

A Pilot Hearing Room in Glasgow



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

Trialling a room designed by, and for, children and young people with experience of the Children's Hearings System



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1. Introduction

One of the main statutory responsibilities of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is to provide suitable accommodation and facilities for Children's Hearings¹.

Inspections of Hearing Centres by SCRA's Modern Apprentices in 2011 and 2013 highlighted areas for improvement, particularly that Hearing (and waiting) rooms should be welcoming and colourful (Collins & Montgomery 2011; Murphy, Swandells & Sutherley, 2013).

In 2014, SCRA joined the National Participation Forum led by Who Cares? Scotland; other members of the forum include Children's Hearings Scotland and CELCIS². The aim of the forum is to improve the participation and engagement of children and young people in the Children's Hearings System. Young people at the forum said that Hearing and waiting rooms were too corporate, bland and unwelcoming, and suggested brighter colours, plants, and soft furnishings to make the rooms more child and young person-friendly.

Pilot Hearing Room

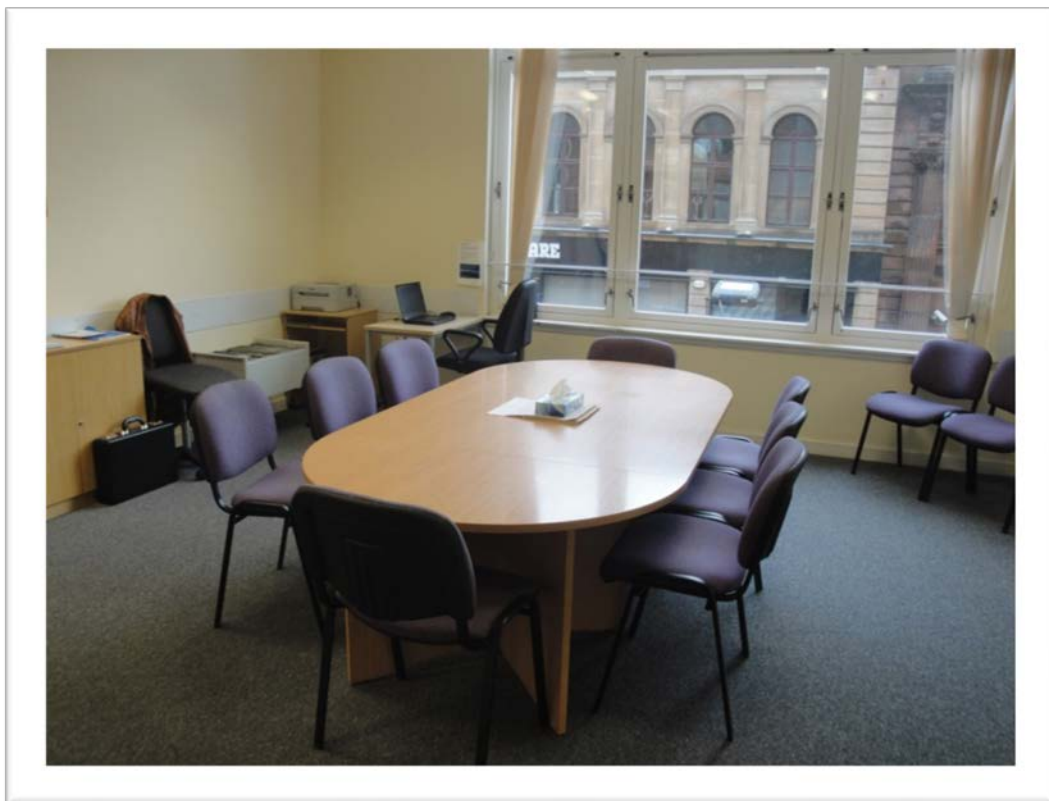
In response to these findings and feedback, SCRA decided to create a Pilot Hearing Room in the Glasgow Hearings Centre. Hearings-experienced young people from Who Cares? Scotland and SCRA's Modern Apprentices advised on the décor and furnishings of the Pilot Room. It has comfortable, modern seating; is colourful; has a dedicated play area for younger children; and no "big table" separating the Children's Panel Members from others in the Hearing, which can be a barrier to children and young people's participation (Creegan *et al*, 2006; Whitehead *et al*, 2009; Children's Parliament, 2010). The waiting room is designed for children and infants, because young people indicated that as long as it was child friendly and has Wi-Fi and a television they are not so concerned with how it looks.

¹ Section 21 of The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011

² Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland, University of Strathclyde

Figure 1. Pilot Hearings Room – before and after

Before – it was a 'standard' Hearing Room



After – the Pilot Hearing Room



Evaluation

Before considering whether to roll out the new look Hearing Room in other areas and/or extend its use in Glasgow, SCRA wanted to get the views of those who have used it including: Panel Members, Social Workers, Safeguarders, Children's Reporters, young people, parents and carers.

The evaluation comprised of a survey of those attending Hearings in the Pilot Room. The Glasgow Area Support Team and Children's Hearings Scotland were consulted in the development of the survey.

Before the start of the Hearing, attendees were asked by SCRA staff if they would complete a short questionnaire after the Hearing, and the purpose of the survey was explained to them. Only those who agreed were included³. The survey was anonymous and no identifiable information was collected.

There were two questionnaires (Annex 1):

1. Panel Members, Children's Reporters and those working with the child and family (i.e. professionals).
2. Children and young people and their parents and carers.

Professionals were asked to self-complete the questionnaire and hand it into SCRA reception staff before they left the Hearings Centre. For young people, parents and carers, members of SCRA's staff provided assistance in completion of the questionnaire after the Hearing. The responses were entered into Survey Monkey (an evaluation tool) for collation and analysis.

³ If any individuals appeared distressed, or if SCRA staff considered that the type of Hearing (e.g. Child Protection Order related, emergency transfer, etc.) made it inappropriate to involve a family – then these Hearings were not included and no attendees were approached.

The survey was carried out between August 2015 and January 2016.

2. Findings

Participants

A total of 198 individuals took part in the survey - 133 professionals and 65 young people, parents and carers (Table 1).

Table 1. Survey participants

Role	Number	%
Panel Member	64	32%
Panel Practice Advisor	3	2%
Children's Reporter	10	5%
Social Worker	25	13%
Safeguarder	2	1%
Legal Representative/solicitor	16	8%
Teacher	1	0.5%
Care worker/Key worker	5	2%
Other*	7	4%
Total professionals	133	67%
Children and young people	16	8%
Parent	24	12%
Carer	25	13%
Total young people, parents and carers	65	33%
Total participants	198	100%

*Other - Two psychologists, one support worker/social work, one foster carer, two parents.

Features and set up of Hearing Rooms

The features that participants considered most important for Hearing Rooms are shown in Table 2. The top three features that professionals considered were most important were: child & young person friendly; clean and bright; and has windows and fresh air. The feature that young people, parents and carers said was most important was that the Hearing room is private, followed by that it is child and young person friendly and feels safe.

Table 2. Features considered most important for Hearing Rooms

Feature	Professionals		Young people, parents, carers	
	Number	%	Number	%
Private	79	59%	51	78%
Feels safe	95	71%	46	71%
Easily accessible entrance and exit	49	37%	30	46%
Child & young person friendly	120	90%	48	74%
Comfortable furnishings	71	53%	45	69%
Clean and bright	110	83%	45	69%
Toys, books, magazines	52	39%	29	45%
A table to put papers, laptops, etc.	64	48%	18	28%
Windows and fresh air	96	72%	34	52%
Other*	3	2%	3	5%
Total**	133		65	

*Other - Coffee machine; place to put coats and bags (two comments); office type chair with folding tables for papers and note taking, a nice smell, air conditioning.

**Respondents could chose more than one feature – the sum of responses does not therefore equal the total number of respondents.

The majority of respondents preferred an informal set up in the Hearing Room (i.e. small table, soft and comfortable chairs, and you can choose where you want to sit) – 64% of professionals and 94% young people, parents and carers said this. About a quarter of professionals (23%) and only 2% of young people, parents and carers would prefer a more formal set up (i.e. large table with chairs surrounding it). 12% of professionals and 5% young people, parents and carers didn't know.

Professionals' views of the Pilot Hearing Room

98% of professionals (n=129) had been to a Hearing before. Most (69%) said that the Pilot Room was much better than Hearing Rooms they'd been in before; 13% said it was the same; 8% said that it was worse, and 9% replied that they didn't know.

The majority of professionals (83%, n=84) preferred the Pilot Hearing Room, and 17% (n=17) preferred a 'standard' Hearing room.

*Considering the pilot room from a **child or young person's perspective**, how do you think it would make them feel about being at their Hearing?*

The majority of professionals (87%, n=116) answered that the Pilot Room would make the child or young person more relaxed and able to participate in their Hearing; 8% (n=11)

said that it wouldn't make a difference; one person said it would make them less relaxed; and 4% didn't know.

*From **your perspective [as a professional]** how did the Pilot Room make you feel during the Hearing?*

There was a wider spread of responses to this question. Almost half (48%, n=63) said it made them feel more relaxed; 37% (n=49) found it made no difference; 12% (n=16) felt less relaxed and 3% didn't know.

What do you think the effect of the new look room had on how today's Hearing was conducted?

About a half of professionals (54%, n=71) said that it made the Hearing better; 35% (n=46) said it didn't make any difference; 5% (n=7) said it made it worse; and 6% didn't know.

Comments

Eighty six professionals made comments. The most common are described below.

- There were 21 comments about practical difficulties in not having a table or somewhere to put papers and/or take notes.
- Nineteen comments were on how the Pilot Room was a better environment for children and young people / child-friendly.
- Eleven respondents had concerns about their own and others safety in the new look Hearing room.
- Similarly, there were 11 comments about how the Pilot Room would not be suitable for some types of Hearings such as those that are contentious or where individuals may be likely to become aggressive.
- Eight respondents commented on how the toys in the room were noisy and a distraction to proceedings.

Children's Panel Members

The biggest category of respondents in the survey was Panel Members – with 64 taking part (i.e. 48% of respondents) (Table 1). Panel Members are responsible for managing the Hearing and making decisions on the child or young person. Their views on the Pilot Hearing Room are therefore of particular interest.

Compared with professionals as a whole, Panel Members' views on the Pilot Room were more mixed and slightly less positive:

- 74% (n=35) preferred the Pilot Hearing Room, and 26% (n=12) preferred a 'standard' Hearing room.
- In comparison with Hearing Rooms they'd been in before – 52% (n=31) said the Pilot Room was much better; 20% (n=12) said it was the same; 12% (n=7) said it was worse; and 17% (n=10) didn't know.
- 80% (n=51) said it would make a child or young person more relaxed in their Hearing. In comparison, 35% of Panel Members (n=23) said it made them feel more relaxed; 41% (n=26) said it made no difference; and 19% (n=12) felt less relaxed.
- Less than half (43%, n=27) found that the Pilot Room made the Hearing better; 41% (n=26) said it didn't make any difference; 8% (n=5) said it made it worse; and 8% (n=5) didn't know.

Young people's, parents' and carers' views of the Pilot Hearing Room

Of the 65 young people, parents and carers who responded, 95% (n=62) had been to a Hearing before. Almost all (97%, n=61) said that the Pilot Room was much better than Hearings Rooms they'd been in before; one said that it was the same and another that it was worse.

One person said they preferred a standard room – 98% (n=55) of young people, parents and carers preferred the Pilot Hearing Room.

Almost all (94%, n=61) said that the Pilot Room had made them feel more relaxed and able to participate in the Hearing; there were three respondents who felt less relaxed and one who said it made no difference.

What do you think the effect of the new look room had on today's Hearing?

80% (n=51) said that it made the Hearing better; 9% (n=6) found it made no difference; one person said it was worse; and 9% (n=6) didn't know.

Comments

Twenty eight respondents made comments. These were largely positive with most being about how the Pilot Hearings Room was an improvement, created an more relaxing atmosphere and was child friendly (18 respondents). There were six comments related to practical difficulties such as no place to put papers and/or belongings or that the room is not suitable for a large number of people.

Children and young people

As the Pilot Hearing Room was created to help make children and young people feel more comfortable and enable their participation in Hearings, it is important to specifically consider their views.

Sixteen children and young people took part in the survey, 15 had been to a Hearing before. All 15 said that the new look Hearing Room was much better than Hearing Rooms they'd been in before.

All 16 young people (100%) said they preferred an informal set up in the Hearing Room (i.e. small table, soft and comfortable chairs, you can chose where you want to sit).

Again all 16 (100%) said they felt that the new look Hearing Room helped them feel more relaxed and able to participate in their Hearing. Almost all (87%, n=13) said that the effect it had on the Hearing was to make it better, and 13% (n=2) didn't know.

Seven young people provided comments, four of these were about how the new look room had helped them feel relaxed, and one young person asked for toys and drawing materials suitable for older children.

3. Conclusions

The overall response to the Pilot Hearing Room was positive. The majority of those who took part in the survey preferred the Pilot Hearing Room to a 'standard' Hearing Room:

- 83% of professionals
- 74% of Panel Members
- 98% of young people, parents and carers
- 100% of young people.

There were some differences between attendees at Hearings in the Pilot Room and it is important to take these into account in any consideration of roll-out. The majority (80%) of young people, parents and carers said that the 'new look' room made the Hearing better. However, 54% of professionals felt it made the Hearing better and within this group 43% of Panel Members held this view. The comments made by respondents offer some insight into these differences. Some professionals raised practical difficulties, and concerns about safety and the appropriateness of the room for some types of Hearings. Young people, parents and carers tended to comment on how the room had helped create a more child friendly atmosphere and made them feel more relaxed.

***'It was a really nice looking room and made me feel relaxed.'* (young person)**

The most important person in a Hearing is the child or young person. The Hearing Room should therefore be suited to their needs. At the same time it must provide appropriate facilities for the effective conduct of proceedings at Children's Hearings.

This evaluation has found that for most Hearings the 'new look' room provides more conducive conditions.

Recommendations

- SCRA and Children’s Hearings Scotland to promote the results of this evaluation with SCRA staff and Children’s Panel Members and representatives to gain their support for an extended roll out.
- SCRA to identify funding opportunities for the roll out of the new look Hearing Room across Scotland.
- SCRA to identify, in consultation with Localities and the Property Team, opportunities to introduce the new look Hearing Room more widely and to put a plan in place for this roll out.
- Where a new look room is being considered, the SCRA Locality will consult with Hearings-experienced young people from that area. This will allow flexibility to local approaches in how the new look waiting and Hearing rooms are to be set up.

References

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Survey Questionnaires

Pilot Hearings room – survey of Hearings attendees (Panel Members, PPAs, Reporters and those working with child and family)

SCRA is carrying out a six month pilot of a new look Hearing room in Glasgow. This has been designed following feedback from young people.

We would like to get the views of those attending Children’s Hearings in the pilot room. On the basis of these responses, SCRA will consider whether to roll out the new look Hearings room across Scotland.

Please could you spare five minutes to complete this questionnaire after attending the Hearing today, and hand into Reception before you leave.

The survey is anonymous, and completed questionnaires will be kept in confidence and destroyed when analysis is complete. The results will be reported on SCRA’s web site, www.scra.gov.uk, later this year.

Your consent

I understand what this survey is about and I am happy to take part – Yes/No

Today’s date:

1. Your role at today’s Hearing (please tick one):

- Panel Member
- Panel Practice Advisor
- Children’s Reporter
- Social Worker
- Safeguarder
- Legal Representative/Solicitor
- Advocate/Children’s Rights Worker
- Teacher
- Health Visitor
- Care worker/key worker
- Other (please describe)

2. Have you been to a Children’s Hearing before? Yes/No (if no – go to Q4)

3. If yes, how does the pilot room compare with those you’ve been in before (please tick one):

- Much better
- The same
- Worse
- Don't know

4. Please tick the features that are important to you in a Hearings room (please tick all that apply)

- Private
- Feels safe
- Easily accessible entrance and exit
- Child and young person friendly
- Comfortable furnishings
- Clean and bright
- Toys, books/magazines
- A table to put papers, laptop, etc.
- Windows and fresh air
- Other: (please describe)

5. What type of set up of the Hearing room do you prefer? (please tick one)

- Informal set up (e.g. small table, soft and comfortable chairs, you can chose where you want to sit)
- Formal set up (e.g. large table, chairs surrounding)
- Don't know

6. Considering the pilot room from a child and young person's perspective, how do you think it would make them feel about being at their Hearing (please tick one):

- More relaxed and able to participate in their Hearing
- No difference
- Less relaxed
- Don't know

7. From your perspective, how did the pilot room make you feel during the Hearing (please tick one):

- More relaxed
- No difference
- Less relaxed
- Don't know

8. What do you think the effect of the new look room had on how today's Hearing was conducted (please tick one):

- Made it better
- Made it worse
- Didn't make any difference
- Don't know

9. Please compare the photographs below – one of the original Hearing room, and the other the pilot room – which do you prefer? (please circle preferred option)

Standard room

Pilot room

10. Do you have any comments and/or suggestions for improvements

Thank you for taking part in this survey

Please remember to hand your completed questionnaire into Reception

Pilot Hearings room – survey of Hearings attendees (young people and parents/carers)

SCRA is carrying out a six month pilot of a new look Hearings room in Glasgow. This has been designed following feedback from young people.

We would like to get the views of those attending Children’s Hearings in the pilot room. On the basis of these responses, SCRA will consider whether to roll out the new look Hearings room across Scotland.

Please could you spare five minutes to speak to me after attending the Hearing today to answer some questions on the new look Hearings room. Or if you prefer, please fill in the questionnaire and hand back to me or reception.

The survey is anonymous, and completed questionnaires will be kept in confidence and destroyed when analysis is complete. The results will be reported on SCRA’s web site, www.scra.gov.uk , later this year.

Your consent

I understand what this survey is about and I am happy to take part – Yes/No

Today’s date:

1. I am (please tick one):

- Young person (12 to 17 years old)
- Parent
- Carer

2. Have you been to a Children’s Hearing before? Yes/No (if no – go to Q4)

3. If yes, how does the new look room compare with those you’ve been in before (please tick one):

- Much better
- The same
- Worse
- Don’t know

4. Please tick what are important to you in a Hearings room (please tick all that apply):

- Private
- Feels safe
- Easily accessible entrance and exit
- Child and young person friendly
- Comfortable furnishings
- Clean and bright
- Toys, books/magazines

- A table where I can put papers, laptop, etc.
- Windows and fresh air
- Other: (please describe)

5. What type of set up of the Hearing room do you prefer?

- An informal set up (e.g. small table, soft and comfortable chairs, you can chose where you want to sit)
- Formal set up (e.g. large table, chairs surrounding)
- Don't know

6. Do you think the new look room helped you feel (please tick one):

- More relaxed/ more able to participate in your Hearing
- No difference
- Less relaxed
- Don't know

7. What do you think the effect of the new look room had on today's Hearing (please tick one):

- Made it better
- Made it worse
- Didn't make any difference
- Don't know

8. Please compare the photographs below – one of the original Hearing room, and the other the pilot room – which do you prefer? (please circle preferred option)

Standard room

Pilot room

9. Do you have any comments and/or suggestions for improvements

Thank you for taking part in this survey

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