

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL24 May 2017Report by Deputy Chief ExecutiveEAST RENFREWSHIRE AREA SUPPORT TEAM
LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBER APPOINTEE**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To consider the appointment of a Local Authority Member nominee to East Renfrewshire Area Support Team (AST).

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Council nominate one elected Member to be the Local Authority Member on East Renfrewshire AST.

INTRODUCTION

3. The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, which came into force on 24 June 2013, introduced changes to Children's Panels in Scotland and how panel members are recruited, trained, supported and reappointed. More specifically, the National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) was then empowered to establish both a national Children's Panel (replacing those in each local authority area) and new ASTs (replacing Children's Panel Advisory Committees) to support the Panel at a local level. ASTs, which are expected to work as a team to provide leadership and support to the Panel locally, are accountable to the National Convener for ensuring that various national standards are implemented; play an important role in ensuring that panel members are supported and trained consistently and to a high standard; and play a vital role in relation to the recruitment and development of panel members and regarding panel practice locally.

4. A stand-alone AST for East Renfrewshire has been in place since 2013. As in other areas, a related partnership agreement between the Council and CHS for the provision of related officer support is in place which is reviewed and renewed periodically. Under that Agreement, the Senior Committee Services Officer is the designated Clerk to the AST and provides that support assisted by other officers based within Democratic Services.

MEMBERSHIP OF AST INCLUDING LOCAL AUTHORITY MEMBER

5. Almost all AST members are volunteers and are appointed to various AST roles specified by CHS for a period of time. In terms of volunteers, the current membership of East Renfrewshire AST comprises the Area Convener, Panel Representatives (2 panel members fulfil this role on a job-share basis); Learning and Development Co-ordinators (2 other panel members fulfil this role on a job-share basis); and 2 Panel Practice Advisors (PPAs). A further PPA and a Depute Area Convener are currently being recruited.

6. Under the 2011 Act, each local authority can, if it wishes, nominate at least one member to serve on their AST. The National Convener **must** appoint one such person and

may appoint others if he or she considers that appropriate. The most recent view on this expressed by the National Convener is that a single local authority appointee is appropriate for this area and that the appointment of a substitute is not appropriate.

7. It is not a requirement under the 2011 Act, but rather expected by CHS, that such nominees should be elected Members. Councillor Lafferty was the Local Authority Member nominee on the AST since its establishment until the recent local government election and appointing an elected Member to serve in this capacity in future is considered appropriate. The main East Renfrewshire AST meetings take place approximately quarterly each year.

8. CHS has started, but has yet to complete, a review of the role of Local Authority Members on ASTs, but currently such nominees are expected to:-

- have an overview of the Hearings System and Children's Panel in their area
- act as an important link between the Panel and the authority
- facilitate communication on emerging issues and concerns to elected Members, relevant local authority committees, departments and senior officers as necessary
- provide ongoing local authority support to the Panel and AST in their area

Local Authority Member nominees are not currently directly involved in recruiting and selecting panel members; making related appointment and reappointment recommendations to the National Convener, or in the practice observation and review process for panel members which is undertaken by PPAs. Training is available for AST Members and any new appointees are expected by CHS to complete these sessions organised at a national level.

9. Further information on the Children's Hearings System, including the role and membership of ASTs, is available on the CHS website www.chscotland.gov.uk.

RECOMMENDATION

10. It is recommended that the Council nominate one elected Member to be the Local Authority Member on East Renfrewshire AST.

Report Author

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Background Papers

Report on East Renfrewshire AST Local Authority Member Nominee submitted to Cabinet on 12 December 2012
Area Support Teams Functions, Roles and Responsibilities published by CHS
National Standards for the Children's Panel published by CHS