

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 22 February 2023 14:47
To: [Redacted]
Cc: Cole-Hamilton A (Alex), MSP
Subject: RE: obo [Redacted] - CHS concerns

Hi [Redacted],

I've attached, with [Redacted] permission, the attachments she sent to us.

Thanks for looking into this.

Best wishes,
[Redacted]

[Redacted]
Casework Manager | Office of Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
E: [Redacted]
A: [Redacted]

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From: [Redacted]
Sent: 06 February 2023 09:55
To: [Redacted]
Subject: RE: obo [Redacted] - CHS concerns

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Hi [Redacted],

I'm looking into the below correspondence, and it seems we haven't received the attachment. Could you please send it over so we can consider the concerns fully?

Kind regards

[Redacted] | Children's Hearings Team
Children's Rights, Protection and Justice | Scottish Government



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From: [Redacted] **On Behalf Of** Cole-Hamilton A (Alex), MSP
Sent: 02 February 2023 09:47
To: Minister for Children & Young People
Cc: [Redacted]
Subject: obo [Redacted] - CHS concerns

Dear Clare,

I hope this finds you well.

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, [Redacted], who has raised concerns regarding the Children Hearings.

I have copied her concerns below:

'In May 2022, three representatives from the Scottish Children's Hearings' Association (SCHA), met Elliot Jackson (National Convener of CHS) to establish the level of engagement and support that the Association could expect from CHS. Elliot Jackson informed them that this was a matter for the CHS Board to decide. The SCHA contacted the CHS Board asking for a meeting and also highlighting the crisis of recruitment and retention among panel members. I am attaching the reply from Ms. Kasper 1/12/2022 (Chair of the CHS Board), claiming that CHS believes that

"activities carried out by the Scottish Children's Hearings' Association (SCHA) will be counterproductive to the success of the CHS community overall and to our ability to uphold the rights of infants, children and young people."

Referring to the ongoing work of the Hearing System Working Group (HSWG) and the panel community consultation process; Ms. Kasper says *"the extensive listening, participation and collaboration work"* that CHS is currently undertaking across the 3,000 strong CHS community is *"greater and deeper now, than at any other time in our history."* SCHA is currently trying to get evidence of the true number of panel members from the 3,000 CHS community who actually engaged in the CHS consultation about the restructuring of the Hearing System. Our initial calculations would suggest in the region of 1-3% but I will forward on the correct figures as soon as I receive them. The SCHA currently has over 150 members, which represents 5% of the CHS community.

Ms. Kasper states in para 2 *“Our role in supporting and developing our panel members is one of the key legislative purposes of Children’s Hearings Scotland and this is front of mind, always, in all work we undertake. We exist for the panel community.”*

If that is the case then why

1. Have over 150 panel members signed up to an Association that has been set up by panel members for panel members, to offer support and give panel members an independent voice?
2. Why is there such a crisis of recruitment and retention and such a high rate of attrition amongst panel members across Scotland?

I am also attaching correspondence between the SCHA and CHS regarding CHS’s claim that the Association breached GDPR legislation in contacting panel members on their internal CHS email addresses to inform them about the Association.

It is extremely disappointing that instead of welcoming the time and effort that panel members have put in, to setting up an Association for themselves, which arguably should have been a priority for CHS to set up; CHS are instead, putting up barriers and doing everything they can to stop the Association flourishing. All this while claiming that *“supporting and developing our panel members is one of the key legislative purposes of CHS”.*

I’d be extremely grateful for any aid you can provide in addressing the concerns laid out here.

Best wishes,
Alex

Alex Cole-Hamilton
Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Western Constituency