



SCRA EQUALITIES & INCLUSION STRATEGY AND OUTCOMES 2018/21

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 child protection, youth justice and children's services. SCRA's role within this system involves several responsibilities including:

- Making effective decisions about a need to refer a child/young person to a Children's Hearing.
- Preparing for and participating in court proceedings where statement of grounds or Hearings findings are appealed, and ensuring the wellbeing of children and young people – particularly vulnerable witnesses – is protected throughout the court process.
- Supporting Panel Members (although we are not involved in making Hearing decisions) and ensuring fair process in Hearings.
- Enabling children, young people and families to participate in Hearings.
- Publishing information and data to influence, inform and reassure.
- Providing premises for Hearings to take place.
- Working collaboratively with partners to support and facilitate the Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) agenda.

All of this only tells part of the story – it tells us what we do, but not how we should do it. As an organisation whose decision making can have a major impact on the lives of children, young people and families we provide services to, we have wider responsibilities in terms of children's rights, corporate parenting and equalities. These reflect different aspects of people's lives and so they interact and overlap in a way that can be complex, but we need to deal with them as an intrinsic part of our day to day service delivery. Our challenge is to do this in a way that promotes good practice, makes sense to our staff, and is helpful and supportive to the children, young people and families we work with.

The Equalities Outcomes set out in the following pages lay out the expectations we place on ourselves and the actions that children, young people and families have a right to expect of us. They are designed to link with our other responsibilities and with our overall approach to planning and delivering 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.

Neil Hunter
Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Officer



Introduction and background

In April 2017, SCRA published a four year strategy summarising its approach to addressing equalities and achieving key associated outcomes over the period 2017 – 2021. Since publication of that strategy, there has been significant further development of our approach, to the extent that it was considered necessary to publish an updated version. This document summarises the developments that have taken place during 2017/18, outlines how they will be built on in future years, and incorporates re-scheduling of the original programme of activity necessitated by the ambitious broadening of the scope and detail of our approach.

Equalities & Inclusion within SCRA's Wider Strategic Framework

Our [Corporate Plan for 2017/20](#) sets out three key outcomes which we aim to deliver over that time frame:

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

Equalities and Inclusion can contribute towards achievement of these outcomes, and this strategy is designed to show how we will do this. It sets out how we intend to meet our statutory duties and, more importantly, how we will embed these within our culture and behaviours. We have defined the following set of Equalities and Inclusion Outcomes which encapsulate our commitment to promoting equality and social justice and eliminating all forms of unlawful discrimination and stigma:

1. We have a better understanding of the needs and experiences of children, young people and families.
2. All children, young people and families can engage with our services with ease and confidence.
3. We have a culture where staff feel more knowledgeable, engaged, supported and valued.
4. We have a workforce that is more representative of the Scottish population.

Focusing and linking our efforts in this way will help to integrate equalities and inclusion into our practice, policies and procedures, raise their profile within the organisation and promote greater diversity in our workforce. This will enhance our capacity to recognise and respond to the diverse and unique needs of the children, young people and their families whom we serve.

Our [Corporate Parenting Plan for 2017/20](#) also contributes towards our three corporate outcomes, setting out our commitments to children and young people as follows:

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

There are many areas of our Corporate Parenting Plan which can potentially overlap with or contribute towards elements of Equalities and Inclusion, and considerable effort has gone into maximising linkage between these complementary approaches and avoiding duplication of effort.

Child Rights Based Approach

As a responsible public body, we commit to adopting a child rights based approach to our work, believing that participation is a fundamental 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, and our outcomes therefore reflect this deliberate prioritisation of participation rights.

Legal Context

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.
- 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 equalities 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 accessible manner
- Publish proposals of how the above will be met

Turning the Strategy into Action

Our Equalities and Inclusion Strategy is driven through our Equalities Network, which is the key forum for planning, implementing, monitoring and reviewing work on our equalities outcomes. Led by our Chair, the Network includes representation from across the organisation with members both from Localities and from specialist Head Office teams. The Network seeks to exceed the bare statutory requirements outlined above, and has devised the following mission statement to provide clear direction and guidance for 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 is increasingly on operational and frontline service delivery, and this is reflected in our targeted outcomes, which were derived from extensive consultation. Issues were derived from staff views, from the work of our Participation Group, from our research into the views of children and young people, from discussions with stakeholder groups on corporate parenting, from evidence gathered as part of the Better Hearings project, and from external organisations that represent the interests of protected characteristic groups.

Progress during 2017/18

In addition to the actions that were scheduled for 2017/18, there has been considerable investment in growing capacity and establishing procedures and systems to provide a sound infrastructure for managing equalities and inclusion. Key developments initiated have included the following:

- Creation of a group of Equalities Ambassadors – volunteers from across the organisation to promote local awareness, understanding and adoption of equality provisions.
- Formation of 5 sub-groups from the Network, each owning responsibility for one or more of the protected characteristics.
- Equalities and inclusion training and awareness raising for all SCRA Board members.
- Training and awareness raising, including unconscious bias training, for all staff, with more in-depth training for all Network members and further training for Equalities Ambassadors in the protected characteristics that they champion.
- Recognition of the need to establish a framework and structure for operating integrated equality assessments, covering equality, human rights and children's rights and wellbeing impact assessments.
- Examining our reporting and publication requirements in some detail.

Re-shaping of activity for 2018/21

The focus on establishing our infrastructure continues into 2018/19, and prioritisation of this activity has made it necessary to reschedule some other activity previously planned for that period. Additionally, it has also become evident that some activity will impact on more than a single Equalities & Inclusion Outcome, and scale of impact has become an important consideration in prioritisation and rescheduling of activity. We have therefore reshaped the sequence and timing of the key actions within our strategy for the next three years. In the following pages, we provide more detail on our Equalities and Inclusion Outcomes, then show the actions planned for the next three years with an indication of their impact on these outcomes. Finally, we provide a detailed plan of activity for 2018/19.

Equalities and Inclusion Outcomes

Outcome 1

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

As well as striving to deliver a user focused service that 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

Outcome 2

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

We must examine the challenges and barriers faced by particular protected characteristic groups and seek to address these, finding 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

Outcome 3

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

We recognise the significant value and contributions that staff with protected characteristics bring to the organisation. We aim to instil confidence that SCRA places a high degree of importance on supporting staff from all protected characteristic groups, and we seek ways in which we can improve not only levels of support but also its visibility

Outcome 4

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

We aim to be more representative of the communities that we serve, by addressing imbalance in SCRA's gender profile for leadership roles and by focusing on certain groups that appear to be under-represented across the organisation, particularly people from BME communities and disabled people

Programme of Activity 2018/2021

Action	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Outcome(s) Impacted			
				1	2	3	4
We will revise our complaint guidance and training to ensure that equalities considerations are fully taken into account throughout receipt of complaint, subsequent investigation and recording of outcome				✓			
We will roll out Easy Read versions of some of our letters, working with People 1 st Scotland					✓		
We will roll out the reasonable adjustment poster developed for the JED group in all Children's Hearing Centres					✓		
We will provide evidence annually to review SCRA's accreditation to the Department of Work & Pensions' Disability Confident Scheme						✓	✓
We will review HR policies and procedures on a scheduled basis to ensure they incorporate best practice in terms of policy, language used and ability to promote and develop equalities in SCRA						✓	✓
We will raise awareness of the importance of staff self-reporting equalities information and provide reassurance about its use						✓	
We will include collection of protected characteristic information in the staff survey and will seek to improve the amount of data that we are able to collect						✓	✓
Our workforce development strategy will include opportunities for staff with protected characteristics to access coaching and mentoring opportunities						✓	
We will work with partners on changes to the Blueprint for processing children's cases to take account of the need for the Reporter to access relevant equalities information				✓			
We will work towards the Court Form including relevant protected characteristic information				✓			
As part of a 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 work towards achieving the LGBT Youth Charter				✓	✓	✓	
We will rate ourselves against the Stonewall Index seeking a points rise over 2015 levels						✓	
Induction training will include a relevant equalities element						✓	
We will implement our Women into Leadership action plan to ensure a more gender balanced workforce						✓	✓
We will deliver Equalities and Inclusion Training and Awareness Raising for all staff						✓	
We will deliver mandatory Unconscious Bias Training for all staff through e-learning						✓	

Action	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	Outcome(s) Impacted			
				1	2	3	4
We will fully establish our five Equalities sub-groups, which together will plan and deliver a programme of activity across all protected characteristics, balanced across all four outcomes				✓	✓	✓	✓
We will lead a CHIP workstream driving multi-agency activity to address ethnic minority communities' awareness and understanding of child protection and the Children's Hearing System in Scotland				✓	✓		
We will plan and deliver an Equalities Network Development Day on 21.05.18 to include Network members and Equalities Ambassadors						✓	
We will address Equality Impact Assessments by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raising awareness of the need for these ■ Determining when, why and how they will be tackled ■ Developing an integrated impact assessment toolkit, drafting guidance, and developing and delivering training ■ Establishing a system and structure around these, to include monitoring and publication 				✓	✓	✓	
We will prepare and publish a report on gender pay gap, race and disability						✓	✓
We will prepare and publish a report on staff equalities statistics						✓	✓
We will publish a biennial Equalities Strategy Progress Report				✓	✓	✓	✓
We will undertake interim progress reporting for Equalities Network, EMT and Board				✓	✓	✓	✓
We will improve the level of job applications from BME communities, and improve the level of job applications from disabled people, by devising and implementing a targeted communications strategy							✓
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 continue to improve the diversity of our Board by more targeted recruitment and initiatives such as shadowing							✓
We will develop our Equalities and Inclusion Strategy and Outcomes for 2021/2025				✓	✓	✓	✓

Detailed Action Plan 2018/2019

No.	Action	Lead	Timeline	
			Start	End
1	We will review our complaints guidance and training to ensure that equalities considerations are fully taken into account throughout receipt of complaint, subsequent investigation and recording of outcome	Malcolm Schaffer	April 18	Dec 18
2	We will roll out Easy Read versions of some of our letters in collaboration with People 1st Scotland	Karen Wallace	April 18	Oct 18
3	We will roll out the reasonable adjustment poster developed for the JED group in all Children's Hearings centres	Maryanne McIntyre	April 18	Mar 19
4	We will provide evidence annually to review SCRA's accreditation to the Department of Work & Pensions' Disability Confident Scheme	Susan Deery	Jan 19	Mar 19
5	We will review HR policies and procedures on a scheduled basis to ensure they incorporate best practice in terms of policy, language used and ability to promote and develop equalities in SCRA	Susan Deery	Jan 19	Mar 19
6	We will raise awareness of the importance of staff self-reporting equalities information and provide reassurance about its use	Ambassadors	April 18	June 18
7	We will include collection of protected characteristic information in the staff survey and will seek to improve the amount of data that we are able to collect	Susan Deery	April 18	Oct 18
8	Our Workforce development strategy will include opportunities for staff with protected characteristics to access coaching and mentoring opportunities	Susan Deery	Oct 18	March 19
9	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	Malcolm Schaffer	April 18	Dec 18
10	We will work towards the Court Form including protected characteristic information	Iain Gault	April 18	March 19
11	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.	Iain Gault	April 18	March 19
12	We will work towards achieving the LGBT Youth charter Actions will cover years 2, 3 & 4	Maryanne McIntyre	April 18	March 19
13	We will reassess ourselves against the Stonewall index, seeking a points rise over 2015 - timescale years 2, 3, & 4	Maryanne McIntyre	April 18	March 19
14	Induction training will include a relevant equalities element	Pauline Proudfoot	April 18	June 19
15	We will implement our Women into Leadership Action Plan to ensure a more gender-balanced workforce	Susan Deery	April 18	March 19
16	Equalities & Inclusion Training & Awareness Raising for all staff	Karen Wallace & Susan Deery	April 18	Dec 19
17	Unconscious Bias Training – deliver mandatory training for all staff through e-learning	Karen Wallace & Susan Deery	April 18	Dec 18

No.	Action	Lead	Timeline	
			Start	End
18	<p>Initiate five Equalities Sub-Groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Minority Ethnicity & Race ■ Gender ■ Family & Caring ■ Disability ■ LGBT <p>Each group initially to identify three focus areas in which they will plan and implement actions, all of these aimed at addressing the four high level outcomes in the Equalities Strategy. Co-ordination will take place to ensure that efforts are balanced across all 4 outcomes. These and subsequent actions will cover years 2, 3 & 4</p>	Karen Wallace to co-ordinate with Sub-group leads	April 18	March 19
19	Lead CHIP workstream to drive multi-agency activity to address ethnic minority communities' awareness and understanding of child protection and the children's hearings system in Scotland. Actions will cover years 2 & 3	Malcolm Schaffer		
20	Plan and deliver an Equalities Network Development Day on 21.05.18, to include network members and Equalities Ambassadors	Karen Wallace	April 18	May 18
21	<p>Equality Impact Assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Raise awareness of need for these ■ Determine when, why, how they will be tackled ■ Develop integrated impact assessment toolkit, draft guidance and develop and deliver training ■ Establish system and structure around these, to include monitoring and publication 	Karen Wallace	<p>April 18</p> <p>April 18</p> <p>April 18</p> <p>April 18</p>	<p>Dec 18</p> <p>Sept 18</p> <p>Sept 18</p> <p>Sept 18</p>
22	Prepare and publish report on gender pay gap, race and disability	Susan Deery	Jan 18	March 18
23	Prepare and publish report on staff equalities statistics	Susan Deery	Jan 18	March 18
24	Publish biennial Equalities Strategy Progress Report	Karen Wallace	Jan 18	March 19



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