

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 solution 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, recruitment, 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, Better Hearings commitments, and findings from the Independent Care Review, SCRA is committed to multiple areas of participatory practice. These include:

- Improved communication with, and support to, children, young people, parents and carers, including electronic, paper-based and personalised services. In 2018, 2019 and early 2020, SCRA's Participation Officer and the Participation Group particularly focussed on increasing staff awareness of protected characteristics, tailoring information materials, and providing sensory areas for people with Autism and sensory difficulties. In 2020 specialised take-away sensory-friendly kits were piloted and launched in three Localities.
- 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. Since the project was launched in 2018 we have delivered over 15 new Hearing rooms from the portfolio with further rooms being rolled out in 2020/2021.
- Building on existing relationships and forging new ones with key partners, we have been delivering ongoing participative work with key partners to improve the support they can offer to children, young people and families. We have also delivered 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 tenth year. The programme commenced in 2010 and we recruited another young person in 2019 to undertake the Apprenticeship, with another Modern Apprenticeship placement planned for later in 2020. In 2015, we also introduced funded temporary work experience placements in partnership with Local Authorities for care-experienced young people. We have successfully run three of these with another commencing later in 2020.

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, young people and families 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.

We have been working closely with Who Cares? Scotland, with whom we have agreed to incorporate Care Experience as a tenth protected characteristic in all of our practice, 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 a positive working relationship with Our Hearings, Our Voice as well as forging new partnerships with organisations offering support to parents and carers affected by the Children's Hearings System.

Information materials

SCRA has developed a suite of communications materials for children and young people including leaflets, films, cartoon animations and podcasts. These were all designed in consultation with children and young people and can be downloaded from our website. There are regularly reviewed and updated.



Ensuring positive futures for children
and young people in Scotland

www.scra.gov.uk
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