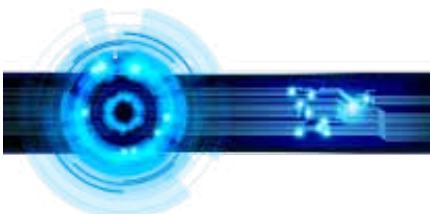


# Digital Strategy

## For the Children's Hearings System



Enabling better informed decisions about children and young people

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Public service reform is driving change within the Children's Hearings System with the traditional ways of doing things evolving into digital technologies and consideration is being given to how new ways of working might be developed with the increasing availability and development of digital technologies. Increasingly there is an expectation that alternatives to traditional delivery methods will be available through online access and that management information will be shared. Children, young people and their families can access information 24/7 through not only computers and laptops, but now through mobile phones, game consoles and televisions. The Children's Hearings Systems needs to embrace digital technology by transforming how we think, how we engage and how we interact with service users and partners.

Digital technology can be used to collaborate and share services and information securely that improve outcomes for children and young people in Scotland, improve performance, improve productivity and create efficiencies. Partnership working is key to ensuring that the right information is delivered to the right people at the right time to reduce the amount of time children, young people and families spend being processed by the system.

The Children's Hearings System has approximately 3,000 volunteers who are critical to ensuring that children and young people in Scotland are provided with help and support. The number of cases reaching these volunteers is anticipated to increase in future years with cases becoming increasingly complex. Expectations placed on volunteers and the Children's Hearings System as a whole are rising with regards the use of digital technologies within Children's Hearings.

The Children's Hearings System Digital Strategy focuses on children and young people and getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). All agencies in touch with children and young people must play their part in making sure that young people are healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included and, above all, safe. Continuous improvement, making quality decisions that are proportionate and ensuring that all staff, partners and volunteers are valued, supported and trained are key elements to success.

The digital strategy focuses on how key projects will improve the service to children, young people and families and increase participation through the use of digital technology. The time taken to journey through the Children's Hearings System will be reduced and better outcomes will be achieved by improving the information flow through the system. Access to online training will lead to better decision making. Improvements will be made to information governance to bring better efficiency through digital Hearings and to reduce risk by strengthening information security.


The Children’s Hearings Digital Strategy has been created to align with the **Justice Digital Strategy in Scotland** which in turn supports the **Scottish Government Public Service Reform**. The Children’s Hearings System Digital Strategy will support **Scotland’s Digital Future** and will work together with partners across other sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people in Scotland.

Public bodies in Scotland are collaborating to ensure that services are joined up to meet the needs of service users in Scotland. Both Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS) and the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) are committed to collaborating with each other to improve the children’s hearings system. The Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership multi-agency group (CHIP) is committed to delivering better outcomes for children across the Children’s Hearings System and will provide a channel to engage partners to adopt a digital first approach.

The Justice Digital Strategy in Scotland will use digital technology where possible to broaden access to justice, improve quality of service and safeguard the rights of citizens and user. SCRA has a role to play in delivering the outcomes of the programme which is underpinned by national policy and national solutions. Justice projects will directly support the Children’s Hearings System and as connected systems develop provide the capability to share more information; provide online help and support to stakeholders and better inform decision making.

CHS and SCRA will ensure that corporate plans are aligned with not only each other, but also with partners in order to achieve better outcomes and identify opportunities to develop new solutions that will allow us to transform the Children Hearings System.





Changes within the broader technological world have created an expectation that digital technologies will be available within the Children’s Hearings System. Users have an expectation that they will be able to access information online, that online user support will be provided and that queries will be responded to within a matter of minutes.

Personalisation of the online experience is driving organisations to better understand their website users with data analytics considered to be of more value than ever before. There is an increased awareness that alternative information delivery mechanisms should be available with traditional communication channels seen as slow and inhibiting.

Technology has become an integral part of everyday life with access to services available through a multitude of different devices, applications and platforms.

Children and young people do not see barriers to using technology and can spend hours using technology to not only speak to one another, but to share ideas and experiences. Tablet devices, mobile phones, laptops and PCs are increasingly used to replace traditional methods of communication with email, video call and instant messaging all available on the move.

Overall perceptions of the Children’s Hearings System from children, young people and partners are that modernisation is required. There is also a general appetite for change from partners who are able to identify how technology could benefit the Children’s Hearings System.



## SCOPE

In defining the scope of our digital strategy it is important to recognise that the focus will be on user and business need, as opposed to technology. The Scottish Government Digital Strategy highlights that services need to be re-designed to meet user needs and the Children’s Hearings Digital Strategy places the child at the centre of everything we do. We will provide a much better user experience for children and young people through the use of digital engagement.

The way that the Children’s Hearings System works, the operational processes and procedures that are followed, will be re-designed to be leaner and more efficient.

Our Children's Hearings Digital Strategy is about transforming the service by gathering intelligence from our users, partners and data to ensure that business benefits are achieved. Digital technology will support these changes but it is not about doing it digitally because we can. It is about being informed as to how we can use technology to support the process to achieve our strategic aims.

The Children's Hearings System Digital Strategy has been developed by consulting with children, young people and partners, along with the staff and volunteers who support the system. Everything that is contained within the strategy came from the initial consultation exercise.

In delivering the digital strategy we will need to ensure that the people who are the key stakeholders in the Children's Hearings System – the volunteers, staff, partners and the public – continue to be consulted.

An understanding of how children, young people and families journey across the Hearings System will be developed with life events mapped into the service redesign to ensure that content is developed as a joined up journey. Services will be driven by the needs of service users.

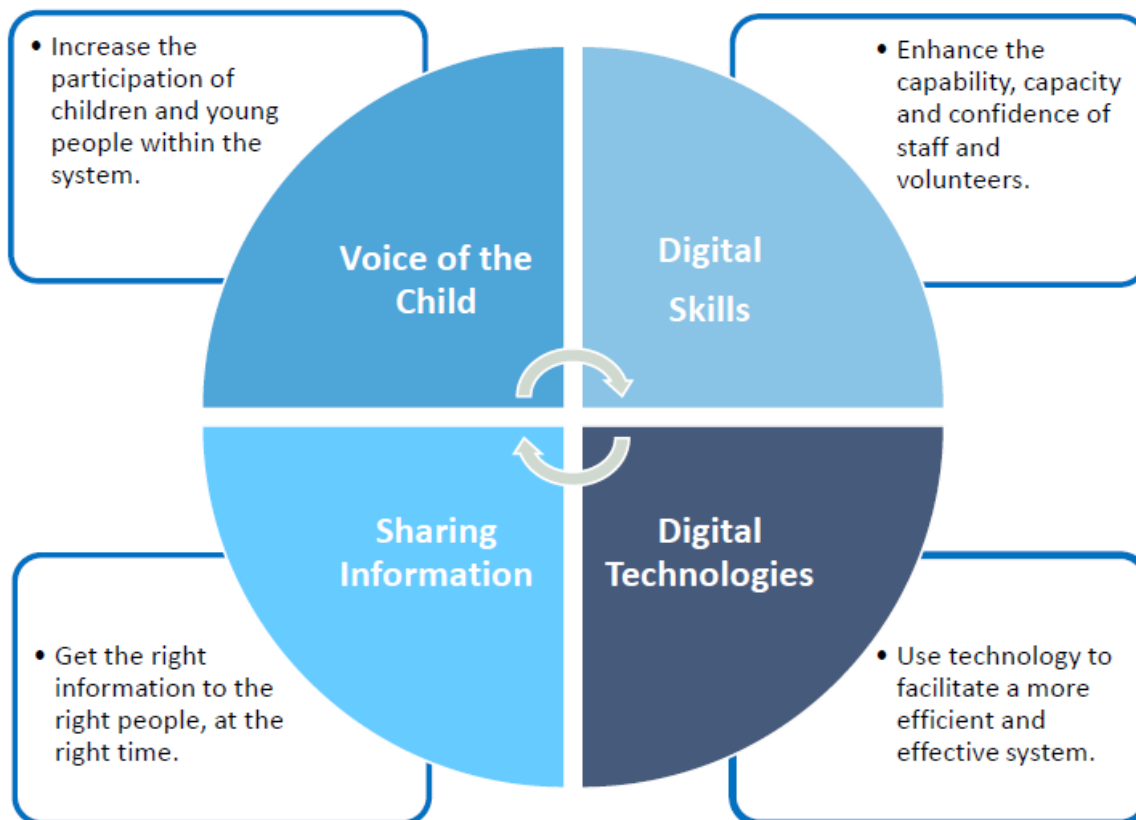
Service interaction will be built from knowledge gained as part of pilot exercises which will be evaluated based on consultation with users on their views and experiences of their participation through digital means. The results of such consultation will drive the direction of the strategy to ensure priorities are focused on the needs of children and young people.

The various organisation's business strategies focus on the outcomes they will deliver. The Children's Hearings System Digital Strategy will focus on how key projects will improve the service to children, young people and families, reduce costs, improve information governance, improve security and improve the timescales taken to journey through the system – all leading to better outcomes for children and young people.



The **vision** is to create a child centred hearing system, staffed with digitally capable volunteers and employees, who confidently utilise digital technologies to improve outcomes for children and young people in Scotland.

The Children's Hearings Digital Strategy has 4 core objectives and priorities:



**Voice of the Child** – Children and young people will have choices about how they engage with the hearing process and digital technology will provide them with various channels to communicate their views. Ensuring that the voice of the child is heard within the system is of vital importance. Extending the use of technology within the Children's Hearings System will not only meet the expectations of children and young people but will also engage them with the tools that they increasingly use as part of everyday life.

Providing children and young people with electronic tools that gathers their views can help to increase their participation within the hearing system. Traditional thinking says that participation can only be achieved through face to face interaction however research is beginning to emerge (BPS, 2015) that it may be less traumatic for some children and young people to engage with the process through electronic methods.

The Hearing setting can be very intimidating for children and young people and if we can gather their views through less traditional channels this would assist with having their opinions heard. Decisions taken affect their lives and it is vital that their views are represented in the decision making process.

**Digital Skills** – Digital technology has been identified as an enabler to improve the Children’s Hearings System by increasing participation, reducing risk and improving efficiency. Staff and volunteers within the Hearings System will be digitally enabled and confident that they can use technology as a support within their role. Traditional methods will still be there for those that need it and we shouldn’t be proposing to remove those.

Everyone within the system will need to be supported in order to achieve the expected benefits technology can bring and the Scottish Government Digital Inclusion Project has been developed to assist with providing access to digital. Touch down spots in buildings with free Wi-Fi access, free digital skills workshops and free online development packages will ensure that there is comfort with the technologies in use. No one should be excluded through a lack of access to the internet or digital skills.

**Digital Technologies** – The digital technology in use within the Hearing will be focused on the needs of children, young people, families, Panel Members, Reporters and partners. The technology within the business will be able to adapt easily to suit changing requirements. Technology will be used to improve the efficiency of communication with partners and improve the service for children, young people and families.

Digital technologies are part of everyday life and we need to ensure that when we re-design processes we consider the use of technology. Technology is an enabler not a driver. We need to design the process and get the technology to meet it rather than the other way about. It is not about using technology because we can but using it because it makes life easier.

Technology will bring efficiencies to the system and savings will be made in terms of time and cost however the real benefit will be found in the improvement to the service we provide to children and young people.

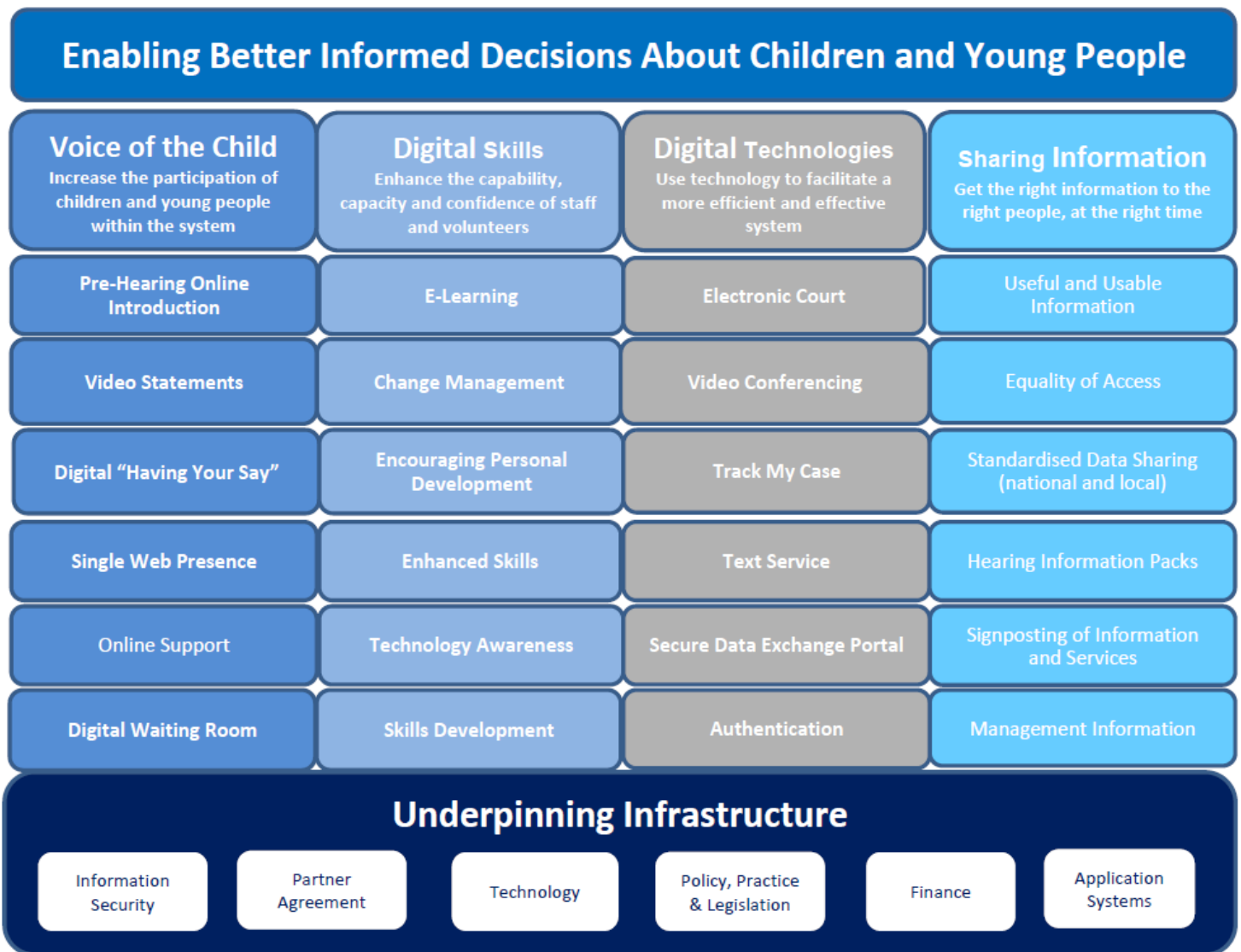
**Sharing Information** – Information is at the heart of all decision making within the Hearings System and by improving the quality and appropriateness of the information within the system we can improve the quality of decisions that are made. Getting the right information into the system that goes to the right people at the right time will lead to better decision making.



Having the most up to date information will bring also benefits in terms of time. It is likely that cases will progress at a faster pace as improved communication will reduce the time taken to make informed and appropriate decisions.

Reducing anxiety, reducing stigma, improving the time to journey through the system and improving the decision making process will improve the service for every child and young person who enters the Children’s Hearings System.

The following diagram summarises some of the ideas and thinking on the Children’s Hearings Digital Strategy.



# 1

## VOICE OF THE CHILD

### INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITHIN THE SYSTEM

Children and young people use technology as part of everyday life and many education establishments provide technology within the classroom with homework allocated to be conducted online.

There is a growing expectation that technology will be used within the Children's Hearings System.

Children and young people are at the centre of the Children's Hearings System and we will ensure that the use of digital technologies will support the increased participation of children and young people within the Hearings System.

OFCOM data shows that 70% of children (5-15) have access to a tablet at home with 34% of children (5-15) owning their own tablet.

We need to ensure that the voice of the child is encouraged and heard at all stages throughout the system, both from the perspective of better informing the decisions about a child and from learning from their experience within the system to allow us to improve how we do things.

In the financial year 2013/14 there were 19,077 children referred to the Children's Hearings System. There were 38,200 hearings, 6,801 pre-hearing panels and at the end of 2014 there were 11,420 children on Compulsory Supervision Orders.

Interviews involving children and young people who have experienced traumatic events are videoed within Scotland in an informal setting and produced at a later date as evidence in proceedings. The process is undertaken to a very high standard with the focus on minimising the trauma on the child.

Ensuring we maintain as informal an atmosphere as possible is vital to allow the voice of the child to be heard. Children can be very intimidated by Hearing settings and are not confident that they can express their opinion. The Panel Members can consist of people who they are likely to have never met before and the Hearing environment can feel very formal.

In order to encourage more participation of children and young people within the Children's Hearings System, the following solutions will be considered:

**Young People's Board** – The creation of a Young People's Board would provide children and young people with experience of the Hearings System the opportunity to have a decision making and scrutinising role in the continuous improvement and development of the Hearings System, using their direct experience, knowledge and perspective.

**Pre-Hearing Online Introduction** – A single, simplified online presence to represent the Children's Hearings System as a whole will enable greater clarity for children and young people about the process. Online facilities such as chat with a Reporter, get a virtual tour of the Hearings suite or view your Panel Member biography could be made available.

**Video Statements** – It is possible that children will feel more able to participate within the Hearing if they can give information in the form of a video statement prior to the hearing. This could include the recording of an "All About Me" type message.

**Video Conferencing** – Children could attend the Hearing through video technology for cases where travelling is likely to cause stress or anxiety. Traditional video conferencing units can be very intimidating for children and alternatives are available through software deployment to tablet devices that would mimic services provided by Facetime or Skype in a secure manner.

**Digital "All about Me"** – An online version of the "All about Me" form could be made available on a secure website. This would provide an alternative method of communicating with SCRA in a manner that many children are now familiar with.

**Digital Waiting Room** - Technology could be provided within the waiting rooms to relax children and young people before entering the Hearing. Attending a Hearing can be a stressful event and technology could be used to keep them informed of relevant information and provide a focus to keep them occupied.

Many of the children and young people may wish to access information online with their own devices and public Wi-Fi within the Hearing suite could be provided.

## 2

DIGITAL  
SKILLSENHANCE THE  
CAPABILITY,  
CAPACITY AND  
CONFIDENCE  
OF STAFF AND  
VOLUNTEERS

In order to gain the potential benefits that the digital technologies can deliver, we need to ensure that the people involved in the system can use the tools effectively.

Across the volunteers and staff that make up the Children's Hearings System, we must develop digital capability and confidence. We need to ensure that we provide the opportunities for development which will allow the achievement of a desired level of capability.

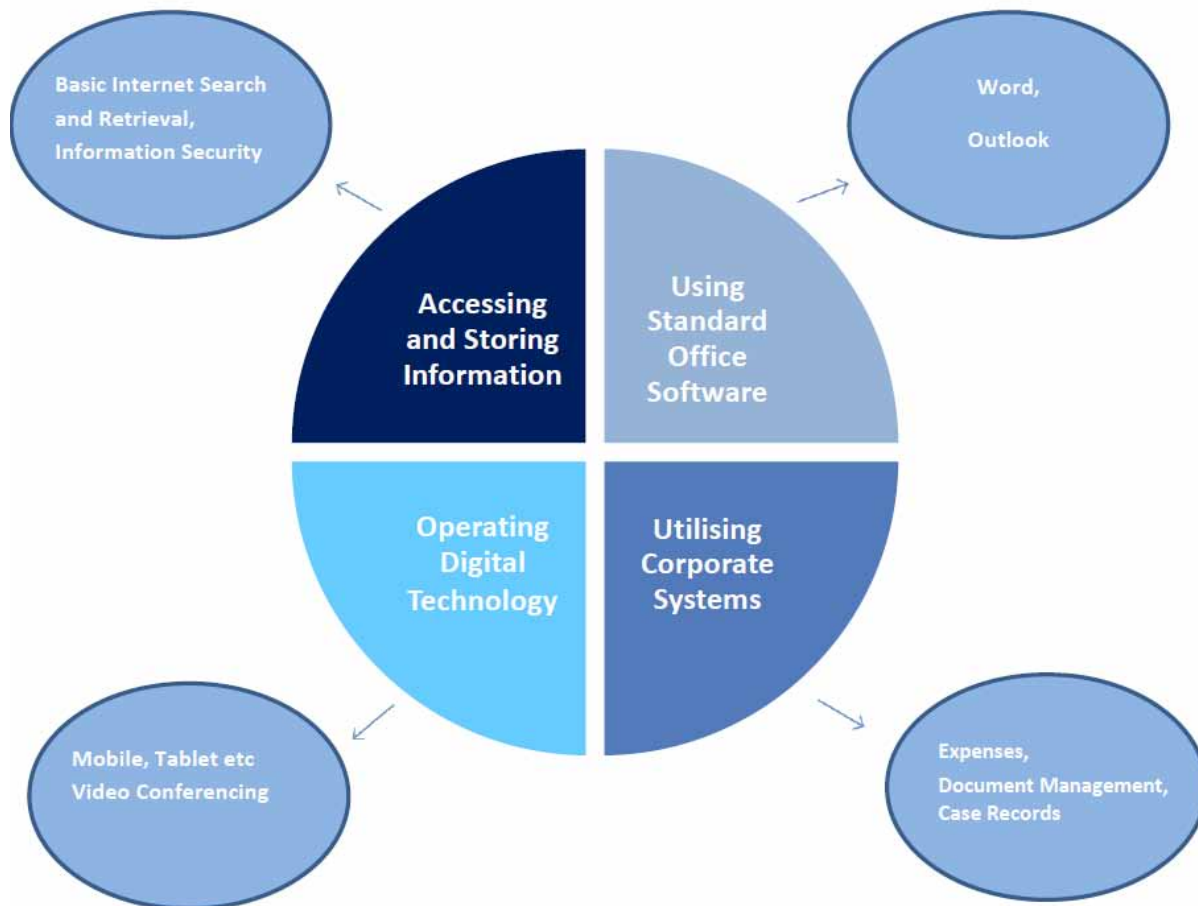
Scottish Government figures show that the percentage of adults using the internet for personal use in Scotland has increased from 63% in 2007 to 80% in 2013. The largest increases are in the older age groups.

The following solutions will be considered:

**E-Learning** – E-learning could be adopted as the preferred choice for learning, where it is deemed appropriate. Partners have indicated that they would welcome e-learning packages that provide information on specific areas of the Children's Hearings System for new and existing staff members. Knowledge of the Hearings System within the general public is low and e-learning packages could be provided via the website to raise awareness.

**Encouraging Personal Development** – In many cases the core skills to operate digital technologies effectively and efficiently are currently underdeveloped. There is a need to improve digital skills and improve the confidence of individuals in the use of digital technologies. The history of the use of digital technologies within the system has not always been a positive experience and there is an opportunity to provide digital learning packages that are focused on developing user needs and wants.

**Skills Development** – As a minimum, we need to establish a working baseline of digital skills. The following basic digital skills will need to be developed in all those that will be required to use technology within the Hearing System.



**Enhanced Skills** – It is anticipated that with the rapid changes in technology, that there will be a need to continuously improve the skill levels. There is a shortage of technologically skilled workers within the Public Sector and we could encourage the development of a technical group across partners who would share their digital skills. This would benefit the Children’s Hearings System by reducing the requirement to engage consultants for technological projects.

**Digital Champions** – The Scottish Government Digital Champions Development Programme has been created to inspire leaders about the transformational potential of digital tools and technology and to give them the confidence to take action to release that potential. The Children’s Hearings System would benefit greatly from involvement in this programme to drive the sector wide organisational change we are seeking to achieve. With the high level of collaboration planned from partners, strategic leaders need to ensure they are driving the digital agenda to improve the outcomes for children and young people.

## 3

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

## USE TECHNOLOGY TO FACILITATE A MORE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEM

Digital technologies provide the facility for people to work in more effective, efficient and agile manners. Technology has become part of everyday life and will be used to support the Hearings System.

Partners have access to technology to engage with the Hearings System and this could be extended to the following examples of use:

**Electronic Court** – In attending court, access to information is vital to all concerned. From the Children’s Reporter’s perspective, having fast, easy access to a number of sources of information is key to being able to provide an excellent service.

Having a mobile device with current case details available, along with access to practice and policy information would be extremely useful and would match the tools used by other partners.

The Global Stats Counter for 2014 shows that over a 12 month period the use of mobile devices to access the internet increased by 67%. The most popular means to access the internet is the desktop.

The BBC found that 69% of Primary and Secondary schools in the UK use tablet computers as a learning tool.

### Secure Electronic Transmission

Hearings papers are currently sent to Panel Members, children, young people and families in paper format. Sending Hearing information electronically to Panel Members would have significant benefits in terms of time.

There is currently a delay of several days for Panel Members to receive Hearing papers through the postal system. If sent electronically, Panel Members would have more time with the information to allow them to prepare for the Hearing. Furthermore, the secure electronic transmission of Hearing information packs would reduce the risk of unintentional data breaches.



**Secure Data Exchange Portal** – To improve the level of digital communication with partners, a secure portal could be created that would facilitate the secure uploading and retrieval of appropriate case information.

Information could be stored on the secure portal with access provided as appropriate on a view only basis. This would ensure the information asset owner retained control of their information and duplicate information was not stored in multiple locations.

**Authentication** – In order to share information securely and efficiently, it is essential to have robust and secure authentication mechanisms in place. We need to ensure that only the people, who should have access to information, do have access to the information.

The “**myaccount**” could be used as the authentication method.

**Video Conference** – Partners, particularly those within Education and Health, could attend the Children’s Hearing through the use of video conferencing technology. Teachers and health professionals who attend a hearing can find that this takes up a significant part of their day and cover has to be arranged for them.

Having the ability to attend the Hearing by video conference has been identified as an area of interest and has been represented by teachers.

**Track My Case** – The ability to retrieve information on children and young people’s cases could be made available online. This would allow children, young people and families to check on the progress of their case. This facility could also be extended to witnesses who are required to attend court to give evidence.

**Text Service** – Panel Members, should they choose to be part of the text service, could receive updates about Hearings as and when sent by SCRA. Text could also be used as another communication tool for business continuity purposes or online access validations.

## 4

SHARING  
INFORMATIONGET THE RIGHT  
INFORMATION  
TO THE RIGHT  
PEOPLE, AT THE  
RIGHT TIME

Throughout the Children's Hearings System decisions are made in the best interests of children and young people. In order to make the best possible decisions at the key decision points, we need to ensure that the best possible information is available to those involved in the decision process.

The information needs to be up to date, accurate, comprehensive and presented in the way in which it is most useful to the recipient of the information.

Historically we have experienced lengthy documents containing a great deal of information being presented to decision makers, expecting them to analyse the information thoroughly and make appropriate decisions upon this. This has proved to be challenging for all of those concerned and much effort has been put in to address the issues. Digital technology offers possible solutions.

In the financial year 2013/2014 there were 32,316 referrals made to the Children's Reporter. 24,178 referrals came from the Police, 6,389 came from Social Work and 1,316 from Education.

The following solutions will be considered:

**Useful and Usable Information** – In considering the handling of information using digital technologies, we can move forward in how we present information. No longer are we constrained by paper documents which are difficult to digest, retrieve and interpret information from. We have the opportunity to present information in a way that is most meaningful to the recipient, structuring the information in a way that allows them to locate information easily and quickly through hyperlinks, bookmarks, etc.

**Equality of Access** – It is important to ensure that the information we provide to those who have the right to receive it have equality of access and consistency of information. The content of any digital information provided should match information provided in paper format but we need to improve the way that people can access relevant appropriate information.



**Standardised Data Sharing** – Establishing national standards for the exchange of information within the Children’s Hearings System would assist greatly in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the partner organisations. In order to achieve this we need to work with partner organisations to move away from the writing of traditional documents, embrace the movement to the Child’s Plan through GIRFEC (scheduled to come into law in August 2016) and look at how we can share information more effectively across the system using standardised information formats.

In order to achieve the true benefits that digital technologies can bring to the Children’s Hearings System, we should move to system to system communication of significant events such as referral and hearing outcomes. Agreed data standards would allow systems to communicate with each other and auto populate appropriate fields that are currently completed manually.

**Hearing Information Packs** – In addition, by ensuring that we achieve better information the Hearing information packs will be more useful and usable for decision making. Panel Members will base their decisions on the most up to date developments available.

**Holistic View** – The Named Person role has created a need to be able to view information relating to the child or young person with the most up to date developments available. A central sharing point is required that all agencies can feed into that will allow the Named Person access to information including the child’s plan.

**Signposting of Information and Services** – The Children’s Hearings System must be presented online in a way that provides clear and simple advice and guidance to anyone interested in the system. This involves children and young people who may be looking for help, advice and advocacy services. It does not matter to them which organisation provides the information or service. Simply how do they get the information and help that they need to ensure their view is gathered and heard.

**Management Information** – Key to the continuous improvement of the system is the production of good quality management information shared appropriately across partners. Management information is bespoke to each organisation that interacts with the Hearings System however a holistic view of appropriate information where justified would provide a more realistic and accurate overview of the Hearings System and a child or young person’s life circumstances.

**Data Strategy** – SCRA is an official statistics provider and around 22 data reports are sent to partners on a monthly basis. There is a wealth of information within the Hearings system and research is undertaken within specific areas. Provision of non-sensitive information through open data is available through corporate websites. Information is not collated across partners to identify trends or patterns and this could be co-ordinated through a shared data strategy.

The following principles will drive the use of digital technologies within the Children's Hearings System:

### Child-Centred

The solutions applied within the Hearings System will focus primarily on the wants and needs of children and young people. Technologies will be used for improving participation in the system and encouraging the voice of the child to be heard. Solutions will bring people closer together and improve the level of meaningful interaction.

### User Focused

Digital technologies used within the Hearings System will be developed with the end users to ensure that they are fit for purpose. Technology will be an enabler not a driver and focus on user needs. Digital solutions will be simple, easy to use and intuitive enough that users succeed first time, unaided.

### Digital Inclusion

There will be a commitment to retain traditional means of communication and access to services. We will not seek to disadvantage anyone that does not have access to the internet.

### Multi-Channel Choice

Children, young people and families will have choice on how they interact and participate with the Hearings System in a consistently applied manner.

They will receive a consistent and high quality service regardless of their channel of communication, including face-to-face, phone, email, and on-line. The appropriate assisted digital support will be in place and we will provide choice so that we are not forcing digital.

### Digital by Default

The digital channel should be the first choice for accessing information within the Children's Hearings System. A sustainable multi-disciplinary team should be developed that focuses on service design, build and operating the service.

### Secure

The confidentiality, integrity and security of the information within the hearings system will be maintained at all times. Personal data collection will be appropriate with security levels and legal responsibilities met. Risks will be mitigated and information governance adhered to.

### ICT Alignment

The ICT and Digital technologies used will be aligned with the business vision, objectives, and strategies that will support the Children's Hearings business. Systems will be flexible to support business needs or changing requirements of the business or legislation. They will be readily able to be incorporated into the ICT Infrastructure with the minimum of disruption to users.

### Cost/Benefit

The ICT will be managed to ensure it is cost effective and provides value for money without transferring the cost to volunteers, children, young people and families.

### Selecting the Most Appropriate Technologies

The tools and systems used to build, host, operate and measure the service will be evaluated to ensure they are the most appropriate. Plans will be created for the phasing out of any existing alternative tools or systems, where appropriate.

### Building and Protecting a Digital Footprint

The systems will improve the value of information held within the Hearings System and enable the creation of a digital footprint for every child that enters the process. It is important to remember, when considering the use of digital technologies, that a review of all systems used should be undertaken at least every three years to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the organisation and deliver the best possible outcomes.

In order to achieve the vision set out in the Children’s Hearings System digital strategy, appropriate governance and change management frameworks must be adopted ensuring that a holistic approach is taken to managing the change.

**Governance and Management of the Digital Programme** – The digital change programme will be governed through a Children’s Hearings System Digital Strategy Board that has representation from Children’s Hearings Scotland, Scottish Government and Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration Senior Management Teams. Projects and initiatives identified will be formally submitted for review to the Digital Board and are subject to approval.

**Principles, policies and frameworks** – the proper direction and instruction from the governing body of the programme are essential to ensuring that it is implemented effectively across and within the stakeholder organisations. This includes both internal and external compliance with policies, legislation and best practice. The programme will operate in accordance with **Scotland’s Digital Future - High Level Operating Framework**.

**Management of Change** – In order to achieve the necessary change, it is essential that a thorough approach to change management is adopted across the staff and volunteer communities within the Children’s Hearings System. This needs to be a multi-pronged approach with key communication messages to reassure those who fear the change and enthuse those that support it.



**The following model of change should be considered:**

- Understanding the need for change within the changing environment.
- Creating a will to change and sharing the ambition for digital technologies to support the Children’s Hearings System.
- Improving people’s knowledge of the technologies and digital transformation.
- Ensure that people have the ability and confidence to use the technologies.
- Sustaining the change, building culture and competence around the change.

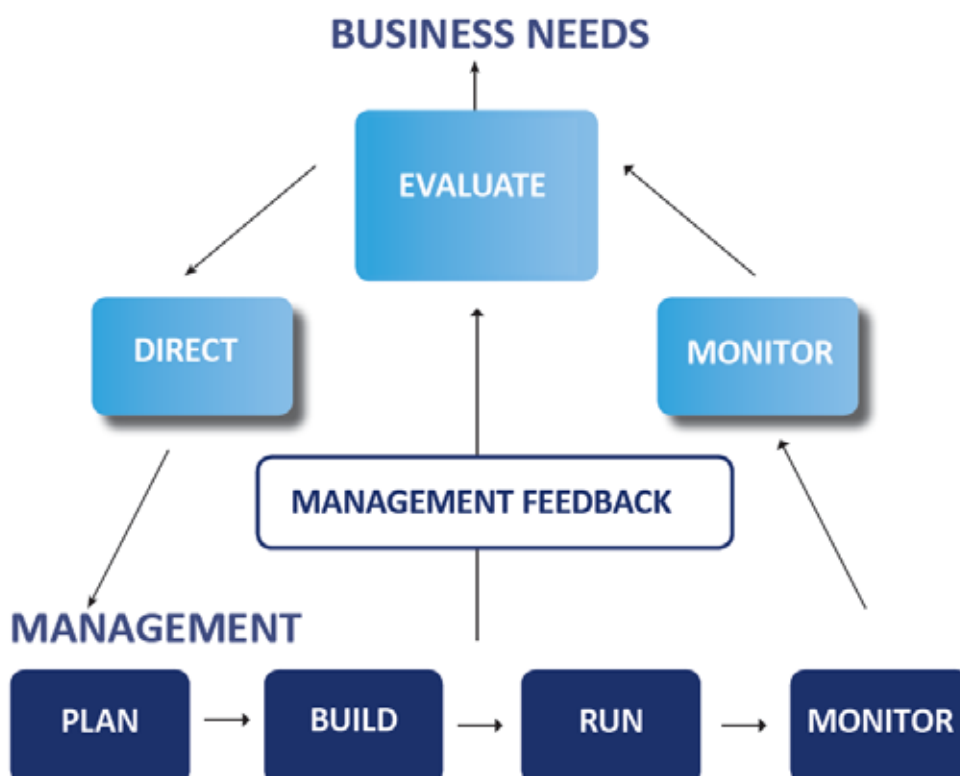


**Strategy Delivery** – Delivery of the strategy will be challenging however across the Children’s Hearings System there is strong support from all partners. Relationships have been forged that will bring expertise and knowledge from all stakeholders within the system.

Programme and project management arrangements will be followed to ensure that the right expertise is applied when delivering objectives. Projects identified in support of the strategy will be prioritised following feedback from stakeholders. Consultation will be undertaken with stakeholders and children and young people whilst representative groups will be formed with partners to ensure their views are central to all that we do.

The governance arrangements will create a Children’s Hearings System decision making and resource allocation body. A programme of work will be designed that identifies the ownership and accountability of each partner to ensure communication channels are open and dependencies clearly mapped.

The financing of the strategy delivery will create opportunities for jointly funded projects with benefits realisation managed and reported against key outcomes. Organisations will align their corporate plans to ensure a joint direction of travel and the communication plan, to ensure buy-in, will be focused on the Hearings System and not individual partners.





## MORE INFORMATION

More information about The Digital Strategy for the Children's Hearings System will be available shortly.

In the meantime if you have any questions, please contact:

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You can also visit Children's Hearings Scotland's website and the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration's website.

