

# SCRA Keeping The Promise 2021-24 Strategy











Children and young people will be listened to, protected and supported to have a positive future where they are safe, valued and respected.



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**#KeepThePromise**

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## 1. Context

The Promise was published in February 2020, and we decided to **#KeepThePromise** by making sure our plans focus on the Care Review's recommendations. This is clear in our [SCRA 2021-22 Business Plan](#), with definite objectives and actions supporting us to #KeepThePromise.

In developing this Route Plan, we considered all of the recommendations of The Scotland Promise plans, including the 2021-24 Scotland Promise Plan, which followed consultation and engagement with wide range of stakeholders to shape our 2021-24 Route Plan. The Route Plan sets SCRA's strategic direction for delivering the recommendations under the five foundations of The Promise (Voice, Family, Care, People, Scaffolding). SCRA's Route Plan also provides our blueprint for all of our related work under the themes of Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting.

In line with the 2021-24 Scotland Promise Plan, we considered a wide range of factors to shape our Route Plan, including, but not limited to:

- Ensuring compliance with United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- United Nations conventions
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
- Our Hearings, Our Voice – 40 calls to Action
- Inclusive and collaborative participation and engagement
- Evidence-based research
- System design
- Better Hearings
- Trauma informed approach
- Legislation
- Learning and development





## 2. Keeping The Promise

Everything we are planning to do is underpinned by the five foundations of The Promise to make sure our planning and priorities to #KeepThePromise have a clear focus on Improvement and Reform.

### The Promise Foundations are:

#### Voice



Children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust.

#### Family



Where children are safe in their families and feel loved they must stay – and families must be given support together to nurture that love and overcome the difficulties which get in the way.

#### Care



Where living with their family is not possible, children must stay with their brothers and sisters where safe to do so and belong to a loving home, staying there for as long as needed.

#### People



The children that Scotland cares for must be actively supported to develop relationships with people in the workforce and wider community, who in turn must be supported to listen and be compassionate in their decision-making and care.

#### Scaffolding



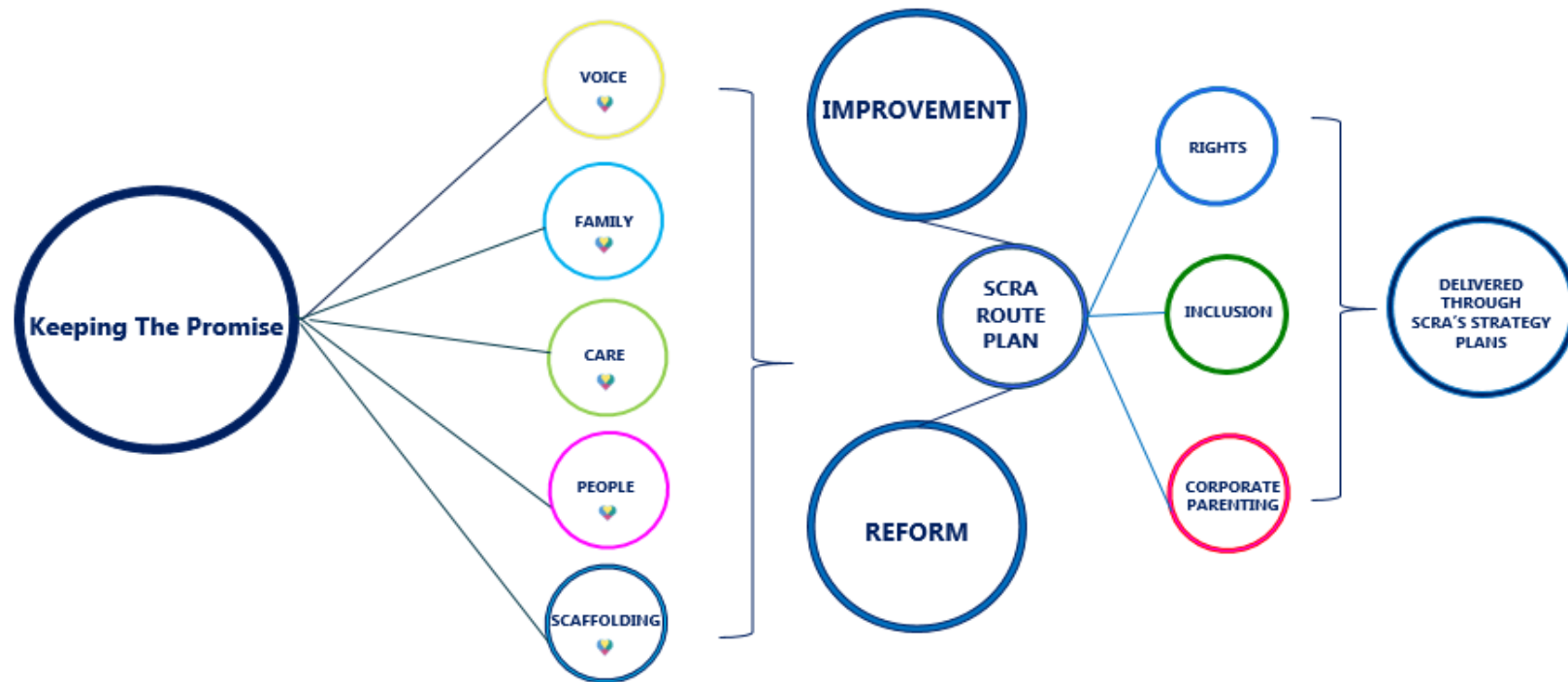
Children, families and the workforce must be supported by a system that is there when it is needed. The scaffolding of help, support and accountability must be ready and responsive when it is required.





### 3. Strategic Framework

Our strategic framework for Keeping The Promise ensures that all the work we undertake under Improvement and Reform is underpinned and guided by the five Foundations of The Promise, which are delivered through our three themes of Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting across our organisational Strategy Plans.





## 4. Strategic Themes

The strategic themes will be delivered across all of our organisational strategy plans, with an emphasis on our Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy leading the key workstreams on The Promise.

### Rights

Children's rights will be front and centre in the Children's Hearing. Children's rights are recognised alongside the rights of other people in their family and need to be protected, encouraged and developed if they are to be made real for every child in every Children's Hearing. We will:

- Devote time and resources to examining how we currently engage with children in every way and at every level.
- Make sure that we give information to children effectively.
- Communicate with children clearly and appropriately.
- Equip children to understand every stage of their Children's Hearing journey.
- Work with our partners to support children to participate effectively at every stage of their Children's Hearing journey.
- Develop ways of getting feedback and ideas from children, and ways of communicating what we have done as a result of the feedback we receive.

We will be creative and forward thinking in the development of new approaches. We are determined to co-develop and implement creative and innovative solutions that:

- Protect children's rights.
- Make sure children's voices are heard.
- Increase children's meaningful participation in all the Children's Hearing decision-making that affects their lives.



## Inclusion

Creating an equal, diverse and inclusive SCRA will help us better serve children, and their families in Scotland, uncover new ways of doing things and keep our people engaged and motivated to do their best work.

Being inclusive not only makes SCRA a great place to work, it ensures that we can work in the best ways with children and their families so that the Children's Hearing is equally accessible for everyone as well as meeting individual needs and rights.

## Corporate Parenting

As a corporate parent, SCRA has a responsibility to promote the wellbeing of children who are experiencing the children's Hearing, and to do that we should understand the lives of our children and respond to their needs.

Corporate parenting is a role which should complement and support the actions of parents, families and carers, and working with these key adults we aim to deliver positive change for children. SCRA are not sole corporate parents – we share our corporate parenting responsibilities with other professionals and services who may be involved with a child and family. All of a child's corporate parents are focused on making sure that their wellbeing needs are met.

Corporate parenting is not a role that sits with one or two named individuals in SCRA. Every member of our staff has a role in the way we behave as a corporate parent, and in the positive impact we can have on a child's wellbeing.





## 5. SCRA 2021-24 Route Plan

SCRA is committed to Keeping The Promise. In order for us to demonstrate our commitment, plan our journey and show our activity to get there, SCRA has developed this Keeping the Promise Route Plan. The Route Plan contains the high level activity we will do to Keep the Promise. It will sit alongside detailed project plans with actions through which these activities will be delivered.

Our Keeping The Promise 2021-24 Route Plan contains two interlinked strands of work – Improvement and Reform. This Route Plan focusses mainly on improvement. SCRA is also actively involved in reform through our work as a member of the Hearings System Working Group. We will work with partners in key organisations and with children and families to redesign the structures, processes and legislation of the children’s hearing system.

The Promise makes a number of asks of us, and these are stated in the Scotland Promise 2021-24 Plan, and further detailed in the Change Plan. The Promise recommendations have been explored and lined up against previous work, and assessed against current plans.

SCRA’s Route Plan has been developed to take forward the ambition of The Promise, and we aim to deliver this through our actions.

### SCRA’s Approach

SCRA is Keeping The Promise across the organisation by ensuring every member of staff can be involved, promoting an inclusive approach to achieve sustainable improvement and delivering on The Promise.

A Keeping The Promise Team has been identified and will be working together to develop plans, engage with staff, partners, and children and families, to help us transform our plans into demonstrable actions. SCRA’s Keeping The Promise Team includes roles from across the organisation to ensure the most rounded perspective in all that is developed, including the Policy and Public Affairs Manager, the Inclusion and Diversity Manager, the Participation Officer, the Operational Change Lead and Business Integration Manager. A Programme Manager, reporting to Head of Strategy, will lead the team and the Route Plan to delivery.





The Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting strategy creates a dynamic way for us to plan and manage the activity required to #KeepThePromise in SCRA. Through the Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy we will recognise actions, develop plans, establish and support working groups and ask for support and advice from our expert partners across Scotland. Our dynamic approach means that we will be able to change what we are doing if that becomes necessary. We are determined that we recognise what doesn't work and that we promote and encourage what does work.

## SCRA's Aims

SCRA's aims have been led by the Promise Change Plan 2021-24, some of the work that we will do to give effect to this includes:

- Hearings will be inclusive, rights based and trauma informed.
- Everyone attending hearings will have the information they need, be prepared and be able to participate.
- The reasons for coming to a hearing will be clear and explained as will the decisions of the hearing.
- Rights to appeal will be clear and accessible.
- Everyone in our organisation will work with children and families with kindness.
- The language that we use to talk and to give information will be clear, accessible and appropriate.
- We will be open and constructive in our conversation with partners about how the Children's Hearing can and should change and we will do all we can to prepare our staff for this change, whilst continuing to improve the current Children's Hearing experience of children and families.

## SCRA Activity

SCRA has developed the following areas of activity that will deliver what we have set out to achieve within our aims. We will continue to work with children, families and partners to ensure our activities remain focused on meeting the recommendations of The Promise.



The key activities include:

## 1. Preparation for Hearings – Options, Choices and Participation

This is an area of work that already has a lot of evidence for improvement as well as recommendations and achievements in Better Hearings to build from. A Better Hearing is inclusive, it is listening, it is rights based. Everyone going to a Better Hearing is well prepared, has all of the information that they need, know what they would like to say – how they would like to say it, and what they need to support them. This will see children and young people have a far more personal interaction with the Reporter and enable the sense of a bespoke Hearing. To enable this:

- We will evaluate, consolidate and expand the good work from Better Hearings to promote and embed the different aspects of what makes a good hearing across the country.
- Review and analyse experiences from virtual and hybrid hearings during the pandemic to inform what children and young people need to support effective and accessible virtual attendance, and identify the most appropriate method.
- This work will look at introductory letters from the Reporter – explaining who they are and what their role is.
- We will develop an easy to use form (electronic and paper) detailing what to expect, what is available and asking what would be preferable – what would help support them when they come in (in person or virtually) if they have any particular needs.
- It will incorporate and build on the new ‘Hearing about Me’ form, which has been developed in partnership with Proud 2 Care to replace the All about me and is far more about what young people would like the panel to know – about them, their situation, what they would like to happen.
- We will consider methods of participation and explore video content, as well as more creative options to participate.
- Explore with local partners different options for hearing locations and for hearing scheduling – to make sure these work for everyone. With our partners, we will consider who should be involved in scheduling and interacting with families.
- We will work with our partners to ensure that young people are as prepared as they can be to attend their hearings by receiving support in advance of their hearing from knowledgeable professionals.



## **2. Rights Based Grounds**

An exploration of UNCRC in grounds – this piece of work takes the description of the grounds for referral and re-frames it from a rights based perspective to shift blame to an unfulfilled right. This is at an early stage and requires to be scrutinised in terms of practice and operational enablement – in partnership with CELCIS.

## **3. Reports for Hearings**

We will work with partners to promote more concise, relevant reports for Hearings which genuinely support high quality decision-making for children – building on work carried out in response to COVID, and one of the clear recommendations coming through from the Promise, as well as from Better Hearings - in partnership with CELCIS and Our Hearings, Our Voice.

## **4. Hearing Rooms**

We will do all we can to promote the safety, comfort and privacy of children at the hearing centre by ensuring our hearing rooms are upgraded to make them feel safe, inclusive and support participation. We will be exploring hearing rooms that take a sensory approach. We have another set of rooms that are being re-designed this year – and another lot the following year. Options, Choices and Participation work will be developing this to ensure that the views of young people are at the heart of the redesign process.

## **5. Child friendly Compulsory Supervision Orders**

Looking at how a CSO and its conditions can be described in a way that is family friendly – accessible and able to be explained, whilst still fulfilling statutory requirements. Working in partnership with CELCIS and Our Hearings, Our Voice.

## **6. Trauma Training**

Staff awareness raising and training on trauma – understanding trauma and its impact, vicarious trauma, what trauma informed practice is and how to become a trauma informed workforce/place. We will ensure that our staff carry forward this approach into the work they do.



## **7. Contextual Safeguarding**

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to the harm or risk that can be faced by children out of the family home – at school or in the wider community. A greater understanding of this approach will be promoted in order for the exploitation of children in Scotland to be fully understood and addressed – without a child taking the blame for their ‘behaviour’. We will link this work with the trauma informed approach and wider work on promoting rights based approaches for children and young people. We will carry forward lessons from research on exploitation of children to ensure that reporters play a key role in ensuring exploited children are treated appropriately and fairly in the hearing system.

## **8. Referrals**

We will work with our partners locally and nationally to ensure that we have the right referrals for the right children at the right time. We will take a data informed approach to understanding referral patterns and outcomes. As well as focussing on care and protection referrals, we will work together with our partners at Police Scotland and COPFS to promote that children in conflict with the law are retained within the Children’s Hearing System rather than entering the adult criminal justice system. We will work together with partners to maximise clarity in communication about care plans and interventions and to minimise delay in decision-making on joint referrals.

## **9. Your Rights**

Your Rights – working with a group of reporters to present creative ways to let people know and understand their rights. This piece of work will produce full and detailed information for people about their rights in the system and when coming to Hearings – to include the rights of children in hearings, relevant persons in hearings, brothers and sisters, victims, rights around offending and around secure care. Working in collaboration with CYCJ, Staff, and others to ensure consistent messaging and clear links.

## **10. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Staff awareness raising and training on UNCRC and in particular Article 12 through a series of workshops. We will work to expand the knowledge of our staff and embed a rights-based approach to our work.





## 6. Getting the conditions right

To ensure that the improvements outlined in our Route Plan are as bold and sustainable as they can be SCRA will support our staff to engage in and deliver improvement. SCRA will focus on ‘getting the conditions right’ through workforce awareness, support and training, capacity planning, inclusive recruitment, good data collection, research, and much more. The activities outlined in the following section aims to capture the actions to get the conditions right.

### What we will do next to make this happen

- Conduct a UNCRC Audit in the organisation.
- Work with the Promise team looking at data to provide the information required to support them.
- Look at our own data to make sure we are collecting and reporting on the things that matter.
- Undertake research to understand the impact of the pandemic and how we can use this to inform our improvement journey.
- Use a range of platforms to engage with our motivated workforce to participate in delivering on The Promise and to communicate our plans and work with children, young people, families and partner agencies.
- Continue to focus on staff wellbeing as a priority to support our staff to do their best at work and have the space and time to be involved in sustainable improvements.
- Ensure that we promote staff in all roles in SCRA becoming involved in testing and delivering improvements to the experience of children and young people attending children’s hearings.

### Inclusive language and communications

Working with CHS and Our Hearings, Our Voice and other partners in the system, we will look at recommendations around language, from both The Promise and 40 Calls To Action. We will develop communication standards for the information that we provide which will impact all aspects of how we communicate. The work of this group will help inform the Options, Choices and Participation work, along with work on all the



information and communications that we provide. It will also seek to recognise and address the areas that are not about language per se, more a lack of information - making it feel inaccessible.

## Working in Partnership

We will be working with our partners in the Hearings system to take forward the actions – working with CHS, with Social Work, with Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, with Advocacy Providers, and with many other partners.

Key to our partnership work will be the work that we do with children and young people. We are not looking to go forward and consult on our work, we are looking to genuinely develop our work going forward in partnership at every stage. This is going to take time and commitment to get right across the country. Please tell us when you have feedback about how we are doing. [KeepingthePromise@scra.gov.uk](mailto:KeepingthePromise@scra.gov.uk)  
[communications@scra.gov.uk](mailto:communications@scra.gov.uk)





## 7. Governance

### SCRA's Monitoring and Evaluation

All activities will have timelines, journey maps, with leads and full descriptions of the actions to enable the Keeping the Promise Programme Board to monitor and have an oversight of our progress. We will plot our activities across our route plan, under the themes of Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting (**Appendix 1**).

We have staff trained and qualified in Improvement Methodology and it is our intention that sitting below our ambitious delivery will be robust methodology to test, monitor, evaluate and improve.

### Governance Arrangements

The SCRA Route Plan will be approved by the Keeping the Promise Programme Board and will be led and reported on by the Programme Manager. Detailed plans for each 'project' within the overall programme will be developed and provided to the Programme Board for approval.

The Programme Board will review progress on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability.

### Performance Reporting

The Route Plan is a fluid and live document, and will be subject to change, as we continue to further consult and engage with internal and external stakeholders.

The Programme Board will receive reports on the progress of activity at a strategic level, and updates on detailed route plans.



## Accessibility

Sitting above our Route Plan is our Route Map and its journeys (Appendix 1). This is will be developed to show the work that we have planned, are doing and have completed. We will be using the format of a map to plot our work, and this will be available on our website for people to access and view our activities in greater detail. Our performance will be represented by how far along each journey we are. We have approached OHOV to work with us on this concept.





## Appendix 1: SCRA Route Map





Scottish Children's Reporter Administration  
Ochil House  
Springkerse Business Park  
Stirling, FK7 7XE

[www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)



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**#KeepThePromise**