



Children's Services Planning SCRA Consultation Response

Children's Services Planning - Provision of Statutory Guidance

Questions

1. Does the statutory guidance provided to date assist in the effective development of a Children Services Plan?

Yes

Yes - although the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) does not use the guidance on its own and we are involved by virtue of wider partnership working and the inclusion of the statutory Children's Hearings System within Local authority plans framed around GIRFEC.

2. What part(s) of the guidance were most helpful or least helpful? How could the guidance be enhanced to strengthen the effective development of a Children's Services Plan?

The length of the guidance is not helpful for us and a shorter summary would really help agencies / partners like SCRA who are involved in wider Children's Services planning in relation to specific roles and responsibilities. SCRA would like involvement to be meaningful and productive and summary guidance could help with this, by spelling out clearly where and when we should be involved.

To enable SCRA managers to become meaningfully involved in a consistent way in children's services planning cycles SCRA are developing a minimum dataset of statistical information and additional text in relation to Children's Services Planning. A draft of this can be found at appendix one (at the end of this consultation). The minimum dataset was developed as a result of our thinking about how best to respond to this consultation and is a work in progress – however, the draft indicates the key areas of our work which we think may impact on local authority service provisions, and therefore where we should supply accurate information.

3. Does the statutory guidance provide sufficient advice on how widely you should consult in advance of developing a Children Service Plan?

Yes

The experience of SCRA managers is that the approaches to this work can be very varied across local authorities. SCRA local authority managers will often have responsibility for more than one local authority area and therefore we see the differences. For example, we can get presented with a draft plan but we may not be meaningfully involved in drafting; some areas will expect or suggest involvement or attendance at planning meetings and some managers will go and contribute, some will go and not contribute; some will not go. Some local authority areas will add in something about the statutory Children's Hearings System, but the approach is uneven. SCRA hope that the minimum data set we are considering will help to even things out nationally, as





we will make the same information available to every local authority and it will be for the local multi-agency group to determine what is and what is not included in the plan.

How could the guidance be improved to enable effective consultation and engagement with local stakeholders during the preparation of a Children's Services Plan?

Enabling effective consultation and engagement with local stakeholders doesn't seem to be the key role of the guidance – and would perhaps fit more within a framework for Children's Services Planning, to indicate which stakeholders should be consulted / when / to what degree. Suggested consultation methods could be given and online tools for use during consultation could also be developed.

4. Do you agree that the guidance supports, enhances and strengthens inter-agency collaboration?

Yes

The multi-agency consideration of wider Children's Services planning should make different sectors more aware of specific pressures being faced but also more aware of different roles and functioning. This should strengthen the knowledge base of the team around any child and should make planning for individual children in need more effective.

How could the guidance be enhanced to emphasise the importance of multi/inter agency integrated collaboration in the preparation of the Plan and the delivery of services?

We think a framework document could help with stressing the importance of interagency collaboration in the preparation of the plan and in service delivery.

SCRA would like to have a clear vision of where the Children's Services Plan wants to get, and how our work fits within that vision. SCRA has a high level of control over our own locality planning, but a very low level of control over wider planning across a local authority.

We also want to see how the wider plan fits above our focused service delivery in our Locality Plan, but also within the national corporate parenting plan for SCRA (for example).

We also want to see clearly how the success of the plan is going to be assessed and how we can be involved in any evaluation process – we want to achieve success in relation to our service provision to children & families and we want to see our success within the wider service improvement agenda.

A framework document could indicate what kind of time commitment is required for this planning work, so that SCRA staff can dedicate time and give advanced thinking to the work. It could indicate what a local authority should be recording and against what kind of timescales. Statistics on their own are not always useful – the framework could indicate what statistics can be used for and also how they could be used. SCRA thinks that this kind of approach could minimise input & maximise effect for our managerial staff – but also for staff across the local authority involved in the development of the Children's Services Plan.

5. Does the statutory guidance support practitioners and staff in delivering the contents of the Children Service Plan?





No

On its own the guidance document does not support service delivery and perhaps that should be the case. Service delivery will be supported by focused and service specific plans, which detail outcome and evaluation.

How could the statutory guidance be enhanced to enable the Plan to support practitioners and operational managers deliver the local priorities and actions?

SCRA think that it should be possible to draft a framework document to accompany the guidance which indicates how the central local authority planning cycle should feed in to service specific planning cycles and therefore into service delivery. At the moment influencing the wider holistic children's service plan can be difficult as membership of the group within a local authority area is so wide and has competing priorities. SCRA, for example, may only have one key action point we would want to include and getting an argument heard about that one point can be difficult.





APPENDIX ONE:

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

Proposed 'template' for use in: Children's Services Planning - Minimum Data Set & Suggested Text Minimum Data Set

Total / M / F where possible

For calendar year	Local Authority Figures	National Figures
Offence Referrals to Reporter		
Non Offence Referrals to Reporter		
Average Reporter decision time from receipt to decision, by age		
Average time for SW report to be received (time between request & receipt)		
Offence – Conversion rate to CH (%)		
Non Offence - Conversion rate to CH (%)		
No of CH's held		
No of children who had CH's in calendar yr		
No of children on CSO as of 1 st June (20--)		
Age profile of children on CSO as of 1 st June (20--)		
Average time child has been on CSO (from last grounds CH to current status – not including any previous CSO).		
No of grounds CH to proof application		
Average time at court (from first to last calling) by age		
No of SAA / MRC CH decisions in calendar yr		
No of children w SAA / MRC decisions in calendar yr		
SAA / MRC by offence / non-offence & gender		
No of CPO's in calendar year		
Age profile of children with CPO's		





Suggested Text:

Referral to the Reporter and Children's Hearings

Children who may need a compulsory supervision requirement for their protection, treatment, guidance or control should be referred to the Children's Reporter (Scottish Children's Reporter Administration - SCRA). A local authority and Police Scotland have a statutory duty to refer under section 60 & 61 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 if they decide that the referral criteria apply; any other person may refer a child at any time.

Once the Children's Reporter has received a referral they have a statutory duty to investigate the child's circumstances and determine two questions:

- 1) whether there is evidence of one of the grounds for referral under section 67 (2) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and
- 2) whether a compulsory supervision order (CSO) is necessary for the child.

If the answer is 'yes' to both of the questions the Reporter must arrange a children's hearing.

A children's hearing is made up of three panel members (men and women) recruited from the local area and supported by Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS). The panel members and the family (child and relevant people) receive the same paperwork in respect of the children's hearing. A children's hearing determines whether or not to make a CSO; and if an order is made whether any specific measures are required for the child (for example, where a child should live, who they should see, whether there are people the child should not see).

A CSO is not a long term or permanent intervention in a child's life. If a children's hearing make a CSO it can only last for 12 months and requires to be reviewed before it expires. Three months after it has been made a child and relevant person can ask that a CSO is reviewed. The local authority can ask for a review of the CSO at any time.

If a child and family do not agree with the section 67(2) grounds for referral then a Sheriff would determine the facts in the case at the Sheriff court. If a child and family do not agree with the decision of a children's hearing then they can appeal the decision, in the first instance this appeal would be to the Sheriff court as well.

[Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership](#) (CHIP)

The Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership exists to support collaborative working amongst the different partners involved in the Children's Hearing System and to deliver improvements for children and families who experience the Hearing System. Part of the national improvement approach in the Children's Hearing System is 'Better Hearings' – a vision to improve the experience before, during and after the Children's Hearing for every child who is involved. 'Better Hearings' is being delivered in local authority areas so that improvement is closely linked to local priorities and needs. Going forwards the CHIP sees 'Better Hearings' sitting clearly within local authority children's services plans and planning so that the continuous improvement agenda in the Children's Hearing is supported, maintained and robustly evaluated.

Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV)

Another aspect of the improvement agenda in the Children's Hearing System is the creation of Our Hearings Our Voice – an independent board of children and young people with experience of the Hearings System whose aims are to:

- identify and recommend improvements across the system (via project work / commissions).



SCOTTISH



- scrutinise and support the work of partners across the Children's Hearings System.
- hold the Children's Hearings System to account.

The focus will be to help create shared understanding, positive change and improvement in the Hearings System through young people's lived experiences.

SCRA Practice & Policy Team, 2019.

