



Devolved Budget Policy

1. Introduction

The Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) Board is responsible for ensuring that CHS fulfils the aims and objectives set by Scottish Ministers, and the efficient and effective use of staff and resources by CHS, in accordance with the principles of best value. This applies at a national and local level.

The National Convener and CHS are together responsible for the effective recruitment, support, training and retention of panel members. The Vision for CHS is:

Our vision is of a forward looking and evolving children's hearings system, working as a community to ensure infants, children and young people are cared for, protected and their views are heard, respected and valued.

We will all aim to meet this through the delivery of Corporate Plans, Business Plans, and Area Support Team (AST) Plans. AST Plans are annual operational plans which record the AST's priorities, key activities and events for the coming year and articulate how these contribute to CHS's Corporate Plan. Anticipated spend of devolved budget is a core part of AST Plans and in-year reviews of these plans should include reviews of devolved budget spend.

The implementation of the policy is delegated to Area Support Teams, to develop local AST Plans which identify the priorities for their local areas. The principles of the developed budget support them to allocate the budget to these priorities so enabling them to roll out their local functions.

A core function of the AST is to identify how it will implement the national priorities, this is done through the development of a local AST Plan. This plan will identify budget allocations to each action and ASTs will ensure these are implemented in the most effective way.

This devolved budget allocation will supplement and complement each Local Authority Partnership Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding and is not to replace what they cover. The Partnership Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding sets out the administrative support provided, and can include staff, property or other services. Each Partnership Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding is negotiated between CHS and the Local Authority, and is unique in every area. Therefore each AST should refer to their local Partnership Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding for clarity of Local Authority provision.

This document lays out the framework for spending this budget and should be read in conjunction with the Devolved Budget Procedures and Guidance document and the AST Plan guidance.



2. Purpose

This will clarify the roles and responsibilities between CHS and local ASTs in determining, managing and implementing the Devolved Budget. The policy and its supporting documents will support effective implementation of local priorities, activities and costs associated with local AST Plans. This is being done to enhance the experience for our Panel Members and ASTs and will complement and enhance the Local Authority Partnership Agreements / Memorandum of Understanding.

3. Scope

The CHS Board has legal and corporate responsibility for ensuring that CHS complies with any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds. This includes following Audit Scotland's guidance on following best value for public funds.

The financial governance and audit requirements in place for CHS as a public body apply to this devolved funding allocation, as to all other areas of CHS spending.

The national standards framework sets out commitments from the National Convener and CHS towards panel members and AST members, particularly but not exclusively through:

- Standard 2 – Panel Members are well equipped and supported to undertake their role
- Standard 6 – ASTs are well equipped and supported to undertake their roles
- Standard 7 – Communication and information sharing across the Children's Panel, AST's and CHS is clear, appropriate and purposeful.
- Standard 8 – Functions, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood within the system

To fulfil these National Standards, an allocation of budget responsibilities is devolved to Area Convenors, AST's and Area Support and Improvement Partners by the National Convener.

AST Plans will outline the budget allocations that are agreed locally to enable implementation of the actions.

4. Reporting Structure and Responsibilities

In order for effective spending of a devolved budget within an AST, the process must be transparent and accountable. This must reflect joint decision making by ASTs in a planned manner, and submission of all appropriate pro forma within set timescales, when requested. This must be able to demonstrate at all times that best value for public funds has been achieved.

The Devolved Budget Procedures must be adhered to at all times, and the related toolkits must be used. Written guidance will be available, which will include examples.

The National Convener and CHS agree the provision being made for each AST and require to be included in the reporting structure. The member of the Senior Management Team with direct responsibility for the devolved budget is the Head of Area Support and Community Improvement.



Area Convenors

Each Area Convenor has the decision making responsibility within the scope of the local AST Plan. This will be done in partnership with the Area Support Team and the Area Support and Improvement Partner as part of the AST Planning and Review process.

The Area Convenor is required to reach agreement with the Area Support and Improvement Partner about their proposed and actual spends.

Area Support and Improvement Partner

Each Area Support and Improvement Partner will be responsible for ensuring that the devolved budget is allocated, spent, and recorded within the Action Plan, to reflect the decisions made within each AST, and ensuring transparency and accountability. This will be done in partnership with the Area Convenor and Local Authority Clerk Team.

The Area Support and Improvement Partner will be required to report to the Head of Area Support and Community Improvement of the AST's proposed and actual spends.

Local Authority Clerk Team

Each Local Authority Clerk Team is responsible for the administration of the devolved budget and the implementation of the decisions taken by the local AC, AST and ASIP as set out in the Partnership Agreement / Memorandum of Understanding.

They are required to report to the Area Convenor and Area Support and Improvement Partner the administration tasks they have carried out on behalf of CHS through the local reporting structure.

5. Equality, Staffing and Financial Impact Assessment

A Screening Impact Assessment has been completed and sent to HR/OD, Sinead Lammie, CHS. On her advice, there is no need for any further action required on equalities impact.

There is no staffing impact.

There is no financial impact.

6. Review

A policy review should take place every two years, but sooner if required.

Date	Author(s)	Review notes
07 Sept 2020	Ross MacKenzie, Finance Manager, SCRA Anne Gerry, Area Support and Improvement Partner, CHS Angela Allan, Area Support and Improvement Partner, CHS Paul Smith, Area Convenor.	Rewritten from 2016/17 version. Policy document now updated and separated from updated Procedures and guidance.
Sept 2022		