

## Participation and Engagement in SCRA

### **Focused on children and young people most at risk, SCRA's fundamental purpose is to:**

- Make effective decisions about a need to refer a child/young person to a Children's Hearing
- Prepare for and participate in court proceedings where Statement of Grounds or Hearings findings are appealed, and ensure the wellbeing of children and young people – particularly vulnerable witnesses – are protected throughout the court process
- Support Panel Members (though we are not involved in making Hearing decisions) and ensure fair process in Hearings
- Enable children, young people and families to participate in Hearings
- Disseminate information and data to influence and inform the wider Children's Services community
- Provide premises for Hearings to take place
- Work collaboratively with partners to support and facilitate the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) agenda

## Background

In 2009, SCRA created a Participation Group to make SCRA and the Children's Hearings System more accessible and more responsive to the needs of children, young people, their parents and carers, and to create long term, structured solutions to support and enable the participation of children, young people and parents/carers. Since that time, SCRA has appointed a Participation Officer and been involved in the recruitment of a Development Worker and Development Assistant for Our Hearings, Our Voice, a board of young people for the Hearings System and significant progress has been made in terms of practice, policies and communications. This briefing sheet provides an update on our participation work.

## Areas of participatory practice

In line with our fundamental purposes, our Corporate Parenting responsibilities and Better Hearings commitments, SCRA is committed to four main areas of participatory practice:

- National Modern Apprenticeships and funded temporary work experience placements for young people who have been involved in the Children's Hearings System and/or who have been looked after and accommodated.
- Improved communication with, and support to, children, young people, parents and carers, including electronic, paper-based and personalised services.
- Provision of child and young person friendly Hearing suites to promote a safe, inclusive and participative environment as a rolling programme, all of which have been designed in consultation with Hearings experienced young people.
- Ongoing participative work with key partners to improve their understanding of the Children's Hearings System and the support they can offer to children, young people and families.
- National training to partner agencies to improve their knowledge and understanding of the Children's Hearings System and child protection legislation.
- Development of an independent, national, Hearings-experienced board of children young people ('Our Hearings, Our Voice') hosted by SCRA

## Modern Apprenticeships and work experience:

SCRA's commitment to providing Modern Apprenticeships to young people involved in the Children's Hearings System and/or having been Looked After and Accommodated is successfully into its eighth year. The programme commenced in 2010 and we recruited a fourth group of young people in 2016 to undertake the Apprenticeship. In 2015 we also introduced funded temporary work placements in partnership with Local Authorities for care-experienced young people.

## Partnership Work

In addition to improving internal practice, communications and work opportunities for vulnerable young people, SCRA is committed to improve our external partnership work on both a local and national scale. SCRA has developed strong partnerships and working relationships with a variety of key agencies and organisations in order to promote child protection, an understanding of the Children's Hearings System, and supporting children and young people in Children's Hearings.

Work includes training and information sharing, delivering new communications, advocacy and support information, and improvements in tailoring information for enhanced service delivery. Key partners include Children's Rights Officers, fostering organisations, Education Scotland, Celcis, Children's Hearings Scotland and the Scottish Government, however, strong local links have been built with multiple agencies and organisations involved with service provision associated with the Hearings System.

## Information Materials

SCRA has developed a suite of communications material for children and young people including leaflets, films and podcasts. These were all designed in consultation with children and young people and can be downloaded from the website.

Ensuring positive futures for children  
and young people in Scotland  
[www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)  
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