



Professional Development Award (PDA) Completion Guidance for Area Support Teams (ASTs) - August 2023

1. Introduction

The aspiration in CHS is that all Panel Members are confident and competent to make the best decisions for infants, children and young people in hearings. One of the key components to achieving this is to ensure they are given the best training to equip them for their role, and therefore all Panel Members, who have joined the National Panel since 2014, are required to complete the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) accredited Professional Development Award (PDA) .

The aim of this document is to provide ASTs with all the necessary information about the PDA and the expectation of Panel Members to complete the award as part of their commitment to their role, and also includes guidance on what should be done if any Panel Member has not progressed on their PDA journey, as expected within the recommended timelines.

2. Background

From the outset a Panel Member is made aware that the PDA, delivered by the CHS Learning Academy, will equip them with the knowledge and skills to ensure they can perform their role to the highest level.

A newly appointed Panel Member is made aware, through a number of channels, of the commitment required to be a panel member, including the requirement to complete the PDA within 2 years, or in exceptional circumstances at least within their 3 year appointment term. The details of this commitment is included:

- During Information Sessions;
- During Preservice training;
- At Welcome Events;
- In the Welcome Pack;
- Included in the National Standards (Standard 2); and
- Included in the CHS Learning Academy Prospectus

Panel Members are reassured that their colleagues, both nationally and locally, will be there to offer excellent guidance, advice and support throughout their volunteering journey to help them fulfil that commitment, from the Learning Academy, the National Team and ASTs.

3. The Professional Development Award

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (<http://www.sqa.org.uk/scqf>) accredited Professional Development Award (PDA) at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Level 7, incorporates 4 essential components:

1. Preservice Training completion followed by joining the rota as a qualified and active side panel member, fulfilling the local rota requirements.
2. Enhanced Practice (EP) training course (1 day) plus post course assessment - approximately 6 months after joining the rota.
3. Management of Hearings (MoH) training course (2 days) plus post course assessment - approximately 6 months after Enhanced Practice completion.
4. Observation of chairing a hearing by a Panel Practice Adviser.

The PDA has been developed over a number of years to ensure that Panel Members are fully equipped to manage all elements of a Children's Hearing and the award is continually updated to ensure it includes all necessary elements of current legislation and practice. The skills and knowledge gained in the PDA are not only hugely important to carry out the Panel Member role but also provide Panel Members with excellent transferable skills they can use in their own workplace or other areas of their life.

4. Current Position

We now have data that shows there are a significant number of Panel Members who have not progressed on their PDA journey as hoped, which is creating rota capacity issues due to a lack of Panel Members in the system who are qualified to perform the chairing role. We have a significant number from our active Panel Members who should be booked in to the next stage of their PDA training journey but are not, and we would like to support these people to progress.

We recognise that the impact of the Covid pandemic was significant, and as we were coping with the restrictions and challenges, we acknowledged that the personal circumstances of Panel Members and the environment that they had been operating in had altered significantly. For many, successful completion of the PDA qualification was taking longer due to reduced hearing numbers, the need to build confidence as a virtual Panel Member and moving Management of Hearings training online.

However, as we now move forward with the restrictions and challenges of the pandemic mostly behind us, once again we want to focus on the needs of Panel Members today and support them to complete their PDA, to not only become confident and competent chairs but also to develop them further as confident and competent Panel Members.

For the Panel Members who lack confidence and experience to progress in to the chairing role due to cancelled hearings or lack of availability, resulting in them sitting on fewer hearings, our ask of ASTs is to encourage attendance on the Management of Hearings course to assist them to develop their confidence and skill set and learn from others. They can then be supported through a local buddy system and by chairing less complex hearings at the start.

5. CHS Chairing Policy

The updated CHS Chairing Policy (April 2023) states that:

All new Panel Members should satisfactorily complete the Preservice, Enhanced Practice and the Management of Hearings training within two years of appointment.

If however, for any reason a Panel Member is not able to complete their PDA within 2 years, then through discussion with their Area Support Team and agreement with the National Convener, additional time can be given, but it is a requirement that all Panel Members complete their PDA within a maximum of 3 years, prior to their reappointment date.

6. Panel Member Reappointment Guidance

The relevant excerpts from the CHS Reappointment Guidance in relation to completing the PDA include:

Complete mandatory training

To ensure that Panel Members continue to make the best decisions with and for infants, children and young people and their families, Panel Members:

- *must be aware of important legal and practice changes within the children's hearings system.*
- *are required to undertake Information Governance Training every two years.*
- *will be required to attend and satisfactorily complete all necessary training (including changes in law, new procedures, or anything else of importance which is essential for Panel Members to know about, as determined by the National Convener).*
- *will have completed mandatory training which includes Management of Hearings.*
- *make a commitment to complete subsequent mandatory training over the next three years of their appointment period.*
- *be pro-active in exploring other Learning Academy modules to augment and widen their knowledge.*

Minimum Requirements of Re-appointment:

- *Ensure Panel Members have completed, or are scheduled to complete, Enhanced Practice and Management of Hearings training to allow them to chair hearings.*

Criteria for not reappointing a Panel Member

- *The National Convener must re-appoint a Panel Member who wishes to be re-appointed to the National Children's Panel unless it can be demonstrated that the person is unfit to be a Panel Member by reason of inability; conduct; or failure, without reasonable excuse, to undertake training specified by the National Convener.*
- *This is the same criteria for removal of a Panel Member during their three year appointment term. The National Convener will consider reasons not to re-appoint a Panel Member in the same way as he considers reasons to remove a Panel Member. A decision not to re-appoint a Panel Member will not be taken lightly. The AST must provide the National Convener with as much information as possible about a recommendation to not re-appoint. The following is an example of when a person may be deemed unfit to continue to be a Panel Member:*

Training requirements imposed by the National Convener

- *the Panel Member has failed to undertake the training required (i.e. deemed mandatory) by the National Convener without reasonable excuse. Failure to engage with learning and development opportunities or local learning and development sessions is not sufficient, on its own, to justify a decision to not re-appoint. However, this may be linked to the inability of the individual to meet the requirements of the Panel Member role if concerns are demonstrated through practice observation.*

7. Exceptional Circumstances Preventing PDA Completion within 2 years

Children's Hearings Scotland recognises that for some Panel Members there may be legitimate reasonable reasons that may have prevented them from being able to complete their PDA within the 2 year timescale, as noted in the CHS Charing Policy April 2023. These circumstances may include situations such as:

- Family Bereavement
- Serious illness or disability
- Major changes to work or family life, including caring responsibilities
- Individual circumstances, needs, and protected characteristics in line with the Equality Act 2010.

If this applies to any Panel Member, they are asked to speak to their Area Convener in the first instance, who will then make a judgment, in consultation with relevant members of their AST, as to whether a request for an extension to 3 years should be submitted to the National Convener.

8. PDA Extension Request

If a request for an extension is deemed appropriate then a CHS PDA Extension Request form (see appendix 1) should be submitted to the National Convener. The form must give details of the request and the reasons for it. It also asks for a suggested realistic timescale of when the panel member should be able to complete their PDA award. Ideally this should be no more than one year so it falls within their appointment term.

If the circumstances preclude the completion of the PDA within a year then there is every chance that the Panel Member may also be unable to fulfil their Panel Member rota duties and it may be suggested that a leave of absence is the most suitable approach until such time as they feel able to commit to sitting in hearings and undertaking the PDA training.

If the request is approved, the Panel Member must complete the PDA within the timescale agreed. The AST has the responsibility to monitor the Panel Member's progress and highlight to the National Convener if it has not been achieved, and appropriate action will be agreed.

As noted, our aspiration is to support all Panel Members to complete their PDA award to become confident and competent Panel Members, and we thank you for your support in making that happen.

If there are any questions on anything included in this guidance then please contact Linda Quinn, Learning academy manager; LQuinn@west-lothian.ac.uk

Appendix 1



Professional Development Award (PDA) Extension Request Form

Children's Hearings Scotland recognises that for some Panel Members there may be legitimate reasonable reasons that may have prevented them from being able to complete their PDA within the 2 year timescale. These circumstances may include situations such as:

- Family Bereavement
- Serious illness or disability
- Major changes to work or family life, including caring responsibilities
- Individual circumstances, needs, and protected characteristics in line with the Equality Act 2010.

If a request for an extension is deemed appropriate then please complete this form with the Panel Member and submit it to the National Convenor.

Panel Member Name:

AST Area:

Extension Time Requested:

Details of Exceptional Circumstances:

Panel Member Signature:	Date:

Area Convenor Signature:	Date:

Request Approved: (please tick)			Request not Approved: (please tick)		
Comment			Comment		
Learning Academy Signature:			Date:		