

REPORT TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 29TH OCTOBER 2012

REPORT ON: CHILDREN'S PANEL AREA SUPPORT TEAMS

REPORT BY: HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC AND LEGAL SERVICES

REPORT NO: 412-2012

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This Report advises the Committee of the replacement of the current Children's Panel Advisory Committees with Area Support Teams (AST's) with effect from June 2013 and makes recommendations regarding AST's in Dundee and Tayside.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree to the establishment of a Dundee Local AST and a Tayside AST and remit to the Head of Democratic and Legal Services, in consultation with the Dundee Children's Panel Advisory Committee and the Dundee Children's Panel, to proceed to make the necessary arrangements.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Responsibility for the majority of the functions on which the Council currently spends money supporting the Children's Panel (eg panel member training and expenses) will be passed to Children's Hearings Scotland under the new arrangements and Children's Hearings Scotland will have responsibility for providing the necessary funding. The ongoing cost for the Council will be that of providing in-kind support, including administrative support and facilities for meetings for the Dundee Local AST and a share of the cost of the functions of the Tayside AST. This is estimated to be £15,000 per annum in total.
- 3.2 The actual cost to Dundee City Council of supporting the Children's Hearing system in 2011/2012 was £195,000: As this will be provided by the Scottish Government in the future it is estimated that savings in the order of £190,000 per annum can be made by moving to the proposed new arrangements.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Children's Hearing system in Scotland is highly regarded for delivering appropriate, well balanced outcomes whilst protecting and upholding the rights of children. The success of the Children's Hearings system is due largely to the very effective partnerships which exist between volunteers, local authorities and the Scottish Government.
- 4.2 The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 is designed to further enhance and improve the current arrangements by providing the means for uniform high standards of performance, support and administration across Scotland.
- 4.3 The 2011 Act requires the establishment of AST's which will replace the Children's Panel Advisory Committees and support Children's Panels across Scotland. The 2011 Act provides that an AST may consist of more than one local authority and requires the National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland to obtain the agreement of each local authority before establishing AST's.
- 4.4 The National Convener believes there are benefits to be gained by a Tayside AST for the local Government areas of Dundee, Angus and Perth and Kinross.

5 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Council should therefore agree to the establishment of a Tayside AST which will be responsible for those functions which are most effectively provided at a Tayside level eg Tayside training, statistical information and oversight of the recruitment, monitoring and re-appointment of Children's Panel members across Tayside.
- 5.2 It is also proposed that the Council should agree to the establishment of a Dundee Local AST which will be responsible for those functions which are most effectively provided at a Dundee level eg local training, the recruitment, re-appointment and monitoring of and dealing with complaints about Dundee Panel members.
- 5.3 The detail of these proposed arrangements would be the subject of further discussion with the Clerk to the Children's Panel Advisory Committees in Angus and Perth and Kinross and would also be the subject of consultation with the Dundee Children's Panel Advisory Committee and the Dundee Children's Panel.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Report has been screened for any policy implications in request of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

7.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services and Director of Social Work have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

Roger Mennie
Head of Democratic and Legal Services

DATE: 10th October 2012