be National Convener rather than local authority appointees.



- 1.7 All AST members appointed by the National Convener will be volunteers, giving their time in support of the Children's Panel. In recognition of the important role previously undertaken by Panel Chairs, the 2011 Act requires that at least one member of the AST is a panel member.
- 1.8 In establishing ASTs to support the Children's Panel at local level, the National Convener recognises the importance of ensuring that all panel members receive consistent support, management, and learning and development opportunities. The functions previously delivered by the skilled serving panel members acting as Panel Chairs and Deputes, and CPAC members, are largely replicated within the ASTs in order to achieve a smooth transition to the new structures.
- 1.9 Partnership Agreements with local authorities for the provision of a clerk and administrative support for ASTs are in place. These salaried staff will play a critical role in supporting AST members and therefore panel members. As mentioned above however, the vast majority of AST members fulfilling functions delegated by the National Convener at local level are unsalaried, skilled volunteers. They play a vital role in the delivery of support and administration to the Children's Panel across Scotland.
- 1.10 The National Convener is committed to ensuring that the highest quality of supervision, support and ongoing training and development opportunities are in place for AST members across Scotland, in recognition of their commitment and contribution to the Children's Panel. The operation of ASTs is underpinned by the national standards for Scotland's Children's Panel and by more detailed procedures and policies.

Values



Child-centred – making sure that everything we do is in the best interests of children and young people;



Respectful – treating children, young people, their families, panel and AST members, partners and each other with care and consideration;



Fair – making sure that everyone is treated with dignity and according to their individual needs; that our information and services are accessible and that we provide a consistent level of service to all;



Creative – considering innovative and imaginative ways of approaching the issues we face at work;



Challenging – not being complacent, but questioning ourselves and others to help us improve;



Open – listening, responding to and learning from, feedback; acting honestly; ensuring processes are transparent; sharing performance data and being accountable for our actions and decisions.



The functions of Area Support Teams

2.1 ASTs:

- uphold the CHS vision, mission and values
- work within the CHS national standards at a local level
- carry out functions on behalf of the National Convener to support members of the Children's Panel who sit on hearings in their area
- work with local authorities, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and all relevant partners towards continual improvement across the Children's Hearings System

2.2 ASTs are responsible at a local level for:

- undertaking the local recruitment of panel members as part of national recruitment campaigns and in response to local needs, such as a shortage of male panel members
- interviewing and selecting potential panel members
- making recommendations of assessed applicants to the National Convener for appointment as panel members and making recommendations to the National Convener regarding panel member reappointment
- ensuring that all volunteers in the Children's Hearings System have had the appropriate checks undertaken in line with Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG checks)
- managing the rota for the Children's Panel within the AST area
- supporting panel members on a day to day basis
- observing and assessing panel member practice, including constructive feedback to panel members in review of their practice, and ensuring panel members are offered continuous learning and development opportunities
- promoting local awareness and understanding of the Children's Hearings System as Scotland's care and justice system for children and young people, and the vital contribution made by panel members as unsalaried lay tribunal members
- undertaking a local training needs analysis
- handling complaints about panel members
- building and developing effective working relationships with key partners in the local area

2.3 ASTs are also responsible for organising panel member training at the local level. This will comprise a mixture of learning and development sessions, in conjunction with the CHS national training provider(s), to equip panel members with the skills and competencies to effectively fulfil their role on an ongoing basis. ASTs also organise information sessions on resources and initiatives available locally, awards ceremonies and an annual recognition event.

2.4 The AST can set up sub-committees for each constituent local authority, where there is more than one within the AST area, and/or for specific purposes, such as a training sub-committee.



Support to Area Support Teams from Children's Hearings Scotland

- 3.1 The majority of AST members will be unsalaried yet undertaking significant work in their respective roles and areas. The National Convener and CHS will establish effective systems and mechanisms for ensuring good communication and support to ASTs and will provide supervision and support to the Area Conveners who will lead the ASTs.
- 3.2 CHS will work closely with ASTs, SCRA and relevant partners to ensure ASTs are supported to fulfil their functions. CHS will assist and represent the interests of ASTs where local practice or operational problems or barriers are identified.
- 3.3 CHS will also work with ASTs and relevant partners to gather and share information about trends, issues, problems and best practice, so that the quality and consistency of panel member practice across Scotland continually improves.
- 3.4 CHS will actively promote and recognise the Children's Panel and the work of ASTs in support of panel members at a national level. CHS will also assist ASTs to act as ambassadors for the Children's Panel and promote it to other organisations and employers locally.



Local authorities and Area Support Teams

- 4.1 A Partnership Agreement between CHS and individual or groups of local authorities will set out how each will support the operation of ASTs and the Children's Panel.
- 4.2 These AST roles and responsibilities will sit alongside the Partnership Agreement agreed between CHS and each local authority. Taken together, they will set out what support will be provided to the AST, and by the AST to panel members. It will be for local authorities and ASTs, however, to determine exactly how that support is delivered. ASTs will for example have the flexibility to decide what sub-committee structures will best meet the needs of the Children's Panel in their area, taking in to account local circumstances and arrangements.



Roles and responsibilities of Area Support Teams

5.1 Key responsibilities

The key responsibilities of ASTs are as follows:

- promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at AST level
- undertake the local recruitment of panel members as part of national recruitment campaigns and in response to local needs, such as a shortage of male panel members
- interview and select potential panel members
- make recommendations of assessed applicants to the National Convener for appointment as panel members and make recommendations to the National Convener regarding panel member reappointment
- ensure that all volunteers in the Children's Hearings System have had the appropriate PVG checks undertaken in line with Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme (PVG checks)
- manage the rota for the Children's Panel within the AST area
- support panel members on a day to day basis
- observe and assess panel member practice, including constructive feedback to panel members in review of their practice, and ensure panel members are offered continuous learning and development opportunities
- promote local awareness and understanding of the Children's Hearings System as Scotland's care and justice system for children and young people, and the vital contribution made by panel members as unsalaried lay tribunal members
- undertake a local training needs analysis
- handle complaints about panel members
- build and develop effective working relationships with key partners in the local area



5.2 Skills, behaviours and knowledge within the AST

5.2.1 AST members work individually and collectively to gain the trust and respect of their fellow AST members and to build confidence among panel members that the AST has a good understanding of panel members' role as decision-makers within the independent, lay tribunal system determining care and justice interventions for children and young people in Scotland.

5.2.2 In order to do this, individual AST members will demonstrate a strong commitment to, and understanding of:

- the CHS vision, mission and values
- the national standards for the Children's Panel
- the structure and functions of the Children's Hearings System and the broader child protection and looked after sectors
- the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- the role of panel members as lay tribunal members within the Children's Hearings System and what is needed to support them in their work
- the need for personal development and keeping their own skills and knowledge up to date
- the law, policy and practice framework relating to the Children's Hearings System
- Scottish Government policy and emerging research and practice initiatives relating to children, young people and families
- key partners, resources and initiatives available to, or affecting children, young people and families in their local area

5.2.3 Each member of the AST demonstrates that they can:

- communicate effectively, both in person and in writing
- work effectively and supportively as a team member
- listen actively and sensitively to views inside and outside the AST, and especially to panel members
- build effective working relationships with stakeholders and partners across the Children's Hearings System, including SCRA and relevant local authority staff



5.3 Outline of roles within ASTs

5.3.1 There are a number of distinct roles within each AST, with recruitment, training and induction programmes developed by CHS to support ASTs and individual members to fulfil their specific roles.

5.3.2 The Area Convener

The Area Convener provides leadership and direction to the AST, ensuring that the AST fulfils the key responsibilities outlined in paragraph 5.1. The Area Convener is appointed by the National Convener who is responsible for ensuring their effective supervision and support, including an annual review undertaken by the National Convener or a CHS officer.

The Area Convener ensures that there are a sufficient number of panel representatives, panel practice advisors and learning and development co-ordinators to provide appropriate support, practice observation and review, and learning and development opportunities to panel members in their area. To achieve this, the Area Convener must work closely with the National Convener, the relevant local authority/authorities with whom CHS has a Partnership Agreement in place, the panel members and AST members.

The Area Convener oversees the day to day operation of the AST, including the delegation of activities to the Depute Area Convener(s) and other AST members and the establishment of sub-committees.

Serving panel members may apply to become Area Convener but will be expected to relinquish their panel membership on taking up appointment as Area Convener.

5.3.3 The Depute Area Convener(s)

The Depute Area Convener(s) provides leadership and direction to the AST, deputising for the Area Convener and ensuring that the AST fulfils its responsibilities. The National Convener recognises that there may be a need for more than one Depute Area Convener, depending on the structure and/or size of AST areas.

The Depute Area Convener(s) are appointed by the National Convener who is responsible for ensuring effective supervision and support to the Depute Area Convener(s), through the Area Convener on a day to day basis, including an annual review undertaken by the National Convener or a CHS officer.

The Depute Area Convener(s) supports the Area Convener to establish sub-committees as appropriate to support panel members and chair such sub-committees as delegated by the Area Convener.

Serving panel members may apply to become Depute Area Convener but will be expected to relinquish their panel membership on taking up appointment as Depute Area Convener.



5.3.4 Panel representatives

Panel representatives are serving panel members and provide leadership, guidance and pastoral support to panel members within the AST area. They act as the local point of contact for panel members, representing their interests to the AST and providing feedback to panel members from the AST.

They also have ownership of, and overall responsibility for, the preparation of the rota and for ensuring that the rota is managed out of office hours so that sufficient panel members are available to cover where there are, for example, call offs or emergency hearings convened by SCRA.

5.3.5 Panel practice advisors

Panel practice advisors are responsible for the recruitment, selection, observation and practice review of panel members in the AST area. They recommend appointments and reappointments to the National Convener, via the Area Convener.

They are delegated by the Depute Area Convener(s) to investigate complaints about panel member practice or conduct. The Area Convener ensures that there are sufficient panel practice advisors to carry out at least two practice observations of each panel member within hearings each year. The panel practice advisors undertake panel member practice observations linked to the competencies and national standards for panel members and provide constructive feedback to them. They work with the panel members, the AST, CHS and relevant training provider(s) to ensure panel members receive training and/or support to address any knowledge or skill gaps.

5.3.6 Learning and development co-ordinators

Learning and development coordinators are responsible for carrying out an analysis of local training needs. It is expected that learning and development co-ordinators will be serving panel members, although this is not an essential requirement for the role.

They promote panel member learning and development at a local level through the organisation and delivery of area meetings and panel member events within the AST area.

They work with the Area Convener and/or Depute Area Convener(s) and panel representatives to ensure that panel members are offered regular opportunities to develop their knowledge of local issues and resources.

They liaise with CHS staff to ensure panel member input to and feedback on national pre-service, core and refresher training programmes. ASTs will have flexibility to establish local learning and development sub-committees. It is envisaged that in those areas with large numbers of panel members such sub-committees will assist the learning and development co-ordinators and share their workload.



5.3.7 Local authority members

Each local authority can nominate at least one member to the AST of which they are a part. It is expected that these nominees will be elected members but this is not a requirement.

Local authority members have an overview of the Children's Hearings System and the Children's Panel in their area. They act as an important link between the Children's Panel and the local authority. They facilitate communication of emerging issues and concerns to elected members and relevant local authority committees, departments and senior officers, as well as ensuring ongoing local authority support for the Children's Panel and AST.

They are not, however, directly involved in the recruitment, selection, recommendation for appointment or reappointment or practice observation and review processes undertaken by the AST panel practice advisors.

5.3.8 Clerk to the AST

In each AST area there is a clerk to the AST. The clerk is a local authority employee tasked with supporting the AST in line with the Partnership Agreement between CHS and the local authority or authorities for the AST area.

In most areas, clerks are supported by local authority colleagues in providing the clerking, secretarial and administrative support to the Area Convener and AST.



5.4 Initial appointment to ASTs

- 5.4.1 Appointments to the positions of Area Convener and Depute Area Convener(s) are made through a fair, open and public process of recruitment. The National Convener invites public applications to these roles. Following an interview and selection process, the National Convener appoints Area Conveners and Depute Area Convener(s) for each area.
- 5.4.2 Appointments to some AST roles have initially been made through invitation to transfer. This applied to some previous CPAC members. Panel Chairs and Deputes, whom the National Convener has invited to transfer into the role of panel representative, transferred to ASTs for the first year following implementation of the Act. Appointment of additional panel practice advisors, panel representatives and learning and development co-ordinators was undertaken in 2012/13.
- 5.4.3 To provide consistency of support to the Children's Panel, and to ensure the retention of existing knowledge and skills in support of panel members, appointments to the first ASTs were made for two, three or four years to allow reappointments to be staggered. Existing CPAC members who were eligible to transfer and who agreed to do so were appointed for three years. Existing Panel Chairs and Deputes who agreed to transfer were appointed for one year in the first instance. All new appointments to the AST were for two years.
- 5.4.4 Appointments to AST roles are made following a fair and open recruitment and selection process, and all members of the AST are appointed for a period of three years, with the possibility of reappointments following satisfactory reviews, recruitment processes are detailed in CHS' recruitment policies for ASTs.



5.5 Remuneration and recognition

- 5.5.1 Area Conveners, Depute Area Convener(s), panel representatives, panel practice advisors and learning and development co-ordinators are unsalaried, volunteer roles.
- 5.5.2 Reasonable expenses incurred by all AST members in carrying out their duties are reimbursed, in line with national guidelines.
- 5.5.3 The National Convener and CHS recognise the considerable time and energy commitment asked of individuals undertaking these unsalaried skilled roles. CHS will ensure an ongoing programme of support and recognition for AST members, including an annual AST event which recognises the work undertaken by the ASTs in support of the Children's Panel.
- 5.5.4 The AST clerk and his/her support staff are local authority employees and their costs are borne by their employers.



Detailed Role Descriptions

6.1 Area Convener

6.1.1 Purpose and functions

The Area Convener provides leadership and direction to the AST, ensuring that the AST fulfils its responsibilities to support panel members and carries out the key responsibilities outlined previously in this paper.

The role of the Area Convener is largely outward-facing, as well as high level and strategic. Due to the wide scope of the role, the Area Convener is supported by the Depute Area Convener(s). The Area Convener is responsible for the day to day oversight and management of the AST. They also oversee the activities of the Depute Area Convener(s) and have the flexibility to delegate to their Depute Area Convener(s) as appropriate.

The Area Convener is appointed by the National Convener who is responsible for ensuring effective supervision and support to the Area Convener, including an annual review undertaken by the National Convener or a CHS officer.

The Area Convener works closely with the National Convener, the relevant local authority/ authorities, AST colleagues and the AST clerk, to ensure that there are a sufficient number of panel representatives, panel practice advisors and learning and development co-ordinators to provide appropriate support, practice observation and review, and learning and development opportunities to panel members in their area.

The Area Convener oversees the establishment of sub-committees by the AST as appropriate and delegates the chairing of such sub-committees to relevant AST members. The Area Convener does not hold a budget, but liaises closely with CHS to determine the funding required annually for local activities and learning and development opportunities. They also oversee the arrangements for co-ordination and implementation of such activities and learning and development opportunities.

6.1.2 Support and development for Area Conveners

The Area Convener is appointed, supervised and supported by the National Convener or an appropriate CHS officer.

The National Convener or CHS officer works closely with the Area Convener to support them in their role, maintaining regular contact and assisting the Area Convener where they identify local problems or issues that require direct support or intervention from CHS.

Any complaint received about an Area Convener is dealt with by the National Convener.



6.1.3 Key relationships

- Depute Area Convener(s)
- panel members
- all AST members
- representatives of key partner agencies and departments, – in particular SCRA, local authorities, NHS, children's services providers
- AST clerk and their team
- local authority line manager(s) of AST clerk and their team
- National Convener and CHS staff
- training provider(s)

6.1.4 Key responsibilities

Leading the AST

- undertake training to ensure sound knowledge of the role of panel members and the role of the AST in support of panel members
- promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- promote the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- ensure that there are sufficient panel members within the AST area to enable all hearings to take place
- delegate effectively and appropriately to the Depute Area Convener(s) to ensure that the Area Convener can fulfil the role
- work in partnership with the Depute Area Convener(s) and members of the AST in carrying out all aspects of their role
- contribute to the annual review and development process for the Depute Area Convener(s)
- support and review the collective practice of the AST and any sub-committees
- ensure AST members have a sound knowledge of their role and responsibilities
- identify learning and development needs of the AST as a whole, working in conjunction with relevant CHS staff and training provider(s) and relevant AST members
- support and review the practice of AST members
- allocate tasks to individual AST members, recognising their specific roles and skills
- support the establishment of AST sub-committees as appropriate, and delegate responsibility for chairing of sub-committees to the Depute Area Convener(s) and/or relevant AST members
- with support from CHS, undertake an annual review of AST activities and practice, through an AST event, seeking feedback from all AST members, panel members and relevant others
- chair meetings of the AST
- liaise with the National Convener/CHS staff about the annual budget required for activities

Stakeholder engagement

- act as the figurehead for Children's Panel members and the Children's Hearings System at a local level and represent the interests of panel members nationally to the National Convener and CHS
- build relationships and engage with key partners and stakeholders locally



- promote effective relationships and open communication both within the AST and in working with key partners
- invite local Children's Reporters, local authority and other relevant partners to AST meetings, when appropriate, to discuss issues and trends
- contribute to national groups and forums as the representative of the AST, delegating this as appropriate
- work closely with the National Convener and CHS, sharing information and seeking support to address any issues identified at local level which have national relevance

Communication and information sharing

- build effective relationships and open communication between the AST, panel members locally, the National Convener and CHS
- promote the work of the Children's Panel, the local panel members and the AST and act as a spokesperson as required
- contribute to the National Convener and CHS annual report by providing the National Convener and CHS with information about the work of the Children's Panel and AST in their area
- participate in meetings of Area Conveners and other relevant networks that are established and supported by CHS for the effective sharing of information and practice across the country
- report back to AST members and panel members locally, seek their views and feedback to CHS and the National Convener

6.1.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

The Area Convener will:

- understand and promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- understand and promote the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- understand the role of panel members and what is needed to support them in their work
- understand and be committed to the need for personal development and keeping their own skills and knowledge up to date
- be aware of the legal framework for the Children's Hearings System
- keep their knowledge of Scottish Government policy and emerging research and practice initiatives relating to children, young people and families up to date
- develop an understanding of resources and initiatives available to or affecting children, young people and families in their local area
- have experience of building and managing a team
- be skilled in managing, supporting and working with, volunteers
- have an understanding of, and commitment to, continuous personal learning and development
- have well developed report writing skills
- be experienced at chairing meetings and facilitating discussions
- promote constructive dialogue and decision making
- be confident in building and maintaining good relationships and communication with partner agencies



6.2 Depute Area Convener

6.2.1 Purpose and functions

Each AST has one or more Depute Area Convener(s) to assist the Area Convener with the carrying out of their functions and to deputise for them as appropriate and required.

The Depute Area Convener(s) provides leadership and direction to the AST, ensuring that the AST fulfils its responsibilities to support panel members and carries out the key responsibilities outlined. The Depute Area Convener(s) is appointed by the National Convener who is responsible for ensuring effective supervision and support to the Depute Area Convener(s), via the Area Convener on a day to day basis, and including an annual review undertaken by the National Convener or a CHS officer.

The Depute Area Convener(s) acts on behalf of the National Convener, sharing the workload of the Area Convener as allocated by and/or agreed with their Area Convener. They work with the relevant local authority/authorities, the panel members and AST members to ensure that there are a sufficient number of panel representatives, panel practice advisors and learning and development co-ordinators to provide appropriate support, practice observation and review, and learning and development opportunities to panel members in their area.

The Depute Area Convener(s) allocates and oversees the management of the complaints process, delegating investigations to panel practice advisors as appropriate, in line with CHS complaints and concerns procedures.

The Depute Area Convener(s) chairs sub-committees as appropriate to achieve this and also delegates the chairing of sub-committees to relevant AST members.

6.2.2 Support and development for Depute Area Convener(s)

The Depute Area Convener(s) are appointed and supported by the National Convener or an appropriate officer from CHS. They are supervised and supported in their role by the Area Convener for whom they deputise.

The National Convener or CHS officer works closely with the Area and Depute Area Convener(s) to support them in their role, maintaining regular contact and assisting where they identify local problems or issues that require direct support or intervention from CHS.

Any complaint received about a Depute Area Convener(s) is dealt with by the National Convener.

6.2.3 Key relationships

- Area Convener
- panel members
- all AST members
- representatives of partner agencies – in particular SCRA, local authorities, NHS and children's services providers
- AST clerk and their team
- local authority line manager(s) of AST clerk and their team
- National Convener and CHS staff
- training provider(s)



6.2.4 Key Responsibilities

Assisting the Area Convener to lead the AST

- undertake training to ensure sound knowledge of the role of panel members and the role of the AST in support of panel members
- promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- promote the vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- alongside colleagues from CHS, facilitate induction programmes for new AST members
- assume responsibility for leadership activities as delegated by the Area Convener, in connection with, for example, AST practice, learning and development for AST members and the establishment and operation of sub-committees
- chair meetings of the AST and sub-committees as appropriate

Stakeholder engagement

- build relationships and engage with key partners and stakeholders locally
- promote effective relationships and open communication within the AST and in working with key partners
- attend regular meetings with SCRA locally to discuss practice issues and concerns
- contribute to national groups and forums as the representative of the AST
- work closely with the National Convener, Area Convener and CHS in relation to sharing information and seek support to address any issues identified at local level which have national relevance
- work with CHS and training provider(s) to ensure that the views and experiences of children and young people influence the design and delivery of panel member training and practice locally

Panel member support

- ensure that the Children's Panel operates efficiently by meeting its obligation to have suitable panel members available for hearings
- receive and oversee the investigation of complaints from or about panel members in accordance with agreed procedures. Delegate investigation to the relevant member(s) of the AST in line with the CHS complaints procedures
- work with the National Convener and CHS staff to assist with the proposed annual survey of panel members
- work with the Area Convener, learning and development co-ordinator(s) and AST clerk to organise an annual recognition event for panel members
- work with the clerk to organise information events for prospective panel members

Communication and information sharing

- maintain effective relationships and open communication between the AST, panel members locally, the National Convener and CHS.
- promote the work of the national panel, the local panel members and the AST and act as a spokesperson as required
- represent the Area Convener at local and national networks that are established by CHS for the effective sharing of information and practice across the country.
- report back to AST members and panel members locally and seek their views for feedback to CHS and the National Convener



6.2.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

The Depute Area Convener(s) will:

- understand and promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- understand and promote the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- understand the role of panel members and what is needed to support them in their work
- understand and be committed to the need for personal development and keeping their own skills and knowledge up to date
- be aware of the legal framework for the Children's Hearings System
- keep their knowledge of Scottish Government policy and emerging research and practice initiatives relating to children, young people and families up to date
- develop an understanding of resources and initiatives available to or affecting children, young people and families in their local area
- have experience of building and managing a team
- be skilled in managing, supporting and working with volunteers
- have an understanding of, and commitment to, continuous personal learning and development
- have well developed report writing skills
- be experienced at chairing meetings and facilitating discussions
- promote constructive dialogue and decision making
- be confident in building and maintaining good relationships and communication with partner agencies



6.3 Panel representatives

6.3.1 Purpose and functions

Panel representatives are serving panel members and provide leadership, guidance and pastoral support to panel members within the AST area. They act as the local point of contact for panel members and represent their interests on and to the AST.

They have ownership of, and overall responsibility for, the rota and for ensuring that the rota is managed out of office hours so that sufficient panel members are available to cover where there are, for example, call offs or emergency hearings.

Each AST must have sufficient panel representatives to ensure a ratio of one panel representative to support up to a maximum of 50 panel members. For joint AST structures, each constituent authority must have at least one panel representative per each local authority area. In every AST, one panel representative has been appointed to the role of lead panel representative, to co-ordinate and support the activities of their fellow panel representatives and to represent their interests to the AST, Area Convener, Depute Area Convener(s) and the National Convener. The National Convener agrees the appointment of additional panel representatives.

6.3.2 Support and development for panel representatives

Panel representatives are accountable to, and supported by, the Area Convener for the work they do supporting and representing local panel members. The National Convener and CHS ensures there are systems in place for panel representatives to communicate across ASTs and to meet together in national forums to share information and learning and developments and concerns.

6.3.3 Key relationships

- panel members
- Area Convener and Depute Area Convener(s)
- AST members
- AST clerk and their team
- local partners e.g. local authorities and SCRA
- panel representatives
- National Convener and CHS staff

6.3.4 Key responsibilities

Pastoral care for panel members

- provide support to panel members at all reasonable times, including evenings and weekends where absolutely necessary
- consider and approve requests for leave of absence from panel members
- establish peer support mechanisms for new panel members
- organise meetings with groups of panel members to discuss issues of common concern
- work with CHS staff to ensure that support or counselling is available to any panel member experiencing difficulties caused by their panel membership
- deal informally with local issues and concerns about panel members, where a formal complaint has not been made
- in conjunction with the Area Convener consider the need to remove panel members from the rota

*Panel member workload and practice support*

- undertake training to ensure sound knowledge of the role of the AST in support of panel members
- work with the AST clerk to ensure that sufficient panel members are available to cover the hearings workload, e.g. through ensuring sufficient panel members are recruited
- be responsible for the preparation of the panel member rota, with support from the AST clerk, to ensure the allocation of panel members to planned and emergency hearings is fair
- provide out of office hours support to ensure that hearings are able to take place
- ensure fairness within the hearings rota in relation to gender and balance of skills and experience
- ensure that panel members sit on hearings in their local area, other than in exceptional circumstances
- work with the AST clerk to make arrangements for the provision of panel members for out of area hearings as required
- highlight hearings management issues to the Depute Area Convener(s) and AST members and feed back to panel members how they will be resolved
- work with AST colleagues and the Depute Area Convener(s) to collate information in relation to panel workload and availability of panel members
- work with the Area Convener and AST colleagues to take any remedial action to address identified gaps or pressures for example, a gender imbalance
- work with AST colleagues responsible for recruitment and retention to ensure that future local recruitment campaigns meet the requirement of the panel locally, and to ensure participation of panel members in local recruitment campaigns
- work with the learning and development co-ordinator(s) and CHS training provider(s) to help identify and deliver local learning and development opportunities
- feedback to local panel members on national/system-wide issues

Communications and information

- represent panel members at local liaison meetings/committees/strategic groups (e.g. those relating to looked after children, youth justice etc) to ensure a high level of understanding of local needs and issues and the role of the Children's Panel
- represent local panel members' interests on national representative groups
- ensure that issues raised by panel members are discussed with the Area Convener and other AST members, keeping panel members informed of the steps taken by the Area Convener to address these
- hold regular meetings with local SCRA representatives to discuss practice issues and concerns
- ensure that AST colleagues who are responsible for practice observation and review of panel member practice are aware of any factors that may impinge on the ability of a panel member to practice e.g. factors that either may affect a panel member's performance or limit their availability to sit on hearings and give rise to their need for a leave of absence
- comment, where appropriate, on the suitability and availability of panel members who are due for reappointment in line with the procedures set out in the core policies and procedures for ASTs
- regularly disseminate information to panel members and provide feedback on training, practice and issues within the system



- contribute to the local authority integrated children's services plan where appropriate
- organise talks and information sessions for local groups and organisations to publicise the work of the Children's Hearings System and generate interest from prospective panel members
- maintain effective relationships with the Area Convener and all other AST members

6.3.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

Panel representatives will:

- understand and promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- understand and promote the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- understand the role of panel members and what's needed to support them in their work
- understand and be committed to the need for personal development and keeping their own skills and knowledge up to date
- be familiar with the law relating to the Children's Hearings System
- keep their knowledge of Scottish Government policy and emerging research and practice initiatives relating to children, young people and families up to date
- be serving panel members for at least two years
- be able to build and maintain good links and communication with panel members using a variety of methods
- be willing to undertake and complete training in basic coaching skills
- have good listening skills and an ability to coach and support panel members
- have a good understanding of needs in terms of hearings in the local area
- have an understanding of, and commitment to, continuous personal learning and development
- have a good understanding of the competence framework for panel members and of the learning and development opportunities available to panel members
- be able to build trust through understanding their obligations around data protection and confidentiality



6.4 Panel practice advisors

6.4.1 Purpose and functions

Panel practice advisors act on behalf of the National Convener and CHS in relation to the national recruitment of panel members at local level and make recommendations to the National Convener via the Area Convener and Depute Area Convener(s) for panel member appointment and reappointment.

They are also allocated responsibility for investigations into complaints about panel member practice or conduct by the Depute Area Convener(s).

The Area Convener ensures that there are sufficient panel practice advisors to carry out at least two practice observations of each panel member within hearings each year. The panel practice advisors undertake panel member practice observations linked to the competencies and national standards for panel members and provide constructive feedback to panel members. Panel practice advisors will work with panel members, the AST, CHS and relevant training provider(s) to ensure panel members receive training and support to address any knowledge or skill gaps.

6.4.2 Support and development for panel practice advisors

Panel practice advisors are accountable to, and supported by, the Area Convener in relation to their work in observing and reviewing panel member practice. The Area Convener may delegate this aspect of their role to the Depute Area Convener(s). Support includes individual meetings, as well as meetings between the Area/Depute Area Convener(s) and the panel practice advisors as a group.

6.4.3 Key relationships

- Area Convener/Depute Area Convener(s)
- other AST members
- potential panel members and current panel members
- AST clerk and their team
- local authority member of the AST
- National Convener and CHS staff

6.4.4 Key responsibilities

Panel member recruitment

- undertake training to ensure sound knowledge of the role of panel members and the role of the AST in support of panel members
- work with CHS, the Depute Area Convener(s), AST colleagues and in particular panel representatives to participate in local recruitment campaigns to the Children's Panel
- deliver or participate in information events for prospective panel members organised locally
- take part in interview and selection processes locally which are in line with CHS recruitment and selection standards
- take part in interview panels to select potential panel members
- make recommendations to the National Convener, through the Area Convener, on the suitability of potential panel members



Panel member practice observation and review

- plan and manage the panel member practice observation and review feedback process in collaboration with AST colleagues and in line with CHS national standards
- undertake a reasonable number of practice observations within hearings, in line with the CHS competence and skills framework for panel member practice
- as part of the learning and development and review process, assess panel member behaviour and practice against the competence framework and prepare constructive feedback for each panel member following observation
- give verbal and written feedback to the panel member following each practice observation and competence and skills review, ensuring the panel member has a personal development plan in place, identifying any knowledge or skills gaps and/or support needs
- use standardised CHS templates to record panel member practice observations, feedback and recommendations and follow agreed policies in relation to the observations and feedback records
- ensure that where there are concerns about panel member conduct and/or practice that these are explored openly with the panel member and the Area Convener is informed and involved where necessary
- make recommendations for reappointment to the National Convener, through the Area Convener

Complaint handling

- investigate and resolve or refer complaints about panel member practice following CHS complaints procedures
- report the outcome of complaints or refer complaints which require to be escalated to the Depute Area Convener(s)

6.4.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

Panel practice advisors will:

- understand and promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- understand and promote the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- understand the role of panel members and what's needed to support them in their work
- be aware of the legal framework for the Children's Hearings System
- understand and be committed to the need for personal development and keeping their own skills and knowledge up to date
- be fair and non-judgemental, treating every panel member in a respectful manner
- have an understanding of, and commitment to, continuous personal learning and development
- have a good understanding of the competence framework for panel members and of the learning and development opportunities available to panel members
- be able to analyse objectively and assess information and draw clear conclusions



- be experienced in giving face to face and written feedback
- be able to articulate their recommendations confidently and sensitively and to give clear reasons for their recommendations in person and in writing
- have good organisational and planning skills
- be willing to undertake the necessary training to develop skills in relation to interviewing, panel member practice observations, assessment and feedback
- show good attention to detail in writing up a note of their practice observations
- respect confidentiality appropriately
- have the skills to engage effectively with AST colleagues, key partners locally and CHS



6.5 Learning and development co-ordinators

6.5.1 Purpose and functions

Learning and development co-ordinators are responsible for carrying out an analysis of local training needs.

They also promote panel member learning and development at local level through the organisation and delivery of area meetings and panel member events within the AST area.

They work with the Area Convener, Depute Area Convener(s) and panel representatives to ensure that panel members are offered regular opportunities to develop their knowledge of local issues and resources.

They liaise with CHS staff to ensure panel member feedback informs the ongoing development of the national pre-service, in-service and any other training programmes.

ASTs determine their sub-committee structure including the establishment of any learning and development sub-committees.

6.5.2 Support and development for learning and development co-ordinators

Learning and development co-ordinators report to, and are supported by, the Area Convener and/or Depute Area Convener(s).

CHS and the national training provider(s) also work closely with the learning and development co-ordinators and respond to gaps identified by them at the local level.

6.5.3 Key relationships

- Area and Depute Area Convener(s)
- AST members
- panel members
- AST clerk and the clerk's team
- CHS staff
- CHS training provider(s)
- managers and project workers in local area children's services
- AST sub-committees where appropriate
- other partners who may identify learning or shared learning and development needs e.g. SCRA

6.5.4 Key responsibilities

Panel member and AST learning and development opportunities

- undertake training to ensure sound knowledge of the role of panel members and the role of the AST in support of panel members
- work with panel representatives, the Depute Area Convener(s), the AST clerk and CHS training provider(s) to prepare an annual learning and development calendar for the AST which complements the national curriculum for panel members and AST members
- work with this same group to organise a mix of evening meetings, seminars and visits for panel members within the AST area, which develop localised knowledge for the Children's Panel regarding issues faced by children and families in their area and highlighting the resources and services available to them



- be aware of the local training budget allocated to the AST and help plan learning and training events accordingly
- provide regular updates to the AST and CHS on the plans for, and delivery of, local learning and development events, with a focus on the impact of learning and development, what they will do differently and what they still need to know

Recruitment

- assist with local recruitment through helping to organise information sessions for prospective panel members

Training needs analysis

- identify local skills and knowledge gaps through regular discussions with panel members and also with the national training provider(s) and AST panel practice advisors who have an overview of local panel member practice issues.
- along with the national training provider(s), CHS staff and other AST colleagues identify, share and embed best practice approaches

Panel member learning and development and recognition

- work with panel representatives and local partner organisations to gather information about resources and initiatives that panel members should be aware of
- help with the identification and organisation of visits to local facilities and organisations in order to raise panel member awareness about local resources
- organise the annual event/ceremony for panel members in recognition of their commitment to the Children's Panel at the local level

6.5.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

The learning and development co-ordinator will:

- understand and promote the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel
- understand and promote the Scottish Government vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- be aware of the legal framework for the Children's Hearings System
- understand the role of panel members and what is needed to support them in their work
- understand and be committed to the need for personal development and keeping their own skills and knowledge up to date
- develop a sound knowledge of the law relating to the Children's Hearings System
- keep their knowledge of Scottish Government policy and emerging research and practice relating to children, young people and families up to date
- be fair and non-judgemental, treating every panel member in a respectful manner
- have an understanding of and commitment to continuous personal and learning and development
- have a good understanding of the competence framework for panel members and of the learning and development opportunities available to panel members
- have an understanding of approaches to training, and in particular to adult learning and the different ways that people learn
- have excellent organisational skills
- have the skills to engage effectively with AST colleagues, CHS and key partners locally



6.6 Local authority member of the AST

6.6.1 Purpose and functions

Each local authority can nominate at least one member to the AST of which they are a part. The current practice is that these nominees will ordinarily be elected members but this is not a requirement under the Act.

Local authority nominees have an overview of the Children's Hearings System and the Children's Panel in their area. They are aware of local issues and act as an important link between the Children's Panel and the local authority elected members and relevant local authority senior officials and departments. They are not directly involved in panel member recruitment, selection, recommendation for appointment or reappointment, or practice observation and review processes undertaken by the AST panel practice advisors.

6.6.2 Support and development for local authority AST members

The local authority members may be elected members or officers employed by the local authority or one of the local authorities who have signed up to the Partnership Agreement with CHS for the AST.

The local authority members are accountable to their local authority but in joining the AST they agree to respect the CHS vision, mission and values.

6.6.3 Key relationships

- Area Convener/Depute Area Convener(s)
- all other AST members
- panel members
- AST clerk and their team
- National Convener and CHS staff

6.6.4 Key responsibilities

- undertake training to ensure sound knowledge of the role of panel members and the functions of and roles within ASTs
- act as the key link between the local authority and the AST
- work closely with the Area Convener and AST members and advise on the local authority perspective on particular matters, emerging issues etc
- meet with appropriate local authority officials (e.g. social work and education directors) at regular intervals to ensure that there is continuing dialogue between the Children's Panel and the local authority
- consider where and how the local authority might provide any additional assistance to panel members locally
- facilitate partnership working and effective communication between the AST, panel members, other partners and the local authority



6.6.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

The local authority member of the AST will:

- understand the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at local level
- promote the vision for the reform and modernisation of the Children's Hearings System
- have a sound understanding of the role of the Children's Panel within the Children's Hearings System
- be aware of the legal framework for the Children's Hearings System
- develop a good understanding of the competence framework for panel members and of the learning and development opportunities available to panel members
- have a good understanding of both the local authority environment and the relationship with the Children's Hearings System
- be able to engage with key partners locally and build and maintain good links and communication with local partners
- have a good understanding of needs in terms of hearings in the local area
- promote constructive dialogue and decision making



6.7 Clerk to the AST

6.7.1 Role of the clerk

The clerk to the AST acts as the central point of contact for AST and panel members. While not a member of the AST, he/she plays an integral role, providing support to the Area Convener and the AST in general. The clerk is a local authority employee and draws on colleagues within the local authority for administration and secretarial resources, to ensure that the AST gets the support it needs.

The Partnership Agreement between CHS and the local authority or local authorities for the AST, sets out what both parties will provide to support the work of the panel members and AST in that area.

The clerk and the administration team are responsible for ensuring the effective operation of the databases and administration systems required to manage the Children's Panel at a local level and for maintaining panel members' records and contact details within data protection requirements. They support the panel representatives in the preparation of panel member rotas and work with them to ensure that there are sufficient panel members available for all hearings, for example when there are call offs or emergency hearings.

The clerk and the team also support the Area Convener, the AST and panel members in relation to practical arrangements such as planning local events and training, preparation for meetings, minute taking and general administrative support.

6.7.2 Support and development for the AST clerk

The clerk is employed by the local authority (or one of the local authorities) with whom CHS has in place a Partnership Agreement for the area which the AST covers.

In a joint AST, it is for the local authorities to agree how they wish to provide clerking support to the AST, how many staff are required, which authority or authorities they should be employed by and how those posts are funded. The clerk is line managed by a member of local authority staff.

The National Convener through delegation to the Area Convener and CHS staff will ensure that there are representation and feedback mechanisms in place for the clerk in relation to their role in supporting the AST and the Children's Panel.

6.7.3 Key relationships

- Area Convener/Depute Area Convener(s)
- other AST members
- panel members
- local authority colleagues
- SCRA staff, including Locality Reporters
- CHS staff
- training provider(s)



6.7.4 Key responsibilities

General support to the AST

- undertake training to ensure a sound knowledge of the role of panel members and ASTs
- make all arrangements for AST and sub-committee meetings including organising accommodation; preparation, agreement and issuing of agendas; attendance at meetings; preparation of reports and minutes; provision of appropriate advice at meetings; ensuring that all decisions of the AST are recorded
- provide general secretarial and administrative support to the Area Convener and Depute Area Convener(s)
- oversee practical arrangements for practice observation of panel members by AST panel practice advisors
- make arrangements for the recruitment and selection of potential AST members, including recommendations to the National Convener
- ensure that all volunteers in the Children's Hearings System have had the appropriate PVG checks
- formulate AST responses to formal consultations
- process, check and pay AST members' expenses claims in line with CHS procedures
- support AST members who are dealing with complaints
- arrange for the induction and training of AST members
- assist the Area Convener and Depute Area Convener(s) with the preparation of reports to the National Convener and the AST annual report
- maintain the relevant data and information concerning panel member workload and allocation to inform local training and recruitment strategies

Panel member appointment and reappointment

- support the recruitment process through the preparation of local publicity and promotion; arranging information events; issuing of application packs; organising and administering interviews; submitting the recommendations reached by the panel practice advisors and Area Convener and Depute Area Convener(s) to the National Convener; preparing reports on evaluation and feedback
- provide support for the panel member reappointment process through the preparation of paper work for reappointment discussions and submission of recommendations to the National Convener

Support to panel representatives and panel members

- provide general secretarial and administrative support for AST panel representatives
- support AST sub-committees and learning and development co-ordinators in the preparation and delivery of local training analysis surveys and learning and development events, including arrangements for accommodation, catering etc
- check and process claims for the payment of panel member expenses in line with CHS procedures
- maintain individual panel member files including records of attendance at training and the outcomes of practice observation reviews and feedback
- support the learning and development co-ordinators to organise the annual event/ ceremony for panel members in recognition of their commitment to the Children's Panel at the local level and nationally



Rota management

- provide administrative support to the panel representatives in the preparation of rotas for hearings, including emergency hearings, and hearings taking place in secure accommodation
- administer changes to the rota
- work with the panel representatives to ensure arrangements are in place for effective out of hours cover
- support the panel representatives to maintain up to date records of panel member availability
- work with the Area Convener, Depute Area Convener(s) and AST colleagues to ensure the availability of sufficient panel members

Communications and engagement

- attend relevant local meetings and national representative groups, seminars etc
- liaise with all key local partners, e.g. panel members, SCRA, local authority staff, training provider(s)
- maintain a telephone answering/enquiry service in relation to the AST and the Children's Panel
- communicate with CHS staff
- maintain confidentiality and comply with data protection, freedom of information and equalities legislation

6.7.5 Skills, behaviours and knowledge

The AST clerk will:

- understand the CHS vision, mission and values
- uphold the national standards for the Children's Panel at a local level
- understand the role of panel members and what's needed to support them in their work
- be aware of the legal framework for the Children's Hearings System
- have excellent organisational skills
- be able to build and maintain effective working relationships with a range of different partners
- have developed skills in e-communication and data management, including word processing, database development, data analysis and reporting
- have demonstrable ability to maintain databases and electronic and paper filing systems, and to retrieve information from these
- have experience of servicing boards or committees
- have experience of managing a budget and providing financial reports
- pay excellent attention to detail
- be resourceful and able to work on his/her own initiative
- have experience and skills in providing high standards of customer care and in particular demonstrating courtesy and helpfulness to internal and external stakeholders face to face, by telephone and in writing.

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