

## 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 and context

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 their parents/carers. At that time, SCRA also appointed a Participation Officer, and significant progress has been made in terms of practice, policies, property 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 multiple areas of participatory practice; these are highlighted below:

National Modern Apprenticeships and funded temporary work experience placements in partnership with Local Authorities for young people who have been involved in the Children's Hearings System and/or who have been Looked After.

Improved communication with, and support to, children, young people, parents and carers, including electronic, paper-based and personalised services. In 2018 and 2019, SCRA's Participation Officer and the Participation Group particularly focussed on increasing staff awareness of protected characteristics, and tailoring information materials and providing sensory areas for people with Autism and sensory difficulties.

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 design-led by 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 legislation.

## 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 ninth year. The programme commenced in 2010 and we recruited another young person in 2019 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 improved child protection practice, an understanding of the Children's Hearings System, and support to children and young people attending Children's Hearings. Work streams include training and information sharing, delivering new communications, advocacy and support information, and improvements in tailoring information for enhanced service delivery. Key partners include fostering organisations, Education Scotland, Reach for Autism, Children's Hearings Scotland, the Scottish Government and Who Cares? Scotland, with whom we have agreed to incorporate Care Experience as a tenth protected characteristic in all of our recruitment and employment policies. In addition, strong local links have been built with multiple agencies and organisations involved with service provision associated with the Hearings System. Multi-disciplinary and agency partnership work also led to the development of an independent, national, Hearings-experienced board of children young people ('Our Hearings, Our Voice') which is hosted by SCRA.

## Information materials

SCRA has developed a suite of communications materials 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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