

SCRA EQUALITIES STRATEGY AND OUTCOMES 2017-21

Ensuring positive futures for children and young people in Scotland



Introduction by the Chair

The Children's Hearings System is an important part of the wider system of youth justice, child protection and children's services. The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration's role within that system involves fulfilment of a wide range of legal duties to protect and support some of the most vulnerable children and young people in our society. These can be summarised as follows:

- To facilitate the work of Children's Reporters
- To deploy and manage staff to carry out that work
- To provide suitable accommodation for Children's Hearings

However, these legal duties only tell part of the story. As a Scottish Non-Departmental Public Body, and as an organisation whose decision making impacts significantly on children, young people and families, we have wider responsibilities in terms of children's rights, corporate parenting and equalities. It is important that these not be seen as discrete and separate areas of work. They reflect different aspects of people's lives and so they interact and overlap in a way that mirrors that complexity. They also need to be seen as an intrinsic part of our day to day business. Our challenge is to bring them together in a way that promotes good practice and which makes sense to our staff and to the children, young people and families we work with.

The new set of Equalities Outcomes set out in the following pages lays out the expectations we place on ourselves and the actions that children, young people and families have a right to demand of us. They are framed in a way that seeks to make the links with our other responsibilities and with our overall approach to delivering our services over the next few years.

As chair of SCRA's Equalities Network, I am grateful to all the external contributors and staff members who have helped us to consider and challenge our practice and whose inputs have informed the content of these outcomes.

Carole Wilkinson
Chair



Mainstreaming equalities

Our Corporate Plan for 2017-20 sets out three outcomes which will drive the way in which we deliver our service over the next three years:

1. A progressive, user-focused service
2. High quality decisions
3. Effective collaboration

One of the ways in which we will seek to deliver on those goals is through our Equalities Strategy and Outcomes. This document sets out how we meet our public sector equality duties and, more importantly, how we absorb these into our culture and behaviours. It sets out a series of equalities outcomes that we will pursue which, taken together, demonstrate our commitment to promoting equality, social justice, and elimination of all forms of unlawful discrimination and stigma. We believe that linking our Equalities Outcomes to our Corporate Plan in this way will help with mainstreaming equalities considerations into our day to day activities, raising the profile of equalities within the organisation and encouraging greater diversity in our workforce.

Our Equalities Outcomes for 2017-21 are as follows:

Outcome One: We have a better understanding of the needs and experiences of children, young people and families

Outcome Two: All children, young people and families can engage with our services with ease and confidence

Outcome Three: We have a culture where staff feel knowledgeable, engaged, supported and valued

Outcome Four: We have a workforce that is more representative of the Scottish population

There is also a significant degree of overlap between these Outcomes and our Corporate Parenting Plan, which sets out our commitments to children and young people as follows:

- You are at the centre of the Children's Hearings System and are treated as an individual
- The decisions that may affect you are based on sound knowledge, clear evidence and with consideration of your views
- Your Corporate Parents will work together to make the system work better for you
- We will keep asking ourselves if the way that we do things is the best it can be

We have therefore identified below in respect of each of our Equalities Outcomes, the areas where there are links between all three of these documents. Again, this is intended to assist with mainstreaming equalities issues by linking them explicitly with other statutory duties and therefore the way in which we deliver our service.

Finally, as a public body, we are expected to adopt a child rights-based approach to our work. We have long taken the view, which is consistent with the Kilbrandon principles that underpin the Children's Hearings System, that participation is a keystone right. Both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRDP) include provisions clearly setting this out. The ability to actively and effectively participate in decision making and legal processes leads to better, more informed decisions and more positive outcomes, and increases the likelihood that other rights will be respected. Many of our outcomes therefore reflect this deliberate prioritisation of participation rights.

We have sought to bring equalities issues into the heart of SCRA's business through our Equalities Network. This is the main vehicle for monitoring and driving forward work on our Equalities Outcomes. Led by our Chair, Carole Wilkinson, it includes representation from across the organisation, including both Head Office and operational teams. While the statutory duties set out below are an important point of reference, the Network has also set itself a clear mission statement to guide its activities:

"SCRA is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our workforce and throughout our organisation at large. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. Our aim is that SCRA embraces, acknowledges and is representative of all sections of society; promoting equality and respect for all so that everyone is able to achieve their potential."

"SCRA is committed to promoting the practice of equality and diversity in all its services, operations and dealings with employees, children, young people and their families and all partner agencies. SCRA aims to ensure that it employs and deploys a workforce that is diverse and equipped with the right mix of skills and experience to deliver a quality service to children and young people."

The Network's focus in 2015/16 has undergone a deliberate shift towards operational and frontline service delivery and our new set of Outcomes reflects this. Each Network meeting has taken a protected characteristic as a theme and examined the impacts on, and issues for, children, young people and families. This has been assisted by seeking out inputs from external organisations which represent the interests of protected characteristic groups, and from SCRA's locality staff. The external contributors were specifically encouraged to identify issues and challenge our practice, while local staff were asked to bring case studies highlighting issues that they had dealt with or learned from. This has allowed us to access both directly and indirectly the experiences of those with protected characteristics who engage with us. We have also drawn from the extensive body of work that has been undertaken by our Participation Group, from research into the views of children and young people, from discussions with stakeholder groups on

corporate parenting, and from evidence assembled as part of the Better Hearings project. This has enabled consideration of this new set of Equalities Outcomes to be driven by a broad range of evidence, information and experience.

In order to help facilitate this process, the Network has met in different locality offices around Scotland, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Stirling, Dundee, Kilmarnock and Hamilton. A further meeting is planned for Aberdeen and other areas of the country will be considered. The Network scrutinises all aspects of SCRA's work towards our Equalities Outcomes and in particular has oversight of Equality Impact Assessments undertaken in relation to projects, policies or other pieces of work.

Legal context

In strictly legal terms, SCRA is required under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:-

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

In addition to this general duty, SCRA is required by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 to:

- Report on progress on mainstreaming the general duty
- Publish equality outcomes and report on progress in achieving these
- Assess and review policies and practices
- Gather and use employee information
- Publish gender pay gap information
- Publish statements on equal pay
- Consider award criteria in relation to public procurement
- Publish in an assessable manner
- Publish proposals of how the above will be met

Outcome One

We have a better understanding of the needs and experiences of children, young people and families

Evidence base

[Children and Families Survey 2016](#)

[Children and Families Survey 2015](#)

[SCRA Annual statistics](#)

[Scottish Government children's social work statistics 2016](#)

[Evaluation report – pilot hearing room 2015](#)

[Children's Reporter decision making 2014](#)

[Fit for Us report 2011](#)

[Hearing Scotland's Children report 2011](#)

Research on learning disabled children in the Hearings System 2015 (unpublished)

Overview

In order to achieve the goals set out in our Corporate Plan and Corporate Parenting plan of delivering a user-focused service which places children and young people at the centre of the Children's Hearings System, treats them as individuals and ensures that decisions made about them are based on clear evidence and knowledge, we must recognise the particular needs and different lived experiences of those children and young people with protected characteristics.

However, the nature of the Reporter's role means that they are heavily reliant on information provided by other agencies, primarily the Police and Social Work. We must therefore continue to work with partner agencies to ensure that this information is made available to the Reporter.

There are a number of other ways in which we gather information about children and young people both at an individual and population level, and progress has been made in terms of the availability of protected characteristic information from internal and external research, work with partners on the Blueprint for processing Children's Hearings cases, on the Better Hearings project,

and on the GIRFEC Child's Plan. This offers opportunities to improve matters. Furthermore, we are due to begin work on scoping and developing a new Case Management System and will ensure that the ability to record and extract protected characteristic information is built into the project requirements from the start. However, we must remain mindful of sensitivities around privacy and children's rights to control access to information where it is not directly relevant to the referral and to the Reporter's decision.

General Equality Duty link

Availability of relevant protected characteristic information about a child or young person will improve the ability of the Reporter to make informed decisions about referrals and to shape the Hearing around the child/young person and family's individual needs. At a system level, understanding more about needs related to protected characteristics will enable us to remove barriers to participation and access to justice. This will contribute to advancing equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

No.	Output	Impact	Measurement	Timescale	Responsibility	Protected characteristic
1.1	We will revise our complaints guidance to make clear the need to capture equalities issues and relevant protected characteristic data.	We will be confident that we have a clear picture of the extent to which equalities issues arise as part of complaints. This will enable us to identify any concerns about our practice or our handling of such complaints.	Complaints guidance will contain an equalities section.	Year 1	Head of Practice and Policy	All
1.2	We will revise our complaints training to include equalities considerations in terms of investigation and recording.	We will be confident that we have a clear picture of the extent to which equalities issues arise as part of complaints and that complaints relating to protected characteristics are being dealt with appropriately.	All complaints training to include an equalities element.	Year 1	Head of Practice and Policy	All

1.3	The Equalities Network will review issues raised by protected characteristic complaints on an annual basis.	Issues raised and lessons learned in responding to complaints will be shared more widely and will inform policy and practice development.	The biennial Equalities progress report will include a section on lessons learned from any equalities-related complaints.	March 2019 & March 2021	Policy and Public Affairs Manager	All
1.4	We will work with partners on the changes to the Blueprint for processing Children's Hearings cases to take account of the need for the Reporter to access relevant equalities information.	We will receive more, and more accurate, information on protected characteristics from referring agencies. This will allow us to continue to build a picture of the needs of children and young people in the system as individuals and as a wider group.	Revised Blueprint will contain expectations around protected characteristic information.	Year 2	Head of Practice and Policy	All
1.5.	As part of our move to a new Case Management System, we will ensure that recording and extraction of protected characteristic data is included in the scope of the project.	We will be able to record protected characteristic data in a way which allows it to be extracted and analysed more easily.	CMS replacement will be able to record and report on selected protected characteristic data.	Year 4	CMS Change Advisory Board	All
1.6	We will work towards the Court Form including protected characteristic information.	We will know more about the needs of children and young people who are involved in proofs and appeals. This will allow us to consider our practice in this area.	Revised court form will include protected characteristic data.	Year 2	Project Manager, Court Project	All
1.7	All case file research will collect information on protected characteristics as a standard dataset where available from partners in reports/referral documentation.	We will have a more detailed understanding of the needs of particular groups of children and young people, or children and young people experiencing a particular part of the system.	100% of case file research projects to collect age, gender, race and disability information as a matter of course where available.	Year 1	Head of Information and Research	Age, gender, race, disability

Outcome Two:

All children, young people and families can engage with our services with ease and confidence

Evidence base

See Outcome One

Stonewall Equality Index 2015 Review

Overview

Discussions at the Equalities Network meetings have allowed us to consider the challenges and barriers faced by particular protected characteristic groups in engaging with the Children's Hearings system. While we are aware that there are challenges associated with all protected characteristic groups, the information we have received has led us to focus particularly on BSL users and children, young people and families with learning difficulties. This will allow us to address the particular issues that have been identified in relation to those groups as a matter of priority. There are also outputs that seek to improve matters for other protected characteristic groups, some of which are intended to build on the delivery of previous outcomes.

For example, while our property portfolio has undergone a modernisation programme aimed at ensuring access and provision for disabled children, young people and families, as well as a more child-friendly and welcoming environment, we must now ensure that information about those improvements and the supports on offer is made available as widely as possible. For other protected characteristic groups, we also intend to seek ways in which to provide confidence to children, young people and families that SCRA is sensitive to issues they may face when engaging with the Children's Hearings System. As a corporate parent, by identifying and removing barriers to access and participation, we will ensure that children and young people's voices are heard and that they are able to inform decision making from a position at the centre of the process.

General Equality Duty link

This outcome is focused on preventing any unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation in terms of the Equalities Act. We will do this through staff training, by scrutinising our practice and by ensuring that we make facilities, information and supports available and accessible to all protected characteristic groups. This includes making use of links with partners to publicise these matters more widely. As with Outcome One, this will contribute to equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations between those who share protected characteristic and those who do not.

No.	Output	Impact	Measurement	Timescale	Responsibility	Protected characteristic
2.1	We will ensure that our website holds information on all of our Children's Hearings centres in terms of disabled access, Hearing Loops etc.	Disabled people will be able to clearly see the range of supports on offer when attending a Hearing. This will give greater confidence and reduce anxiety.	100% of all office location pages include accessibility information.	Year 1	Press and Communications Manager	Disability
2.2	We will promote wider access to All About Me forms via digital platforms and partner agencies. .	Wider access to forms will encourage more children and young people to make use of them and provide their views to Children's Hearings.	All About Me forms will be available online.	Year 1	Participation Officer	Disability, age
2.3	We will develop and trial Easy Read versions of some of our letters in collaboration with People 1 st Scotland.	People with learning disabilities will find it easier to understand the Children's Hearings System process, less stressful to engage with it, and will be better able to access their rights.	Easy Read letters to be piloted in 1 Locality.	Year 1	Participation Officer	Disability
2.4.	We will revise our BSL guidance to make clear that assumptions should not be made about needs and Reporters should check to see if written versions of documents are accessible to BSL users or if translation is required.	BSL users will be provided with translations of documents when necessary, meaning that they can fully and fairly participate in the Hearing.	BSL guidance will be up to date and clear about Reporter responsibilities re: translation and interpretation.	Year 1	Press and Communications Manager	Disability

2.5	We will consider the development of unconscious bias training for Reporters and those who may be investigating complaints.	We will reduce the potential for unconscious biases to impact on Reporter decision making or on complaints investigations.	All Reporters and complaints investigators to have received unconscious bias training.	Year 2	Learning and Equalities Officer	All
2.6	We will produce a film aimed at explaining the Children's Hearings System process to families with learning difficulties.	People with learning disabilities will find it easier to understand the Children's Hearings System and access their rights. The experience will be made less stressful for them.	Film will be available on our website and in limited numbers of hard copies.	Year 1	Press and Communications Manager, Participation Officer	Disability
2.7	We will work towards achieving the LGBT Youth charter.	LGBT staff, children, young people and parents/carers will benefit from the practical improvements demanded by the Charter. Visibility of the Charter marks as they are achieved will help give children, young people and families confidence that they will be treated fairly and sensitively when engaging with SCRA.	SCRA will achieve the LGBT Youth Charter marks.	Year 4	Policy and Public Affairs Manager	Sexual orientation, gender identity
2.8	We will display the reasonable adjustment poster developed for the JED group in all Children's Hearings centres.	Disabled children and young people, family members and others will have greater awareness of their rights to ask for reasonable adjustments to be made. Posters will also serve as a visible reminder to staff of the need to consider such adjustments in advance of the Hearing.	Poster will be displayed in all Children's Hearings centres.	Year 1	Press and Communications Manager	Disability
2.9	We will review our Practice Direction on translation and interpretation to ensure that it continues to be implemented fairly, effectively and in the interests of children, young people and families.	Provision of translation and interpretation where necessary will ensure that individuals are able to effectively participate in Children's Hearings and understand decisions made.	Equalities Network will supervise a review of the PD implementation and impact.	Year 1	Practice Manager	Race

Outcome Three:

We have a culture where staff feel knowledgeable, engaged, supported and valued

Evidence base

Current HR systems

Staff survey, Health and Wellbeing survey

Feedback from inspections

Overview

SCRA depends on the professionalism, integrity and hard work of its staff group to deliver a high quality service. We recognise the significant value and contribution that staff with protected characteristics bring to the organisation. However, we have struggled to collect comprehensive data on some protected characteristics and therefore have only some of the evidence that would enable us to be confident that we are fully supporting those with protected characteristics. We must provide information to staff about why data is being requested, and reassurance that it will be treated in confidence. We believe that framing the request as part of the Health and Wellbeing survey will help to achieve this. The Women into Leadership report reflects our desire to understand and remove barriers that may face female members of staff in terms of progression, while appointing protected characteristic champions will send a clear signal about the importance SCRA places on supporting staff from all protected characteristic groups.

General Equality Duty link

This outcome is specifically about advancing equality of opportunity for those members of staff from protected characteristic groups.

No.	Output	Impact	Measurement	Timescale	Responsibility	Protected characteristic
3.1	We will recruit and appoint Ambassadors/Champions for each protected characteristic.	Greater focus and increased awareness of the issues faced by staff, children and young people and families with protected characteristics. Staff with protected characteristics feel more supported due to increased visibility of organisational commitment via Champions. Opportunities for more consideration of intersectional issues through collaboration and discussion with and between Champions via Equalities Network.	An identified Ambassador/Champion for each protected characteristic will be in place and visible to staff via Connect.	Year 1	Policy and Public Affairs Manager	All
3.3	We will reassess ourselves against the Stonewall index, seeking a points rise over 2015.	Staff, children and young people and families will be confident about SCRA as an employer and public service provider. We will understand more about where we need to improve in advance of our next set of Outcomes.	Points rise over our 2015 placement.	Year 3	Director of HR&OD	Sexual Orientation, Gender identity
3.4.	We will raise awareness of the importance of staff self-reporting equalities information and provide reassurance about its use.	Staff will feel more confident in providing protected characteristic information to SCRA. This will lead to a greater understanding of protected characteristics within our staff group, leading to opportunities to identify barriers to recruitment or progression.	A higher percentage of staff will self-report protected characteristic information.	Year 1	Director of HR&OD	All

3.5	We will include collection of protected characteristic information in the 2017 Health and Wellbeing study and will seek to improve the amount of data that we are able to collect.	We will understand more about our staff group and particularly about issues that may impact on health and wellbeing for individuals with protected characteristics.	A higher percentage of staff will self-report protected characteristic information.	Year 1	Director of HR&OD	All
3.6	We will offer opportunities for staff to join protected characteristic staff groups in other organisations via Justice Board partners	Staff with protected characteristics will feel more supported and have opportunities to share experiences with others. A larger group will offer the chance to raise issues in a way which does not place undue onus on individuals.	Opportunities will be made available to staff to join other organisations' staff groups.	Year 1	Policy and Public Affairs Manager	All
3.7	We will conduct exit interviews to gather information about issues relating to protected characteristics	We will understand more about the experiences of staff members and any unaddressed issues for those with protected characteristics.	All staff leaving will have an exit interview, giving them a chance to raise issues relating to protected characteristics.	Year 1	Director of HR&OD	All
3.8	Our Workforce development strategy will include opportunities for staff with protected characteristics to access coaching and mentoring opportunities.	Staff with protected characteristics will feel valued, supported and able to progress and develop in the organisation.	Content of Workforce Development Strategy will include coaching and mentoring.	Year 1	Director of HR&OD	All
3.9	Induction training will include a relevant equalities element.	Equalities awareness will be further mainstreamed into day to day business and supported organisationally. Staff will be more aware of issues and more sensitive towards those with protected characteristics.	All new staff will be trained in equalities issues	Year 2	Learning and Equalities Officer	All

Outcome Four:

We have a workforce that is more representative of the Scottish population

Evidence base

Current HR systems information (via iTrent and Recruitment & Selection Equality questionnaires)

Equal Pay data

2011 Census data

Staff surveys

[Women into Leadership report](#)

Overview

As a public service, SCRA seeks to be more representative of the communities we serve. To that end we collect and publish statistics on the make-up of our work force.

The latest workforce statistics were published in March 2016. They showed that SCRA's gender profile remains largely static, with 86.4% of the staff group being female. This profile is reflected in the number of applicants for posts (84.5% female). However, the ratio shifts dramatically in relation to more senior posts. The Women into Leadership work has sought to identify the reasons behind this and to provide options that will remove barriers to the progression of female staff into leadership roles.

Our age profile suggests that succession planning is also becoming a real focus for the organisation, with an increasing proportion of staff in the 55-64 age group. This is particularly an issue in certain roles (Grades A, F and G).

The numbers of staff self-reporting as disabled is currently 2.3%, with an increase seen in the number disclosing their status over the last 3 years. 2011 Census data shows that around 17.5% of the working age population (16-64) has a long-term activity-limiting health problem or disability.

In relation to ethnicity, 2.1% identify as BME, though more than 20% of staff have not disclosed this information. 2011 Census data suggests that 4% of the Scottish population is from a BME background.

While there are gaps in the data, we know that certain groups appear to be under-represented across the organisation. Notably, people from BME communities and disabled people. Significantly, this under-representation is reflected not just in staff data, but also at the application level, suggesting that we have not managed to effectively reach some sectors of the population in our job advertising. We have therefore committed to work towards greater representation of BME and disabled people at the application stage. Delivery of unconscious bias and equalities training for those involved in recruitment will then help to ensure that applicants from protected characteristic groups are treated fairly later on in the process.

General Equality Duty link

SCRA is a national body which provides a public service. It is reasonable therefore to expect us to seek to reflect the make-up of the communities we serve. By removing barriers to recruitment and progression, we will ensure that our workforce is more representative and delivers the best possible service to vulnerable children, young people and families.

No.	Output	Impact	Measurement	Timescale	Responsibility	Protected characteristic
4.1	We will improve the level of job applications from BME communities by devising and implementing a targeted communications strategy.	Our pool of applicants will more accurately and fairly reflect the make-up of the communities we serve.	Increase in proportion of BME applicants.	Year 3	Director of HR&OD	Race
4.2	We will improve the level of job applications from disabled people by devising and implementing a targeted communications strategy.	Our pool of applicants will more accurately and fairly reflect the make-up of the communities we serve.	Increase in proportion of disabled applicants	Year 3	Director of HR&OD	Disability
4.3	We will implement our Women into Leadership Action Plan to ensure a more gender-balanced workforce.	Our female members of staff will see a clear route into leadership positions within the organisation. Where such positions are not available, they will be developed and supported in a way that enables them to seek opportunities elsewhere.	All Women into Leadership recommendations to be enacted.	Year 2	Director of HR&OD	Gender

4.4.	We will implement unconscious bias training for all staff involved in recruitment.	We will reduce the potential for unconscious biases to impact on decisions about recruitment.	All recruitment trained staff will have received unconscious bias training.	Year 2	Learning and Equalities Officer	All
4.5	We will conduct outreach to universities, schools, law and social work students to encourage students with protected characteristics to consider a career in SCRA.	We will help students to consider a career in the Children's Hearings System, particularly those with protected characteristics.	Increase in proportion of applicants with protected characteristics.	Year 4	Policy and Public Affairs Manager	All
4.6	We will continue to improve the diversity of our Board by more targeted recruitment and initiatives such as shadowing.	Our Board will be more diverse and offer more opportunities to those with protected characteristics to join and contribute.	Increase in proportion of Board applicants with protected characteristics.	Year 4	Board Chair	All



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