



Information for Employers



- **My employee wants to join the children's panel**

Do you have an employee who wishes to join the children's panel or is already a children's panel member? This leaflet sets out what is involved in children's panel membership, what you can do to help and what you can gain as an employer from supporting the children's panel.

- **What is the children's panel?**

Since 1971 children's hearings have been making decisions about children at risk or in trouble. These decisions are made by lay members of the community who are aged 18 or over and come from a wide range of backgrounds. They give their services voluntarily and are unpaid.

Scotland's children's hearings put children first. Panel members have to deal with cases that are often complex, difficult and emotionally challenging. They are carefully selected and highly trained for their role. But in many cases they need their employer's support to carry out that role.

- **What can I do to help?**

The supportive partnership between the panel member and employer is crucial to the functioning of the children's hearings system. Children's hearings normally take place during the day and

panel members usually sit on 1 or 2 half-day sessions per month. As members of statutory tribunals, children's panel members are entitled to reasonable time off work to carry out their duties (Section 50, Employment Rights Act 1996). So the willing and enthusiastic support of employers, line managers and colleagues is essential for the system to work effectively.

- **What do I gain?**

Children's panel members are trained in skills that are transferable to the workplace. The highly rated training is funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by four Scottish Universities. It develops skills which include:

- leadership
- teamwork
- effective communication
- analytical thinking
- decision making
- influencing/negotiating.

Panel members learn to absorb, consider and critically analyse large quantities of detailed information from the professional reports produced for hearings. These skills can help employees to be more confident and effective in almost any job,

and they are developed at no cost to you as an employer. Supporting employees to volunteer, train and serve makes good business sense.

- **Tell me more about the training**

Before sitting on hearings, panel members undergo around 45 hours of training spread over several months. This mainly takes place at weekends and in the evenings. However, it will also involve scheduled visits to hearings and related centres, which may be during the day. After taking up appointment, they will continue to develop in their role through experience and at in-service training, which normally takes place in evenings and at weekends.

- **What about expenses for panel members?**

Panel members can usually claim travel and some other expenses. A loss of earnings allowance, in accordance with government guidelines, is also payable to the panel member by the local authority if paid time off is not available to an employee. You are asked to note that it is frequently the case that this does not fully compensate a panel member for actual loss of earnings, so panel members value the full support of their employers.

- **I want to know more about the children's hearings system**

A children's hearing consists of three panel members of mixed gender who meet with the child, his/her carers and the professionals involved. They discuss the problems fully and decide what action is in the best interests of the child. Decisions on the action to be taken are made openly in front of the child and family/carers at the hearing.

Panel member recruitment takes place annually and the first term of appointment is normally 3 years. Children's panel members are appointed by Scottish Ministers on recommendation of the local Children's Panel Advisory Committee (CPAC), which interviews and selects candidates.

To find out more visit our website
www.chscotland.gov.uk or contact the Clerk to
the CPAC in your local council. The Clerk to the
CPAC is always interested to learn of employers
who actively support staff who are panel
members.