

Application Pack: Panel Practice Advisor



Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Panel Practice Advisor.

This application pack contains the information you will need in order to apply to become Panel Practice Advisor. Please read the information in this pack carefully before you submit your application.

Contents of application pack

This pack contains the following appendices:

1. A background note, providing information on the Children's Hearings System, the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and Area Support Teams
2. Guidance notes for applicants
3. Panel Practice Advisor role description
4. Application Form at end of document

Background note

The Children's Hearings System

The Children's Hearings System is Scotland's unique, integrated approach to child care and justice.

For nearly half a century, lay tribunal members have been making decisions about the best interests and welfare of children and young people in need of protection, help and support at children's hearings. Currently, around 3,000 people dedicate their unpaid time to the system, sitting on hearings, or acting as Area Support Team (AST) members to ensure that serving panel members in their local area are supported and managed effectively.

The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011

The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) strengthens and modernises the Children's Hearings System to secure better outcomes for children and young people. It introduced changes to the way in which panel members are recruited, inducted, trained, supported, appraised and re-appointed.

The 2011 Act, which came into effect on 24 June 2013:

- Created the role of National Convener to act as a figurehead for panel members and ensure they are consistently supported to a high standard;
- Created a dedicated national body, Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), to support the National Convener in the delivery of her statutory functions. CHS currently employs 12 members of staff, while its Board, which provides governance and challenge, comprises six members including the Chair;
- Established ASTs who are responsible for panel member recruitment, making recommendations for the appointment and reappointment of panel members, management of the rota and the support, practice observation and practice review processes for panel members at local level; and
- Created a national Children's Panel.

Area Support Teams

ASTs play a critical role in the delivery and administration of the Children's Hearings System at local level across Scotland. Their success and effectiveness depends on the positive partnership and common purpose which has been a distinguishing hallmark of the Children's Hearings System.

ASTs:

- Uphold the CHS vision, mission and values
- Work within the CHS national standards at local level

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- Carry out functions on behalf of the National Convener to support members of the Children's Panel who sit on hearings in their local 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.

ASTs have responsibility for panel member recruitment, selection, induction and practice observation, for rota management and for supporting panel members at local level. They report regularly to CHS to share information about trends, issues, problems and best practice, so that the quality of practice across Scotland improves. AST members act as ambassadors for the Children's Panel and represent it to other organisations and employers locally.

There are a number of distinct roles within each AST:

- Area Convener
- Depute Area Convener
- Lead panel representative
- Panel representative
- Panel practice advisor
- Learning and development co-ordinator
- Local authority member

Each AST are supported by a clerk. Clerks are not members of the AST but play a key 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 the AST gets the support it needs.

Guidance notes for applicants

Your application form will determine whether or not you will proceed from the first assessment stage to interview and ultimately to appointment. It is important that you clearly demonstrate the evidence required to show how you meet the relevant criteria for the post of Panel Practice Advisor. All applications will be considered on an equal basis.

Application forms

You can either email your application form or send it hard copy. Please see the vacancy advert for details of where to send your application, and for closing date and interview date(s).

Please mark your application Private and Confidential. If your letter of application is handwritten, please use **black ink** and ensure it is legible as it will either be downloaded or photocopied/scanned for shortlisting/interview purposes.

Anonymity at initial sift and shortlisting stages is used to ensure that the key principles of merit, equality, openness and transparency are upheld. This ensures that all applications are treated the same. Part B of your application form will therefore be removed prior to consideration of your application and will not be used to assess your suitability for appointment.

Only the information you provide in Part A of your application form is made available to those involved in the sift/short-list and selection for interview stages. The selection panel will only see a list of the names of those who are invited to interview after they have made their decisions about whom to invite for interview. Please do not worry about referring to named events/activities in your application form. There will be situations where you consider this necessary. It is for you to decide and inclusion of such information will not count against you.

The application form asks you to address the selection criteria. Remember to give specific examples/evidence of where, when you acquired and, how frequently you have demonstrated, the skills and knowledge required for appointment as Panel Practice Advisor.

A good application should be structured to ensure that it flows in a clear and/or logical way. Please provide evidence and examples to demonstrate what **you** did, the reasons for your action, what happened, what you took into account and the outcome. You should not for instance assume that the evidence is obvious by recounting role titles or role duties. Try and avoid bland and hypothetical statements and where possible/appropriate use the first person: "I" not "We".

For example, if one of the criteria is "the ability to work as part of a team", the following examples would be deemed to have provided no evidence:

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“I have developed excellent team working skills during my working life”, as you say you have the skill but give no additional information to support this;

or

“As a children’s panel, I clearly have the ability to work well as a team member”, as you give a role title with no explanation of how this involved the skill required;

or

“I think good teamwork means valuing everyone’s contribution”, as you give a statement of opinion, but no practical examples of how the skill has been demonstrated;

or

No answer is given at all.

Appointment Process

Following receipt of your application form, your personal information sheet (Part A) will be separated from the main part of your form (Part B).

Your application will initially be assessed against the criteria for the Panel Practice Advisor role to see whether you have the skills and knowledge specified. Based on this assessment, the selection panel will then decide whether you will progress to the interview stage.

Any applicant who is not selected for interview will be advised of the outcome of their application in writing.

At the interview, you will be asked questions by the interview panel to assess whether you can demonstrate that you meet the criteria required for this role.

All applicants invited to interview will be advised in writing of the outcome of their interview.

If you are successful, you will be invited in writing to accept the appointment as Panel Practice Advisor.

Standard Disclosure checks will be carried out for all successful applicants.

Feedback will be offered to all applicants, based on the assessment of your merit in relation to the skills and knowledge required.

Equality and Diversity

CHS is committed to appointment on the basis of merit, diversity, equality and accessibility. We will always give consideration to disability-related reasonable adjustments that an applicant might request to enable them to participate fully in the selection process. If you require any of the application pack in an alternative format, please contact Children's Hearings Scotland on 0131 244 3696.

Interviews/Expenses

Applicants can claim for reasonable expenses incurred in attending an interview from CHS. It is expected that the most efficient and economic means of travel will be used and reimbursement will normally be restricted to that amount. When an overnight stay is necessary, you must contact Anne Munro in advance for confirmation of current subsistence rates. Receipts must be provided in support of all claims.

Complaints

Any complaints about the recruitment process should be sent to Gary Coutts, Chair of the Board, at CHS. Any complaint received will be acknowledged within three working days and will include the name and title of the individual within CHS who will investigate your complaint. The investigation into your complaint will be completed and a response issued within 20 working days. If it is not possible for us to do this, we will inform you and keep you up to date with progress every 10 working days.

Role description

PPAs 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). They undertake panel practice observations and provide constructive feedback to panel members.

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; and
- 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 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 pass to the clerk who will retain the information;
- 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; and
- 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; and
- report the outcome of complaints or refer complaints which require to be escalated to the Depute Area Convener(s).

Person specification for PPA

The skills and knowledge needed to serve as a PPA are listed below. When completing Section B of your application form, it is important to highlight how your skills and knowledge match those required and how these transferable skills would benefit the AST.

Criteria required:

- 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 objectively analyse 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 appropriate confidentiality; and
- have the skills to engage effectively with AST colleagues, key partners locally and CHS.