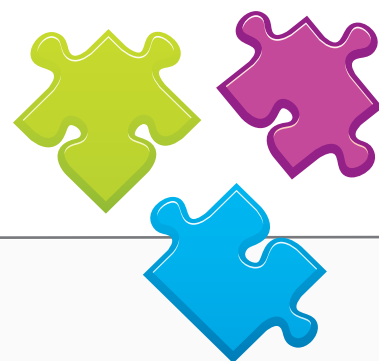# Area Support Team/
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
Locality Operating Framework

Working Together

children's
**hearings
scotland**

SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
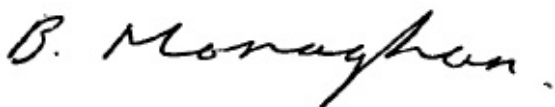ADMINISTRATION

Contents

Foreword

We want Area Support Teams and SCRA Localities to be in the forefront of delivering a modernised, improved Children's Hearing System across Scotland. We are building upon excellent work, achievements, commitment and relationships, developed over many years. This is a huge opportunity to further embed quality of experience and outcomes for children, young people and their families within our work, to use our skills and knowledge to constructively influence within our wider partnerships and ensure the Hearing System takes its proper place in open, transparent decision making for children and young people most in need or at risk.

We are building on our existing strengths – however the way we do business with each other does need to change and become more systematic, based around a clear agenda, underpinned by professional trust and respect for each other's respective roles, responsibilities and contributions. We want to create an open and honest culture where we make up front commitments to challenge and call each other to account constructively with the aim always on learning, sharing our knowledge and improving how and what we do for children and young people.

At the core of this is our ability to communicate with each other, to promote common understandings of challenges we face and what needs to be done, by whom and by when. We are not trying to prescribe – Scotland is too rich and diverse for that – but we are setting a series of clear expectations that we want to see delivered in the way that best suits local circumstances - but these expectations are reasonable and meaningful and we will be seeking evidence over time about how they are being achieved.

As National Convener and Principal Reporter, you can expect our support and commitment to help you deliver this vital local relationship and programme of work. We aim to provide the kind of leadership that you would expect and to lead by example in embodying these principles and values in what we do – and how we do it.
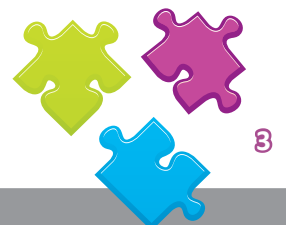
We are extremely grateful to the joint CHS/SCRA working group who have taken this work forward with immense energy and enthusiasm, brought their experiences to bear and have, we think, developed something which is both exciting and enduring.

Bernadette Monaghan   Neil Hunter

What is the purpose of an AST/SCRA Locality Operating Framework

This operating framework is a set of core expectations which set out the terms of the engagement and working relationship between ASTs and SCRA Localities as seen by the Principal Reporter and the National Convener. The framework is aimed at being flexible and agile and seeks to empower local managers and volunteers in leadership roles to work from within it.

The establishment of Area Support Teams (AST) provides a unique opportunity to redraw the boundaries of this crucial relationship and drive forward the Children's Hearings System across all areas of Scotland.

Why do we need an Operating Framework?

The Children's Hearings System is a highly devolved structure across Scotland's 32 Local Authority areas. SCRA operates 9 localities and CHS support 22 Area Support Teams across Scotland (see Appendix A for a breakdown of each Locality and the corresponding AST). SCRA and CHS have Head Offices based in Stirling and Edinburgh respectively.

We need an operating framework to act as model of engagement between AST and SCRA leaders locally but which reflects this high level of devolved responsibility. The framework sets out a blueprint for this engagement in the form of expectations within key themes. It's not designed to be detailed guidance that needs to be slavishly followed, but it does contain principles of best practice, which each area will pick up to a greater or lesser extent.

What are the key themes of the operating model?

Five key themes have been identified by a group of your SCRA and AST peers, supported by the Principal Reporter and the National Convener. These themes provide the key touchstones of the local relationship and will be used as a basis to improve services and communication locally with the ultimate aim of delivering better outcomes for children and young people. The themes are:

1. Strong relationships;
2. Inspired leadership;
3. Learning together;
4. Driving partnerships; and
5. Improving performance.

Each thematic area is broken down further overleaf.

Strong Relationships

Strong, trusting, respectful and supportive relationships at an AST and Locality level lie at the centre of this operating framework. They are critical to the success and well being of the Children's Hearings System locally. We believe that by working to resolve issues locally, and where possible informally, and communicating effectively we will build a sustainable model of respect and trust in which we can focus our energy on improving outcomes for children.

AST/Locality Teams
- Role model positive behaviours and challenge poor and negative behaviours.
- Positively resolve issues and complaints locally, in the spirit of continuous learning and improvement.
- Create a culture and environment of constructive feedback and challenge.

Inspired Leadership

You are leaders in the Children's Hearings System and guardians of its ethos and history and we need you to inspire colleagues locally. Your individual and collective leadership will drive improvement through the way you set out the priorities and direction of travel, how you lead, support and manage your colleagues and how you influence and deliver improvement.

AST/Locality Teams
- Clearly set out the direction of travel in delivering CHS and SCRA's overall vision for the Hearing System.
- Are innovative and bold, driving forward new ideas.
- Involve children and young people locally to inform ideas.

Learning Together

Continuous improvement is about the constant need for learning and development. We believe that by sharing research and information from Audits and Inspections we can broaden our knowledge of the system and apply that learning locally in the pursuit of better outcomes for children and young people.

AST/Locality Teams
- Organise and participate in joint and shared learning and development opportunities.
- Share research, experience and skills and are open to new ideas and thinking.
- Respond to the learning needs of the local area.

Driving Partnerships

Improved outcomes for children and young people within the Children's Hearings System can only be delivered in partnership with other agencies. We believe that by collaborating locally we can drive our relationships with our partners forward by sharing information and local data to help inform discussions and compare ourselves to the best elsewhere. You offer our partners relevant skills and experience, access to information, data and research within a context of mutual support.

AST/Locality Teams
- Are clear on what it is we want from each of our partners and what specifically we want to improve.
- Use data and other sources of evidence routinely and systematically to inform discussions locally.
- Support each other and pursue joined up solutions to local issues and difficulties.

Improving Performance

Managing and improving the local performance of the Children's Hearings System is a cornerstone of the relationship between the AST and the SCRA Locality. Local performance has many dimensions and it will be up to each area to assess their performance against the national picture and local context before building plans to improve. The current AST quarterly report, that also includes a significant amount of data from SCRA, should be used at the outset as the basis for discussions on improving local performance. A joint AST/Locality performance report will be developed in the first year of this framework to provide a single point of reference for each area.

AST/Locality teams
- Agree shared priorities and performance improvement targets.
- Share information and performance reports and monitor performance.
- Report progress annually to the Principal Reporter and the National Convener.

National Supports and Local Meetings

National Supports

SCRA and CHS each have formal mechanisms in place for managing SCRA Localities and supporting ASTs according to their individual needs and requirements. SCRA has in place a range of policies and protocols for the governance and management of the organisation's functions and the performance of Localities and their staff teams.

CHS has a support structure in place for the volunteers who fulfil leadership roles and delegated National Convener functions within the ASTs.

This framework promotes the opportunity for you to engage national supports from either SCRA or CHS to progress joint areas of work locally. There is a range of specialist staff available that could either support you directly by attending meetings and providing advice or by preparing short reports or presentations on your behalf on key issues. In addition, the Principal Reporter and/or the National Convener would be happy to attend any meeting if that would be helpful.

National support is available in the following areas:

- Research;
- Performance Management and analysis;
- Practice and procedure;
- Partnership engagement and Community Planning;
- External and internal Communications;
- Engagement of children and young people;
- Training and development;
- Information Technology;
- Human Resources;
- Complaints handling; and
- Information Governance and Data Protection.

You should discuss your requirements locally and agree requests for support from SCRA and/or CHS. Our colleagues are busy, therefore ensure that there's enough notice to consider your request.

Joint Meetings

The Locality Reporter Manager (LRM) and the Area Convener (AC) are responsible for leading the Locality and AST and will work with colleagues in their management teams to deliver the aims of this framework. The joint AST/Locality team is likely to include the Locality Reporter Manager (LRM), Locality Support Manager (LSM), Area Convener (AC) Depute Area Convener (DAC) and Lead Panel Representative (LPR).

Whilst it is crucial to have a management/leadership team, it is recognised that there will be different sub-group structures designed to support individual local needs. Management/leadership teams will agree, facilitate and manage the engagement model which best reflects how the ASTs and SCRA Localities will operate in their local context. It is also important to recognise that a single SCRA Locality could work with up to six different AST's.

Management/leadership meetings will discuss strategic and high-level operational issues with more sensitive issues discussed on a one-to-one basis. Meetings will happen at least quarterly and they should be recorded by an action note. Broadly speaking, these meetings will discuss the same topics. A copy of suggested topics is attached as Appendix B.

Key responsibilities of the management team include:
- Planning, organisation and management of meetings;
- Following through on allocated actions;
- Sourcing specialist SCRA/CHS resources to support local initiatives
- Communicating decisions of the management/leadership team

Monitoring and Review

The Area Convener and Locality Reporter Manager will review implementation of this framework annually, looking at how this framework is operating.

Where particular issues arise locally, the Area Convener or relevant AST representatives and Locality Reporter Manager will attempt to resolve them through dialogue and negotiation. In the event that this is not possible, they should refer the situation to the Director of Panel and Area Support (CHS) or the appropriate SCRA Senior Operational Manager (SOM).

A review of how this Framework is being applied nationally will be undertaken within 18 months as a means of sharing best practice and delivering continuous improvement.

References:
- Memorandum of Understanding between SCRA and CHS www.scra.gov.uk
- AST roles and responsibilities www.chscotland.gov.uk
- Practice Guidance on the Management and Scheduling of Children's Hearings (Available from Connect (SCRA) and CHIRP (AST).

Appendix A – List of Localities and ASTs

Highlands and Islands Locality (Comprising Highland; Eilean Siar; Orkney; and Shetland Local Authorities)	Highland and Moray AST (Split Locality/AST) Eilean Siar AST Orkney AST Shetland AST
Grampian Locality (Comprising Aberdeen; Aberdeenshire City and Moray Local Authorities)	Aberdeen City AST Aberdeenshire AST Highland and Moray AST (Split Locality/AST)
North Strathclyde Locality (Comprising Renfrewshire; East Renfrewshire; East Dunbartonshire; West Dunbartonshire; Inverclyde; and Argyll & Bute Local Authorities)	Renfrewshire AST East Renfrewshire AST East Dunbartonshire AST West Dunbartonshire AST Inverclyde AST Argyll & Bute AST
Glasgow Locality (Comprising Glasgow City Local Authority)	Glasgow City AST
Tayside and Fife Locality (Comprising Dundee; Perth and Kinross; Fife; and Angus Local Authorities)	Tayside AST Fife AST
South East Locality (Comprising Edinburgh; Scottish Borders; East Lothian; and Midlothian Local Authorities)	Edinburgh AST SE Scotland AST
Central Locality (Comprising Falkirk; Stirling; Clacks and West Lothian Local Authorities)	Central and West Lothian AST
Lanarkshire/D&G Locality (Comprising North Lanarkshire; South Lanarkshire; and Dumfries & Galloway Local Authorities)	North Lanarkshire AST South Lanarkshire AST Dumfries & Galloway AST
Ayrshire Locality (Comprising East Ayrshire; North Ayrshire; and South Ayrshire Local Authorities)	Ayrshire AST

Appendix B – Suggested Topics for Agendas

1. Practice (e.g. Consistency/Hearings Management/Audit-Inspection Feedback)
2. Performance Management (e.g. Monthly performance report, complaints etc)
3. Partnership Working – (e.g. Planning Meetings/Outcomes required)
4. Training (e.g. joint learning and development opportunities)
5. Professional Conduct (e.g. Panel member/ Children's Reporter behaviours)
6. Property Issues (e.g. Hearing centres/ panel members facilities
   /health & safety)

* These are suggested merely as areas of good practice to discuss. Your local needs will determine the size and scope of your agenda.

Acknowledgements

This Framework was created through three workshops. We would like to thank the following people who attended the workshops for their enthusiasm and valued contribution in putting this document together.