Welcome to SCRA’s Annual Report for 2016/17. This report covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

It summarises SCRA’s key achievements and performance during that period and includes an update on progress against our Business Plan.

As part of our continued commitment to the environment, we have not printed our Annual Report for many years now, however, you can still view all our information online, including a full set of our annual audited accounts, our Official Statistics and interactive statistical dashboard at www.scra.gov.uk

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A running theme in my foreword of the last two years’ Annual Reports has been the work we have been doing with our partners to realise the aspirations and policy intentions of the Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. This can be seen in the work of the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) and the plans for Better Hearings and improving the participation of children and young people.

Improving services for children and young people remains a key priority for SCRA. We continue to listen and learn from them, involve them in our plans and whenever possible, action their ideas. Young people also have a role in the design of our Hearing centres, most recently in Perth, Stirling and Tranent. There is an ongoing programme to improve the quality of our property, in particular Hearing rooms, so they are modern, suitably furnished, decorated and welcoming to all. Our Modern Apprentices - all care experienced young people - are valuable members of the workforce, offering ideas, practical solutions and advice based on their personal experiences. Several of them having achieved their Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), have gained permanent jobs in SCRA.

In looking at the trends over the year 2016/17, referrals for non-offence grounds seem to have stabilised, this may mean a levelling, but it is too soon to say and this will need to be monitored. The number of children and young people referred on offence grounds increased to 2,995 - 234 more children and young people or an eight per cent increase. The number of children and young people referred on offence grounds has been consistent over the past three years and therefore, this is a statistic we will be watching carefully and seeking to understand.

There were 687 children and young people with Child Protection Orders (CPOs) in 2016/17, this is an increase (of 15.5%) from 595 in 2015/16 (that year saw a large drop). We know a number of factors influence applications and that there are regional and local variations. There remains a concern about the number of very young children referred because of concerns about their welfare. You will see in Our Statistics section that in 2016/17 15,118 children and young people were referred to the Children’s Reporter (The figure 15,118 represents 1.7% per cent of all children and young people in Scotland):
- 13,254 on non-offence (care and protection) grounds
- 2,995 on offence grounds

Over the past few years we have worked hard to shape the organisation to meet changing demands and to ensure we have a workforce with the right skills and experience. There is no doubt that the circumstances of the children and young people being referred are profound, high risk and complex. This requires from our staff commitment, dedication and resilience - qualities they need in their determination to make a difference and improve lives.

The Board of SCRA acknowledges the hard work of our staff and thanks them for their contribution. We would also like to thank our partners for their shared commitment to driving change and rising to the challenges required to achieve continuous improvement.

This Annual Report gives you a flavour of our work in 2016/17 – we hope you find it interesting and informative.
Our Vision

Our vision sets out what we want the world to be like for children and young people in Scotland - “Vulnerable children and young people in Scotland are safe, protected and offered positive futures.”

Our Values

Children and young people’s experiences and opinions guide us. We are approachable and open. We bring the best of the past with us into the future to meet new challenges.

Our Strategies

Our strategies set out our key priorities for the year. In 2016/17 we had three key strategies – sustainability, quality and performance, customer focus and engagement.

Our Customer Commitment

This is the commitment we give to children, young people, families and our partners about how we will treat them and what they can expect from us.
Some of the highlights and key developments across SCRA in 2016/17 ...

**APRIL**

- SCRA launches its new corporate website www.scra.gov.uk
- New Professional Development Award for Children’s Reporter Practice unveiled
- Information guide for Kinship Carers published

**MAY**

- Evaluation report into pilot Hearing room in Glasgow produced
- Updated Practice Direction on Translation and Interpretation issued
- Protocol agreed covering the arrangement of Hearings for children resident in secure accommodation

**JUNE**

- SCRA leaflet for victims updated
- Briefing sheet for new social workers produced
- Children and Families Survey 2016 results published

**JULY**

- SCRA’s Official Statistics 2015/16 launched
- Supreme Court ruling on Named Person Judgment

**AUGUST**

- Staff appointed as Pre-Hearing champions in each Locality
- Learning and development e-brochure published
- New research ethics committee announced

**SEPTEMBER**

- Official opening of our new Hearings centre in Irvine
- Updated suite of information fact sheets produced
- Annual staff survey issued to all staff
- Bi-annual performance reviews against Locality plans

**OCTOBER**

- Better Hearings research report is published
- SCRA achieves Living Wage accreditation
- 14th annual Kilbrandon lecture is held

**NOVEMBER**

- Updated Business Continuity Plan is produced – in time for winter!
- Court project consultation reports are published
- Official opening of our new Hearings centre in Perth

**DECEMBER**

- SCRA welcomes the increase in the age of criminal responsibility
- New Healthy Being e-zine for staff published
- Annual toy drive gets underway

**JANUARY**

- Women into Leadership research report produced
- New Professional Manager’s Programme unveiled
- SCRA Volunteering Policy announced

**FEBRUARY**

- Mental health training arranged
- Staff Event invite issued to all staff
- New Non-disclosure forms for partners produced
- Locality planning days held to develop plans for next three years

**MARCH**

- Recruitment drive for new Board Member
- Emoji pilot for children and young people developed
- New Court Module: Enhanced Court Training – Boost Your Confidence announced

To find out about our year in more details, turn to SCRA’s Stories section ...
Throughout the year, our focus has been on delivering our core strategies as outlined in our Business Plan 2016/17:

- Sustainability, Quality and Performance
- Customer Focus
- Engagement

Our three strategies delivered a number of actions in 2016/17, this section of our Annual Report gives you some of the highlights. More detail is available here.

**Strategy 1 - Sustainability, Quality and Performance:**
18 out of 19 actions were fully complete within the year. This outcome was about delivering sustainability as well as improvements, from case sampling and dedicated projects, we were able to identify, pilot and roll out a number of efficiencies to the way that we work to enable a transfer of time back into quality.

We developed our three year Corporate Plan and for the first time aligned this with key supporting strategies such as Workforce and OD, Corporate Parenting, Practice and Policy to ensure delivery.

**Strategy 2 - Customer Focus:**
Outwards facing, this strategy focused on improving to the experience of coming to a Hearing; in partnership with young people we re-designed six more of our Hearing rooms, we explored new ways of encouraging young people to participate in their Hearing and, along with partners from the CHIP (Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership), we developed the Standards for Better Hearings.

Seven out of the 8 actions were fully complete. One action (looking at customer service) moved into 2017/18 in alignment with the Corporate Parenting Plan.

**Strategy 3 - Engagement:**
Eight of the 16 actions in strategy 3 were fully complete. These delivered: the establishment of a group to set up a Board of young people for the Hearings System. key research into Sibling Relationships, a programme to focus on supporting Women into Leadership.

Eight of the 16 actions that were partially complete were unable to progress any further due to the Supreme Court ruling around Named Persons and therefore have moved into 2017/18.
SCRA’s progress and achievements in 2016/17

Throughout the year, our focus has been on delivering our core outcomes as outlined in our Business Plan 2016/17.

Our five key outcomes:

- The views of children and young people influence both their individual cases and how to better deliver services that meet their needs now and in the future.

- Our decisions are proportionate, timely and make a positive impact on the welfare, safety and protection of children, young people and communities.

- We improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in Scotland through the earliest and most effective interventions.

- Together with our partners we will get it right for every child in the Hearings System.

- Our staff and partners recognise SCRA’s quality of service and overall performance as continually improving.

Read on to find out more about our work in 2016/17…
Our performance and targets

Our performance for 2016/17 reflects the work undertaken in recent years to improve services to children, young people and families.

This can be seen in the ‘percentage of decisions on referrals within 50 working days’ indicator which has increased by 1.9 percentage points (pp) to 78.1% from 2015/16.

Decisions on cases are therefore being made more quickly, resulting in children and young people receiving a timelier service from SCRA.

Overall, five of the nine targets within our 2016/17 Business Plan were met with two rated as amber (nearly meeting the target) and two as red (target missed). Of those met, performance in ‘percentage of initial Hearings proceeding to disposal’ is particularly important for children, young people, and families as this ensures, where possible, decisions about compulsory measures are made at the earliest possible opportunity.

- Hearing scheduling has continued to see improvements, with a 4pp increase in the year leading to the indicator being rated as amber and just missing the target by 1pp.

Three further targets were missed in the year:

- Staff absence levels were 1.5pp above the 4% target and rated as amber. Much of the absence was long term and difficult to manage. SCRA continues to put policies and procedures in place to ensure that staff are supported to return to work, where appropriate, at the earliest possible date.

- The capital budget was underspent by 8.6% (below the 5% variance target) and rated as red. This was due to slippage on four projects which will now complete in 2017/18.

- The Scottish Government efficiency saving target was missed and rated as red. This reflects the difficulty in generating new efficiency within the existing delivery model savings after several years of significant savings.

SCRA’s performance against targets can be seen in detail in Table 7.3 of the Statistical Analysis 2016/17.

Our Practice

2016/17 was a busy year covering the full range of providing Practice support and advice, developing Practice Direction and materials, creating and delivering training, managing appeals to the higher courts and working with partner agencies at national level.

Practice Direction on Recovery of Evidence was published and the Practice Direction in relation to Attendance at Hearings and Translation and Interpretation was updated. The approach to non-disclosure was reviewed and revised during the year and Practice Direction was updated to reflect this, and the related operational processes. The list of Purposes of a Children’s Hearing was revised to make it more user-friendly and other Practice materials developed and published during the year include the Reference Resource on Submissions and various Practice Notes to provide additional practical tools for Reporters.

A full schedule of Core Practice training was delivered, including four Advocacy Skills modules. These were delivered in Aberdeen, Stirling, Edinburgh and Glasgow to meet Locality demand and facilitate participants’ attendance. The Core Module on Child Development was extended to include additional content on offending behaviour and harmful sexual behaviour in children.

A new Core Module addressing evidence of section 67 grounds was developed and delivered and now forms part of the standard schedule of Core Modules. Training on Domestic Abuse, developed and delivered in partnership with Scottish Women’s Aid, took place across the country for all Reporters. The training covered both understanding of domestic abuse and the impact of that understanding on decision-making and drafting statements of grounds by the Reporter.

Training was developed in partnership with other teams to reflect the revised Practice Direction and the related operational processes and Case Management System (CMS) functionality. This enabled learning on all aspects of non-disclosure to be delivered in a single training module and attendance was mandatory for all Reporters and Locality support staff. Further significant development of new modules took place, particularly in relation to practical court issues for more experienced Reporters, further advocacy skills, and vulnerable witnesses and joint investigative interviews.

In addition, the Practice Team delivered national training to various partner agencies including police, procurators fiscal and joint investigative interviewers. New training for staff in Police Concern Hubs was developed and delivered to enhance their understanding of the Children’s Hearings System and the role of the Reporter.

Twenty one appeals to the higher courts were concluded during the year, adding to the ongoing development and understanding of the law on particular issues, for example significant contact, significant involvement and use of hearsay evidence. Law Reports on appeals were published to support Reporter awareness and knowledge. Law Reports were also published on cases in other proceedings where they involved relevant issues, for example disclosure of joint investigative interviews and use of expert/skilled witnesses.

SCRA’s internal quality assurance programme is now in its fifth year. Each quarter there is an exercise to review an area of practice and process, which provides an assurance to our Audit and Risk Committee about the level of compliance with our Practice Direction, policies and agreed processes. This work is developed and overseen by the Practice and Quality Network, which brings together managers from across the country, to share experience and learning about the areas for improvement.

In 2016/17 the programme has looked at the application of SCRA’s Supervision Framework, the reasons for and practices in successful appeals against decisions of a Hearing, the quality of Reporter decision making, and practices and processes around Pre-Hearing Panels arranged to excuse a child from attending a Hearing.

Our People

During 2016/17, we commissioned research on Women into Leadership to better understand the barriers for women in SCRA in career progression. This research has informed a number of action points and will continue to do so for a number of years.
In June 2016 we started to develop and roll out enhancements to our e-hr system which enables staff to manage their own learning and development and submit all leave and sickness absence through the electronic self-service portal.

Also in June 2016, we retained our Healthy Working Lives Bronze Award and we continue to work towards achieving the Silver Award via the work of our Health and Wellbeing group.

Towards the end of 2016 we undertook a review of the Management Development Programme to identify what had worked well and where there were areas for further improvement. A report was submitted to our Executive Management Team (EMT) and it was decided that future national all manager events would be held on a twice yearly basis as opposed to a quarterly basis and that Locality Reporter Manager and Head Office/Business Partner networks would be established to run alongside this (and alongside our established Locality Support Manager network).

We also relocated the national managers’ event to Forth Valley College in Stirling, a more modern and flexible educational environment, consistent with our emphasis on skills development and interactive learning. Our first, new style national managers’ event was held in September 2016 and focused on measurement and evaluation, coaching skills and developing a ‘growth mindset’. In February 2017 we held the first meetings of the new Locality Reporter Manager and Head Office/Business Partner networks.

In addition, it was decided that we would seek to obtain a commercial package of management development materials that would support both collective and individual self-directed learning. This will be launched in 2017/18.

In June 2016 we agreed a one year pay settlement with staff which saw pay uplifts across all grades. In addition we continued our commitment to no compulsory redundancies in the organisation.

In July, we launched a new approach to learning and development which encourages staff to take accountability for their own development. This included the publication of an interactive learning brochure which is updated on a quarterly basis.

While in September we appointed our first Learning and Equalities Officer to support our commitment to improving personal and professional development across the organisation.

In the summer of 2016 we launched our first Healthy Being e-newsletter which provides information to staff on positive action to improve health and wellbeing at work and at home. It also contains staff news about their health activities in and out of work.

In October 2016 SCRA became an accredited Scottish Living Wage employer, while we also completed our three year pension auto-enrolment exercise to ensure that staff have appropriate access to the pension scheme.

In December 2016, we developed a three year Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2017-20.

In other staff news, in March 2017 we completed the review of the Senior Practitioner job description in partnership with staff and UNISON and launched our new professional managers qualification which for the first time was open to non-managerial employees.

Also in March, the latest round of Board Member recruitment took place. Our Nominations Committee developed a Communications Plan to ensure maximum reach of the advertisement for a new Board Member.

**Equalities**

SCRA published a new Equalities Strategy and set of Equalities Outcomes in March 2017. 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.

The Strategy is intended to underpin the Corporate Plan in a way that 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.

SCRA’s 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

The new Outcomes are based on the work of SCRA’s Equalities Network over the last 18 months or so and reflect our commitment to bringing equalities further into our day to day business by recognising the clear links with other areas of work such as Corporate Parenting and the Better Hearings agenda.

The Network’s focus throughout 2016/17 has continued to be on operational and frontline service delivery. Each meeting has taken a protected characteristic or related issue as a theme and examined the impacts on, and issues for, children, young people and their families, staff within SCRA and our partner agencies.

This has been assisted by seeking out inputs from external organisations and from locality staff, as the Network has met in different locality offices around Scotland. Some highlights include:

- A meeting in Stirling with a presentation from LGBT Youth Scotland
- A meeting in Dundee with a presentation from Action on Sectarianism
- A meeting in Kilmarnock on hate crime with a presentation from Police Scotland
- A meeting in Aberdeen on race, including a presentation on SCRA’s forthcoming BME research

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However, this shift in emphasis has not meant losing sight of our responsibilities as an employer. Network meetings have still been able to consider and take action on issues such as Women into Leadership and staff health and wellbeing.

**Participation and engagement**

Throughout 2016/2017, SCRA’s commitment to improving and supporting the participation of children and young people attending Children’s Hearings has continued. SCRA focussed on broadening our communications and support to include information and assistance being made available to those involved in the Children’s Hearings System, including parents, carers, professionals and relevant organisations.

Following on from the success of the Pilot Hearing Room in Glasgow, SCRA received funding from the Scottish Government to make further improvements. During 2016/17 SCRA’s Participation Officer and Property Team worked in partnership to lead the implementation of new child and young person-friendly Hearing rooms (designed in consultation with Hearings-experienced young people). The new Hearing rooms were launched in:

- Glasgow
- Hamilton
- Aberdeen
- Paisley
- Stirling
- Alloa
- Kilmarnock

In August 2016, SCRA re-launched its commitment to Pre-Hearing visits with staff taking on the roles of Pre-Hearing Champions. Children and young people are now routinely offered Pre-Hearing visits to come in and familiarise themselves with the Hearings centre and given an age appropriate information pack during their visit.

In 2016/17 SCRA appointed two new Modern Apprentices, one in Inverness and one in Stirling. At this time, in addition to the rolling Modern Apprenticeship programme, SCRA also piloted temporary six month work placements for Hearings-experienced young people in partnership with funding from Local Authorities to promote work experience for young people who have been looked after and accommodated.

In early 2017, SCRA acquired funding to create their first film for parents and carers with learning disabilities. The film, which was launched in the spring, complements our existing information and support services for people with learning disabilities which are available on our website.

During 2016/17, SCRA - in partnership with partner agencies - has continued to progress the development of a Young People’s Board for Scotland. The support of a number of organisations have been invaluable in this initiative. Two national Engagement Jams took place in 2016 involving over 25 young people, one in Glasgow and one in Inverness, which helped to shape the Board and its projects.

In 2017 after consultation by vote with young steering group members and Engagement Jam attendees, the Young People’s Board was named Our Hearings, Our Voice – a Young People’s Board for the Children’s Hearings System. Work to implement the Board will continue in 2017/18.

We spent 2016/17 developing our three year Corporate Parenting Plan. This is our first plan which lays out our commitments as a Corporate Parent. The plan is supported by a website for young people. Both the plan and the website were launched in spring 2017.

**Our Research**

SCRA’s research ‘The Next Steps Towards Better Hearings’ was published by the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) in October 2016. The research developed standards which are based on consensus between professionals and young people on what would make Hearings better, and are written from the perspective of what children and young people should expect from their experience before, during and after their Hearings. The standards have been endorsed by the CHIP and Tripartite Group (SCRA, Children’s Hearings Scotland and Social Work Scotland) and agencies are working together to develop plans for their implementation.

In April 2016, SCRA carried out its fourth national survey of children and families attending Hearings, and the report was published in June 2016. A total of 636 people took part (i.e. 388 adults, 122 young people (12 to 17 years) and 126 children (3 to 11 years). Results were similar to previous surveys. Recommendations were made on how to improve children and young people’s understanding of Children’s Hearings and their participation in them.

Following the successful introduction of the ‘participation style’ Hearings room in Glasgow, this model is being rolled out across Scotland. The new Hearings Centre in Irvine was evaluated in 2016-17 and feedback from those attending the new look Hearings facilities was largely positive. The evaluation report was produced in February 2017.

Research was carried out on female staff’s views on how best to encourage and support their leadership development in SCRA. This was prompted by the imbalance between SCRA’s largely female workforce and the relatively few female staff in senior positions. The report, ‘Women into Leadership’, was produced in January 2017 and its recommendations are being taken forward in an action plan by SCRA’s Equalities Network.

As well as that completed in 2016/17, SCRA started five research projects:

- Home Compulsory Supervision Orders – effectiveness of decision making and outcomes is a joint project with the Scottish Government which has provided SCRA with additional funding to carry out this research.
- Criminal Advice and Remittals to the Children’s Hearings System – was a joint project with the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ) and was published by in June 2017.
- An exploration of ethnic minority communities’ understanding and awareness of child protection and the Children’s Hearings System in Scotland – was commissioned by SCRA’s Equalities Network.
- Decisions on continuation of Compulsory Supervision order (CSOs) past 16th birthday - looks at Hearings’ decision making for 15 year olds who are about to turn 16.
SCRA established its own Research Ethics Committee in 2016/17. Its members come from various roles in SCRA and two universities. Its remit is to ensure that the research SCRA carries out and contributes to is: of the highest possible professional ethical standards for social research; in accordance with legal requirements; and in line with SCRA’s policies and the ethos of the Children’s Hearings System.

**Working in Partnership**

During 2016/17 SCRA has continued to work with partner agencies, specifically around Better Hearings and Corporate Parenting. This work will continue in 2017/18 to ensure we all work together to ensure the system is the best it can be for children and young people.

SCRA has also been closely involved in the re-development of the Blueprint for the Processing of Children’s Hearings Cases - reviewing the key points, standards and timescales for processing children’s cases and in turn the measures that agencies will seek to perform against. Overseen by a workstream of the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) which is also looking at the links between GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) and the Hearings System.

Following the Supreme Court Judgement in July 2016, SCRA was represented on a working group which has helped advise on redrafting information sharing powers.

The CHIP has appointed a Learning and Development Adviser to help with multi-agency understanding of the Hearings System and Elaine Adams a Reporter from our North Strathclyde Locality was appointed to that role in early 2017.

SCRA has also supported the Youth Justice Board with the Principal Reporter leading a workstream on Whole Systems Approach. We are also heavily involved with initiatives to raise the age of criminal responsibility and in the Evidence and Procedural review led by the Scottish Courts Service to reduce the impact on children giving evidence in criminal proceedings.

We also have regular links with partners on joint operational issues, including: the Hearings Management Group which looks at practice issues relevant for Reporters and Panel Members and the Tri-partite group with Social Work Scotland and Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS) to consider joint initiatives.

We also have joint regular meetings with Children 1st, Children’s Hearings Scotland and the Courts Service in relation to the operation of the Safeguards service and we are part of a Corporate Parents collaboration group.

In addition, we have meetings with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Police Scotland to review jointly reported cases and draw up an information sharing agreement. We also work closely with the Scottish Legal Aid Board (SLAB) to overview the operation of the legal representation scheme within Children’s Hearings.

**Property**

SCRA is responsible for providing suitable and sufficient facilities to accommodate Children’s Hearings. Property is central to the delivery of our services and is one of the organisation’s key areas of expenditure.

As in previous years, economic and budgetary pressures remain and require us to constantly review how effectively and efficiently we manage our property assets. We are constantly looking at ways to reduce our costs wherever possible, and prioritise delivery of services across our estate.

We continue to review SCRA’s estate and surplus property is made available either for sale or lease. During 2016/17, SCRA completed the sales of surplus premises in Clydebank and Perth. The capital receipts generated from these sales are reinvested to provide improvements to our estate by undertaking priority capital projects.

Key locations were identified for delivering new or improved Hearing and staff facilities during 2016/17. New facilities for staff and Children’s Hearings were completed in Inverness and Stornoway. These new premises provide modern, accessible, fit for purpose facilities that now meet the needs of the Children’s Hearings System.

New stand-alone Children’s Hearing Centres have been completed in Perth and Irvine. Both buildings provide significantly improved facilities for all participants in the Hearings, with both properties providing accessible Hearing suites. The Irvine centre now has two Hearing rooms, which has allowed us to stop using premises in Kilbrimie that were no longer considered to be suitable for Children’s Hearings.

Following completion of our pilot Hearing room project in Glasgow, significant progress has been made rolling out the new style Hearing and waiting rooms in our facilities. In consultation with local children and young people new style Hearing rooms have been provided in Kilmarnock, Hamilton, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Paisley. The new, and refurbished, properties provided during 2016/17 create more welcoming Hearing centres that have child-friendly furniture and layouts.

Following significant fire damage to our Tranent Hearing centre in November 2015, reinstatement works were undertaken during 2016 to return the property to operational use. The building now provides a refreshed and more welcoming environment for everyone attending a Hearing.

We continue to seek opportunities to reduce our running costs by leasing out surplus space. Whilst this is increasingly difficult, we secured a letting of surplus space in our Bellshill premises and agreed terms for a short-term lease of space in Glenrothes.

**Technology**

2016/17 was a year in which SCRA’s IT services focused on consolidating the existing environment to create a stable platform for next generation systems and developing detailed plans for the delivery of the Joint Digital Strategy for the Children’s Hearings System.

Over the course of 2016, SCRA completed a detailed discovery “deep dive” into its existing Case Management System (CMS) environment. The “deep dive” highlighted that the main product base on which CMS relies (Documentum) was coming to the end of its life and a strategic approach needed to be determined by the end of the financial year 2016/17 to allow the procurement of a successor system (a new CMS or upgraded CMS) to be undertaken within 2017/18. The target for the successor system to be operational is 2020.

Sopra Steria were contracted by SCRA in October 2016 to undertake a review of the organisation’s case management needs and provide a strategy paper that would include procurement information for a
successor system. The strategic review was concluded early 2017 and this identified the requirements for the procurement of the next generation system. SCRA began the process to engage a procurement specialist to go to market for the next generation Hearings information system in February 2017.

A remedial plan of action to stabilise CMS, improve reliability, resilience and performance was developed late 2016 which included infrastructure upgrades and re-hosting the system in the cloud. The cloud based platform for CMS, which includes full backup recovery at a secondary site, has been built and testing began in March 2017.

Meanwhile over the course of 2016/17 we procured and replaced 12% of SCRA desktops, refreshed 75 mobile devices, introduced 55 Blackberry 10 devices, refreshed six Multi-Functional Devices (MFDs) and identified that during 2017/18 there is a need to review our MFD strategy.

Also in 2016/17 we completed 90% of the upgrades to the telephone system, Local Area Network (LAN) and Wide Area Network (WAN) across SCRA. Business as usual activity saw SCRA roll out Skype for Business to all users in June 2016.

A number of successful IT pilots have been completed in 2016/17. In February 2016, in partnership with Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS), we carried out a successful pilot of new CMS functionality in Dumbarton. The ‘Panel Pocket’ pilot saw the electronic collation of Hearing information within CMS for export in hard copy to Panel Members. Following the pilot, Panel Pocket functionality will be rolled out nationally during 2017/18. Dundee became the first SCRA site to have an ONSCOTS supported Wi-Fi solution in June 2016 and also in that month SCRA worked with Police Scotland on a successful electronic information sharing pilot for under 16s. This focused on the police providing data electronically to SCRA for automatic matching against CMS. Where the child or young person was subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) or an open referral, this was notified to the police. This aids the police with their decision making.

In January 2017 we published the updated Case Management user guide for staff and in February, following several months of development, a new appeal process was implemented within CMS to bring appeals into line with the provisions and terminology of the 2011 Act.

Children’s Hearings Scotland and SCRA’s High Level Business Case to support the case for change laid out in the joint Children’s Hearings Digital Strategy, was approved in principle by the Scottish Government in December 2016 and we received first year funding (2017/18) confirmation in March 2017. In 2017/18 Executive Responsible Officers will be assigned to develop the plans for the Digital Delivery Programme.

Information Governance

Two main areas of activity in 2016/17 were initial preparations for the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in May 2018 and improving the management of Non-disclosure cases.

The GDPR was a standing item on all SCRA Information Governance (IG) Leads meetings and the joint SCRA and Children’s Hearings Scotland IG Group. A representative from the Office of the Information Commissioner (ICO) attended the November meeting of the IG Leads Group to give a presentation on getting ready for GDPR implementation.

SCRA revised its guidance on Non-disclosure cases and mandatory training for all Locality staff on Non-disclosure was delivered between November 2016 and January 2017. SCRA continued to work with partners on Non-disclosure. At a national level SCRA is working with partners in the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) and through Chief Social Work Officers.

At a local level, SCRA IG Leads are developing information sharing protocols with partners on Non-disclosure cases. In September 2016, SCRA reported a Non-disclosure breach to the ICO. The ICO’s response, received in January 2016, was that no further action in respect of SCRA was necessary.

In March 2017, SCRA’s internal auditors carried out a review of SCRA’s information governance arrangements. They found four main areas for improvement. SCRA has accepted the report’s recommendations and has put in place actions to address these by the end of 2017.
This section of our Annual Report includes a visual at a glance guide to some of our key statistics in 2016/17.

More detailed information about our statistics can be found in SCRA’s Statistical Analysis 2016/17 which is available at www.scra.gov.uk.

Our suite of statistical information includes:

- Online Statistics 2016/17
- Statistical Analysis 2016/17
- Online Statistics Local Authority Breakdown 2016/17
- Interactive online dashboard
‘lack of parental care’ was the most common ground of referral.

The majority of referrals were from the police.

15,118 children and young people referred.

687 children and young people had Child Protection Orders granted.

336 were for children under 2 years.

Compulsory Supervision Orders were in place at 31st March 2017.

26% of children and young people referred had a Reporter decision to arrange a Children’s Hearing in the year.

78% of decisions on referrals were made within 50 working days.

34,106 Children’s Hearings were held.

9,996
This section provides information on our Board in 2016/17. During this time we welcomed some new members and said farewell to some members who retired.

**Chair**

Carole Wilkinson (re-appointed 2014)

**Board Members**

Andrew Miller (re-appointed 2012, retired in 2016)
Malcolm Dickson (re-appointed 2012, retired in 2016)
Bernadette Docherty (re-appointed 2014)
Andrew Menzies (appointed 2013, resigned 2016)
Douglas Yates (appointed 2013)
Catherine Robertson (appointed 2013)
Anela Anwar (appointed 2014)
Sam Anderson (appointed 2016)
Martin Toye (appointed 2016)
Suzanne Vestri (appointed 2016)

SCRA operates under the direction of an eight person Board. As a Non-Departmental Public Body, SCRA's Board - although acting independently - is ultimately accountable to Scottish Ministers, and Board Members are appointed by Ministers.

Our Board Members reflect a wide range of experiences and backgrounds in relation to children and young people.

The Board plays a significant role in setting the strategic direction of SCRA and in challenging the organisation to ensure we deliver our plans.

More information about our Board, including a full Register of Board Members' Interests, can be found on our website at www.scra.gov.uk
In the introduction to this year’s Annual Report we have emphasised the value placed on the lived experience of children and young people in shaping the future priorities for change and improvement in the Children’s Hearings System. This will without any doubt, be a key feature again in 2017/18 as we consolidate the progress we have made and give ourselves new challenges and objectives. In 2017/18 we build on the voice of children and young people in our programmes by:

- Preparing our first ever Corporate Parenting Plan – testing our commitments to be the best Corporate Parents we can be, backed up by comprehensive training for our staff.
- Developing and implementing a Young People’s Board which will hold SCRA and other Hearings System partners to account on delivery of changes and improvements.
- Training SCRA staff on issues of quality.
- Taking forward comprehensive and sustainable delivery of the recommendations of our ground breaking ‘Better Hearings’ research.
- Continuing our wider participation and engagement programme with other Children’s Hearings organisations.

In 2017/18 we will continue to develop SCRA’s approach to delivering equalities by assessing our organisational arrangements and professional practice in relation to all protected characteristics. SCRA is a public body which sees equality as a key issue given the extent to which discrimination, injustice, stigma and marginalisation underpins much of the experience of children and young people referred to us and to whom we have an absolute duty. The link between our equalities work and our workforce development and learning plans will be strengthened further in the coming year. We will publish research next year on child protection and BME (black and minority ethnic) communities – which we believe will be a relatively unique, but a much needed contribution to this complex and to date unexplored area.

SCRA staff have delivered exceptional performance in recent years. Decisions for children and young people referred to the Reporter have always been made without undue delay and in 2017/18, despite the resource and complexity challenges we face, this will continue. It is a reflection of our staff’s huge commitment to children and young people that this excellent service delivery has been maintained and improved further.

We expect to hear about the financial support we need to deliver our technology and modernisation arrangements in 2017/18. This is a major and much needed investment in the Hearings System which we hope will be made over the next three years or so. We need a major upgrade in our core systems and whilst we await the necessary resources, we continue to progress with strengthening our infrastructure so vital to supporting our digital ambitions.

SCRA is proud of its leadership role in the Hearings System, but also in the wider children and young people’s services arena. We have a proven track record of using our research and data to good and positive effect in providing evidence for and support in delivering change and improvement.

2017/18 promises to be another really busy and stimulating year as our research services continue to contribute reports and studies of the highest quality, promoting real world improvements in children and young people’s experience.

We will continue to be highly active in supporting the work of the Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership, the Youth Justice Improvement Board, the Child Protection Improvement Programme and the wider GIRFEC delivery programme. We know the Hearings System does not exist in isolation and we have profound and strong partnerships already in place – with Children’s Hearings Scotland, Local Authorities and Social Work Scotland, Police Scotland and the national Safeguards panel and Children 1st.

We work and contribute as part of energetic networks CELCIS and the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ). We aim to strengthen all of this further in 2017/18 and add value to the work that happens in these partnerships.

Most of all, we will work to ensure that Scotland’s Hearings System continues to do its best for children and young people. We will respond to the challenges of increased complexity in children and young peoples’ lives, use the limited resources we have to support our front line operations and functions, and work constructively and positively with partners to ensure we contribute to the protection, support and aspirations of our children and young people.