

CHILDREN'S HEARINGS SCOTLAND

BOARD MEETING

MINUTES

6th Meeting, 2012

Monday 20 August 2012

Present:

Craig Spence, Chair

Brian Baverstock, Board member

Alastair Hamilton, Deputy Chair

Andrew Thin, Board member

Linda Watt, Board member

Also present:

Bernadette Monaghan, National Convener/CEO, CHS

Kit Wyeth, Project Manager, CHS

Fiona Greig, Director of Finance and Corporate Services, CHS

Alison Gough, Director of Panel and Area Support, CHS

Sara Brodie, Performance and Research Officer, CHS

Franck David, Administrative Assistant (minute taker), CHS

Eleanor Manson, Policy Manager, The Scottish Government

The meeting opened at 2.15 pm

1.1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies

None.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

None.

1.4 Minutes of previous meeting

The Board agreed to approve the minutes of 13 June 2012.

1.5 Matters arising

The Chair thanked Alastair Hamilton for his input as the new Deputy Chair of CHS Board since his appointment in June.

1.6 Action log

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services informed the Board that CHS had joined the Lothian Local Government Pension Scheme on 4 July with a retrospective date of 1 April 2011. All necessary arrangements were now in place.

A member queried when the Board would have sight of the briefing paper detailing the timetable for migration of functions from the Scottish Government Sponsor Team to CHS. The Project Manager confirmed that he would bring at the next Board meeting an update paper summarising the various functions to be migrated.

1.7 National Convener/Chief Executive Update

The National Convener/Chief Executive (NC/CE) updated members on the substantial work taken forward since the last Board meeting in relation to a number of key areas.

- The “Area Support Teams: Functions, Roles and Responsibilities” had been published on 29 June;
- Twenty local authorities were supportive in principle of the Partnership Agreement;
- The first phase of recruitment for Area Conveners and Depute Area Conveners was underway with the second phase starting in September;
- The National Standards Framework had been published on 23 July;
- The induction programme prepared by the Training Units and designed for colleagues joining the new AST structures had been received;
- The online survey on Advice to Hearings had concluded and had been well received by the panel community:
 - A report with recommendations on options had been submitted to the NC/CE who will publish her detailed response in September
 - A number of key recommendations had been accepted by the NC/CE on:
 - joint training with SCRA
 - Training Resource manual to be available at every hearing
 - online resource tool to be developed
 - Telephone/e-mail contact with an advisor to be made available at the pre-hearing stage
 - Copy of the Training Resource Manual available in all hearing rooms
 - Written advice from the NC/CE as a last resort.

A member asked what interest had been generated for the posts of Area Conveners and Depute Area Conveners and the Director of Panel and Area Support answered that a reasonable interest for the posts had been expressed.

Further to that point, a member queried whether, in relation to Advice to Hearings, the organisation had a sufficient budget for the dedicated member of staff who would lead on this area. Both the NC/CE and the Director of Panel and Area Support confirmed that this was the case.

In addition, the NC/CE informed the Board that she had had a fruitful meeting

with the Head of Practice & Policy at SCRA and Sheriff Tom Welch to discuss issues relating to appeals of panel member decisions. The NC/CE reiterated her point that when sheriffs remit a case back to the panel, they should provide clear reasons of their decision.

1.8 Chair update

The Chair reflected on the joint Board seminar held with SCRA in July and which had been a success. In particular, the meeting had highlighted a shared thinking and a collaborative approach that would benefit the panel community and ultimately the Hearings system.

The Chair, together with CHS Communications and Engagement Officer, also had a useful meeting with colleagues at Highlands and Islands Enterprise to discuss, and learn from, their strategic engagement work with parliament, Scottish Government and stakeholders.

The Chair updated the Board that he had been liaising with Scottish Government regarding appointments to the remaining spaces on the CHS Board. A public appointment process is planned for towards the end of the year.

Lastly, the Chair reminded everyone that the next Board meeting would take place in Inverness on 17 September.

The Chair confirmed that CHS Board members were very willing to attend panel and CPAC meetings, and the NC/CE added that the Board also showed willingness to attend training events.

2.1 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services introduced CHS draft Business Plan for 2012/13. The Plan stemmed from the Corporate Plan which had been approved by the Board at its meeting in March. The Director confirmed that the Business Plan did take into account the feedback provided earlier in the year by the Board and the Scottish Government and that it contained seven business objectives. The plan presented to the Board did not contain expected final comments from Scottish Government.

A member noted that a large proportion of the activities listed in the Plan had a completion date of March 2013 and that it would be helpful to add in interim milestones or trajectories to keep track of any progress or issues. This was agreed to by the Director and CHS Performance and Research Officer.

The Board agreed to approve CHS draft Business Plan 2012/13 subject to amendments suggested by the Board and comments from the Scottish Government.

2.2 The Performance and Research Officer provided an overview of CHS Performance Management Framework. The Framework was designed to demonstrate tangible progress towards the delivery of CHS' outcomes, objectives and activities as set out in the Corporate and Business Plans. A balanced scorecard and key performance indicators (KPIs) approach was adopted to form a view on how the organisation was delivering on all aspects of its business. Further, CHS would report to the Board on its performance on a quarterly basis and would integrate

high level risk reporting over the course of 2012/13.

A member made the point that there was a delicate balance to reach between deciding what information was important for the management team and information that best assists the Board in focusing on outcomes.

Members thanked the Performance and Research officer for a very clear presentation which outlined a robust and well worked up system. Members unanimously agreed that the Framework was fit for purpose and of a high calibre and were eager to see it translated into a working tool.

The Board agreed to note CHS Performance Management Framework.

- 2.3** The Director of Finance and Corporate Services introduced CHS quarter one performance report and explained that a number of activities could not be measured at this point in time. However, the report gave a sense of the type of reports the Board could expect to consider. The Director further explained that work was still ongoing to identify indicators, simplify the language and that these reports would be published onto CHS website.

A member reiterated the point that the Board's primary focus should be on outcomes and that an exception report was needed to inform it of those areas that were not progressing satisfactorily.

A member asked whether CHS had plans to undertake a joint research with SCRA on performance and the Director answered that this was the intention.

The Board agreed to note the content and structure of CHS quarter one performance report.

- 2.4** The Director of Finance and Corporate Services talked members through CHS financial position as of 30 June 2012. The Director explained that in the absence of meaningful historic data, the 2012/13 budget had been phased equally over the year. The Director further explained that expenditure on key workstreams would happen later in the year and that detailed project plans were already in place (e.g. the online portal and website). Further, the management team would undertake a re-forecasting exercise at the end of quarter two. A significant underspend was highlighted due to the phasing of key work streams (i.e. panel and AST expenses, panel and AST training).

A member said that a budget reforecasting should be undertaken urgently to produce a more refined budget reflecting the information contained in the financial position report. This was endorsed by the Director. Further to that point, a member queried whether CHS had a contingency list that could be used to take advantage of the underspend. The Director confirmed that this was the case and gave the example of a scoping exercise to look at the IT provision for ASTs which has the potential to incur a substantial cost.

A member said that the online portal project would, in his experience, benefit from a phased approach based on priorities rather than attempting to cover all aspects, whatever their importance might be. The Director agreed and confirmed that the project would indeed be approached through four phases.

A member asked whether CHS had sufficient resources to undertake the next panel member recruitment exercise that it would be leading on in January 2013. The Director explained that this exercise was part of the migration of functions from the Scottish Government to CHS and that the Government would outsource a team to lead on specific tasks e.g. publicity, advertising, call handling.

The Board agreed to;

- a) note CHS' financial position at 30 June 2012 and
- b) request that a budget rephasing be conducted urgently.

- 3.1** The Director of Panel and Area Support provided a comprehensive update on the various workstreams that her team was leading on. The Director confirmed that the
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- 3.3** National Standards for the Children's Panel had been published onto CHS website on 23 July and that the feedback from the panel community had been positive, if limited.

The Director will attend a series of meetings with Scottish Government officials until Go-Live to progress any issues and ensure the smooth transition of functions. A number of reference groups have been established to ensure the involvement of panel members, panel chairs, CPACs and CHTUs in the development of the Panel Member and AST Handbook. The latter will form a key part of the national Standards framework for ASTs and the Children's Panel.

In relation to Advice to Hearings, CHS Interim Advice to Hearings Officer submitted a detailed report to the NC/CE on options regarding the mechanisms and procedures to support hearings¹.

In terms of data transfer, the Director highlighted a number of complex and, potentially, significant issues for instance:

- archiving of local authorities and Scottish Government records regarding panel members;
- type of records that should be archived/destroyed;
- CHS access to panel members records;
- PanelPal update.

The Director said that this area required a very substantial amount of work that could not be underestimated and with implication on resources.

Further, the Director informed the Board that three Partnership Agreements had been signed off by local authorities with another twenty content in principle with the Agreement. However, nine councils still had outstanding issues. On that point, a member asked that an update paper be provided to the Board at the next meeting with a focus on those local authorities which are holding up e.g. rationale, remedies.

A member suggested that there was a willingness from all Board members to assist in this

¹ Refers to point 1.7, National Convener & Chief Executive update.

process. This could include meeting with relevant Local Authorities if that could be helpful. The Chair agreed that this was a matter to bring to the attention of the Project Manager who was leading on this area.

Following a question from one member about whether CHS had any back-up plan should negotiations with some local authorities fail, the Director of Panel and Area Support explained that further negotiations would be undertaken to explore what options/concessions would be feasible.

The Board agreed to note the update by the Director of Panel and Area Support.

3.2 The Director of Finance and Corporate Services updated members on the activities to “Go-Live” and in particular the establishment of ASTs and of the national children’s panel. Those two activities were rated amber with the latter depending on the first one.

The Director advised that in future the project RAG report would be delivered as part of the Quarterly Performance Report.

The Board agreed to note the update by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution. The next Board meeting will be on 17 September in Inverness.

The meeting closed at 3.46 pm