

Face to Face Hearings – SCRA' s response to the consultation with Children and Young People

Since the start of lockdown, all Children's Hearings have been held **virtually** – as an online meeting.



From the feedback that we got, we know that these Hearings have **worked well** for some people and **not so well** for others.

As lockdown restrictions ease, we are now able to get back to having **face to face Hearings** – with safety measures in place like social distancing much more cleaning.

We will still be having virtual Hearings as there are still lots of people who can't come into our Hearings centres (or don't want to) and many of our staff and our Hearings system partners are still working from home.

This very new for all of us – virtual Hearings, online papers, and now face to face Hearings with social distancing – and we have to work out how to do them all in the best way.

To help us with our planning for the return to face to face Hearings, we have been asking Children and Young People with experience of Children's Hearings to share their views with us - to make sure that we are considering their **thoughts, ideas, worries and questions**. As Corporate Parents, it is very important to us that we work with Children and Young People to ask, listen and to try to accommodate what they tell us will help.

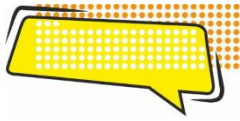
To all of the Young People that have given us views – Our Hearings, Our Voice, The Fostering Network, Aberdeenshire's Young People's Campaigning Group.. and many others **THANK YOU** – for your honesty, openness and enormous creativity.

What you have told us is hugely important and is a really important part of our work in planning how we get things ready to return to face to face Hearings – and letting us know that for some of you, that is not what you would want.

We have pulled out some of your comments/suggestions/questions and have described what we have done – or what we are going to do... or just hopefully given you information to answer your questions or your concern...

As always, we are keen to listen – so if you want to talk to us about any other thoughts, or with any questions, please just get in touch lisa.bennett@scra.gov.uk – Lead for Corporate Parenting

Face to Face Hearings... Yes or No?



You told us that, for some of you, it would feel okay to be getting back to face to face Hearings with social distancing and that you would feel better able to participate.

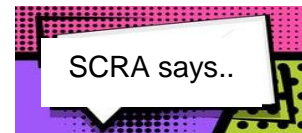
For others (about half) you would feel too uncomfortable with face to face because of social distancing, masks, anxiety about the virus, being unsure of what to do and where to go, or it just feeling strange.

Some of you have told us that you prefer to stay with virtual Hearings.



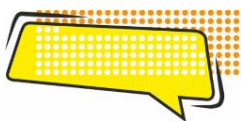
“ We could have a choice, face to face or virtual meetings.”

You have the right to attend your Hearings and the right to participate, to have your views heard and taken into account. Being able to choose what would make you most comfortable, and where you think that you could participate most easily is **really important**.



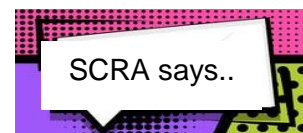
We and our partners will be talking to you about what is best for your Hearing and then doing our best to make that happen – face to face or virtual

Social Distancing – how will it work?



You have told us that with social distancing measures in place, it will feel a bit strange and can be confusing knowing what to do or where to go. You are also concerned that people can't follow these rules.

All of our Hearings Centres are set up with 2 metre social distancing in place. We know that it can feel very odd and can be confusing, especially for younger children.



We have now designed and put up lots of really clear, child-friendly signs in our centres and there will be people there to help by showing you where to go.

Some examples of our signs:



Please stay 2 metres apart
That's three really big steps!



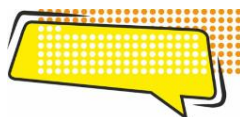
Please wash your hands



“Make children/young people and families aware of the changes. Maybe a leaflet or a film that actually walks you through what it’s going to be like. Explaining this isn’t forever and we will get back to normal once the risk passes.”

We think this is a fantastic idea, we have made up leaflets that will be sent out to families explaining how it will all work and we are going to look at the possibility of a video – we will keep you updated on that one.

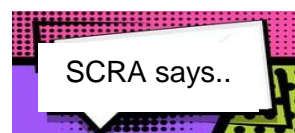
Social Distancing – people and space



You told us that, for some of you, social distancing will feel better – it will mean less people in the room and it will mean people aren’t so close – and this will cause less anxiety.

“I’d definitely feel okay. It’s better with social distancing as I can get shy when people come too close to me, especially when I go up in the lift with other people... I get really uncomfortable. I think the social distancing will make some children and young people a bit less anxious.”

We are looking at all of our centres and are working out where Hearings can be held with social distancing in place – not all Hearings will be held in the usual room if it is too small.



In some of our centres we have cleared staff areas to use so that we can have full Hearings with everyone sitting 2 metres apart. In some centres where the rooms are all small we are looking at using two rooms and linking between them so there would be less people in the room that you are in.

We know that for some of you, having fewer people in the room would be better – with others linking in digitally. We agree that you should be with the people that you most need around you.

Some of you don't like the idea of a mix of 'real people' and people on screen.. and because you are all different, and feel differently about these, we want to be able to give you options.

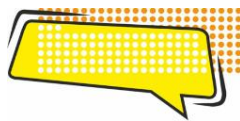
We are exploring what those options are right now with all of this in mind



“Reduce hard surfaces in Hearing Rooms by taking away any of the big tables (that are left) as it stops people touching things and risks the spread of the virus, it also creates more space for social distancing.”

That is a great idea, we will work with our property team and get this done. You are right – it will create more space and there will be fewer surfaces.

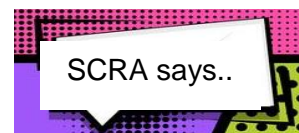
Social Distancing – support and privacy



You have concerns that you won't feel supported or be able to have private conversations with your trusted adults/advocacy workers. You are also unsure how you could speak to the panel on your own if people are linked in digitally.

“It can be an intimidating space and environment already and now having to have your Advocacy Worker/support person sit far away from you – you don't have the same opportunity to have a private conversation like you used to”

These are really important questions and concerns that we need to get right – thank you for raising them.

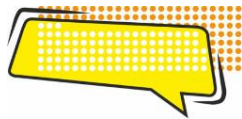


Feeling supported and having space to speak with your trusted adult or advocacy worker before or after your Hearings is really important. We will make sure that there is a private space available for you to use.

If you want to talk to the Panel Members on their own, we will be able to move people back to the waiting rooms – as there will be no other Hearings waiting

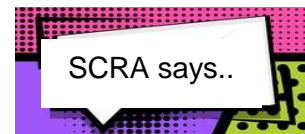
to go in, and for those joining virtually, we can cut the sound and video so that they can't hear or see the room – these are very good points to make.

Virus Transmission – what are we doing about it?



You have told us that the transmission of the COVID-19 virus is a concern for you when you think about coming to a face to face Hearing and that personal hygiene and cleaning is one of your **'top worries'**

We really appreciate you telling us that this is a concern for you - we want people coming into our Hearings Centres to be confident that we are doing everything that we can to prevent the spread of the virus. So we will work hard to let you know and see what we are doing.



Our centres have all been cleaned and are following strict advice from experts about how we are working and setting up our Hearings rooms and public areas.

Please follow the arrows



We are following a 2 metre social distance throughout the Hearings centre. There will be very clear signs about this and about handwashing, hand sanitiser, what arrows to follow and to take a mask – if you want one.

We don't suggest that anyone in shielding categories, or living with anyone in this group come into the centres and if anyone has COVID-19 symptoms they are being asked to stay away.

We are only having one Hearing in each session so that there is only one group of people in the space and after each Hearing, the room, the waiting rooms, toilets and all touch points will be cleaned.

We have worked really hard to make our Hearings rooms feel as comfortable as possible over the past few years (and still have lots to do!) but for now, for your safety we have had to remove all of the cushions, bean bags, toys and books as these are things that can't be cleaned after each Hearing.

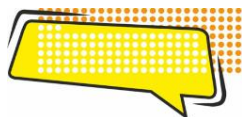


“If we can’t have toys and things in the waiting rooms any more then have things that won’t spread the virus (like colouring in/origami/playdoh etc) that children and young people can take away with them”

YES!! This is a great idea, some of our localities are making up takeaway packs – playdoh, crayons, colouring books etc – in sterile, sealed bags – THANK YOU!

We are also developing some takeaway mini sensory kits for children and young people that would normally benefit from using the Hearing room kits

Protective Masks

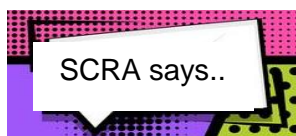


You have told us that seeing people wearing masks can be scary – even if it doesn’t bother you, you know that it would be scary for your wee brothers and sisters, or your carer.

A hugely important point - “Protective masks could be scary. They hide people’s facial expressions which is an important part of being able to read what a person is thinking.”



Some of you have been getting used to them and are seeing them as fashion accessories or as a way to express yourself.



In all of our Hearings Centres we have 2 metre social distancing in place. That means that people don’t need to wear masks – although some people might prefer to.

We don’t want people to feel more anxious about coming in because people might wear masks and so this is about options again – and we would want to make sure you are comfortable, and if not, look at what we can do to make you more comfortable – and this might mean doing a Hearing virtually.



“Have them available for free for everybody, so like when you come in you can pick one up and wear it.”

WE WILL!! We will have masks available for you to take when you come in – only if you want to though.

Please take one of our masks

(only if you want to!)



SCOTLAND
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ORGANISATION

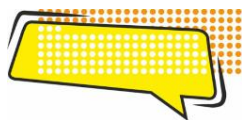


“ Make something more positive out of the masks. So get Panel Members and Reporters etc. to show a bit of their personality on them where they might draw on them, and then introduce their masks to the children/young people e.g. “on my mask you can see It’s the little things that can make a real difference.”

We are hoping that there won’t be very many people in masks when you come to a hearing BUT if there are, we will encourage them to jazz it up a bit to let you see a bit more about who they are.

We are also looking into getting clear plastic visors so that if anyone is wearing one, you will still see their face and their expressions.

Travel versus Virtual Hearings



Some of you have told us that you would prefer to continue to have virtual Hearings as it would feel safer not to travel. For some of you that have to travel long distances, you would prefer to continue to attend your Hearings virtually.

“Not a lot of people have cars and public transport isn’t a good idea, especially for anyone that’s shielding. My carer wouldn’t come as they’re shielding, and then I wouldn’t want to come without them.”

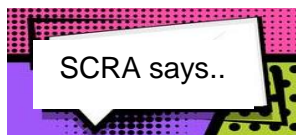
“What about travel? Let’s keep face to face Hearings virtual.”

Some of you would still prefer to be in a face to face Hearing as you feel it is easier to participate and get a sense of what others are feeling.

“I find it easier to speak my mind in person, and that might be the same for some other people. But it might be easier for other children or young people to speak their mind if they are on a screen.”

Virtual or face to face, you want us to know that :

“Children, young people and families need more support before, during and after their Hearing - especially when it’s a virtual Hearing.”



We understand your concerns about travel – and especially long journeys. Continuing to have your Hearings virtually will still be an option for you.

We have had loads of feedback about virtual Hearings – good and bad, and we have lots to work on to make them run bit better and a bit smoother.

Good information and good support is so important to feeling prepared, able to participate and then talking it through afterwards.

We will continue to provide data to people that need it to attend virtually and will work with partners to ensure that everyone who would like to connect digitally, can connect.

More... much more!

You have all shared and told us so much, much more than I can cover in here. We have read, listened and understood everything that you have told us and we are taking it ALL into account in our planning – for our return to face to face Hearings, for the way that we develop virtual Hearings and much more. We will keep you updated with our progress.

