		Papers	*Purpose*	*Owner*
1.1	AOB			
1.2	Apologies			
2.	Declarations of Interest			
3.	Updates			
4.	**Minutes/Committees**			
4.1	Minute of Meeting held on 23 June 2021	Attached	Review	
4.2	Board Action Log	Attached	Review	
4.3	Workplan	Attached	Review	
4.4	Matters Arising			
4.5	Audit & Risk Committee Draft Minute of Meeting held on 26 August 2021	Attached	Info	JE
	Reports			
5.	Board Member Recruitment – Update	Attached	Info	MM
6.	SCRA Sustainability Review	Attached	Approval	NH
7.	Chief Executive's Report	Attached	Noting	NH
8.	Data Report	Attached	Noting	DL
9.	Budget Monitoring Report	Attached	Noting	EM
10.	Financial Strategy	Attached	Approval	EM
11.	Annual Accounts 2020-21 & Management Representation Letter	Attached	Approval	EM
12.	SCRA Annual Report	Attached	Approval	LB
13.	Business Plan Update	Attached	Noting	LB
14.	Agile Working Policy	Attached	Noting	SD
15.	Digital Programme Update	Attached	Noting	NH
16.	SCRA Framework Document	Attached	Approval	AH
17.	New Risks		Discussion	All
18.	Proposed 2022 Board/Committee Dates	Attached	Approval	PA
	Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 15 December 2021			

**Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on
Wednesday 23 June 2021
By MS Teams**

Present:

Michelle Miller (Chair),
Catherine Robertson,
Anela Anwar,
Jim Edgar,
Tam Baillie,
Suzanne Vestri,
Martin Toye

In Attendance:

Neil Hunter (Principal Reporter/Chief Executive),
Ed Morrison (Head of Finance and Resources),
Lisa Bennett (Head of Strategy and OD),
Susan Deery (Head of Human Resources),
Donald Lamb (Data Manager), Item 5,
Maryanne McIntyre (Press and Communications Manager), Item 10,
Alistair Hogg (Head of Practice and Policy),
Paul Mulvanny (Senior Operational Manager),
Helen Etchells (Senior Operational Manager),
Pamela Armstrong (Governance Officer, Minutes)

		Timescale	Action
1.1	**AOB** None		
1.2	**Apologies** None		
2.	**Declarations of Interest** There were no declarations of interest.		
3.	**Minutes/Committees**		
3.1	**Draft Minute of the meeting held on 25 March 2021** Agreed as an accurate record. **Board Action Log and Workplan** Reviewed and agreed		

			Timescale	Action
	Matters Arising None			
3.2.1	**Draft minute of the Audit and Risk Committee held on Thursday 14 May 2020** Jim Edgar, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and Board Member updated the Board in the following areas: • Quality Assurance and Performance • External Audit • Internal Audit • Digital Strategy Joint Committee Update • Strategic & Operational Risk Registers			
3.2.2	**Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report** Jim Edgar, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and Board Member introduced the report, the purpose of which was to summarise the work undertaken by SCRA's Audit and Risk Committee in 2020/21 and to support preparation of the Governance Statement. **Noted:** • The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the work undertaken by SCRA's Audit and Risk Committee in 2020/21 and to support preparation of the Governance Statement. **Issues arising during discussion:** • The Board thanked the Audit and Risk Committee to the work undertaken over the Couse of the year. **Agreed:** • To approve the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report for 2020/21			
	Reports			
4.	**Chief Executive's Report** The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive spoke to the update report which detailed a wide range of activity across the organisation. **Noted:** Updates were given in the following areas; • Staff Partnership • Agile Working Policy			

			Timescale	Action
		- Strategic Partnerships - Scottish Government Liaison - Covid 19 Recovery Planning - Research - SCRA Corporate Parenting survey **Issues arising during discussion:** - The Board commented that SCRA recovery planning has been outstanding in terms of the level of work and complexity.		
4.1	**The Promise – Reporting and Governance Structure** The Head of Strategy and OD introduced the report for Board consideration, discussion and approval of approach. **Noted:** - In February 2020, the Independent Care Review completed its review of care in Scotland and published a series of reports called The Promise. The Promise received cross party support and a commitment to #keepthepromise from public, private and 3rd sector organisations. The Promise is made to all those who experience 'care' in Scotland and is a call for change to be made. - A Promise Scotland Team was recruited and more recently, the Promise Oversight Board – one of their first tasks being to develop and validate the Plan 2021-24. - Plan 2021-24 was published in April 21 and the 2021-24 Change Programme is in development to be published 25th June 21. - The ask for reform is very clear in the Promise. They ask that we do not 'remove and polish' parts and slot them back in, more that we consider the core principles and foundations on which the system is built and the way in which it functions in order that we can describe a 'system' that is able to respond to the needs and asks of children and families in Scotland in order to protect, support and care for their best interests. **Issues arising during discussion:** - Radical change can be made within current structures. The Promise have laid out what the		

			Timescale	**Action**
		future hearing system will feel like.		
		• There is a degree of uncertainty around what happens next. We agree there is a statement of what the hearing system needs to be, there are a lot of things that need to be unpacked and understood. We need to create a structure to allow those conversations to happen. This is an emerging picture and will require to adapt and emerge other the next couple of years.		
		• We need to understand what people mean by the Kilbrandon ethos. SCRA need to have a discussion about what that ethos means to SCRA in 2021.		
		• The voluntary sector need to be involved and thought given to what part they play in terms of strategic driving of the changes.		
		Agreed:		
		• The Board are satisfied that the proposed approach and Governance structure can provide adequate assurance of direction, planning, monitoring and reporting.		
		• The proposal for a joint governance structure		
5.		**Data Report** The Data Manager introduced the report recommending the Board note the data in support of the current operating environment – response and recovery.		
		Noted:		
		• This report provides the Board with oversight of the data relating to the current operating environment.		
		• It is an amalgam of data provided to the Scottish Government in relation to the use of the provisions set out in the emergency legislation and data in relation to Hearings and referrals as we track our progress against recovery plans.		
		• This report draws on data that is currently available for reporting through Power BI and provides a data set against the indicators set out in the Business Plan 21/22 for monitoring recovery activity across the year.		
		• Reporting against provisions;		
		o On the 7th April, the Coronavirus		

		Timescale	Action
	(Scotland) Act 2020 came into force with a number of emergency provisions for the Children's Hearing System. ○ Reporting to the Scottish Government and partner agencies throughout the pandemic has been driven by a set of requirements to report against the provisions as set out in the emergency legislation passed in April 20. • Reporting against recovery ○ In September 2020 we developed an approach to recovery planning that saw us forecast minimum numbers of Hearings to be held across all localities to ensure that every Hearing that had to be held in line with legislation was able to be held and that there was capacity for all other prioritised cases. ○ Work has since been undertaken to update the forecast, looking at Recovery into March 22. This forecast was based on the assumption that the emergency powers would be extended until September 21 (which they have been), and that restrictions would remain throughout April to June but, that from July, we would be able to give greater focus to increasing volumes of face to face Hearings again – coupled with virtual ones. ○ The indicators in the business plan support us to monitor our Recovery – concerned with delay at different parts of the process. On top, the contextual data that we monitor, allows us to prepare for increasing volumes coming in or through court. **Issues arising during discussion:** • Additional context will be added to future reports.		

			Timescale	Action
6.	**Senior Operational Manager Reviews 2020/21** The Senior Operational Manager introduced the report recommending the Board note the outcome of the 2020/21 SOM reviews. **Noted:** - The annual Senior Operational Manager (SOM) reviews are part of the established cycle of Locality Performance Reviews (LPRs) which cover all aspects of operations. This year, the SOM reviews have been carried out against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic and the organisational response to that. This reports sets out the approach to and findings of the reviews which were carried out between January and April 2021. - The response of our people to the pandemic and all of the personal and professional pressures that came with it was extraordinary. - The SOM reviews were an opportunity to recognise and thank locality teams for their hard work, dedication and adaptability in responding to the pandemic. They were an opportunity to gather detailed feedback from the frontline, to reflect on the organisational response to the pandemic, to identify challenges and to capture the gains that should be embedded. - The SOMs are able to assure the Board that, notwithstanding the significant challenges presented by Covid, the operational response to the pandemic ensured that a continuous service was provided and the most vulnerable children and young people were protected and safeguarded. Work has continued throughout the pandemic across all areas of activity and the focus is now on ensuring recovery across decision making, hearings and court activity in the course of 2021/22. **Issues arising during discussion:** - It is impressive to see how the organisation has responded to the covid situation over the past 18 months. Board members feel proud and reassured about the work that has gone on. - It is clear we are in a period of transformational change. It is important to		

		Timescale	Action
	ensure SOMS are sighted on all changes to ensure staff not being given too much change or information much at once. • The issue of temporary resource has been raised with Scottish Government given the impending policy and legislative changes that will need capacity and investment, most specifically extending the age of referral to the reporter. To make the staffing permanent we need to make the budget permanent and that's what we are seeking to achieve or at very least agree the principle with Scottish Government.		
7.	**2020/21 Draft Budget Outturn** The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the report recommending the Board; • Consider the draft revenue and capital outturn positions for the year to March 2021. • To approve the draft revenue underspend of £775k of which £300k required to balance the 2021/22 revenue budget and the balance of £475k held in reserves. • To approve allocation of capital underspend up to £220k to complete 2020/21 projects in 2021/22 and support 2021/22 capital plans. • To note the Digital forecast for the year to March 2021. **Noted:** • The total available revenue grant funding for 2020/21 was £25,250k allocated by Scottish Government for core activity and £658k for the SCRA revenue costs of the Digital Delivery Plan. In addition £481k of other income (shared services, rents and secondments) was generated. • The total available revenue grant funding for 2020/21 was £25,250k allocated by Scottish Government for core activity and £658k for the SCRA revenue costs of the Digital Delivery Plan. In addition £481k of other income (shared services, rents and secondments) was generated. • The overall accruals based revenue underspend is £776k (3%). Further late journals will increase the underspend by around £65k, particularly as a result of		

			Timescale	Action
		releasing the £50k provision for Aberdeen dilapidations. Agreement has been reached to retain the revenue underspend and review in the autumn the requirement for the additional in-year funding of £1.5m assumed in setting the 2021/22 revenue budget. The Property capital budget is currently underspent by £125k principally due to slippage on Minor Works. Corporate capital projects are underspent by £95k largely due to expensing some smaller items of IT equipment. **Agreed:** • To approve the draft revenue underspend of £775k of which £300k required to balance the 2021/22 revenue budget and the balance of £475k held in reserves. • To approve allocation of capital underspend up to £220k to complete 2020/21 projects in 2021/22 and support 2021/22 capital plans.		

8.		**Property Strategy**
		The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the Property Strategy report, asking the Board to note;
		• Recent progress implementing SCRA's Property Strategy and the planned actions for 2021/22.
		A new Property Strategy will be developed over the coming year and the Board are invited to comment on the expected direction of travel.
		
		Noted:
		• SCRA's current estate comprises of 34 core properties of which 19 are owned.
		• In addition, prior to the pandemic, SCRA used ad-hoc daily hire facilities in around 24 locations for children's hearings. From March 2020, the use of these ad-hoc centres largely stopped and hearings were delivered through digital/ hybrid solutions allowing participants to attend remotely.
		• The Corporate Plan 2020-23 sets out our three strategic aims – to Care, Connect and Protect. The five key themes of the Property Strategy, set out below, are consistent with the strategic aims of the Corporate Plan.
		    1. Meeting the Needs of Property Users
		    2. Flexible Service Delivery
		    3. Location and Quality of Hearing		

		Timescale	Action
	Centres 4. Sustainability 5. Working in Partnership. • Property objectives for 2021-22 are included in the Finance and Resources Strategy which is aligned with the organisations other key strategies, particularly People and Digital strategies. • The Coronavirus pandemic has created a unique opportunity for SCRA to consider how it can sustainably develop the future delivery of children's hearings and provide our services. Through necessity the uptake in digital solutions has accelerated in the last 12 months and whilst they will not be appropriate in every situation it has demonstrated the opportunities for agile working and flexible delivery of services. Over time, as technology solutions improve, the quality and reliability of the equipment and the supporting infrastructure will become more robust. • The initial expectation that the pandemic would bring a relatively short period of service interruption has since led to more fundamental questions around how our services can be developed and how our properties will support these changes. • Work carried out during 2020/21 was directed towards our response to the pandemic and ensuring that our premises could be safely brought back into operation following closure for several months. • The hearing rooms improvement programme is now in its 6th year and further hearing room upgrades will take place in Bellshill (HR2), Edinburgh (HR2), Glasgow (HR4), Inverness (HR1), Lochgilphead and Kirkwall. To make the programme sustainable, three design routes were created and only minor modifications are made each year, primarily to furniture, to reflect the learning and experience of previous years. It is intended that the design routes will be refreshed next year to ensure that our hearing room designs remain contemporary. • A new property strategy for 2022–26 will be developed and this will be influenced by the changes brought about by the pandemic and the opportunities/ challenges that have been		

			Timescale	Action
		created. - Agile working and greater use of mobile technology and systems improves resilience and flexibility as a part of business continuity planning. There are implications for how much space we need and how we use our properties with potential to reallocate office space to public facing activities and uses. - Climate change and our public sector duties to work towards net zero will increase in priority and feature as a part of every aspect of how we deliver our services. **Issues arising during discussion:** - It was asked if there is scope for freeing up space in the estate. The Head of Finance and Resources advised that Scottish Government are taking a firmer approach to scrutinising business cases. The focus is reshaping how we use our office space. - The Head of Finance and Resource commented that this has been a challenging report to write. There is a sense of the critical linkage between property, agile working and the workforce.		
9.	**Annual Procurement Report** The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the Annual Procurement Report for the period 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. The Board are asked to; - Note Procurement activity during 2020/21 in line with SCRA's Corporate Procurement Strategy and the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014. - Note the ongoing contribution of the Procurement Strategy to SCRA's ongoing work. **Noted:** - In accordance with The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, SCRA is required to publish an Annual Procurement Report which should include; - A summary of the regulated procurements that have been completed during the period covered by the report. - A review of whether those procurements complied with SCRA's		

			Timescale	Action
		Procurement Strategy.		
		o The extent to which any regulated procurements did not comply, and a statement detailing how SCRA will ensure that future regulated procurements do comply.		
		o A summary of any community benefit requirements imposed as part of a regulated procurement that were fulfilled during the period covered by the report.		
		o A summary of any steps taken to facilitate the involvement of supported businesses in regulated procurements during the report period.		
		o A summary of regulated procurements expected to commence in the next two financial years.		
		o Reporting on other matters as contained within SCRA's Corporate Procurement Strategy		
		• The report also provides an overview of SCRA procurement performance across the year as well as the range and scope of the Procurement Team work and its criticality to the smooth operation and support of many aspects of SCRA's work.		
		• In addition to the mandatory sections, the report also provides an update on other procurement activity including work in connection with Equalities & Inclusion, Cyber Resilience and the PCIP and Audit recommendations.		
		• A copy of the Annual Procurement Report will be published on SCRA's website and a link will be sent to the Scottish Ministers.		
10.	**Communications and Engagement Strategy Update** The Press and Communications Manager introduced the report recommending the Board note progress on actions within SCRA's Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023 one year on. **Noted:** • SCRA's latest three year Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020-2023 was approved by the Board in June 2020. It was launched shortly afterwards and is available			

			Timescale	Action
		on Connect, our staff intranet and our external website. - The Communications and Engagement Strategy aims to ensure SCRA continues to have an integrated approach to communications and engagement, and one that supports the organisations' vision and values. - The Communications and Engagement Strategy is supported by an action plan and this report provides Board Members with an update on actions in the last 12 months which covers the first year of the strategy. **Issues arising during discussion:** - The pace of work done during the pandemic cannot be underestimated. A high degree of creativity has been shown in communications getting information to service users. **Agreed:** - To approve the contents of the report for inclusion in the SCRA Corporate Plan 2020-23.		
11.		**Annual Complaints Report** The Head of Practice & Policy introduced the report on the review of complaints 2020-21. **Noted:** - SCRA's Complaints Handling Procedure has been in place since 2011 and follows the model provided by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Its main features are to allow: - More pro-active recording of issues as complaints - Greater resolution at front line - Greater visibility of issues of learning. - An internal audit of SCRA's complaints process was carried out in February and March 2021. This found a moderate level of assurance and made seven recommendations related to: complaints process, complaints logging, complaints sign off, independent review of complaint and finding, complaints root cause, and lessons learned and actions. These recommendations have been implemented from 1st April 2021, and will be		

			Timescale	Action
	reflected in the review of complaints for 2021-22. • There were 36 complaints received in 2020-21 which required further investigation. The majority (77%) of them were from parents or solicitors representing parents. • As with previous years, SCRA received no direct complaints from children and young people. • All localities received at least one complaint that required further investigation. • Two complaints about Head Office were from members of the public and related to 　○ SCRA's use of pronouns in a response to a freedom of information request, and 　○ An image of a young person used on SCRA's Twitter page. Neither were upheld. • Five complaints related to the Victim information Service (VIS). None were upheld. • Of the 36 complaints that required further investigation (i.e. could not be resolved at the front line) – all except one have been closed. One is still outstanding as we are waiting on clarification from the complainant. **Issues arising during discussion:** • We will be seeking feedback from OHOV by asking hearing experienced young people to explain if they have been unhappy with the service in the past and if so, what caused them not to complain?		
12.	**Influencing Report 01 December 2020 – 01 June 2021** The Head of Practice & Policy introduced the Influencing Report outlining the key areas where SCRA has been able to be influential and apply its professional expertise, data and research to particular issues at a national level. **Noted:** Updates were provided in the following areas: • Pending Legislation and Parliamentary Work; 　○ The review of section 12 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 and section 42 of the Sexual		

		Timescale	Action
	Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 was published on 14th October 2019 - Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill 2020 - United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill 2020 - Public Petitions Committee - The Female Genital Mutilation (Protection and Guidance) (Scotland) Act 2020 - The Children (Scotland) Act 2020 - Vulnerable Witnesses (Criminal Evidence) Act 2019 - Children (Equal Protection from Assault) Act 2019 - The Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 - Forensic Medical Services (Victims of Sexual Offences) (Scotland) Act 2021 - The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 - Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 • Other Consultation Responses - Secure Care Pathways and Standards - Youth Justice Standards - Child Protection Guidance 2014 - Review - Exploring the feasibility of a survey measuring child abuse in the UK - Raising the Age of Referral to the Principal Reporter • Current partnership & collaborative work - New Joint Investigative Interview Training - Online Training – developed for North Lanarkshire - Child Trafficking and Exploitation - Restorative Approaches - Children's Rights • Additional Work - Scoping of External Training Delivery - Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) - Safeguarder Court Training - Children's Hearing – Training for schools / information for staff and pupils - Advocacy for Children's Hearings • Horizon Scanning - Other legislative Reform		

			Timescale	Action
	- o Independent Care Review - o Barnahus in Scotland - o Improving the Management of Sexual Offences Cases - o Victims Taskforce • Other Influencing Work and Training. **Issues arising during discussion:** • The report highlights the breadth and influence SCRA has. • A huge amount of work is being undertaken to ensure we take a good legislative position.			
13.	**Digital Strategy Review** The PR/CE introduced the paper recommending the Board; a) Note the contents of this report b) Note the progress been made in relation to CSAS transition c) Note the Digital Delivery Boards approval of the Product Acceptance Criteria and closure of the minimal viable product phase d) Note the Digital Aims and Objectives for 2021/22 e) Note the progress of the Standard Operating Model f) Note the conclusion and next steps of the Virtual Hearings pilot **Noted:** • Board members received a workshop briefing recently led by the Head of Strategy and Organisational Development and Data Manager on the good progress we are making in re-establishing and enhancing our routine data reporting and information management capabilities linked to CSAS. • The Programme Director has made a clear recommendation that the Product Acceptance Criteria has been met, the MVP delivered to CHS and SCRA in full and that final remedial work to the CHS reporting arrangements should be scoped out with the PAC. • CHS/SCRA will refine their detailed business planning and budget needs to deliver against the 2021/22 digital priorities within the context of each organisation. • The standard operating model is being developed alongside Localities and will be			

			Timescale	Action
		agreed as our core casework processing model, will be developed over time but will give SCRA a coherent and recognisable approach across all Localities, maximising the capabilities of the new CSAS system – an important step in both our optimisation and improvement programmes. • The virtual hearings pilot has run from January 2021 and will conclude at the end of June. A detailed evaluation has been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders, including children, young people and families, the results of which are significantly positive.		

14.		**Board Governance Review**
		The Governance Officer introduced the report asking the Board to note the outcome of the SCRA Board self-evaluation exercise.
		
		Noted:
		• Boards are required to conduct an annual self-evaluation exercise. As part of this Board Members have completed a checklists from the On Board Guide, Good Corporate Governance. This checklist is split into the following areas:
		  ○ Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships
		  ○ Effective Financial Management
		  ○ Standards of Behaviour
		• There were no significant areas of concern flagged up but there were areas where either clarification was sought or there was uncertainty around the current position and some of the terminology was questioned.
		• There was a recurring theme from respondents in relation to the questions on the range of policies and procedures in place. While it was assumed these were all in existence and fit for purpose, reassurance was sought around the following;
		  ○ Training
		  ○ Redundancy
		  ○ Grievance Procedures
		  ○ A clear understanding between the Board and senior staff of each other's responsibilities
		  ○ An understanding of the organisation's management ethos		

			Timescale	Action
		o An induction system for all staff, Board members and volunteers.		
15.	**Risk**			
15.1	**Strategic and Operational Risk Registers** The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers report for review by the Board. **Noted:** • SCRA's Revised Risk Management Policy was approved by the Board at its meeting in June 2019. The Board has responsibility for the system of internal control and risk management within SCRA. The Risk Management Policy will next be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee in February 2022 and taken to the March 2022 Board for approval. The Board charges the Audit and Risk Committee with overseeing the operation of the system of internal control and with ensuring robust risk management arrangements within SCRA, including reviewing the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers six-monthly. • The Risk Registers are kept under review by the Executive Management Team (EMT) and the Planning and Performance Network (PPN). The work of the service wide Risk Reference Group has now been integrated into the remit of the PPN and this change has been reflected in the updated Risk Management Policy. • The risk register format includes an assessment of both gross and net risk in order to demonstrate the impact of existing control mechanisms and to link the agreed organisational risk appetite. • The risks across both registers focus on the ongoing challenges in the delivery of a safe and effective service with the focus on capacity, resources and information governance. **Agreed:** • The Board approved the strategic and operational risk registers.		

		Timescale	Action
15.2	**New Risks** No new risks were identified.		18
	Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 22 September 2021 by MS Teams		

Board Action Log as at September 2021

Meeting/ Item	Action	Timescale	Owner	Comments	Status
Dec 20 **Overview of policies**	Consider a change to governance and approach to reporting format, which more clearly set out policies in play and review schedules	Dec 21	PA		Not yet due

SCRA Board Meeting Workplan September 2021

Business Item	Wed 22/9/21	Wed 15/12/21	Jan 22 TBC	Mar 22 TBC	Jun 22 TBC
Strategic/Corporate					
Policy & Influencing Report		✓			✓
Research Programme		✓			
Risk Register		✓			✓
Governance					
Audit Committee Minutes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Committee Annual Reports					✓
Nominations Committee Minutes				✓	✓
Board Committee Membership		✓			
SCRA Standing Orders Review (Next due 2022)					
Finance					
Budget Monitoring Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft Budget				✓	
Annual Report & Accounts	✓				
Financial Strategy	✓				
Planning					
Draft Corporate, Corporate Parenting & Business Plan	✓	✓ (BP)	✓	✓	
Draft Annual Report	✓				
Annual Workforce Planning Report				✓	
Communications Plan					✓
Performance					
Organisational Performance Report					
Data & Performance Report **	✓	✓		✓	✓
Operational					
Locality Performance Reviews					✓
Chief Executive's Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Complaints Review					✓

Business Item	Wed 22/9/21	Wed 15/12/21	Jan 22 TBC	Mar 22 TBC	Jun 22 TBC
Equalities Annual Report					✓
Environmental Annual Report				✓	
Overview of Policies Annual Report		✓			
Health & Safety Annual Report				✓	
Efficiency Report				✓	
Procurement Report					✓
Property Strategy					✓
Digital Strategy update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Review of Risk Policy (next due 2024)		✓			✓
Agile Policy	✓				
SCRA Framework Document (next due 2024)	✓				

* The Data and Performance report will replace the OPR whilst localities are working to the SCRA Covid-19 recovery plan and the transition to live in CSAS continues.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Chief Executives Report

Accountable Director:	Neil Hunter	**Date:**	22 September 2021

Recommendation:

1.   To note the Chief Executives update report

Reason for Report   At request of Board

Resource Implications   In line with revised budget

Strategy   In line with Corporate Plan

Equalities Duties   Indicate whether an Equalities and Human Rights Impact assessment (HRIA) is required and has been completed. Describe in the body of the report any issues/findings/adjustments that have been made.

Equalities   Impact   Assessment Required/Completed

☐   Yes

◼   No

Issues/action points:-

Consultation   EMT/Communications Manager/Information and Research Manager

Document Classification Open

1.   Staff Partnership

1.1   The National Partnership Forum met on the 10 August 2021. UNISON Branch have recently conducted an in depth consultation with its members focussing on a range of key issues being experienced by SCRA and its staff. These include implementation of agile working, introduction of new technology (CMS/RAVHI), review of job roles, learning and development, The Promise and many other contemporary challenges which have been very prominent across the whole of SCRA over the last 18 month/2 year period and which will dominate the next phase for our organisation.

1.2   This has proven to be a really rich and powerful exercise and UNISON have generously offered the findings of the consultation as part contribution to ongoing refinement of SCRA's strategic, operational and organisational priorities. The consultation offered a forum for staff across all grades and functions. Some of the key findings are summarised below:-

*   Concerns about job security and income reduction from support staff in particular
*   The need for training to take on any new 'front facing' support roles
*   Gaps in Reception support and capacity
*   Concerns about consistent application of flexible working to all staff and dealing with the implications of such a profound cultural change
*   Intensity and pace of change for staff during the pandemic and CSAS has been relentless – and the future environment promises more of the same
*   The need for ongoing training and learning to optimise CSAS. Additional training in 'digital' skills to reflect how reliant we are now on RAVHI software/hearing room hardware and making all the components work together for a high quality experience
*   Concerns about shifts of key tasks between support and Reporter roles, driven by the CSAS standard operating model
*   Multiple pressures from 'above and below' experienced by both Locality Support and Reporter Managers and significant increase in volume and pace of work and breadth of responsibility
*   Concerns about the future quality and variety of work
*   Uncertainty and concern about the implications of The Promise for our future work

1.3   SCRA and UNISON have agreed to a series of workshop sessions during the remainder of 2021 to ensure that our existing programmes of work being steered through the National Partnership Forum (agile working policy/learning and development planning/engagement and consultation/ CSAS stabilisation and training plans etc.) are sufficiently detailed and have the right breadth to ensure that members concerns can be comprehensively addressed.

2.   Strategic Partnerships

2.1   Childrens Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP)

2.1.1   The CHIP met last on 5th August and the agenda focussed on the ongoing Hearing System recovery work and the establishment of the Hearing System Review Group as part of the Promise. Whilst most of the information on the Review Group was for CHIP members information there was a clear desire to ensure that the contribution of CHIP members could be secured in informing the review as it develops. A clear relationship between the CHIP and the Review Group was seen as essential to ensure that professional expertise and experience could be appropriately played in.

2.2   Youth Justice Improvement Board (YJIB)

2.2.1   The YJIB will meet in mid-September and will consider a number of substantive reports including the closing report of the 16/17 year old review group, which has been led by SCRA and COPFS – in order to examine areas of change that will be required to support the raising of the age of referral to the Principal Reporter. The full report can be accessed here. The group has recommended the following changes need to be more fully considered by the next phase of the work in the run up to a Care and Justice Bill in 2022/23, led by Scottish Government:-

- Expansion of provisions to support and communicate with victims of offences – balancing rights and privacy
- The need to examine ways that provisions for some young people that need to extend beyond 18th birthday can be continued – perhaps on application to the Court
- Significant investment in the social work/GIRFEC workforce to considerably improve access to support and interventions for 16/17 year olds
- Change in language and terminology away from 'compulsion' and towards supervision and support
- Further definition in the duties of all corporate parents to provide support to children and young people – including for this group of older young people in particular, housing services/employment support and further education providers
- Increasing the capacity and capability of secure care in Scotland to ensure that we give effect to the aspiration that no young person under 18 is sentenced or remanded to YOI
- Expanding alternatives to secure accommodation whist comprehensively meeting the needs of those children age 16/17 who have significant support needs and promoting much more individualised, bespoke, trauma informed and therapeutic interventions with this group
- More effective support during transitions between secure accommodation and the community in line with the new national secure care standards so that all children can successfully make the transition out of secure and into positive destinations

2.2.2 SCRA expects to be able to contribute to the next phase of this work in the run up to the development of new legislation.

3.   Sponsor Team Liaison

3.1   Our most recent joint accountability meeting took place on 29 July and covered the range if standing items from finance to digital. A special finance workshop took place in late August to loom at the very rapidly changing operational and recovery needs of SCRA and to bottom out what support we might expect from Scottish Government is very dynamic and uncertain period. A series of briefing papers were provided to support this discussion on recovery, digital, policy and legislation – all laying out the challenges in the short medium and long term. A follow up discussion with the Director of Children and Families is planned for late September/early October.

3.2   The Chair and PR/CE met with the relatively new Director General for Education and Justice, Joe Griffin in early September. The discussion was upbeat and positive and a short introductory paper on SCRA, the work of the Childrens Reporter and the opportunities and challenges for SCRA and the Hearing system was provided.

4.   Programme For Government

4.1   The Scottish Government published its programme for Government (PfG) on 1st September followed by a debate in Parliament. Some of the key headlined most relevant to SCRA's work are shown below. The PfG document can be accessed here.:-

- Start work this year to ensure access to a "Bairns Hoose" by 2025: a child-friendly environment providing trauma informed recovery, improving children's experience of the criminal justice system, and preventing them from being re-traumatised.
- a new Human Rights Bill, which will include, as far as possible within devolved competence, incorporation of four UN human rights treaties into Scots Law. We will consult on the Bill in the coming year.
- £100 million over three years to support frontline services and focus on prevention of violence against women and girls from school onward.
- work to tackle racism in schools and communities, and refresh work to support refugees and asylum seekers.
- Creating a person-centred social care system, built on compassion, care and kindness
- Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-26 (March 2022)
- invest £4 million to support public services to consistently uphold children's rights.
- invest at least £500m over the life of this Parliament to create a Whole Family Wellbeing Fund, significantly reducing the number of children and young people who are living away from their families by 2030.

- at least 5% of all community-based health and social care spend in preventative whole family support measures that will enable us to create a Scotland where more children will only know care, compassion and love, and not a 'care system'
- safeguard young people within the youth justice system, supporting a presumption against under 18's in the Criminal Justice System, keeping them out of young offenders' institutes where possible and appropriate, while ensuring that victims receive the support they need. Bring forward a Children's Care and Justice Bill to support this transformation.
- Over the course of the Parliament, we will work with The Promise Scotland to undertake a redesign of the Children's Hearings System, to rethink the structures, processes and legislation that underpin it, and ensure that courts can facilitate child-friendly justice that upholds children's rights.
- New Human Rights Bill and a National Transitions to Adulthood Strategy and a Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Bill and a Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity Commissioner.

4.2   We will continue to work with our sponsor team to understand the full implications of PfG and its relevance and connection to SCRA's work, how we can work to secure appropriate opportunities to support change and improvement in the Hearing system as well as contributing to the wider momentum for sustained improvement across the totality of children's services.

5.   Keeping the Promise

5.1   A paper was brought to the June Board laying out the next steps for Keeping the Promise in SCRA, across two main strands – Reform and Improvement. It described the outcome of the meeting between the SCRA and CHS Boards and the agreed actions.

5.2   Since that meeting, both Chairs have met with Fiona Duncan from the Promise and have agreed the make-up, scope and remit of the proposed Core group of statutory partners – now the Hearings Systems Working Group.

5.3   The first meeting of this group was on 6th September and Suzi Vestri from SCRAs Board and Alistair Hogg, Head of Practice and Policy were both present – representing SCRA.

5.4   Recruitment of two Promise posts is underway – a Programme Manager to oversee delivery and governance, and an Operational Change Lead to link the Promise team to the localities ensuring clear lines of communication and implementation – this role will also oversee operational change more widely through further roll out of the Standard Operating model, digital developments etc. and the link through to the Promise team gives a very clear 'sieve' for all work to be filtered through.

5.5   The Keeping the Promise team have been developing the Route map and across the areas of improvement have identified themes, activities and priority actions for 2021-24 aligned with the Promise Change Plan.

5.6   Discussion papers have been developed by project leads covering – Participation, Hearings in a virtual environment, inclusive service delivery, and Better Hearings and, together with the OHOV forty calls to action and of course the asks of the Promise, have been used to develop the improvement route map.

5.7   The Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting strategy remains the key delivery mechanism for this work. Key areas of focus for year one are proposed as**:**

- Shortened reports for Hearings – 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
- Child Friendly CSOs – 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. In partnership with CELSIS and Our Hearings Our Voice
- Preparation for your Hearing – Options, Choices and Participation. This is an area of work that is just starting but that has a lot of evidence and recommendation to build from. This will see Children and Young people have a far more personal interaction with the Reporter and enable the sense of a bespoke Hearing. This work will look at:-
  o   new improved introductory letters from the Reporter – explaining who they are and what their role is, it will involve 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,
  o   it will incorporate 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.
  o   consider methods of participation and explore video content as well as more creative options to participate. We are looking to run this as a test for change in two localities this year.
- 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, victims, rights around offending and around secure care. Working in collaboration with CYCJ, Staf, and others to ensure consistent messaging and clear links across.
- 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 early stages and requires to be scrutinised in terms of practice and operational enablement.
- Staff awareness raising and training on UNCRC and in particular Article 12 (the right to express views and have then fully considered) through a series of workshops

- Staff awareness raising and training on trauma – we are working with NES in relation to taking forward this programme - understanding trauma and its impact, vicarious trauma, what trauma informed practice is and looks like and how to become a trauma informed workforce/place/service.
- Exploration of funding 'Shannon's Box', a box of keepsakes given to every child that is taken into care to provide them with a sense of connection, companionship and belonging.
- The language of care, working with CHS and Our Hearings Our Voice, a group has been set up to look at recommendations around language from both the Promise and forty calls to action. The work of this group will help inform the Options, Choices and Participation work along with work more generally about the information that we provide and how we communicate. I will seek to recognise the areas that are not about language per se, more a lack of information making it feel inaccessible.

5.8   On top of these priorities, the Better Hearings work is being re-visited, refreshed and re-established in preparation for localities being in a position to move forward with improvement work at the start of 2022 when recovery has become manageable and the agenda can start to turn towards this at a local level. This work takes in the learning from previous work, from what we learned last year working through lockdown – and the opportunities that it presented, what we need to have in place to offer an inclusive service as well as recognising the work of the Options, Choices and Participation work.

5.9   In preparation for this the Operational Change lead will be working with the project team to get underneath the asks and the priority setting that will translate over into the standard operating model, partnership discussions and local tests for change.

5.10   Progress in the style of a performance report will be brought to the December Board laying out the route map, activity, timescales and progress.

6.   Update from the Press and Communications Team – September 2021

6.1   SCRA website

6.1.1   With traffic to our external website continuing to increase, we are constantly looking to improve the layout and content. On Global Accessibility Awareness Day (Thursday 20 May) we launched a revamped Accessibility section on the website. The information has been split into different sections with information for visitors to our site with different needs. In addition, we have created a new section which provides information for people applying to work with SCRA who may require some adjustments at interview or once appointed.

6.1.2   The changes are in addition to the website's accessibility tool which we have had on the site for several years. The ReciteMe tool provides additional functionality to visitors with different needs. It includes text to speech functionality, dyslexia software, an interactive dictionary, a translation tool with over 100 languages and it works across all devices. It also has features which can help visitors with autism, ADHD and epilepsy.

6.1.3   Following on from this, in June, we launched new wellbeing sections on our website for children and young people. The new sections include: recorded meditation sessions and mindfulness colouring in sheets which can be printed off. Children and young people can also try the emoji generated juke box FeelsFm produced by See Me. There's also links to lots more ideas from Hearings-experienced young people.

6.1.4   In August we launched the first of our new monthly web series 'Spotlight on...'. The aim is to shine the spotlight areas of our work that visitors to our website might not have heard of. The first piece focused on Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments. The second one posted on 13 September, featured our work to protect personal information.

6.2   Communications and accessibility

6.2.1   A number of pieces of work have been launched in recent months. In June a BSL version of SCRA's British Sign Language Action Plan was published which included sub titles and audio. We also have a short video about the role of SCRA with BSL, audio and sub titles. Further work is planned including a short BSL clip on referral to the Reporter and how to make a complaint.

6.2.2   In June, two visual story guides for children were launched. The first is for children and young people participating in a virtual Hearing. The second is a pilot visual information guide for children and young people attending a face to face Children's Hearing in Glasgow. The guide takes children step by step through their Hearing, right from arriving outside the Hearings centre in Bell Street. It is hoped the guide will be amended for other Hearing centres.

6.3   Siblings rights

6.3.1   In July to mark the introduction of new participation rights for siblings in Children's Hearings, we developed a communications plan. This included a latest news item on our website, new pages in the children and young people section of our website, a cartoon animation aimed at young children explaining the changes and a social media pack. In addition, we led on the communications for the Stand Up For Siblings partnership which included a number of news items and blogs published on the Stand Up For Siblings website which SCRA's Press and Communications Team continues to host and manage. We also joined an online session with the Minister and young people to mark the changes. We continue to be an active member of Stand Up For Siblings and are arranging a series of webinars for early October.

6.4   The Promise

6.4.1   With the announcement of the new working group to oversee the redesign process for The Children's Hearings System, The Promise Scotland led on the external communication with support from SCRA and CHS. They gave an exclusive to the Sunday Post. We provided quotes from Suzie Vestri and Alistair Hogg. An in-depth and largely positive article was published on Sunday 15

August. In addition, we showed our support by posting a news item on our website and on social media. Internally, we issued a coming soon news item on Connect on the Friday prior to the article appearing (13 August) and we followed this up with more information on the Sunday on Connect.

6.5   Communications and inclusion

6.5.1   SCRA has developed an information guide for staff which outlines how to use inclusive language to avoid biases, slang or expressions that excludes certain groups based on gender or sexual orientation. The guide is aimed at all staff and will be launched during National Inclusion Week from Monday 27 September.

6.5.2   Marking Pride 2021 - this year with COVID-19 restrictions ongoing, LGBT Youth Scotland encouraged people and organisations to hold Pride Picnics during June which is traditionally Pride Month. SCRA held four picnics in Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling. We promoted these on social media and included a special feature with photographs in the summer National Reporter.

6.5.3   International Non Binary People's Day took place on Wednesday 15 July. To mark the day, SCRA issued a video recording on Connect to highlight the importance of language in particular when communicating with non-binary people. In the clip, SCRA's Inclusion and Diversity Manager, Indiya Kurlus talked to one trans/non-binary young person about their journey and experiences. The feedback from staff was extremely positive and we would like to say a massive thank you to Calder for helping us raise awareness.

7.   Research and Information Team update

7.1   Data collection and interviews for our research on **children under 12 years in residential care** are completed. In June 2021, SCRA submitted evidence on the use of residential care for children under 12 to the UN Day of General Discussion (DGD) on Children's Rights and Alternative Care. In August we submitted a paper to the Scottish Journal of Residential Childcare for publication in its next edition. This paper [Nixon, C. & Henderson, G. 'The provision of residential care to children under the age of 12: how is it used and is it effective?'] reports on trends in the use of residential care for younger children, and identifies the characteristics of and outcomes for these children.

7.2   In December 2020, the Board gave approval for SCRA to conduct a programme of research exploring the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic upon the operation of the Children's Hearings System**. The research will focus on virtual Hearings, contact and maintaining relationships, stability of placements, and the emergency legislation. The research team met with the senior management teams of SCRA and CHS on 12th August to discuss the research questions, how they sit within the strategic aims of SCRA and CHS, and to gain an understanding of decisions made over the course of the pandemic. On 28th August, Our Hearings Our Voice (OHOV) took part in a similar discussion on the research questions and scope of the research, and also on how OHOV

members would like to be involved it in. These discussions will form the basis of the design of the research programme.

7.3   Analyses of the data collected on 400 children's cases for our **research on offending by 12 to 15 year olds** is almost completed. Those done so far cover exploration of: children's backgrounds and adversity and trauma; harmful behaviours by children and by others to children; victims of offending by children;, offences and interventions, jointly reported offences; and serious offences committed by children. Work is on-going on timelines, case studies, gender differences, and cases retained by the Procurator Fiscal. Preliminary findings will be presented to the Age of Criminality Group on Data and Research in September.

7.4   A report on the **evaluation of OHOV** is being drafted and available by end September. During July and August, interviews and focus groups were carried out with OHOV members, SCRA and CHS senior managers and Board members, and OHOV staff. A survey of CHIP members produced 75 valid responses from a range of organisations and roles.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Draft Financial Strategy

1

Accountable Director:	Chief Executive/Principal Reporter	**Date:**	22 September 2021
Report Author:	Head of Finance and Resources		

Recommendations:

1. **To approve the updated Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27.**

2. **To note the updated assessment of revenue and capital funding needs (Appendices 1 and 2).**

Reason for Report: For approval

Resource Implications: **Outwith approved budgets**

Strategy: **Outwith approved plans**

Consultation: **Executive Management Team**

Equalities Duties: **An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.**

Document Classification: **Not Protectively Marked**

1. **Introduction and Background**

   1.1   In June 2020 the Board approved an updated Financial Strategy 2021/22-2025/26. In quarter three of 2020/21 the SCRA Chair and SCRA senior management engaged with the Minister and Sponsor Team to influence the outcome of the 2020 Scottish Government Budget process which set the funding allocation for 2021/22. In March 2021 the Board approved the 2021/22 Budget and noted updated five year Financial Plan figures.

   The purpose of this report is to present an updated Financial Strategy for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 following a review by the Head of Finance & Resources in conjunction with EMT. The Strategy is essentially a 5 year Financial Plan based on funding requirements and includes a number of funding scenarios with potential options to address funding gaps.

   1.2   The updated Financial Strategy is set out from section 2. The Strategy will enable consideration to be given as to how resources should be allocated to supporting the activities in the last year of the current three year Corporate Plan 2020-23 and the next three year Corporate Plan.

   1.3   As a result of the review no changes are proposed to the Financial Strategy Objectives and the other sections of the Strategy have been updated and refreshed.

   Financial Strategy 2022 - 2027

1. **Development of the Financial Strategy**

   1.1   In common with many public bodies SCRA faces challenges in developing a sustainable service delivery model in the face of funding constraints, year to year funding settlements and multiple emerging operational and policy related pressures. The ability to plan resources over a multi-year period would be welcome although there seems little prospect of multi-year funding settlements in the short to medium term.

   Developing a Financial Strategy should contribute to SCRA's sustainability, help in quantifying future funding and be an enabler of the Corporate Plan.

2. **Financial Strategy Objectives**

   2.1   Three financial strategy objectives identified last year remain appropriate:

   Objective 1 – To achieve long term financial sustainability.

   We will ensure Corporate Plan objectives and planned resources are appropriately aligned.

   Objective 2 – To take a medium to long term view of investment in our key resources and capabilities and new developments.

Investment in key resources such as staff, digital and property will be with a view to building sustainability and resilience. The strategy should include scope for investment in new developments which will improve future performance and reduce annual running costs.

Objective 3 - To align the Financial Strategy with other strategies.

The Financial Strategy, delivery strategies (Corporate Parenting, Practice & Policy Strategy, Participation and Engagement Strategy) and resource strategies (People Strategy, Digital & Information Technology Strategy Finance & Physical Resources Plan) are inter-dependent.

3. Strategic Environment

3.1 Covid-19 and recovery

Like other public services, SCRA moved from an in-person to a remote operating model in response to the lockdown in March 2020. To ensure a continued service to children and young people in the Children's Hearings System services pivoted from face to face delivery to virtual hearings.

Staff were asked to work very differently with new and scarce technology, whilst at the same time they were managing home-schooling and other caring arrangements that they had very little control over. SCRA staff kept offices open from the start of the pandemic leading a printing strategy to ensure that all hearing participants had the necessary hearings paperwork to allow hearings to proceed.

Since Summer 2020 SCRA has made significant changes to its operating model, including changes to staffing profile as a result of recruitment of temporary Reporters and Assistant Reporters, deployment of CSAS and the Standard Operating Model, introduction of an Agile Working Policy, introduction of a new Virtual Hearings platform (RHAVI), installing new technology in hearing rooms to support remote attendance and changes to the estate to accommodate physical distancing.

Whilst there is increased complexity in the work that SCRA teams are doing now compared with pre-pandemic there have been some savings during this period particularly in travel and subsistence costs and hearing driven costs - printing, postage and stationery and court costs. Some of these savings will continue through 2021/22 although it is expected that travel and subsistence costs will rise at some point as will court costs.

It has been assessed by EMT as critical to retain the temporary staffing resources beyond March 2022 in the turbulent and uncertain environment SCRA faces. SCRA has invested significant time and resources in the induction and training of temporary staff, it is estimated that it takes approximately three months training, support and induction to impact on service delivery which equates to an average of around £14k per recruit.

If the temporary staffing resources were retained throughout 2022/23 they would be deployed as a flexible resource to:

- Support localities to manage any residual recovery issues;
- Prepare for upcoming legislative changes;
- Enable equalisation of workload issues; and
- Provide additional resources for more complex hearings and court work.

These resources will provide stability during the transition period out of a pandemic and provide capacity to extract staff to prepare for a very different legislative landscape as well as avoiding the obvious 'cliff edge' of a March 2022 reduction in capacity.

3.2 Legislative change

The following planned legislative changes will impact on SCRA over the period of this Financial Strategy:

- Children (Scotland) Act 2020 – this Act introduces new rights for siblings including a duty on children's hearings to consider contact between siblings, and other provisions that will impact on hearings - the right to request attendance by remote means, the ability to require an individual to attend by remote means, and the requirement to provide the LA with all hearing papers.
- UNCRC Incorporation – the Bill, which has passed Scottish Parliament, means all public services must act compatibly with the UNCRC articles. SCRA is conducting a full analysis of our practice, policies and procedures, to ensure they are compliant. This is likely to highlight some changes that may be required in SCRA's practice and operational delivery to become fully rights based,includingthe need for more choice in hearings to improve participation. This in turn will create more complexity and labour intensity in the arrangement of hearings.
- Raising the age of referral to include all 16 and 17 year olds in the Hearing System – it is Scottish Government's intention to raise the age of referral to 18 and for any ground of referral. It is anticipated that this will lead to a significant increase in referrals, and also an expectation that we will be handling cases that have a different dynamic and complexity. In relation to offence grounds, there will be a rise in the number of more serious offences that will need to be proved by the Reporter – the kind of cases that may be prosecuted in a High Court and which would currently merit prosecution by an Advocate Depute.
- Age of Criminal Responsibility Act – this Act raises the age at which children in Scotland can be held responsible for committing a crime to 12 – previously it was 8. This has implications for the grounds that are available to children's reporters, and also contains complex expectations in relation to how the police interview and interact with children under 12. The Act also requires the age of criminal responsibility to be reviewed, and the expectation is that this will rise to a higher age. This review must be completed within 3 years of the enactment of the Act. There will be an impact in relation to the extending the range and scope of services provide to victims of the harmful behaviour of children under the age of criminal responsibility.

It is anticipated that these developments will result in:

- an increase in referrals for 16 and 17 year olds;
- an increase in number of hearings as a result of the increase in referrals
- an increase in court activity – more referrals will translate into more proofs, but it is also likely that the older age group will be more likely to challenge both grounds and hearing decisions and therefore there will be more appeals and challenging court activity and leading evidence in proofs
- more complex and time consuming arrangement of hearings;
- more administrative support in relation to all of the above, but particularly around hearing arrangement as well as delivering on our support and quality aspirations for children and young people;
- court challenge in relation to alleged breach of UNCRC rights; and
- greater expectation in relation to victims of offences committed by young people.

3.3   The Promise

The Promise has made a number of recommendations for the Childrens Hearings System. Some of the most significant of these are:-

- A focus on children's rights throughout the hearing system, including that children age under 18 be defined as children and taken outwith, wherever possible the criminal system.
- That the hearing system should shrink and specialise in line with securing significant investment in supporting children and their families in their communities.
- That the principles of Kilbrandon should be refreshed and updated.

At this early stage it is assumed that as a result of the implementation of The Promise referrals to the reporter will generally decrease over the next eight years (albeit this will be in significant part offset by an increase in the age of referral to 18) however the degree of complexity of referrals will increase the labour intensity of Reporter assessment, investigations, information gathering and decision making.

4.   Expenditure Profile and Financial Position

4.1   The 2020/21 revenue and capital outturns were under budget with some planned capital projects slipping into 2021/22. The revenue underspend has been carried forward but a review will take place as part of the autumn budget review to agree how much of the additional funding discussed with Scottish Government is required.

SCRA's funding comes largely from one source, Grant-in-Aid (GiA) received from Scottish Government which represents approximately 98% of total income. Income from property leases, secondments and shared services accounts for approximately 2% of total income.

4.2   The external auditors have highlighted that in recent years the balance on SCRA's general fund has reduced significantly, reaching a negative position of £9.577m in 2020/21. This position has arisen despite SCRA breaking even or underspending on operating expenditure against budget each year and is due mainly to significant non-cash pension adjustments. There are no immediate implications arising from the general fund deficit as the letter received in 2020 from Scottish Government addresses concerns in this area.

5.   2021/22 Budget

5.1   Initial planning for the 2021/22 budget was based on standstill cash (£24.910m) and in October 2021 SCRA's revenue requirement increased from £25.708m to £26.730m resulting in a budget gap of around £1.8m which was closed by budget pressures funding and 2020/21 carry forward.

5.2   In the 2021/22 budget net staff costs of £21.2m (after deducting the savings target) account for 78% of net revenue budget. Property costs of almost £3.1m account for a further 11% and IT costs of around £1.6m a further 6%. Other administrative costs amount to £1.5m offset by income of £0.4m.

5.3   Operational budgets at £16.5m represent 61% of SCRA's revenue budget. However this figure excludes around £4.9m for property costs, IT infrastructure/software and legal expenses which are not apportioned to operational teams and are instead included in Head Office budgets.

5.4   In relation to staffing establishment as at November 2020 the reporter posts (assistant reporters, reporters and senior practitioners) accounted for 44% of FTE posts with front line support posts (receptionists and support administrators) accounting for 30% of FTE posts.

5.5   SCRA's reporters and front line support staff are supported in their statutory functions by two Senior Operational Managers, Locality Reporter and Locality Support Managers and a range of Head Office services which comprise key non statutory Head Office functions: Communications & Engagement, Practice, Research & Information and Data. All of these services provide benefits and savings to a wide range of partners in the hearings system and wider justice sector. In addition Head Office provides HR, Finance, IT, Property, Planning and Performance services to operational teams..

5.6   The budget includes a 1.5% savings target which it is expected will be mainly met from delayed filling of vacant staffing posts. Whilst efforts to identify efficiencies will continue the scope for significant further savings in any area of SCRA's budget is limited and so it is not assumed in the Financial Strategy that efficiencies can bridge future funding gaps.

6.   Forecast Budgets 2022/23 to 2026/27

6.1   The Financial Plan at Appendix 1 reflects SCRA's assessment of revenue needs over the five years from 2022/23. The figures show required year on year budget increases of 6% in 2022/23, 4% in 2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27.

6.2 The pay bill remains the predominant financial commitment in SCRA. The updated Financial Plan reflects pay uplifts in line with the current Scottish Government Pay Policy plus annual progression and any non-consolidated awards. The cost of settling pay awards has doubled in recent years since the Scottish Government eased pay restraint. The Plan doesn't reflect the cost of the newly announced national increase which could amount to £140k next year.

6.3 Employer's pension contribution rates are set for 2021/22 to 2023/24 following the most recent triennial valuation. The next triennial valuation will take place in 2023 and set rates for 2024/25 to 2026/27. The forward budgets assume pension costs increase by around 0.5% of staff costs year on year. No significant changes in employer national insurance rates or apprenticeship levy are assumed.

6.4 Managing the cost of the workforce is balanced by managing the workforce profile including overall numbers and types of roles. In terms of staff numbers the Financial Plan assumes SCRA's requirement for additional staff recruited in 2020/21 will continue beyond 2021/22 as a result of the forthcoming legislative and policy changes.

6.5 The last (small) round of voluntary severance took place in March 2020. The 2021/22 Budget Plans do not include any voluntary severance proposals. Efforts will continue over the period of the Strategy to shape the workforce to meet ever changing operational needs and financial challenges.

6.6 The Financial Plan reflects no significant change in the property portfolio over the next five years. Opportunities for rationalisation have largely been exploited and the focus in the next few years will be on improving hearings facilities including the embedding of new technology to improve quality, engagement and efficiency. It is expected that the referral of 16 and 17 year olds to the reporter may in due course place more pressure on SCRA's estate leading to a need to increase the space for hearing facilities or at least reconfigure space allocated to hearings.

6.7 The Digital Programme Director expects IT support costs to increase year on year by around 0.5% to reflect continued investment in Digital and will remain at a higher level over the long term as SCRA has moved away from ownership of IT hardware to a rental based model. SCRA is now more exposed to price fluctuation in IT running costs and this has been visible recently in the significant increase in charges from ITECS.

6.8 It is expected that current income levels of around £449k from shared services, secondments and rental income, will be difficult to maintain and a more prudent set of assumptions has income falling to around £200k by the end of the Plan.

6.9 The main changes to assumptions since the Financial Plan figures were presented to the Board in March are set out in the following table. The continuation of temporary staff and additional IT running costs have been raised with Sponsor Team, the other items are new and have arisen from recent discussions in EMT. The proposed investments directly link to key organisational priorities - aligning job roles to new service demands, driving a very significant L&D programme, responding to The Promise and building IT capacity to ensure technical support as staff embrace the challenge of delivering services digitally.

Pressure	Budget (£k)	Comment
Temporary staffing	966	Continue temporary staffing beyond March 2022.
Support Assistant (Reception)	115	Potential Job Evaluation outcome.
The Promise	125	Full time Programme Manager and Operational Change Lead to create required capacity to Keep the Promise.
Learning & Development	77	Increased management capacity to lead L&D Manager to support organisational change and improvement.
Digital Team re-structure	149	2 Modern Apprentices and two internal secondments to increase capacity in the first phase of CSAS development.
IT running costs	134	0.5% of operating spend pa.
Total	**1,566**	

When these pressures are added to the March 2021 funding figure of £26.9m the total requirement is £28.5m which is £3.3m higher than the SCRA baseline of £25.16m.

7. Savings and Efficiencies

7.1 SCRA has delivered significant revenue savings since the high point of revenue funding in 2009/10. Staffing reduced by 18% over 5 rounds of voluntary severance delivering over £3m of recurring savings. This is over and above significant reductions in property (12%) and IT costs (56%) since 2008/09.

7.2 The Financial Plan includes a 1.5% per annum savings target over the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 delivering around £350k of cost savings each year. This target will be challenging to achieve year after year and the main impact is typically on the provision of adequate staffing cover. In recent years 2% seems to have been largely achievable, although it is not without pain. Anything above that level would be unlikely to be achieved across the board. The Business Managers, along with members of the Budget Efficiencies Group (BEG), are continuously looking for efficiencies, recent examples include postage, printing, and MFD costs. One of the biggest challenges we have for 22/23 is our ability to release staff to new priorities – such as Keeping the Promise, without having to backfill the posts and roles they come from (particularly Locality roles). This reflects the highly stressed and pressurised operational environment we are currently in, workforce fatigue and the consequential impacts of a febrile period of change (pandemic crisis response and CSAS) and the prolongation of the impact of the pandemic much longer than anyone could have anticipated.

7.3 As around 75% of SCRA's revenue budget is committed to staff costs it is clear that if significant savings are required to offset any future funding reductions the impact will fall largely on SCRA's establishment. Workforce Planning will continue to be focused on the mix and deployment of skills across SCRA.

7.4 It is not assumed that the Digital Strategy will deliver significant cash savings although it will, over time enable decreases in some administration costs in SCRA (due to electronic transfer of Panel Papers) allowing capacity to be released to higher value activities, such as direct pre-hearing support to young people and other quality corporate parenting initiatives.

7.5 The impact of the pandemic can be seen on some hearings driven expenditure lines in 2020/21 as illustrated in the following table:

	2019/20 outturn £k	2020/21 outturn £k	2021/22 budget £k
Travel & subsistence	253	38	165
Printing, stationery, photocopying	168	96	174
Postages	331	144	278
Hearing costs	226	138	188

7.6 During the course of 2020/21 and early 2021/22 a Standard Operating Model (SOM) has been developed to support the best and consistent use of CSAS across the organisation. This includes clear instructions on case processing, CSAS user guides, FAQs and hints for its best use. However the concept of a Standard Operating Model is one that requires additional ongoing development to remain dynamic and encompass more than case processing in CSAS. The next phase will focus on service delivery and effective office management. Additionally, with the developments expected around implementing the Promise there is a need to support operational change as new ways of working will be introduced to meet the organisations policy objectives.

7.7 SCRA has already realised substantial savings from reducing the size of the estate. The process continues with a drive to reduce vacant space, become more energy efficient, reduce travel costs and develop space in a way that supports a more agile workforce.

7.8 SCRA secured capital funding from Scottish Government (£50k) for hearing room adaptations to provide bigger hearing rooms as part of the organisation's response to Covid-19. Where enlargement of rooms was not possible Locality staff, supported by IT and Business Managers, tested options to link rooms and in some cases Locality Managers took hearings to partners premises.

7.9 SCRA's Procurement Officers and Contracts Review Group continue to scrutinise contracts with a view to challenging demand for services, delivering better value for money from key contracts and reducing costs. Where possible SCRA seeks to utilise Scottish Government Frameworks or collaborate with other public bodies to secure the benefits of economies of scale.

7.10 By working closely with partners SCRA can secure better use of resources by removing unnecessary processes, by using more efficient methods to transfer accurate information and by minimising delay in the system. SCRA and partners are supported in this type of activity by the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) which brings a multi-agency perspective to the work of the hearing system.

7.11 The COVID-19 emergency resulted in the rapid introduction of virtual hearings. An evaluation of the current virtual hearing model will inform how this service offering develops over the coming years delivering greater choice for children young people, families and all partners.

7.12 SCRA provides shared services (Finance, HR, IT) to CHS and collaborates with CHS on internal audit tender exercises. SCRA leases vacant space to a range of public bodies and recently SCRA was approached by the Scottish Courts & Tribunal Service about accommodation requirements for vulnerable witnesses.

8. Scenario Planning

8.1 Changing some of the key assumptions in the forward budget figures has a significant impact on the future budget deficits.

GiA
Changing the GiA assumption by + or – 1% or 3% from 2021/22 onwards has the following impact on the forecast deficits:

Deficit	2021/22 £k	2022/23 £k	2023/24 £k	2024/25 £k	2025/26 £k	2026/27 £k
Standstill*	0	3,326	4,463	5,636	6,847	8,098
-1%	0	3,578	4,964	6,383	7,838	9,331
-3%	0	4,081	5,950	7,833	9,733	11,652
+1%	0	3,074	3,957	4,874	5,825	6,815
+3%	0	2,571	2,931	3,303	3,689	4,091

* assuming standstill funding at 2021/22 level of GiA (£25.16m)

Each 1% increase in the pay award to all staff earning over £36.5k costs over £100k per annum (based on 2020/21 scales).

A 1% increase in the employer pension contribution rate will mean an increase in staff costs of over £150k per annum.

9. Capital

9.1 The June 2020 Financial Strategy included an assessment of capital requirements from 2021/22 to 2025/26. The figures are shown at Appendix 2 are updated, extended for a further year and aligned to a £1.9m flat cash assumption. The figures reflect two main programmes: Property and Digital. The Property programme is focused on investment in the current, diverse estate and includes funds for new developments.

9.2 In relation to Digital and in particular ongoing investment in CSAS beyond Minimum Viable Product (MVP) the Head of IT estimates that SCRA and CHS will need around 3% of gross expenditure to ensure continued investment in the new digital infrastructure and services and regular technology refreshes, this gives a figure of £800k for SCRA in 2022/23 rising to £925k by the end of the five year plan.

9.3   Continued investment in SCRA's estate is critical as it is increasingly viewed as the medium through which SCRA can improve customer care and deliver digital services. The Head of Property will develop an outline five year property programme, informed by likely policy and operational changes and projected staffing profiles. Two significant projects are scheduled to be delivered in 2022/23, Stirling and Hamilton, which will deliver bigger, future proofed hearing rooms as well a as significant smarter working benefits at both locations. Smarter working, agile working, digital delivery and environmental policy are likely to be key drivers in the five year property programme.

9.4   Linking the Digital strategy and the improved estate agenda is the concept of digital hearings. It is expected that virtual and hybrid hearings will continue to be part of SCRA's service offering beyond the pandemic and work is underway to develop the most efficient and effective model of delivery.

10   Service change and resilience

10.1   The Financial Plan assumes the likelihood of significant change in SCRA's operating environment over the next three years. The policy and operational developments outlined in section 3.1 above all have the potential to impact on referrals with an expectation that complexity will increase. The potential addition of 16 and 17 year olds into the Hearing system is likely to be towards the middle part of the five year period. Stability in staffing complement and performance over the next few years would provide an essential backdrop against which to respond to these policy and operational challenges, implement the next phase of the Digital Strategy and focus on driving up service quality.

10.2   The core reporter role will sit within a structure that ensures maximum support to postholders from senior practitioners and assistant reporters. The Review of Assistant Reporter Role led to an increase in the number of these roles and consideration is being given to where these roles can deliver the maximum contribution. The core support role is also changing and there is a determination to work with the group of support staff and Locality Support Managers, in partnership with Unison, to shape this role to meet the new demands of delivering a rights based service to children and young people post CSAS and the pandemic.

11   Links to other strategies

11.1   The link between the financial strategy and other key strategies is critical in that the financial strategy is concerned with delivering the resources for the organisation's strategic plans. As the medium to long term strategies are inter-dependent it will not be possible to successfully deliver the strategies if they are not properly resourced. Equally it will not be possible to deliver a successful financial strategy without an effective people strategy.

11.2   The SCRA Corporate Plan 2020/23 introduced three key organisational outcomes – Care, Connect and Protect with all strategies sitting below and playing into the delivery of these. The strategies include Practice & Policy, Finance, People, Communications & Engagement, Operational and Digital. Four themes of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (also now a strategy), Corporate Parenting, Environmental Impact and Quality underpin the Corporate Plan.

11.3 Corporate Parenting will continue to be an organisational driver in how we deliver our service and is interwoven through all of the strategies with more detail set out in the Corporate Parenting Plan 202-/23.

12   Financial Risks

12.1 The financial risks routinely captured in the SCRA Strategic Risk Register concern the affordability of LGPS employer costs and the affordability of a pay offer in line with SG pay policy.

12.2 The external auditors previously identified a financial sustainability risk relating to the negative position of the general fund. This was mitigated in discussion with the external auditors, Sponsor Team and Scottish Government Finance. The auditors focus part of their review work on financial planning arrangements and reviewing financial monitoring reports to confirm the expected final outturn positions at year end. As part of the 2020/21 audit they identified the need for SCRA to review the assumptions and projections within the financial strategy to ensure that they continue to support delivery of the Corporate Plan 2020-2023 in the post Covid-19 environment.

12.3 Regular reporting to the Board has confirmed that SCRA continues to operate within the resources allocated by Scottish Government. The general fund position is mainly impacted by the volatility and late notification of pension scheme costs.

12.4 It is anticipated that Covid-19 will have significant consequences for public spending well into the future leading to increasing pressures on public spending, and more uncertainty in the Scottish budget. One year budget settlements are likely to continue making medium term planning more challenging and limit our ability to reshape and refocus the organisation in a planned way to respond to the changing operational policy environment. The rapidity and intensity of change in the last 18 months and the subsequent cumulative fatigue and exhaustion in the workforce are also significant, albeit transitional features.

13   Conclusions

13.1 Financial sustainability over the term of the Financial Strategy will require continued in year support from Scottish Government for new and unforeseen budget pressures, around 4% increases in annual revenue funding, delivery of efficiencies from major programmes, clear outcomes from the work on service change and resilience, continuing capital investment in infrastructure and ongoing vigilance from budget holders, supported by Head Office business partners.

13.2 The next 18 months will see a transition from pandemic recovery to business as usual at the same time as preparing the organisation and wider hearings system for the significant changes in the policy and legislative landscape that will take place over the course of the five year Financial Plan.

13.3 Discussions are underway with Sponsor Team to ensure a good, shared understanding of SCRA's corporate and financial objectives for 2022/23 and the period to 2026/27. It is hoped this will build on the very productive dialogue that led to the increased revenue funding in 2021/22.

14   Recommendations

14.1   To approve the updated Financial Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27.

14.2   To note the updated assessment of revenue and capital funding needs (Appendices 1 and 2).

Previous Papers:
Draft Financial Strategy, SCRA(JUN20)8
Draft Budget 2021/22, SCRA(MAR21)6

Appendix 1

SCRA FINANCIAL PLAN 2022/23 TO 2026/27

		year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5
NARRATIVE	Budget 2021/22	Forecast Budget 2022/23	Forecast Budget 2023/24	Forecast Budget 2024/25	Forecast Budget 2025/26	Forecast Budget 2026/27
Staff numbers average in year	**441**	**450**	**450**	**450**	**450**	**450**
	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k
Staff Costs	19,855	21,551	22,771	23,668	24,596	25,557
Pay Remit (SG current Pay Policy)	630	754	797	828	861	895
Employers pension rate increases (0.5%)	0	0	100	100	100	100
COVID-19 Recovery Plan	1,002					
New pressures		466				
Staff Costs	**21,487**	**22,771**	**23,668**	**24,596**	**25,557**	**26,552**
Property Costs	**3,096**	**3,096**	**3,158**	**3,221**	**3,285**	**3,351**
Property changes		62	63	64	66	67
Property Costs	**3,096**	**3,158**	**3,221**	**3,285**	**3,351**	**3,418**
Travel & Subsistence	**180**	**229**	**229**	**229**	**229**	**229**
Supplies and Services						
Equipment & Maint Contracts	47	47	47	47	47	47
Printing, Stationery & Photocopying	174	174	174	174	174	174
Postages	259	259	259	259	259	259
SCOTS	740	740	740	740	740	740
Software	888	888	888	888	888	888
Legal fees	160	160	160	160	160	160
Hearing costs	191	191	191	191	191	191
Other supplies and services	297	297	297	297	297	297
Revenue implications of digital projects	0	134	274	418	567	721
Supplies and Services	**2,756**	**2,890**	**3,030**	**3,174**	**3,323**	**3,477**
Unfunded Pensions	179	179	179	179	179	179
Savings Target	(289)	(342)	(355)	(369)	(383)	(398)
Income	(449)	(399)	(349)	(299)	(249)	(199)
TOTAL	**26,960**	**28,486**	**29,623**	**30,796**	**32,007**	**33,258**
Annual increase in revenue funding required	**0**	**1,526**	**1,137**	**1,173**	**1,211**	**1,251**
GiA increase	**0.0%**	**6%**	**4%**	**4%**	**4%**	**4%**

14

Appendix 2

FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 TO 2026/27
CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS

15

Programme	2021/22 Budget £m	2022/23 Estimate £m	2023/24 Estimate £m	2024/25 Estimate £m	2025/26 Estimate £m	2026/27 Estimate £m
Property	0.700	0.850	1.000	0.975	0.950	0.925
Corporate	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050
Digital*	1.150	0.800	0.850	0.875	0.900	0.925
Total	1.900	1.700	1.900	1.900	1.900	1.900

* based on 3% of gross expenditure for SCRA from 2022/23.

The digital capital profile does not cater for one off, large development investments which would be the subject of separate business cases for funding.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Business Plan 2021/22 Performance Report

Accountable Director: **Head of Strategy/OD**

Report Prepared By: **Corporate Planning and**   **Date: 22 September 2021**
Performance Manager

Recommendations:

1. **To note SCRA's performance against the objectives set out in the 2021/22 Business Plan.**

Reason for Report: For noting

Resource Implications: Within current agreed budget

Strategy: Corporate Plan 2020/23, Business Plan 2021/22 and related strategies

Consultation: Head of Strategy

Equalities Duties: An equalities impact assessment is available for the Business Plan 2021/22

Document Classification: Not protectively marked

1.   Introduction

1.1   SCRA's Corporate Plan 2020/23 was published in April '20 with the Business Plan 2020/21 being published June '20 – slightly later than normal due to a late revision to reflect the situation in relation to COVID and lockdown with a focus on operational response.

1.2   In April 2021, the second annual Business Plan against the Corporate Plan 2020/23 was published. Whilst there was still recognition of the situation around COVID and what that meant for the operation to recover, there was a more in depth focus on the objectives coming from the organisational strategies.

2.   Background

2.1   Performance against the Business Plan has historically been reported through the quarterly OPR, giving the Board a sense of relative completeness of objectives.

2.2   It was felt however that this
         form of reporting could be further enhanced, to provide greater insight into delivery of organisational objectives as described by each strategy.

2.3   A new system was implemented to aid planning and monitoring of the organisational aim, objectives and actions – ZOHO; the system details each action and links them to corporate aims and objectives, allowing users to update their progress against these.

2.4   Interrogation of ZOHO allows the planning manager to assess performance against plans, identify areas not progressing and form a greater sense of what is being delivered.

3.   Performance

3.1   The attached Business Plan Performance report provides the Board with an overview of how the organisation is delivering on the objectives set out in the Business Plan 2021/22 between April '21 and August '21.

3.2   The report provides a level of narrative to also give a sense of what is being delivered.

3.3.   This report should be read as an interim report, to provide assurance, ahead of the fuller detail contained within the Annual Accounts that is compiled at year end.

4.   Recommendation

4.1   **To note SCRA's performance against the objectives set out in the 2021/22 Business Plan.**

Prepared by: Myrian Lazo
Corporate Planning and Performance Manger
September 2021

2021-22 Business Plan Performance Report

September 2021

Contents

1.   Introduction

The Business Plan Performance Report provides an overview of the progress made during April to August, 2021

The Business Plan objectives are subdivided under the aims of Care, Connect, Protect and delivered through the 7 organisational strategies. The Operational Plan is delivered through the 9 Locality Plans. The 2021-22 Business Plan consists of 686 actions across all of the strategies and locality plans. During April to end of August, 85 actions (12.4%). were completed.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Corporate Parenting previously featured as an underpinning theme within the organisation's strategic framework, however, with the development of the Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting strategy (RICP), these are amalgamated with Rights under one umbrella strategy. The RICP strategy ensures greater alignment between these three interlinking areas of work and will also deliver some of the recommendations of The Promise.

2.   Performance Overview

The following graphics and tables provides a high level quantitative overview on the progress made across the strategies during April to August 2021.

Zoho (online project management system) enables the organisation to monitor progress through a wide range of status options, which provides greater context compared with the traditional Red, Amber and Green status.

The following graphics shows the status and the percentage of completed actions.

Graphic 1.

People (0/26) 0%
- In Progress - 7
- Open - 19

Finance and Resources (2/26) 7%
- Closed - 2
- In Progress - 8
- Open - 16

Communications and Engagement (1/20) 5%
- Closed - 1
- In Progress - 5
- Open - 14

Digital   (0/27) 0%
- In Progress - 7
- Open - 20

Practice and Policy (9/80) 11%
- Delayed - 1
- Cancelled - 1
- Closed - 8
- In Progress - 9
- Open - 61

Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting   (6/87) 6%
- On Hold - 2
- In Review - 4
- Closed - 6
- Open - 31
- In Progress - 44
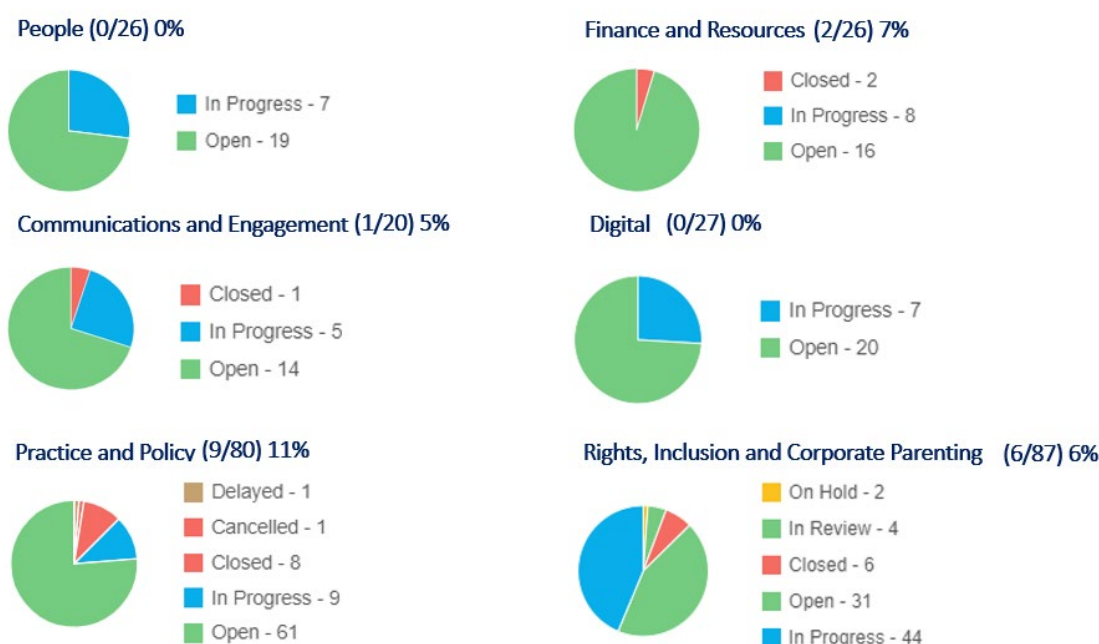
The Operational Strategy Plan consists of 41 actions that are replicated across the 9 Locality Plans. Some localities developed additional actions, which is reflected in the variances in the total amounts of actions in graphic 2.

Graphic 2. Operational Plan (Delivered by Localities)

Lanarkshire (1/43) 2%
- Delayed - 1
- Cancelled - 1
- In Progress - 18
- Open - 23

Central (16/51) 31%
- Delayed - 3
- On Hold - 6
- Open - 7
- Closed - 16
- In Progress - 19

Ayrshire (5/44) 11%
- In Review - 1
- Closed - 5
- Open - 14
- In Progress - 24

Tayside and Fife (4/50) 8%
- Closed - 2
- To be Tested - 3
- Delayed - 5
- In Review - 7
- On Hold - 9
- In Progress - 24

South East (5/41) 12%
- Closed - 5
- Open - 17
- In Progress - 19

Grampian (16/43) 37%
- On Hold - 5
- Closed - 16
- In Progress - 22

Glasgow (7/53) 13%
- Closed - 7
- Open - 17
- In Progress - 29

North Strathclyde (10/54) 18%
- In Progress - 6
- Closed - 10
- Open - 38

Highlands, Islands and Moray (3/41) 7%
- Closed - 3
- In Progress - 38

3. Progress

The following section (Tables 2,3 and 4) provides an overview on the key progress made across the plans during April to August 2021 (completed objectives/actions). Detailed progress reports on all other work is provided to EMT to review and monitor on a quarterly basis.

Each plan objective is aligned with Corporate Plan objectives, ensuring the delivery of the Care, Connect and Protect aims.

The Business plan is a live document, which enables it to be flexible and responsive to change - to meet service requirements. Changes to, or additional objectives and actions are updated to plans in Zoho.

Detailed monitoring on the progress of the plans is undertaken by the respective strategy leads on a regular basis.

The following tables provides an overview of completed objectives/actions during April to August 2021, across all strategy and locality plans.

Table 2

Care	
Delivering a service that feels right for each child, young person and family that experiences it.	
Corporate Plan Objectives	**Key Updates**
1.1: We will demonstrate compassionate and proactive Corporate Parenting - asking, listening and acting, being open to try new approaches.	*Obtained ethical approval and established a Research Advisory Group to oversee and guide the evaluation for the evaluation of Our Hearings Our Voice.*
1.4: Our service will be equally accessible to all, including people with protected characteristics to ensure it meets everyone's individual needs and rights.	*Developed and tested a toolkit to identify children in care who may be likely to have a disability, and submitted a report to Disabled Children Child Protection Network on the feasibility of the toolkit.*
1.5 Our staff will feel skilled, confident, valued and respected to enable them to work compassionately and with high quality.	*Development and implementation of Locality Health and Wellbeing Programme and actions plans; to promote and support staff wellbeing, whilst sharing of best practice from across the organisation to encourage consistency.* *Locality Managers are ensuring discussions of employee wellbeing in supervision - with reference to the tools available to support staff is promoted and encouraged. This includes access to Vicarious Trauma support and wellness plans.* *All localities are ensuring engagement with national networks, initiatives and events to promote staff wellbeing. This includes local representation at the Health and Wellbeing Group and supporting a training package for Mental Health First Aiders and Mindfulness Champions.* *Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment's (EHRIA) have been undertaken on new/revised policies, practice or process to ensure children and families are not discriminated against and ensure their human rights are upheld.*

Table 3

Connect		
Working together to receive the right referrals, for the right children, at the right time.		
	Corporate Plan Objectives	Key Updates
2.1	We will work effectively with our partners; to agreed protocols, shared goals and common standards to ensure we meet the needs of children and young people.	*We raised awareness of public, practitioners and policy makers on the extent and types of child exploitation in Scotland. This included establishing a working group of partner organisations and developing materials for training by SCRA and partner organisations.* *We are working in partnership with CHS to develop common understanding and alignment for new developments, in particular the implementation of sibling rights in the Hearing System, and implementation of the expectations of The Promise. Constructive weekly meetings of the Hearings Recovery Group and fortnightly meetings of the Senior Management Team are held, with Practice meetings taking place several times this year.*
2.4	Our organisation is kind and connected to the world we live in – from the way that we work and travel, to the culture we promote.	*We re-branded and re-launched the national Reporter – staff e-zine that promotes greater organisational engagement and transparency.*
2.5	Our organisation is fully inclusive as employers, as partners, as a service to children and families.	*Implemented mental health charity Mind's Wellness Action Plans (WAP's) to provide a practical way for managers to support the mental health and well-being of their staff.* *Drawing on our experience of the national response to COVID-19 and in recognition of the high value staff place in being able to work flexibly we revised our Flexible Working Policy (to specifically incorporate agile working) to ensure that our staff are adequately supported, their caring responsibilities can be balanced with the demands of work and to ensure our service is responsive to future challenges.*
2.7	We will have digital connectivity with partners to allow automated and secure sharing of information.	*Embedded virtual hearings and expanded the digital hearing infrastructure; undertaking staff training and supporting local partners with virtual hearings.*

Table 4

Protect
Making high quality and timely decisions for children and young people, using the right information that is relevant, clear and secure.

	Corporate Plan Objectives	Key Updates
3.2	Our organisation will be flexible, resilient, and responsive to allow us to act effectively and timeously to change.	*Locality engagement with the Recovery Team has ensured full use of reporter and assistant reporter resources in support of locality recovery. Localities have also supported the Recovery Team by hosting, and providing training to develop staff for deployment.* *Localities have been working steadfastly to clear existing referral backlogs caused by Covid and are working through recovery plans with the SOM's and partner organisations.* *We published the 2020/21 Annual Report (including Two Year Forward Plan and Review of Regulated Procurements) highlighting compliance with regulations and best practice.*
3.3	We will continue to be a high performing organisation, with quality and consistency at the heart of all that we do.	*Finance and Resources worked with strategy leads to ensure resources are in place to deliver most significant objectives in Operational Plan, Corporate Parenting, People, Digital and Property Strategies.*
3.4	Our workforce will be flexible and adaptable with the right balance of roles, skills and experience.	*Localities ensured opportunities for learning and development are available and supported, promoting PDA candidates to resume diploma where suspended as a result of pandemic..*

4.   Appendix 1: 2021-22 Business Plan Objectives

CARE Delivering a service that feels right for each child, young person and family that experiences it.				
No	**Communication & Engagement Strategy Objectives**	**Timescale**		**Corporate Plan Ref**
1.1	Through effective, meaningful and trauma-informed participative approaches, we will work with children and families to empower them to participate and engage in Children's Hearings processes.	April	March	1.2
2.1	We will consult with and engage with Hearings experienced young people employed within the service, as well as with external partners to develop new methods of communication.	April	October	1.2
3.1	Working with children and young people, including Champions Boards, Our Hearings, Our Voice, Modern Apprentices, internal work experience placements, and other groups, we will review and refine/improve the information that we provide.	April	June	1.2
3.5	We will continue to provide safe communication spaces and tools led by children and young people, including child-and-young-person-centred Hearing rooms, sensory gardens/areas, toolkits/information for people with autism, sensory and learning difficulties.	April	March	1.1
No	**People Strategy Objectives**	**Timescale**		**Corporate Plan Ref**
5.3	Following the implementation of our new case management system, CSAS, we will, in partnership, assess the impact on our roles and where change is necessary, consult with postholders, amend job descriptions and provide appropriate role based training to post holders.	April	March	1.6
5.10	We will ensure our staff have the digital skills to support children and young people to engage with SCRA.	April	March	1.6
No	**Finance and Resources Strategy Objectives**	**Timescale**		**Corporate Plan Ref**
2.1	To invest in key resources such as staff, digital and property to build sustainability and resilience.	April	March	1.6

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
5.3	We will consider equality, diversity and inclusion throughout our tender processes and comply fully with legislation.	April	March	1.4
No	Operational Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.3	Develop and implement a Locality Health and Wellbeing Programme to promote and support staff wellbeing.	April	March	1.5
1.4	Managers to ensure discussion of employee wellbeing in supervision with reference to the tools available to support staff.	April	March	1.5
1.5	Ensure Locality engagement with national networks, initiatives and events to promote staff wellbeing.	April	March	1.5
No	Practice and Policy Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
	PRACTICE			
1.9	Develop and deliver training for external agencies to support shared understanding and implementation of legislation and policy.	April	March	1.1
	INFORMATION AND RESEARCH			
1.2	Research - Children aged 12-15 years involved in offending referred to the Reporter and Procurator Fiscal in Scotland	April	March	1.3
1.3	Carry out research on children under 12 years old in residential care – their needs, supports, care history, decision making, and outcomes.	April	February	1.3
1.4	Initiate a research programme on how the COVID-19 period has impacted on the operation of the Children's Hearings System, on the rights of children, on their relationships with family and care providers, and on their wellbeing.	May	March	1.2
1.5	Evaluation of Our Hearings, Our Voice.	February	March	1.1
1.4	Develop and test a toolkit to identify children in care who may be likely to have a disability.	February	March	1.4
	VICTIMS			
1.13	Improving support of victims who are seriously harmed by the actions/behaviour of children under the age of 12.	April	March	1.3
	RIGHTS			
3.1	We can and will explain why we need to act in ways which affect rights.	April	March	1.2

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
4.1	Our approach should result in family rights being recognised and supported and impacted only when necessary and in order to make a situation better.	April	March	1.4
No	Digital Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	Maximising the organisational benefits from delivery of the CSAS MVP.	April	March	1.6
2.1	Digitally Enabled Service Redesign.	April	March	1.6
4.1	Managing the Digital Supply Chain.	April	March	1.5

CONNECT
Working together to receive the right referrals, for the right children and the right time.

No	Communication & Engagement Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
2.2	We will work with the Senior Management team and Locality Management teams to promote an open and transparent engagement culture in SCRA aligned to organisational values.	April	March	2.4
No	People Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
4.5	We recognise the high value staff place in being able to work flexibly to balance responsibilities within and out with work. SCRA takes pride in being able to support a flexible approach and will continue to do so where it can align with operational service delivery and the aims of the Operational Strategy.	April	June	2.5
5.1	SCRA will develop Inclusive Leadership Standards to underpin an inclusive organisational culture which values and develops our people, providing them with the tools and support they need to be skilled, confident, valued, respected and cared for in maximising their potential. The standards will reflect our leadership values and beliefs describing leadership characteristics and indicative behaviours in line with our organisational values and beliefs and will complement our current Management Standards.	April	September	2.4
6.4	We will work to the principles of the Scottish Government's Fair Work in Public Bodies Principles which will see SCRA invest in skills and training, take action on our gender pay gap, genuine staff	April	March	2.5

No	Finance and Resources Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
	engagement through our strong partnership working model with UNISON and continue to support and promote Scotland's Living Wage.			
No	**Finance and Resources Strategy Objectives**	**Timescale**		**Corporate Plan Ref**
2.14	To undertake further Hearing Room improvements across the country that support Better Hearings.	April	March	2.2
2.20	Environmental sustainability.	April	March	2.4
No	**Operational Strategy Objectives**	**Timescale**		**Corporate Plan Ref**
1.7	Promote equalities and inclusion objectives in localities.	April	March	2.4
2.2	Work with CHS, Local Authorities and other key partners to ensure effective continuing response to pandemic for the Hearings sSystem while subject to ongoing restrictions.	April	March	2.1
2.3	Engage with local Promise teams.	April	March	2.1
3.1	Learning and development of CSAS and CSAS+.	April	March	2.7
3.2	Embed the Standard Operating Model.	April	March	2.1
3.3	Develop and embed virtual Hearings and the digital Hearing environment.	April	March	2.7
3.4	Develop a local sustainability plan to meet climate change duties.	April	March	2.4
No	**Practice and Policy Strategy Objectives**	**Timescale**		**Corporate Plan Ref**
	PRACTICE			
1.2	Use our expertise, knowledge and experience to influence partners, including the Scottish Government on legislative and policy matters.	April	March	2.1
1.4	Work with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), to ensure common understanding of policy and practices, and to ensure good information governance across the Hearings System through the Joint CHS-SCRA information Governance Group.	April	March	2.1
1.5	Participate in and influence national partnership work across a broad range of issues and agencies, including the Scottish Government, Police Scotland, COPFS, SLAB, SWS, and thirdsector.	April	March	2.1
3.6	Manage appeals and other proceedings in the Sheriff Appeal Court, Court of Session and UK Supreme Court.	April	March	2.1
3.16	Support Practice compliance in operation of CSAS and operational process.	April	March	2.1
	INFORMATION AND RESEARCH			

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	Raise awareness of public, practitioners and policy makers on the extent and types of child exploitation in Scotland.	April	November	2.1

	RIGHTS			
1.1	Children's Rights and Human Rights underpin all the work we do.	April	March	2.4
2.1	We are all aware of rights and aware when our work is affecting rights.	April	March	2.5
No	Communication & Engagement Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
5.1	Building on Relationships in a Digitally Enabled Context.	April	March	2.1

PROTECT Making high quality and timely decisions for children and young people, using the right information that is relevant, clear and secure.				
No	Communication & Engagement Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.4	We will provide Hearings and/or care experienced young people with salaried opportunities to work, learn and develop in safe, supported, trauma-informed environments within our service.	April	December	3.4
No	People Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	We will reintroduce our management development programme in 2021, to support how we support and manage our services differently.	April	June	3.3
1.2	We will take appropriate action to attract a diverse range of applicants for each of our vacant roles in seeking to reflect the communities we serve in our own demographics.	April	June	3.3
1.3	We will develop e-recruitment to support end to end recruitment from application to new start within the organisation.	April	June	3.3
1.5	We will review our Youth Employment Strategy that will provide broader opportunities for work experience, graduate and voluntary placements as well as ensuring our Modern Apprenticeship Programme continues to meet the needs of both SCRA and the Apprentice.	April	March	3.3

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
4.3	We will seek to achieve the Mental Health at Work Standards that will strengthen our commitment to supporting good mental health in the workplace, encourage a culture where our people can talk about mental health and wellbeing, and we will bring together in a more meaningful way, all our strands of support into one accessible forum.	April	March	3.2
4.2	We will continue to develop opportunities within the workplace for wellbeing activities that can be accessed by all staff fairly across the organisation and that will improve resilience and ability to manage competing and complex pressures in the workplace.	April	March	3.2
5.2	We will encourage staff to take responsibility for their own learning and development, seeking opportunities to learn within and out with SCRA, through a variety of mediums and ensuring that they fully record their learning requirements and achievements on their personal learning on Itrent. Having this information recorded enables SCRA to understand the talent within SCRA and how best to use that talent.	April	September	3.3
5.5	We will further develop our approach to Succession Planning, the aim of which will be to develop our talent and offer clarity on career paths through the organisation. We will provide opportunities to develop, shadow and be mentored as part of the succession planning approach.	April	March	3.3
5.6	Through the development of an annual Training Plan, we will ensure that all staff have access to good quality training that meets their individual and team/role based needs.	April	June	3.4
5.8	We will continue, to conclusion, the review of the shape of our resources and associated structures under the Sustainability Work being led by EMT to ensure that the key role of Reporter is appropriately resourced and supported.	April	December	3.4
No	Finance and Resources Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	We will ensure Corporate Plan objectives and planned resources are appropriately aligned to achieve long term financial sustainability.	April	March	3.3
2.2	Scope for investment in new developments which will improve future performance and reduce annual running costs.	April	June	3.2
2.9	We will ensure necessary steps are taken to embed Cyber Security in our procurement processes.	April	March	3.6
2.11	We will produce the Statutory Annual Procurement Report in accordance with The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014.	April	June	3.2
2.12	We will undertake planned improvements that relate to our existing properties.	April	March	3.2

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
2.13	Flexible service delivery/smarter working/feasibility studies.	April	December	3.2
2.15	To manage the process of key lease events that are due over 2021-22 and 2022-23.	April	March	3.2
2.17	We will undertake a programme of minor works to improve or replace the equipment, services or fabric of our buildings including environmental benefits where possible.	April	March	3.3
2.19	We will further embed our approach to Savings & Benefits by implementing recommendations from the Procurement & Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP).	April	March	3.2
2.21	We will ensure SCRA's procurement practices contribute to the Scottish Government's objective for sustainable economic growth and contribute to the achievement of relevant National Outcomes.	April	March	3.3
3.1	Align the Finance Strategy with organisational strategies to ensure interdependence.	April	March	3.3
5.6	We will work to improve the cyber security and resilience of our suppliers by further embedding actions from the Public Sector Action Plan on Cyber Security in our procurement processes.			
No	Operational Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	Ensure regular workforce planning mechanism is in place.	April	March	3.4
1.2	Engagement with Recovery Team to ensure full use of reporter and assistant reporter resources in support of locality recovery.	April	March	3.2
1.6	Ensure opportunities for learning and development are available and supported.	April	March	3.4
1.8	Continually improve the staff working environment including adoption of principles of Smarter Working to enhance wellbeing.	April	March	3.2
2.2	Shared responsibility for Information Governance.	April	March	3.2
No	Practice and Policy Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
	PRACTICE			
3.1	Continually develop and maintain Practice Direction and other Practice materials.	April	March	3.3
3.2	Provide direct Practice support to Localities on all aspects of casework.	April	March	3.3
3.4	Continually develop and maintain a programme of national Practice Training, including core modules, more specialised modules and mandatory ongoing training.	April	March	3.4
	INFORMATION AND RESEARCH			
1.7	Deliver training on Non Disclosure and preventing breaches to all Localities.	June	March	3.3
1.8	All to staff to have received GDPR refresher training as recommended by ICO.	June	March	3.3

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.9	Ensure SCRA's compliance with Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and Data Protection Act 2018, and liaison with Scottish Information Commissioner, Keeper of the Records of Scotland, and Information Commissioner's Office.	April	March	3.6
1.10	Ensure the provision of information to Disclosure Scotland on its requests under PVG Scheme within required timescales.	April	March	3.6
1.11	Manage SCRA's Complaints Handling Procedure in line with SPSO requirements.	April	March	3.6
VICTIMS				
1.12	Improving support of victims harmed by children and young people who are in conflict with the law.	April	March	3.5
RIGHTS				
5.1	We will offer positive support and solutions to people in order for their rights to be respected in our work.	April	March	3.5
No	Digital Strategy Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
3.1	Strong Digital Governance and Ownership.	April	March	3.2

The Corporate Parenting and the EDI objectives are now integrated into the Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy

Underpinning Themes				
No	Corporate Parenting Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	All staff will be trained in trauma and its impact, corporate parenting, rights and inclusion.	April	March	1.1, 1.3, 1.5
1.2	We will work closely with the Promise team and with Partners to plan, prioritise and deliver the findings from the Independent Review of Care – developing our own internal structures to support this.	April	March	1.2
2.1	We will work with Our Hearings, Our Voice, groups of Young People and our Partners as we plan, prioritise and deliver the 40 calls to action, to keep them informed of progress, to check that what we are doing is what we should be doing, and to seek their expertise in areas that we are better working together on.	April	March	2.1, 2.2

No		Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
2.2	We will work in partnership with Children's Hearings Scotland, 'Our Hearings, Our Voice' and other partners to work towards a Children's Hearings - wide approach to rights, inclusion and participation.	April	March	2.1, 2.2
2.3	We will focus on the way that we communicate with and the information that we provide to children and to ensure that they have the information that they need, know what to expect, and how they should expect to be treated, know how to complain and importantly, know how to have their voice heard.	April	March	2.6
3.1	We will continue to make our Hearing centres feel safe, comfortable and welcoming.	April	March	3.5, 3.6
3.2	We will use our learning from our response to COVID-19 and the research conducted, previous research – internal and external, staff experience, previous improvement projects and, importantly, the voices of children and young people to identify and describe best practice for future service improvement – to support us in Keeping the Promise.	April	March	3.5
No	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives	Timescale		Corporate Plan Ref
1.1	Our staff will continue to treat all children and families with dignity and respect.	April	March	1.5
1.2	Our services will be procured, designed, shaped and delivered to meet the needs of children and families.	April	March	1.5
2.1	Our leaders will foster a culture where our people feel included, valued, respected and cared for.	April	March	2.5
2.2	Our staff will feel supported, respected and cared for.	April	March	2.5
3.1	We will make our workforce more diverse through our recruitment and selection processes.	April	March	3.4

Appendix 2: 2020-23 Corporate Plan Aims and Objectives

Strategic Aim 1:   CARE

CARE	
Delivering a service that feels right for each child, young person and family that experiences it.	
Objectives	
1.1	We will demonstrate compassionate and proactive Corporate Parenting - asking, listening and acting, being open to try new approaches.
1.2	Our service will be informed by experience – working with children and young people in Our Hearings, Our Voice, Local Champions Boards and others, we will welcome challenge, evaluation and partnerships to get it right.
1.3	Our service will be trauma sensitive – recognising the impact of a 'system' on already traumatic circumstances and ensuring that it is the best and kindest it can be.
1.4	Our service will be equally accessible to all, including people with protected characteristics to ensure it meets everyone's individual needs and rights.
1.5	Our staff will feel skilled, confident, valued and respected to enable them to work compassionately and with high quality.
1.6	Our service will be digitally enabled to allow children and young people to engage with it in ways that suit their needs.

Strategic Aim 2: CONNECT

CONNECT	
Working together to receive the right referrals, for the right children and the right time.	
Objectives	
2.1	We will work effectively with our partners; to agreed protocols, shared goals and common standards to ensure we meet the needs of children and young people.
2.2	Through local partnerships and our connections with local children and young people, we will ensure that we are all working together to deliver and assess 'Better Hearings'.
2.3	That we are connected to the local community through local events, and we will work with practitioners, children and young people and make a meaningful contribution to local initiatives.
2.4	Our organisation is kind and connected to the world we live in – from the way that we work and travel, to the culture we promote.
2.5	Our organisation is fully inclusive as employers, as partners, as a service to children and families.
2.6	We will recognise, promote and support the rights of individuals as they connect with the Hearings System and will work with others to do the same.
2.7	We will have digital connectivity with partners to allow automated and secure sharing of information.

Strategic Aim 3: PROTECT

	PROTECT **Making high quality and timely decisions for children and young people, using the right information that is relevant, clear and secure.**
	Objectives
3.1	Our organisation will be visible in the community, in schools and in health services with our key role in the delivery of GIRFEC clear and understood.
3.2	Our organisation will be flexible, resilient, and responsive to allow us to act effectively and timeously to change.
3.3	We will continue to be a high performing organisation, with quality and consistency at the heart of all that we do.
3.4	Our workforce will be flexible and adaptable with the right balance of roles, skills and experience.
3.5	We will enable all children and young people have the opportunity to participate in a way that suits them to ensure that their voice is heard in all decisions being made.
3.6	Our organisation will continue to prioritise the privacy and confidentiality of children and their families, and have systems, processes and people skilled to ensure that all data is held securely and used appropriately.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

AGILE WORKING

Accountable Director:	Head of Human Resources	**Date:**	22nd September 2021

Recommendations:

1.   To note SCRA's new Agile Working Policy and supporting documentation

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Reason for Report: **For Board noting**

Resource Implications: **Not Applicable**

Consultation: **EMT, UNISON, HR Sub Group, Managers and their Teams**

Equalities Duties   **Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment Completed and Published**

Document Classification: **Not Protectively Marked**

1. Background

1.1 Since the first lockdown in March 2020, SCRA staff have principally been working from home and where necessary attending the office to undertake essential tasks. Our operational service delivery model can support this and all staff have the necessary technical kit to enable them to work from home (albeit we are currently reviewing mobile phone provision). We have also provided DSE equipment, following completion of a working from home risk assessment, to ensure staff's health and safety whilst working both at home and in the office.

1.2 The 2020 Staff Survey focused on three areas, how as an organisation we responded to COVID-19 and the wellbeing of staff, CSAS implementation and transition as well as future ways of working. 79.5% of staff indicated that they would prefer to work partly at home or in the office and have the flexibility to choose to do that.

1.3 We have listened to staff, and like many other public bodies, have developed an Agile Working Policy that provides for the majority of staff to have flexibility about where they deliver their roles where this can align with the operational needs of our service. The Policy was developed in partnership with UNISON and we consulted widely with our managers on the policy development. We also asked our managers to consult with their Locality Teams on the policy and provide feedback to inform and refine the development.

1.4 Following a final paper based consultation, the HR Sub Group formally adopted the policy on 8th September. The Policy was launched to all staff during week commencing 13th September. In formally adopting the Policy, it was agreed that the policy would be kept under continual review as standing item on the HR Sub Group agenda to ensure the policy worked for SCRA as we developed into an agile working organisation.

2. Policy

2.1 The policy, attached at Appendix A, sets out:

- the approach where both managers and employees can explore ways to work differently which can positively benefit SCRA and employees.
- the expectations on the use of our office spaces
- the ways employees can deliver their roles in an agile way which means working with your manager and your team on ensuring that the right resources are in the right place at the right time
- roles and responsibilities
- the expectations that any different ways of working should enhance our services to children, young people and their families
- the opportunity to improve wellbeing for staff.

2.2   The policy notes that agile working is not just about doing things in the old way with some new technology and re-designed offices. It is about modern ways of working and fresh approaches to management and teamwork.

2.3   The Policy is supported by a Frequently Asked Question document, attached at Appendix B, that is intended to bring the policy to life and covers the discussion themes during the consultation period so that managers and staff have a further guidance document available to them.

2.4   Appropriate training is being sourced for Managers in leading hybrid working teams which they will all be required to attend. We are also exploring a larger audience webinar for all staff to attend to complement the launch of the Policy.

3.   Recommendations

3.1   The Board are asked to note the development and progress to our new ways of working through the Agile Working Policy. Future updates will be provided to the board as our approach develops over time.

Appendix A

Agile Working Policy

1. **Policy Vision**

1.1   As we emerge from a global pandemic and the almost immediate need to change how we have worked, we now have a once in a generation opportunity to improve our services to children, young people and their families by changing the way we work and improving the facilities where we work. This ultimately means the change is about people and culture. It is about encouraging and supporting changes in the way people work and empowering them to work differently.

1.2   We recognise that agile and smarter working will be a journey and this policy should be seen as a 'foundation' policy that we build upon as we learn about how this approach works for us. We will implement this gradually and aim to make continuous progress towards modernising the way we work, moving away from traditional line of sight management, investing in our estate, less use of outreach hearings spaces that don't work for us, maximising our use of the technology available to us and delivering our roles from where they make the most positive impact. This policy provides a framework for us to start that journey.

1.3   Agile working isn't just about doing things in the old way with some new technology and redesigned offices. It is about new ways of working and new approaches to management and teamwork. Teamwork will always be a huge focus in how we implement different ways of working – we absolutely do not want to lose that 'sense of team' and the relationships with colleagues that are so important to us in our working lives, we learn from each other and we develop in the company of others. More collaborative working by continuing face to face meetings, using virtual technology to improve our team working and developing new working relationships across the organisation will hopefully be a key outcome of the implementation of agile working.

2. **Policy Statement**

2.1   SCRA recognises the need to develop modern working practices that enable employees to maximise their performance whilst maintaining a good work life balance and improving their own health and wellbeing. Our experience of responding to, and continuing to deliver services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period, and the feedback from staff as part of our staff surveys has indicated that it is important that we change the way we work to one that brings positive benefits to both SCRA and to individual employees.

2.2   Agile working is the term used to describe how employees can work flexibly from a variety of locations, whether it is an SCRA office, Court or Local Authority building, from home or any combination of these. The expectation from the new flexible way of working is that productivity will be at least maintained but could be expected to increase.

2.3   This change in the way we work will offer different opportunities for staff to deliver their roles, modernise the way we use our offices and hearing suites and support staff to balance their personal and working lives.

2.4   This policy sets out
   - the approach where both managers and employees can explore ways to work differently which can positively benefit SCRA and employees.
   - the expectations on the use of our office spaces

- the ways employees can work flexibly
- roles and responsibilities
- the expectations that any different ways of working should enhance our services to children, young people and their families
- the opportunity to improve wellbeing for staff.

2.5   The policy applies to all SCRA employees regardless of any protected characteristic and provides a framework for consistent and fair practice on the issues to be taken into account when considering agile working arrangements. The nature of agile working will depend on the individual employee's role and the considerations of the impact on our services.

2.6   The policy covers all agile working arrangements which means that staff will give up ownership of 'their' desk. All staff and managers will have access to a work space and appropriate equipment when working in an office space and they will share access to that workspace with SCRA colleagues. This approach means that staff will be able to use office spaces in more collaborative ways that promote better team working, improves health and wellbeing in the workplace and over time will help to reduce our overall office footprint to release space for hearing facilities or deliver cost savings.

3.   **Policy Development**

3.1   This approach will go hand in hand with the roll out of our office upgrades to create more collaborative and welcoming spaces, which will take some time to complete in all our core properties. The Property Team will be considering how the Property Strategy needs to change to meet the challenges of the next 5 – 10 years. This phased approach means that we will be able to further develop our Agile Working Policy as we learn how it works for us in practice.

3.2   At this stage of development, the aims of the policy are to:

- test the principles of agile working
- maximise the opportunities agile working affords us
- avoid a drift back to full office working and the way we worked prior to COVID-19
- engage staff in the discussion as it affects them and help us to determine the end point vision
- maximise the use of and investment in our technology to enable continued innovation and the opportunity to consider much less use of Outreach Hearing Centres, which would mean less travel, more agile working and better work life balance.

4.   **Benefits of Agile and Smarter Working**

4.1   The benefits of agile working can include:-

- staff retention
- improved health and wellbeing
- increased productivity
- work life balance opportunities
- ability to better plan for caring responsibilities
- flexible working
- improved working environments
- minimise travel
- greater collaboration

- potential to reduce costs of accommodation and other overheads

4.2 Smarter working really just means being thoughtful about the tasks we have to achieve each day and choosing the most appropriate location from which to accomplish them. In terms of location, this can mean either office, hearings suite or homeworking but it can also mean using the spaces within our offices differently dependent on the task at hand. For example,

- if you need to collaborate with someone else on a task - work beside them in the office that day
- if you are having a team meeting, hold the team meeting away from the main working area so that the noise of the meeting doesn't impact on those working at desks.
- If you need to hold a private meeting, use a private space
- If you need to concentrate on a piece of work, work in a quieter area.
- If using technology can aide in accomplishing a task, this might be a more efficient way of achieving it.

The intention is that employees are able to have control over where they can best deliver their role and others are respectful of that. The line manager and the employee will agree the best pattern of flexibility to ensure that service delivery is maintained or improved and team development/support is positively impacted. This will mean that in most cases staff will have a physical presence in the office every week to deliver face to face tasks, provide cover for each other and to maintain a team ethos.

5. **Agile Working Arrangements**

5.1 There will be two different types of working arrangement in SCRA – a Flexible Worker and a Fixed Worker.

5.2 *Flexible Worker*

A Flexible Worker is an employee who is able to deliver their role flexibly from either an SCRA office or from home. The level of flexibility the employee will have is dependent on the need to be in an office/hearing suite to deliver that role, work pattern, team structure etc.. It is anticipated that the majority of SCRA staff will be Flexible Workers and the assumption is that a Flexible Worker will spend part of a working week working in the office and part of the week working away from the office. However, a Flexible Worker can choose to work in the office for their full contractual hours, if that is what works for then in terms of their own health and wellbeing.

5.3 A Flexible Worker will not have a fixed desk location. As a result, there will be fewer desks than there are staff in that office which means that staff will need to share desks and other equipment to carry out their work. The reduction in desks will be phased in over time as we develop our offices spaces in line with a programme of office developments but it could be anticipated that we reduce our desks by around 30%.

5.4 To support this, SCRA will adopt a 'clear desk' policy. This means no work or personal items are to be left on desks at the end of use/the working day.

5.5 SCRA may adopt a booking process or manage desks on a first come basis depending on each office's needs. In the very unlikely event that there is no available desk space, then staff will be able to work from other collaborative spaces, meeting rooms, wifi enabled areas until a desk becomes available.

5.6   In offices where there are multiple teams, such as Head Office, groups of desks may be allocated for specific teams where they require to work together and they will normally use these areas. The desk allocation system adopted will take this into account. However, there will be flexibility to use other areas where there are no available desks within an allocated area, or when an employee wishes to collaborate with another team. All staff must respect the confidential and sensitive nature of our work, particularly when working within other team 'areas'.

5.7   Dependent on the need to be in the office, there may be opportunities for staff to work from an office location closer to their home to undertake administrative or other office based functions. This would reduce unnecessary travel and provide a better balance for staff. Where this is a possibility, this should be agreed with the line manager in advance.

5.8   Desks will not have pedestals for storage purposes. Flexible workers will be provided with a locker to store personal and work items.

5.9   A flexible worker will retain their designated office as the contractual base and must be used in relation to any travel claims. No home to office base travel can be claimed.

5.10   *Fixed Worker (Exceptions)*

        A Fixed Worker is an employee whose role requires them to spend the majority of their time in an office. In these circumstances it may not be possible for these employees to share a desk and as such, a fixed desk may be allocated as an exception. In discussion with staff, Line Managers will consider whether the role requires the employee to be a Fixed Worker.

5.11   Fixed Workers must adhere to the clear desk policy which includes keeping the desk clean and free from personal belongings when they vacate the desk. Any fixed desk may be used by any member of staff if not in use by the Fixed Worker.

6.   **Principles of the Policy**

6.1   No employee will have a fixed desk unless they meet Section 5.10 of this policy. SCRA's current strategy aim is to provide desks for 70% of the FTEs based within the office.

6.2   The nature of an employee's agile working arrangement will depend on the job being delivered and considerations should take into account the services we provide to children, young people and their families balanced against employee health and wellbeing. The working arrangement must be compatible with the amount of face to face service delivery, team development and supervision required.

6.3   There should be no adverse effect on the quality and level of service we provide to children, young people and their families and key partners, as a result of the implementation of this policy.

6.4   This new way of working supports greater levels of empowerment and autonomy and provides opportunities for employees to demonstrate added value to our service users, SCRA, our staff and the environment.

6.5	Regular supervision, team meetings and good staff communications must be a feature of this policy. Clear objectives and levels of work expectations must be set and regularly reviewed in supervision.

6.6	There should be no increase in workload for either the individual or their colleagues as a result of an employee working from flexible locations and there should be a positive impact on the employee's health, safety and wellbeing.

6.7	Arrangements must be put in place to protect confidential and personal information including that held on laptops and other mobile technology, whilst working at home. For example, you should not leave your laptop unattended and unlocked whilst working from home, where others may have access to it.

6.8	Employees with caring responsibilities should ensure that appropriate caring arrangements are in place during agreed working times.

6.9	Effective and secure communication arrangements with flexible workers must be maintained.

6.10	All of SCRA's remaining terms and conditions of employment are unchanged and will still apply to all staff covered by this policy, including sickness reporting, booking leave etc.. This includes your office base as your contractual employment base. This policy does not negate or supersede the Flexible Working or Flexible Working Hours Scheme policies that already exist for use by employees.

7.	**Responsibilities**

7.1	*EMT*

EMT are responsible for sponsoring and promoting this new way of working and demonstrable support will be given to the implementation and maintenance of supporting flexible working.

7.2	*Line Managers*

Managers are responsible for determining the working arrangements and supporting agile working as the norm. They will give careful consideration to the needs of the service when agreeing to various working arrangements in the team and make sure they have considered all of the necessary information in order to support agile working. Where there is any consideration for a Fixed Worker, the business needs will need to be clear for this.

7.3	It is the responsibility of managers to support agile working and managers must act sensitively and treat all employees fairly. The way in which line managers manage their teams will change over time, from the more traditional line of sight management to flexible/remote management that still retains productivity and staff wellbeing as a focus. Managers will be expected to engage in learning opportunities to support a different management approach.

7.4	The manager will ensure that regular team and 1:1 meetings, including regular supervision will take place, providing support for staff and regularly reviewing agile working with the employee.

7.5	Managers must discuss, agree and review, in regular supervision, working arrangements that fit with hearings/court/office service delivery vs home working. This

should include consideration that staff will provide cover for office based work on an emergency basis e.g. hearing cover and how this will be arranged when necessary. This is to ensure that productivity, quality of work, service delivery and timescales are not impeded by agile working.

7.6 Line managers should continue to discuss career development and training opportunities and how they can fit with agile working approaches. This is to ensure that there is no adverse effect on staff opportunities to progress within SCRA as direct result of different working arrangements.

7.7 In terms of health and safety, managers must ensure:-

- that they are aware of SCRA's health, safety and wellbeing policies and that these will apply regardless of agile working arrangements
- that their employees complete the mandatory health and safety e-learning modules and complete the working from home risk assessment.
- ensure that health, safety and wellbeing is not compromised as a result of any new working arrangements
- that they ensure that any necessary reasonable adjustments are considered both for office and home working in line with OH advice as required
- if agile working is having an adverse impact on the employee's health, safety and wellbeing then the manager will seek OH advice from the HR Team and may withdraw agile working for a period in support of the member of staff.

7.8 *Employees*

It is essential that staff plan and agree a working arrangement with their line manager to ensure that the team structure and availability can be maintained and that service delivery expectations can be managed. Where possible, the working arrangement should be agreed with the manager in advance, allowing the employees who are using their homes to work in to have the right of privacy out of hours and to be able to separate their working and home lives. Any variation of this should be agreed with the manager in advance.

7.9 Any formal requests to change hours of work e.g. to part-time or job share will be managed in the usual way through the Flexible Working Policy.

7.10 Employees must be willing to engage in problem solving to ensure that the agile working arrangement works effectively for both SCRA and the member of staff. Both managers and employees are responsible for maintaining good working relationships and are responsible for ensuring that once established, the arrangements continue to work effectively and are reviewed on a regular basis.

7.11 Normally, supervision sessions will take place at the office. However, with agreement these can also be held virtually. The employee is obliged to attend these meetings as part of the supervision framework.

7.12 SCRA's Maximising Attendance Policy will continue to apply and the employee must ensure that they comply with the policy.

7.13 Whilst working at home (and in the office), the employee must take the appropriate breaks from work as outlined in SCRA's flexi scheme policy e.g. a minimum of 30 minutes over the lunchtime period. Employees should take these breaks away from their workstation.

7.14 If there is disruption to the network connection to an employee's home which extends beyond the ability to deliver their role, then the employee will be required to come into the office to work, or work their hours differently that week/day to accommodate the exceptional circumstances. The line manager should be advised of the availability of the employee.

7.15 Employees must:-

- When working in the office, clear the desk at the end of the working day and leave them clean and tidy for other people to use
- Be considerate of other people working in the office, particularly where staff are working alongside new or other teams.
- Where flexible workers are attending lengthy meetings whilst in the office, they should not occupy a desk until such time as they require to use it.
- Attend the office as required to deliver their role and as agreed with their line manager, including on unplanned occasions with little notice to cover absence for hearings/court etc.. It is expected that all reasonable steps are taken to support the team during unplanned periods of absence.
- Be available for any agreed face to face service delivery such as operational services, team meetings, training or supervision sessions.
- Ensure that all SCRA equipment and data is kept safe and secure whilst in offices or working from home and take all reasonable steps to safeguard equipment from loss or damage e.g. do not leave laptops unattended in vehicles. Failure to keep equipment or information secure will be considered a very serious matter and could result in disciplinary action being taken.
- Employees must comply with SCRA's GDPR requirements
- Employees must comply with SCRA's Staff Code of Conduct at all times
- Ensure outlook calendars are maintained and kept up to date
- Remain contactable and ensure contact numbers are available to colleagues so that they can make contact or leave messages.
- Employees must ensure that they do not give out their personal contact details e.g. telephone number, e-mail address to children, young people and their families and should always use work contact details
- Understand that they are accountable for complying with policy, procedure, legislation and all requirements laid down by SCRA
- Complete the working from home risk assessment and follow all health and safety advice
- Complete all mandatory health and safety e-learning
- Record all working time on their flexi sheet
- Record any accidents or incidents that occur during their working hours, whether this happens within the office or at home/alternative premises.

8. **Property Development**

8.1 The Property Team will work with Localities and Head Office Teams in the phased development and improvement of SCRA's working environments. Planned developments will commence with a feasibility study on the potential use and design capacity and capability of each property, in line with the Property Strategy timelines. The Property Team will apply the principles of this policy e.g. reduced desks, provision of lockers and better, more efficient and collaborative use of the property space available to teams to ensure that SCRA staff and its service users have a modern, welcoming and functional space to accommodate different opportunities to deliver roles. This work will be planned over a number of years.

8.2 Managers and staff should still adopt the principles of the Agile Working Policy in advance of any required physical upgrading of properties.

9. **Inclusion and Diversity**

9.1 This policy applies to all staff irrespective of protected characteristics and socio-economic background as laid down in the Equality Act 2010.

9.2 It is essential that managers and employees enter into the spirit of agile working within the constraints of our service provision to children, young people and their families. Each Locality will have their own dependencies to consider for agile working and as such, a one size fits all approach cannot be applied. This must be considered at Locality and individual level.

9.3 The final decision on working arrangements will be based on the impact it has on SCRA's ability to provide an inclusive and accessible service, so although the majority of staff will have access to agile working not all agreements will be the same nor will all roles be suitable for agile working.

10. **Complaints**

10.1 If an employee is dissatisfied with the arrangements made for agile working, including hours or times of attendance at the office, then they should discuss this initially with their line manager in supervision (or earlier if required).

10.2 Any failure to agree working arrangements should be raised with the line manager's manager (e.g. LRM, SOM, Head of Service), who will consider the situation and whose decision is final.

Appendix B

Agile Working Policy

Frequently Asked Questions

Q.   **What if I want to work in the office every day?**

A.   Then you can. We expect that the majority of our workforce will be classified as
Flexible Workers, but this doesn't mean you will be forced to or expected to work from
home if you don't want to. Agile working is a choice for you but if doesn't work for your
own health and wellbeing or individual circumstances then you can choose to be office
based. Discuss this with your line manager.

Q.   **If I want to work flexibly, how many days do I have to be in the office each week?**

A.   There still remain very good and legitimate reasons for being in the office on a weekly
basis. No-one will become a permanent home worker. We have a responsibility to
support each other as team mates as well as to deliver our roles to children, young
people and their families, our roles to other teams and staff, hearings, court, meetings,
staff support and development etc etc.. And this will vary across teams – so it is
difficult to say that what would work for one individual/team would also work for
another. However, an underpinning principle of this policy is retaining a sense of
team, so it is suggested that everyone has to attend the office on a weekly basis for
that reason, then in addition to that day you need to consider what face to face tasks
you require to do and what cover you may be asked to provide. For example, you may
have hearings one day, court another day and team meetings/development/cover on
another day – in this example you would be in the office on 3 days and with agreement
from your line manager, work flexibly the other 2. Agile working is subject to
operational requirements and will be continually evaluated.

A suggested approach is that LMTs consult with staff on how the working week should
be covered, what levels of staffing are required and how the Locality can propose to
fairly apply the policy to all.

Q.   **If I agree with my manager a pattern of agile working, is that fixed and/or
guaranteed?**

A.   No. Agile working is dependent on operational need and any arrangements are
subject to change either by your manager in meeting the needs of the Locality, and by
yourself in taking responsibility for delivering your face to face work commitments,
which in all likelihood, will fall on different days of the week. Staff are expected to work
agilely – this is different to agreeing a Flexible Working Pattern. If you want to agree a
fixed working pattern, you should consider making an application under the Flexible
Working Policy.

Q.   **How will this policy be applied fairly across the organisation?**

A.   This policy applies to all staff. Managers are expected to apply this policy fairly and
transparently, which means ensuring that all staff have access to the policy and that
regular discussions about agile working are held within supervision.   As outlined
above, fairly does not mean that there will be a blanket decision about how staff can
work more flexibly – each locality and individual needs are different which means that
each employee's flexibility may well be different.

Q.   **What if emergency cover is needed for hearings/court?**

A.   Managers will generally make an assessment for hearings/court cover including an element for any emergencies. However, this may not always be available. Flexibility is a two way arrangement and staff should be prepared and available to come into the office at short notice.

Q.   **I live closest to the office, will it always be me that has to provide any emergency cover?**

A.   That is not the intention or desired outcome. Dependent on the emergency cover required, the manager will consider all aspects of need including using virtual technology vs the need for face to face as well as the timescales involved and who is available. Managers will make all considerations to ensure fairness of cover whilst bearing in mind the practical nature of the cover required.

Q.   **I'm new to the organisation and I'm concerned that I won't get to know my colleagues or understand how SCRA works?**

A.   As a new employee, you will likely be expected to attend the office every day of your working week until your induction and familiarisation period ends which may be over a month or so. Your manager will take this into consideration in discussing with you what flexible arrangements can be put in place or not to support you during your early career with us.

Q.   **I have young children or elderly parents. Can I use my time at home to provide care for them?**

A.   Staff can still access our other policies intended for caring arrangements including the Flexible Working Policy which manages formal requests for changing working patterns, Dependent Care Leave and our flexi scheme. Where staff are working from home under the agile working policy it is expected that they are available for work at all agreed times. We do recognise that staff will always have emergency needs or unplanned visits but generally staff should put in place the appropriate caring arrangements that will accommodate working from home as they would if they were working in the office.

Q.   **I have reasonable adjustments to my workstation in the office. Will I get this to support me working from home?**

A.   SCRA will take all reasonable steps to provide staff with the kit they need to work from home or the office. As with any requirements, there will be an assessment of reasonableness but we anticipate that staff will, in the main, be supported with the necessary kit.

Q.   **Will I get a working from home allowance?**

A.   No. SCRA is offering agile working to give staff some choices about how and where they deliver their role. This is part of our wellbeing and benefits strategies. Staff can claim for a tax adjustment for home working https://www.gov.uk/tax-relief-for-employees/working-at-home

Q.	**Will I need Wifi to work from home?**

A.	Yes, you will need wifi to access the SCOTs network and CSAS, the core platforms that we use. We recognise that all staff may not have access to wifi, particularly in more remote areas, and the opportunity to undertake tasks from home may be limited.

Q.	**What hours am I expected to work from home?**

A.	You should work the hours you agree with your manager aligned to your contractual hours. You should not feel that you have to work longer hours or on non-working days because you are able to do so at home.

Q	**Can I work from my holiday home or other non-office base in the UK or abroad?**

A	If, as a flexible worker, an agreement has been made that you can work from home then home is classed as your main place of residence. Holiday homes or other residences e.g. your partner's, friends or family member's homes are not considered your main residence. You are not able to work from abroad unless required by SCRA or where there are exceptional circumstances which SCRA has approved in advance.

Q.	**I'm a fixed worker, will I have a fixed desk?**

A.	It's likely you've been identified as fixed worker as a result of your role which might mean you need a specific workspace. In that case, you will have a fixed desk but you must still follow the clear desk policy so that others can use your desk when you are not using it.

Q.	**I've not been identified as a fixed worker but I don't want to work flexibly. Will I have a fixed desk?**

A.	No you won't have a fixed desk but there will be a workstation available for you. You should follow the protocols for identifying desk use in your office.

Q.	**I see that there is an opportunity to work from an office that is not my contractual base but is closer to my home. How would that work?**

A.	That is possible, if it can be accommodated. You would need to discuss this with your line manager and ascertain whether there was an available workstation at the other location before you could make any arrangements. You would still be expected to work from your base location to undertake your own required face to face work, cover and team development activities. For those head office staff who regularly work from other locality offices, there will be a general agreement to do so with your line manager and the line manager in the receiving office to ensure they are aware of protocols for using desks etc.. When considering any adaptations to available desking/property upgrades, LMTs should consider provision for regular head office users where possible.

Q.	**Why will I lose my pedestal?**

A.	The majority of staff will not have a fixed workstation and pedestals tend to 'anchor' a person to a desk. Over time and as properties are developed, staff will be provided with a locker that they will be able to keep relevant papers and personal items in. Even a Fixed Worker will not be provided with a pedestal as they will also be required to comply with the clear desk policy.

Q.   **What does a clear desk policy mean?**

A.   At a very high level this means that you should only have on your desk the information you are working on at any one time. You should leave the desk clear at night, having tidied away all your documents and personal belongings, so that another user can use the desk clean and tidy the next day. You are still able to have personal items such as photos etc on your desk while you are using the desk, but these must be cleared at night in line with the policy.

Q.   **My office has a desk booking system so that we know that there will be a desk available when we work from the office. What if someone sits in the desk that I've booked?**

A.   All staff should use and respect the appropriate booking systems in place in each office, including those staff who are based in that office and those staff who are visitors to that office. This will minimise the disruption of looking for a desk on arrival and/or the potential that there is no available space. Using our offices more flexibly means that head office, and other staff, will have the opportunity to work from different spaces and this should be supported.

Q.   **If an office has no hearings or any face to face tasks require to be undertaken on a specific day, can it close to allow staff to work flexibly?**

A.   That is a question for Localities to consider. Where clear contact and communications channels are available and communicated, and where there is no expectation of visitors to the office, and where there is agreement with staff to work flexibly on that specific day, the Locality can consider the need to physically open the office. However, Localities may be required to provide access to contractors for building maintenance or other minor works as required and should provide the necessary access even on days when the office might generally be closed.

Q.   **I need to sit by a window so that I can keep cool during summer months. Can I do that?**

A.   How your locality will make desks available to staff will be dependent on the number of available desks and the set-up of the office space. If your requirements are linked to a medical requirement or reasonable adjustment, you should discuss this with your line manager who will consider how best to support you when you are in the workplace.

Q   **My circumstances have changed and I want to vary my agile working arrangements. What do I do?**

A   We will all be required to demonstrate flexibility as part of this policy. We understand that sometimes personal circumstances change and we will work with you to accommodate this as much as possible. Additionally, our services mean that it may not always be possible to support you to work from home on the same day(s) every week, for example, if you have hearings, court, meeting and team commitments, which may be changeable etc.. It is really important that you discuss your flexible working regularly with your line manager whilst ensuring that you are available to undertake any face to face work tasks in your diary.

Q.   Why are some of my colleagues working differently from me?

A.   Given the individual nature of flexible working e.g. some staff want to work more flexibly than others, face to face responsibilities may be different etc. it is inevitable that not all approaches to flexible working will be the same and all patterns are possible. Your manager will have had the appropriate discussions with their staff about when they should be in the office and/or working flexibly and will know the agreed arrangements. If you have any concerns you should discuss these with your line manager.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

SCRA Framework Document

Accountable Director: Principal Reporter/Chief Executive   **Date:** 22 September 2021

Report prepared by: Head of Practice and Policy

Recommendation:

1. To approve SCRA's Framework Document

Reason for Report: For Approval.

Resource Implications: Not applicable

Consultation: Executive Management Team
Scottish Government Sponsor Team

Equalities Duties: Equalities impact assessment not required

Document Classification: Not protectively marked

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The Purpose of the report is seek Board approval for the revised Framework Document.

2. Background

2.1 The Framework Document for an NDPB sets out how the organisation will operate and defines key roles and responsibilities which underpin the relationship between the SCRA and the Scottish Government. The existing Framework Document has been in place since 2016.

2.2 SCRA's Sponsor team drafted a proposal around the template and amendments suggested by SCRA have been accepted.

3. Framework Documents

3.1 The Framework Document, a copy of which is attached at appendix 1, forms a key part of the accountability and governance framework and should be reviewed and updated as necessary, and at least every 2-3 years. Any proposals to amend the framework document either by the Scottish Government or SCRA will be taken forward in consultation and in the light of Scottish Government priorities and policy aims.

3.2 The most notable change to the Framework Document includes updates to the Scottish Minister's objectives and priorities, such as The Promise on the 2021-2024 Promise Plan and delivery of the Covid Recovery Plan.

3.3 There have also been amendments to NDPB Member Responsibilities.

4. Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that the Board approve the revised Framework Document

APPENDIX 1

**SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION
FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT**

Introduction

1.   This framework document has been drawn up by the Scottish Government (SG) in consultation with Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (the SCRA). It sets out the broad framework within which the SCRA will operate and defines key roles and responsibilities which underpin the relationship between the SCRA and the SG. While this document does not confer any legal powers or responsibilities, it forms a key part of the accountability and governance framework and should be reviewed and updated as necessary, and at least every 2-3 years. Any proposals to amend the framework document either by the SG or SCRA will be taken forward in consultation and in the light of SG priorities and policy aims. Any question regarding the interpretation of the document shall be determined by the SG after consultation with the SCRA. Legislative provisions shall take precedence over any part of the document.

2.   References to the SCRA include any subsidiaries and joint ventures owned or controlled by the SCRA. The SCRA shall not establish subsidiaries or enter into joint ventures without the express approval of the SG/Sponsor Directorate/Sponsor Team. The SCRA has no subsidiaries.

3.   Copies of the document shall be placed in the Scottish Parliament Reference Centre. It shall also be published on the SG and the SCRA websites.

Purpose

4.   The SCRA is to contribute to the achievement of the SG's primary purpose by aligning its aims and objectives with the SG's published Economic Strategy and National Performance Framework, and specifically the National Outcomes:

- Young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk
- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

5.   The SCRA's statutory duties are to:

- Assist the Principal Reporter in carrying out the functions conferred on that officer by virtue of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (2011 Act) or any other enactment and to facilitate the carrying out of those functions.

- Provide suitable accommodation and facilities for children's hearings under the terms set out in section 21 of the 2011 Act.

- Comply with the duties set out in Schedule 3 of the 2011 Act.

- Comply with any general or specific directions given by the Scottish Ministers about the carrying out of its functions.

6.   The SCRA is also required to contribute as appropriate to the implementation of statutory responsibilities and partnership obligations in respect of new and emerging legislation, including the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, and in particular the harmonisation of GIRFEC within the Hearings System

7.   The Children's Hearings System provides the operational setting in which SCRA and its partner agencies work. SCRA's key aims and performance targets, as agreed by the Scottish Ministers, are set out in the SCRA's Corporate and Business Plans. The main aim is to provide a safety net for vulnerable children and deliver tailored solutions, which meet the needs of the individuals involved, while helping to build stronger families and safer communities. Focused on children most at risk, SCRA's role and purpose is to

- Make effective decisions about a need to refer a child to a Children's Hearing to consider whether Compulsory Measures of Supervision are necessary.

- Prepare and disseminate information and data essential for the Children's Panel to make decisions about children and young people

- Provide National Statistics and data for Scotland on vulnerable children and young people, for the benefit of SCRA, Scottish Government and partners, to inform and influence improved outcomes for children and young people.

- Provide a research facility, drawing in particular on the data within SCRA and that of partner agencies, to undertake research to inform and influence improved outcomes for children and young people.

Relationship between Scottish Government and SCRA

8.   Effective strategic engagement between the SG and the SCRA is essential in order that they work together as effectively as possible to maintain and improve public services and deliver improved outcomes. Both the SG and SCRA will take all necessary steps to ensure that their relationship is developed and supported in line with the jointly agreed principles set out in the statement on 'Strategic Engagement between the Scottish Government and Scotland's NDPBs''

Governance and Accountability

Legal origins of Powers and Duties

9.   The SCRA, which was established under section 128 of the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 and continued under section 15 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (the 2011 Act), became fully operational on 1 April 1996. The SCRA is a body corporate and does not carry out its functions on behalf of the Crown.

Ministerial Responsibilities

10.   The Scottish Ministers are ultimately accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the activities of the SCRA and its use of resources. They are not, however, responsible for day to day operational matters. Their responsibilities include:

- agreeing the SCRA's strategic aims and objectives and key targets as part of the corporate planning process;

- agreeing the budget and the associated grant in aid requirement to be paid to the SCRA, and securing the necessary Parliamentary approval;

- carrying out responsibilities specified in the founding legislation such as appointments to the SCRA Board, approving the terms and conditions of board members, and appointment of the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive; and

- other matters such as approving the SCRA's pay remit and laying the accounts (together with the SCRA Annual Report) before the Parliament.

SCRA Board Responsibilities

11.   The SCRA Board, including the Chair, normally consists of non-executives appointed by the Scottish Ministers in line with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Scotland. The role of the SCRA Board is to provide leadership, direction, support and guidance to ensure the Body delivers and is committed to delivering its functions effectively and efficiently and in accordance with the aims, policies and priorities of the Scottish Ministers. It has corporate responsibility, under the leadership of the Chair, for the following:

- taking forward the strategic aims and objectives for the body agreed by the Scottish Ministers;

- determining the steps needed to deal with changes which are likely to impact on the strategic aims and objectives of the SCRA or on the attainability of its operational targets, **ensuring that Scottish Ministers are kept informed of any changes**;

- promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources by the SCRA consistent with the principles of Best Value, including, where appropriate, participation in shared services arrangements and ensuring that effective arrangements are in place so that the SCRA acts corporately in accordance with the priorities set out in the Scottish Government's statement of corporate expectations;

- ensuring that effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management, governance and internal control. The SCRA Board must set up an Audit Committee chaired by a non-executive member to provide independent advice and assurance on the effectiveness of the internal control and risk management systems;

- (in reaching decisions) taking into account relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers;

- ensuring that the Board receives and reviews regular financial information concerning the management and performance of the SCRA and is informed in a timely manner about any concerns regarding the activities of the SCRA;

- appointing with the approval of the Scottish Ministers, the SCRA Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and in consultation with the SG, set appropriate performance objectives and remuneration terms linked to these objectives, which give due weight to the proper management and use of resources within the stewardship of the SCRA and the delivery of outcomes; and

- demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times, including openness and transparency in its decision making.

Further guidance on how the SCRA Board should discharge its duties is provided in appointment letters and in 'On Board - A guide for Board Members of Public Bodies in Scotland'.

The SCRA Chair's Responsibilities

12.   The Chair is accountable to the Scottish Ministers and, in common with any individual with responsibility for devolved functions, may also be held to account by the Scottish Parliament. Communications between the SCRA Board and the Scottish Ministers should normally be through the Chair. He or she is responsible for ensuring that the SCRA's policies and actions support the Scottish Ministers' wider strategic policies and that its affairs are conducted with probity.

13.   In leading the SCRA Board the Chair must ensure that:

- the work of the Board is subject to regular self-assessment and that the Board is working effectively;

- the Board has a balance of skills appropriate to directing the SCRA business, in accordance with recognised good practice in corporate governance;

- the SCRA Board members are fully briefed on terms of appointment, duties, rights and responsibilities;

- he or she, together with the other Board members, receives appropriate induction training, including on financial management and reporting requirements and, as appropriate, on any differences that may exist between private and public sector practice;

- the Scottish Ministers are advised of the SCRA needs when Board vacancies arise;

- there is a code of conduct for Board members in place, approved by the Scottish Ministers;

- Representing the views of the Board and work of the SCRA to the general public.

14.   The Chair assesses the performance of individual SCRA Board members on a continuous basis and undertakes a formal appraisal at least annually. The Chair, in consultation with the Board as a whole, is also responsible for undertaking an annual appraisal of the performance of the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive.

Individual SCRA Board Members' Responsibilities

15.   Individual SCRA Board members should act in accordance with the responsibilities of the Board as a whole and comply at all times with the code of conduct adopted by the SCRA, and with the rules relating to the use of public funds and to conflicts of interest. (In this context "public funds" means not only any funds provided to the SCRA by the Scottish Ministers, but also any other funds falling within the stewardship of the SCRA, including trading and investment income, gifts, bequests and donations.) General guidance on Board members' responsibilities is summarised in their appointment letters and is also provided in On Board: A Guide for Board Members of Public Bodies in Scotland.

SCRA Principal Reporter/Chief Executive's Responsibilities

16.   The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive of the SCRA is employed and appointed by the Board with the approval of the Scottish Ministers. He or she is the SCRA Board's principal adviser on the discharge of its functions and is accountable to the Board. His or her role is to provide operational leadership to the SCRA and ensure that the Board's aims and objectives are met and the SCRA's functions are delivered and targets met through effective and properly controlled executive action. His or her general responsibilities include the performance, management and staffing of the SCRA. General guidance on the role and responsibilities of the Chief Executive is contained in 'On Board.' Specific responsibilities to the Board include:

- advising the SCRA Board on the discharge of its responsibilities - as set out in this document, in the founding legislation and in any other relevant instructions and guidance issued by or on behalf of the Scottish Ministers - and implementing the decisions of the SCRA Board;

- ensuring that financial considerations are taken fully into account by the SCRA Board at all stages in reaching and executing its decisions, and that appropriate financial appraisal and evaluation techniques, consistent with the Appraisal and Evaluation section of the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM), are followed;

- ensuring that the SCRA adheres, where appropriate, to the SG's Programme and Project Management Principles;

- having robust performance and risk management arrangements - consistent with the Risk Management section of the SPFM - in place that support the achievement of the SCRA's aims and objectives and that facilitate comprehensive reporting to the SCRA Board, the SG and the wider public;

- ensuring that adequate systems of internal control are maintained by the SCRA, including effective measures against fraud and theft consistent with the [Fraud](#) section of the SPFM;

- establishing appropriate documented internal delegated authority arrangements consistent with the [Delegated Authority](#) section of the SPFM;

- advising the SCRA Board on the performance of the SCRA compared with its aims and objectives;

- preparing the SCRA's Corporate and Business Plans, in the light of the strategic aims and objectives agreed by the Scottish Ministers;

- preparing appropriate plans to ensure SCRA is resourced with staff in the right capacity, and with the right capabilities;

- ensuring effective relationships with SG officials;

- ensuring that timely forecasts and monitoring information on performance and finance are provided to the SG, that the SG is notified promptly if over or under spends are likely and/or if performance targets are at serious risk; ensuring that corrective action is taken; and that any significant problems whether financial or otherwise, and whether detected by internal audit or by other means, are notified to the SG in a timely fashion.

- ensuring that an effective complaints procedure is in place including, where applicable, reference to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman;

  ensuring that internal controls, information raising and training are in place to manage the risk of sensitive information loss arising and therefore reducing the risks associated with non-disclosure orders and case information breaches, and ensuring that regular updates on non-disclosure orders and case information breaches are provided to the Board and SG;

- taking forward improvement areas and continuing to work with partners to raise awareness of secure data handling to maximise compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, so that sensitive information about children, young people, and their families, as well as other personal information is handled safely;

- giving evidence when summoned before Committees of the Scottish Parliament on the use and stewardship of public funds by SCRA;

- reporting as required by the Public Services Reform(s) Act 2010 against sustained economic growth and demonstrating economy, effectiveness and efficiency in the discharge of its functions

- Reporting as required by the Equalities Act 2010 in relation to the discharge of functions of SCRA as an employer and public service provider in relation to promoting and delivery of equality to individual and groups with a protected characteristic and to eliminating discrimination in its organisational practice.

SCRA Accountable Officer Responsibilities

17.   The Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration (the Permanent Secretary of the SG) will designate the Chief Executive as the Accountable Officer for the SCRA. Accountable Officers are personally answerable to the Scottish Parliament for the exercise of their functions, as set out in the [Memorandum to Accountable Officers for Other Public Bodies](#). These include:

- ensuring the propriety and regularity of the SCRA's finances and that there are sound and effective arrangements for internal control and risk management;

- ensuring that the resources of the SCRA are used economically, efficiently and effectively and that appropriate arrangements are in place to secure Best Value;

- ensuring compliance with relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers, in particular the SPFM;

- signing the SCRA Annual Accounts and associated governance statements; and

- a statutory duty to obtain written authority from the SCRA Board / Chair before taking any action which he or she considered would be inconsistent with the proper performance of the Accountable Officer functions.

18.   It is incumbent on the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive to combine his or her Accountable Officer responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament with his or her wider responsibilities to the SCRA Board. The SCRA Board/Chair should be fully aware of, and have regard to, the Accountable Officer responsibilities placed upon the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, including the statutory duty described above.

Portfolio Accountable Officer Responsibilities

19.   The Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration will designate the Director-General for Learning and Justice as the Accountable Officer for the SG portfolio budget for the SCRA. Withdrawal of the Accountable Officer designation would also be a matter for the Principal Accountable Officer. The responsibilities of a Portfolio Accountable Officer are set out in detail in the [Memorandum to Accountable Officers for Parts of the Scottish Administration](#). He or she is personally answerable to the Scottish Parliament for ensuring that:

- the financial and other management controls applied by the SG are appropriate and sufficient to safeguard public funds and, more generally that those being applied by the SCRA conform to the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management;

- the key roles and responsibilities which underpin the relationship between the SG and the SCRA are set out in a framework document - and that this document is regularly reviewed;

- effective relationships are in place at Director and Deputy Director level between the SG and the SCRA in accordance with the strategic engagement principles; and

- there is effective continuous assessment and appraisal of the performance of the Chair of the SCRA, in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Scotland.

Scottish Government Director and Deputy Director

20.   The Director for the Children and Families Directorate and the Deputy Director for the Care and Justice Division have responsibility for overseeing and ensuring effective relationships between the SG and SCRA, which support alignment of the SCRA's business to the SG's Purpose and National Outcomes and high performance by the SCRA.   They will work closely with the SCRA Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and be answerable to the Portfolio Accountable Officer for maintaining and developing positive relationships with SCRA characterised by openness, trust, respect and mutual support. They will be supported by a Sponsor Unit in discharging these functions. The Director shall be responsible for assessing the performance of the SCRA Chair, at least annually.

Sponsor Unit Responsibilities

21.   The SG Sponsor Unit for the SCRA is the Children's Hearings Team. It is the normal point of contact for the SCRA in dealing with the SG. The Unit, under the direction of the Director/Deputy Director, is the primary source of advice to the Scottish Ministers on the discharge of their responsibilities in respect of the SCRA and undertakes the responsibilities of the Portfolio Accountable Officer on his/her behalf. Specific responsibilities include:

- discharging sponsorship responsibilities in line with the principles and framework set out in the document 'Strategic Engagement between the Scottish Government and Scotland's NDPBs' and ensuring that sponsorship is suitably flexible, proportionate and responsive to the needs of the Scottish Ministers and the SCRA;

- ensuring that appointments to the SCRA Board are made timeously and, where appropriate, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland;

- proportionate monitoring of the SCRA's activities through an adequate and timely flow of appropriate information, agreed with the SCRA, on performance, budgeting, control and risk management;

- addressing in a timely manner any significant problems arising in the SCRA, alerting the Portfolio Accountable Officer and the Minister for Children and Young People where considered appropriate;

- ensuring that the objectives of the SCRA and the risks to them are properly and appropriately taken into account in the SG's risk assessment and management systems; and

- informing the SCRA of relevant SG policy in a timely manner.

Internal Audit

22.   The SCRA shall:

- establish and maintain arrangements for internal audit in accordance with the

- Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Internal Audit section of the SPFM;

- set up an Audit Committee of its SCRA Board, in accordance with the Audit Committees section of the SPFM, to advise both the Board and the Chief Executive in his or her capacity as the SCRA Accountable Officer;

- forward timeously to the SG the audit charter, strategy, periodic audit plans and annual audit assurance report, including the SCRA Head of Internal Audit opinion on risk management, control and governance and other relevant reports as requested; and

- keep records of, and prepare and forward timeously to the SG an annual report on fraud and theft suffered by the SCRA and notify the SG at the earliest opportunity of any unusual or major incidents.

23.   The SG's Internal Audit Division has a right of access to all documents held by the SCRA internal auditor, including where the service is contracted out. The SG has a right of access to all SCRA records and personnel for any purpose.

External Audit

24.   The Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) audits, or appoints auditors to audit, the SCRA's Annual Accounts and passes them to the Scottish Ministers who shall lay them before the Scottish Parliament, together with the auditor's report and any report prepared by the AGS. For the purpose of audit the auditors have a statutory right of access to documents and information held by relevant persons. The SCRA shall instruct its auditors to send copies of all management reports (and correspondence relating to those reports) and responses to the SG.

25.   The AGS, or examiners appointed by the AGS, may carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the SCRA has used its resources in discharging its functions. The AGS may also carry out examinations into the arrangements made by the SCRA to secure Best Value. For the purpose of these examinations the examiners have a statutory right of access to documents and information held by relevant persons. In addition, the SCRA shall provide, in contracts and any conditions to grants, for the AGS to exercise such access to documents held by contractors and sub-contractors and grant recipients as may be required for these examinations; and shall use its best endeavours to secure access for the AGS to any other documents required by the AGS which are held by other bodies.

SCRA Annual Report and Accounts

26.   The SCRA must publish an Annual Report of its activities together with its audited accounts after the end of each financial year. The Annual Report must cover the activities of any corporate, subsidiary or joint ventures under the control of the SCRA. It should comply with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and outline the SCRA's main activities and performance against agreed objectives and targets for the previous financial year.

27.   The accounts must be prepared in accordance with relevant statutes and the specific accounts direction (see Appendix 1) (including compliance with the FReM) and other relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers. Any financial objectives or targets set by the Scottish Ministers should be reported on in the accounts and will therefore be within the scope of the audit. Any subsidiary or joint venture owned or controlled by the SCRA shall be consolidated in its accounts in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adapted and interpreted for the public sector context.

28.   The draft report should be submitted to the SG Sponsor Unit for comment, and the draft accounts for information, at least six weeks before the proposed laying date and in advance of full Board approval. The final version should be available for laying before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers by **31 October.** Whilst the statutory date for laying and publishing accounts audited by the AGS is by 31 December, following the close of the previous financial year, there is an expectation on the part of the Scottish Ministers that accounts will be laid and published as early as possible. The accounts must not be laid before they have been formally sent by the AGS to the Scottish Ministers and must not be published before they have been laid. The SCRA shall be responsible for the publication of the report and accounts e.g. on the SCRA website.

Management responsibilities

SCRA Corporate and Business plans

29.   The SCRA must ensure that a Corporate Plan, agreed with the Scottish Ministers, is in place and published on the SCRA's website. The SCRA shall agree with the SG the issues to be addressed in the plan and the timetable for its preparation and review. The finalised plan shall reflect the SCRA's strategic aims and objectives as agreed by the Scottish Ministers, indicative budgets and any priorities set by the Scottish Ministers. It shall demonstrate how the SCRA contributes to the achievement of the SG's primary purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth and alignment with the SG's National Performance Framework (NPF). The Corporate Plan for the SCRA should include:

- the purpose and principal aims of the SCRA;

- an analysis of the environment in which the SCRA operates;

- key objectives and associated key performance targets for the period of the plan, the strategy for achieving those objectives and how these will contribute towards the achievement of the SG's primary purpose and alignment with the NPF;

- indicators against which performance can be judged;

- details of planned efficiencies, describing how the SCRA proposes to achieve better value for money, including through collaboration and shared services; and

- other matters as agreed between the SG and the SCRA.

30.   The SCRA Corporate Plan should inform the development of a separate Business Plan for each financial year. The Business Plan for the SCRA should include key targets and milestones for the year immediately ahead, aligned to the NPF, and be linked to budgeting information so that, where possible, resources allocated to achieve specific objectives can be identified. A copy of the SCRA's Business Plan should be provided to the Sponsor Unit prior to the start of the relevant financial year.

Budget Management

31.   Each year, in the light of decisions by the Scottish Ministers on the allocation of budgets for the forthcoming financial year, the SG will send to SCRA a formal statement of its budgetary provision, a note of any related matters and details of the budget monitoring information required by the SG. The statement of budgetary provision will set out the budget within the classifications of resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (DEL), capital DEL and Ring-fenced (non-cash) DEL. SCRA will also inform the Sponsor Unit at the earliest opportunity if a requirement for Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget is identified. Transfers of budgetary provision between the different classifications would require the prior approval of the SG Finance Directorate. Any proposals for such transfers should therefore be submitted to the Sponsor Unit. The SG should also be advised in the event that budget provision was forecast to be higher than estimated net expenditure. Subject to the above, transfers of provision within the classifications may be undertaken without reference to the SG, subject to any constraints on specific areas of expenditure e.g. the approved pay remit.

32.   If the trading and other resource income - or the net book value of disposals of non-current assets - realised is less than included in the agreed budget SCRA shall, unless otherwise agreed with the SG, ensure a corresponding reduction in its gross expenditure (The extent to which SCRA exceeds agreed budgets shall normally be met by a corresponding reduction in the budgets for the following financial year.) If income realised is more than included in the most up to date agreed budgets SCRA must consult, and obtain the prior approval of, the SG before using any excess to fund additional expenditure or to meet existing pressures. Failure to obtain prior approval for the use of excess income – excluding income from gifts, bequests and donations – to fund additional expenditure may result in corresponding reductions in budgets for the following financial year.

Cash Management

33.   Any grant in aid (i.e. the cash provided to the SCRA by the SG to support the allocated budget) for the year in question must be authorised by the Scottish Parliament in the annual Budget Act. Grant in aid will normally be paid in monthly instalments to SCRA on the basis of updated profiles and information on unrestricted cash reserves. Payment will not be made in advance of need, as determined by the level of unrestricted cash reserves and planned expenditure. Unrestricted cash reserves held during the course of the year by SCRA should be kept to the minimum level consistent with the efficient operation of the SCRA - and the level of funds required to meet any relevant liabilities at the year-end. Grant in aid not drawn down by the end of the financial year shall lapse. Grant in aid shall not be paid into any restricted reserve held by the SCRA.

34.   Finance and Accountability meetings between the SCRA and Sponsor Unit will be held at least four times yearly to monitor progress against planned expenditure.

35.   The banking arrangements adopted by the SCRA must comply with the Banking section of the SPFM.

Risk Management

36.   The SCRA shall ensure that the risks that it faces are dealt with in an appropriate manner, in accordance with relevant aspects of generally recognised best practice in corporate governance, and develop a risk management strategy, consistent with the Risk Management section of the SPFM. Reporting arrangements should ensure that the sponsor Directorate is made aware of relevant risks and how they are being managed. The SCRA Audit Committee is also required, at the earliest opportunity, to notify the relevant SG Audit and Risk Committee if it considers that it has identified a significant problem which may have wider implications.

Fraud Management

37.   The SCRA should adopt and implement policies and practices to safeguard itself against fraud and theft, in accordance with the Fraud section of the SPFM. Application of these processes must be monitored actively, supported by a fraud response plan and robust reporting arrangements. This includes the establishment of avenues to report any suspicions of fraud. In addition the SCRA should take risk-based and proportionate steps to appraise the financial standing of any supplier or other body with which it intends to enter into a contract or to provide funding.

Performance Management

38.   The SCRA shall operate management information and accounting systems that enable it to review, in a timely and effective manner, its financial and non-financial performance against the strategic aims, objectives, targets and milestones set out in its Corporate and Business Plans. The results of such reviews should be reported on a regular basis to the SCRA Board and copied to the SG. The SG shall assess the SCRA's performance on a continuous basis and undertake a formal internal review at least twice a year. The responsible Cabinet Secretary/Scottish Minister shall meet the SCRA Chair formally at least once a year to discuss SCRA's

performance, its current and future activities and any policy developments relevant to those activities.

SCRA Staff Management

Broad responsibilities for SCRA staff

39.   The SCRA will have responsibility for the recruitment, retention and motivation of its staff. The broad responsibilities toward its staff are to ensure that:

- personnel policies, practices and systems comply with employment and equalities legislation, and standards expected of public sector employers;

- the level and structure of its staffing, including grading and staff numbers, are appropriate to its functions and the requirements of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (subject to the SG Pay Policy for Staff Pay Remits);

- the performance of its staff at all levels is satisfactorily appraised and the SCRA's performance measurement systems are reviewed from time to time;

- its staff are encouraged to acquire the appropriate professional, management and other expertise necessary to achieve the SCRA's objectives;

- proper consultation with staff takes place on key issues affecting them;

- adequate grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place;

- whistle-blowing procedures consistent with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 are in place; and

- a Code of Conduct for staff is in place based on the Model Code for Staff of Executive NDPBs – see chapter 5 of Public Bodies: A Guide for Departments.

Pay and Conditions of Service

40.   The SCRA shall submit to the SG for approval (normally annually unless a multi-year deal has been agreed) a pay remit in line with the SG Pay Policy for Staff Pay Remits and negotiate a pay settlement within the terms of the approved remit. Proposals on non-salary rewards must comply with the guidance in the Non-Salary Rewards section of the SPFM. The SCRA shall comply with employment and equalities legislation. The terms and conditions of the Chief Executive are subject to a separate approval exercise in line with the SG Pay Policy for Senior Appointments.

Pensions, Redundancy and Compensation

41.   Superannuation arrangements for the SCRA staff are subject to the approval of the SG. SCRA staff shall normally be eligible for a pension provided by Falkirk Council Pension Fund. Staff may opt out of the occupational pension scheme provided by the SCRA, but the employers' contribution to any personal pension arrangement, including stakeholder pension, shall normally be limited to the national insurance rebate level.

42.   Any proposal by the SCRA to move from existing pension arrangements, or to pay any redundancy or compensation for loss of office, requires the prior approval of the SG. Proposals on compensation payments must comply with the Severance, Early Retirement and Redundancy Terms section of the SPFM. This includes referral to the SG of any proposed compensation payment being considered for an individual outwith any existing approved scheme and *before* the individual is approached and any offer made either orally or in writing.

Asset and Property Management

43.   The SCRA shall maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of its current and non-current assets consistent with the Management of Assets section of the SPFM. "Fixed" assets should be disposed of in accordance with the Disposal of Property, Plant & Equipment section of the SPFM. The SG's Property Advice Division and the SG Sponsor Unit should be notified of relevant proposed SCRA disposals of property at the earliest opportunity and at least 1 month prior to them being advertised on the open market. Proceeds from a disposal will normally require to be surrendered or clawed back through a corresponding reduction in grant in aid. Alternatively, following a successful application to the SG Sponsor Unit, the proceeds may be reinvested. Any SCRA proposal to acquire land, buildings or other rights in property should comply with the Acquisition of Property section of the SPFM. The SCRA is also subject to the SG Asset Management Policy, including the requirement for any new commitments to be signed off by the Scottish Ministers. Information concerning the SCRA should be accurately recorded and updated as necessary by the SCRA on the Office of Government Commerce electronic Property Information Mapping System (e-PIMS).

Specific Financial Provisions

[Many of the provisions included in this section - and other sections - of the framework document highlight specific requirements in the SPFM that are considered of particular relevance to NDPBs. It should be noted however that guidance in the SPFM should always be considered in its entirety as and when relevant issues arise.]

Exceptional Cases Protocol for Legal Challenges

44.   SCRA must ensure that detailed guidance is developed setting out the process to follow within SCRA when dealing with legal challenges relating to SCRA practice and the legislative framework for the Hearings system, whereby cases raise systemic, structural and other issues and are exceptional in terms of complexity. The Protocol will be reviewed to ensure it reflects SCRA's experience of legal challenges arising from current legislation and case law. .

45.   SCRA should alert the SG Unit of impending exceptional legal cases and to the issues surrounding those particular cases; and will engage with the SG to discuss the merits of the case(s) prior to the formal process of instructing Counsel.

46.   Applications for funding will be by submission of a Business Case to the SG covering a single or multiple cases. The SG will respond within 4 weeks of its submission, indicating whether the expenses associated with each individual case can be covered – in full or in part – by the Protocol.

47.   SCRA must have in place processes to monitor the costs of cases covered by the Protocol, along with an estimate of the costs. SCRA must provide regular updates to the SG on costs incurred.

Delegated Authorities

48.   The SCRA's specific delegated financial authorities - as agreed in consultation between the SCRA and the SG - are set out in the attached Appendix 2. The SCRA shall obtain the SG's prior written approval before entering into any undertaking to incur any expenditure that falls outside these delegations. The SCRA shall also comply with any requirements for prior SG approval included in the SPFM and/or this document. Prior SG approval must always be obtained before incurring expenditure for any purpose that is or might be considered novel, contentious or repercussive or which has or could have significant future cost implications.

Income Generation

49.   The SCRA shall seek to optimise income - grant in aid does not qualify as income - from all sources, including from the European Union, and ensure that the SG is kept informed. Novel or contentious proposals for new sources of income or methods of fundraising must be approved by the SG. Fees or charges for any services supplied by the SCRA shall be determined in accordance with the Fees & Charges section of the SPFM.

50.   Gifts, bequests or donations received by the SCRA score as income and should be provided for in the agreed resource DEL and capital DEL budgets, updated as necessary in consultation with the SG. However, the SCRA should be able to demonstrate that expenditure funded by gifts etc. is additional to expenditure normally supported by grant in aid (i.e. SG core funding) or by trading and other income. Before accepting such gifts etc. the SCRA shall consider if there are any associated costs in doing so or any conflicts of interests arising. The SCRA shall keep a written record of any such gifts etc. and what happened to them.

Financial Investments

51.   Unless covered by a specific delegated authority the SCRA shall not make any financial investments without the prior approval of the SG. That would include equity shares in ventures which further the objectives of the SCRA. The SCRA shall not invest in any venture of a speculative nature.

Borrowing

52.   Borrowing cannot be used to increase the SCRA's spending power. All borrowing by the SCRA - excluding agreed overdrafts - shall be from the Scottish Ministers in accordance with guidance in the Borrowing, Lending & Investment section of the SPFM.

Lease Arrangements

53.   Unless covered by a specific delegated authority as detailed in the attached Appendix 2, the SCRA shall not enter into any finance, property or accommodation related lease arrangement - including the extension of an existing lease or the non-exercise of a tenant's lease break - without the SG's prior approval.   Before entering/continuing such arrangements the SCRA must be able to demonstrate that the lease offers better value for money than purchase and that all options of sharing existing public sector space have been explored.   Non-property accommodation related operating leases are subject to a specific delegated authority.   The SCRA must have capital DEL provision for finance leases and other transactions which are in substance borrowing.

Tax Arrangements

54.   Non-standard tax management arrangements should always be regarded as novel and/or contentious and must therefore be approved in advance by the SG. Relevant guidance is provided in the Tax Planning and Tax Avoidance section of the SPFM.   The SCRA must comply with all relevant rules on taxation, including VAT.   All individuals who would qualify as employees for tax purposes should be paid through the payroll system with tax deducted at source.   It is the responsibility of the SCRA to observe VAT legislation and recover input tax where it is entitled to do so.   The SCRA must also ensure that it accounts properly for any output tax on sales or disposals.

Lending and Guarantees

55.   Any lending by the SCRA must adhere to the guidance in the Borrowing, Lending & Investment section of the SPFM on undertaking due diligence and seeking to establish a security.   Unless covered by a specific delegated limit the SCRA shall not, without the SG's prior approval, lend money, charge any asset, give any guarantee or indemnity or letter of comfort, or incur any other contingent liability (as defined in the Contingent Liabilities section of the SPFM or in International Financial Reporting Standards), whether or not in a legally binding form.   Guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort of a standard type given in the normal course of business are excluded from this requirement.

Third Party Grants

56.   Unless covered by a specific delegated authority the SCRA shall not, without the SG prior agreement, provide grant funding to a third party.   Such funding would be subject to the guidance in the State Aid section of the SPFM.   Guidance on a framework for the control of third party grants is provided as an annex to the Grant & Grant in Aid section of the SPFM.

Impairments, Provisions and Write-offs

57.   Assets should be recorded on the balance sheet at the appropriate valuation basis in accordance with the FReM. Where an SCRA asset - and that includes investments - suffers impairment it is important that the prospective impairment and background is communicated to the SG at the earliest possible point in the financial year to determine the implications for the SCRA's budget. Similarly any significant movement in existing provisions or the creation of new provisions should be discussed in advance with the SG. Write-off of bad debt and/or losses scores against the SCRA's resource DEL budget classification and is subject to a specific delegated limit.

Insurance

58*.*   The SCRA is subject to the SG policy of self-insurance.   Commercial insurance must however be taken out where there is a legal requirement to do so and may also be taken out in the circumstances described in the Insurance section of the SPFM - where required with the prior approval of the SG. In the event of uninsured losses being incurred the SG shall consider, on a case by case basis, whether or not it should make any additional resources available to the NDPB. The SG will provide the NDPB with a Certificate of Exemption for Employer's Liability Insurance.

Procurement and Payment

59.   The SCRA's procurement policies shall reflect relevant guidance in the Procurement section of the SPFM and relevant guidance issued by the SG's Procurement and Commercial Directorate. Procurement should be undertaken by appropriately trained and authorised staff and treated as a key component of achieving the SCRA's objectives consistent with the principles of Best Value, the highest professional standards and any legal requirements. Unless covered by a specific delegated authority any proposal to award a contract without competition (non-competitive action) must be approved in advance by the SG. Any external consultancy contracts with a value of more than [£100,000] must be approved in advance by the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth.

60.   Any major investment programmes or projects undertaken by the SCRA shall be subject to the guidance in the Major Investment Projects section of the SPFM and is also subject to a specific delegated authority. The Sponsor Unit must be kept informed of progress on such programmes and projects and Ministers must be alerted to any developments that could undermine their viability. ICT investment plans must be reported to the SG's Information Services Investment Board.

61.   The SCRA shall pay all matured and properly authorised invoices relating to transactions with suppliers in accordance with the Expenditure and Payments section of the SPFM, and in doing so shall seek wherever possible and appropriate to meet the SG's target for the payment of invoices within 10 working days of their receipt.

Gifts made, Special Payments and Losses

62.   Unless covered by a specific delegated authority as detailed in the attached Appendix 2, the SCRA shall not, without the SG's prior approval, make gifts or special payments or write-off of losses. Special payments and losses are subject to the guidance in the Losses and Special Payments section of the SPFM. Gifts by management to staff are subject to the guidance in the Non-Salary Rewards section of the SPFM.

Clawback

63.   Where the SCRA has financed expenditure on assets by a third party, the SCRA shall make appropriate arrangements to ensure that any such assets above an agreed value are not disposed of by the third party without the SCRA's prior consent. The SCRA shall put in place arrangements sufficient to secure the repayment of its due share of the proceeds - or an appropriate proportion of them if the SCRA contributed less than the whole cost of acquisition or improvement. The SCRA shall also ensure that if assets financed by the organisation cease to be used by the third party for the intended purpose an appropriate proportion of the value of the asset shall be repaid to the SCRA.

Board expenses

64.   Remuneration, allowances and expenses paid to SCRA Board members must comply with the SG Pay Policy for Senior Appointments and any specific guidance on such matters issued by the Scottish Ministers.
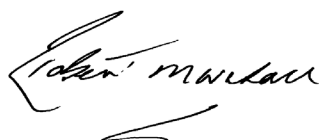
May 2014

APPENDIX 1

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTION BY THE SCOTTISH MINISTERS

1.   The Scottish Ministers, in pursuance of Schedule 3 of the Children's Hearing Scotland Act (2011), hereby give the following direction.

2.   The statement of accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2014, and subsequent years, shall comply with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the edition of the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM)   which is in force for the year for which the statement of accounts are prepared.

3.   The accounts shall be prepared so as to give a true and fair view of the income and expenditure and cash flows for the financial year, and of the state of affairs as at the   end of the financial year.

4.   This direction shall be reproduced as an appendix to the statement of accounts. The   direction given on 10 January 2006 is hereby revoked.

ROBERT MARSHALL

A member of the staff of the Scottish Minsters

Dated 4 March 2014

APPENDIX 2

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SCRA FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

SPECIFIC DELEGATED FINANCIAL AUTHORITIES

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External business and management consultancies	£100,000
Capital investment projects	£249,000 *** see Note 1 below**
Non-competitive action	£10,000
Cash loss, but excluding overpayments of salaries, wages, pensions and allowances	£3,000 in individual instances; annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Cash loss arising out of theft, fraud, arson or gross carelessness; includes cash equivalents e.g. stamps	£3,000 in individual instances; annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Stores and equipment losses arising out of theft, fraud, arson, sabotage or gross carelessness; or through events such as fire, weather or accident	£3,000 in individual instances; annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Compensation payment for loss or damage to personal property whilst on duty	£3,000 in individual instances, annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Personal injuries (employees)	NIL

*Note 1 – subject to SPFM guidance and Scottish Ministers current policies, Capital Project approval limits are:

Up to £249k	appraised and approved by SCRA
£250k to £500k	outline details of Project sent to Sponsor Unit for consideration ******
Over £500k	detailed appraisal sent to Sponsor Unit for approval
Novel, contentious or high-risk projects	detailed appraisal sent to Sponsor Unit for approval

**this would determine whether SCRA could appraise and approve the Project itself, or whether a detailed appraisal would need to be submitted for approval

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT

Introduction

1.   This framework document has been drawn up by the Scottish Government (SG) in consultation with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (the NDPB). It sets out the broad framework within which the NDPB will operate and defines key roles and responsibilities which underpin the relationship between the NDPB and the SG.   While this document does not confer any legal powers or responsibilities, it forms a key part of the accountability and governance framework and should be reviewed and updated as necessary, and at least every 2-3 years. Any proposals to amend the framework document either by the SG or NDPB will be taken forward in consultation and in the light of SG priorities and policy aims. Any question regarding the interpretation of the document shall be determined by the SG after consultation with the NDPB. Legislative provisions shall take precedence over any part of the document.

2.   References to the NDPB include any subsidiaries and joint ventures owned or controlled by the NDPB. The NDPB shall not establish subsidiaries or enter into joint ventures without the express approval of the SG.

3.   Copies of the document shall be placed in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre. It shall also be published on the NDPB website.

Purpose

4.   The NDPB is to contribute to the achievement of the Scottish Ministers' objectives and priorities by aligning its aims and objectives with the [National Performance Framework](), [Scotland's Economic Strategy]() and [Programme for Government]().

5.   The NDPB's statutory functions are to:

- Assist the Principal Reporter in carrying out the functions conferred on that officer by virtue of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act") or any other enactment and to facilitate the carrying out of those functions, as per section 20 of the 2011 Act.

- Provide suitable accommodation and facilities for children's hearings under the terms set out in section 21 of the 2011 Act.

- Comply with the requirements set out in schedule 3 of the 2011 Act.

- Comply with any general or specific directions given by the Scottish Ministers about the carrying out of its functions, as per section 23 of the 2011 Act.

6.   The NDPB is also required to contribute as appropriate to the implementation of statutory responsibilities and partnership obligations in respect of any new and emerging legislation and policy including work with Children's Hearings partners and The Promise on the 21-24 Promise Plan. SCRA as a statutory body will work with all children's hearings partners to collaborate and ensure delivery of the Covid Recovery Plan.

7.   The children's hearings system provides the operational setting in which the NDPB and its partner agencies work. The NDPB's purpose, strategic aims and objectives, as agreed by the Scottish Ministers, are set out in the NDPB's Corporate and Business Plans. The main aim is to provide a safety net for vulnerable children and deliver tailored solutions, which meet the needs of the individuals involved, while helping to build stronger families and safer communities. Focused on children most at risk, the NDPB's role and purpose is to:

- To support the Principal Reporter's functions in relation to making effective decisions about the need to refer a child to a children's hearing to consider whether a Compulsory Supervision Order is necessary.

- Prepare and disseminate information and data essential for the Children's Panel to make decisions about children and young people

- Provide national statistics and data for Scotland on vulnerable children and young people, for the benefit of the NDPB, SG and other partners, to inform and influence improved outcomes for children and young people.

- Provide a research facility, drawing in particular on the data within the NDPB and that of partner agencies, to undertake research to inform and influence improved outcomes for children and young people.

Relationship between Scottish Government and the NDPB

8.   Effective strategic engagement between the SG and the NDPB is essential in order that they work together as effectively as possible to maintain and improve public services and deliver improved outcomes. Both the SG and the NDPB will take all necessary steps to ensure that their relationship is developed and supported in line with the jointly agreed principles set out in the statement on 'Strategic Engagement between the Scottish Government and Scotland's NDPBs'.

Governance and accountability

Legal origins of powers and duties

9.   The NDPB, which was established under section 128 of the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 and continued under section 15 of the 2011 Act, became fully operational on 1 April 1996. The NDPB is a body corporate and does not carry out its functions on behalf of the Crown.

Ministerial responsibilities

10.   The Scottish Ministers are ultimately accountable to the Scottish Parliament for the activities of the NDPB and its use of resources. They are not however responsible for day to day operational matters and founding legislation prevents them from directing or guiding the Principal Reporter in relation to the carrying out of their statutory functions. The responsibilities of the Scottish Ministers include:

- Agreeing the NDPB's strategic aims and objectives and key targets as part of the corporate planning process

- Agreeing the budget and the associated grant in aid requirement to be paid to the NDPB, and securing the necessary Parliamentary approval

- Carrying out responsibilities specified in schedule 3 of the 2011 Act, such as appointment of members to the NDPB, approving the terms and conditions of members and approving appointment of the Chief Executive and Principal Reporter (noting that these roles may both be held by the same person)

- Other matters such as approving the NDPB's chief executive and staff pay remit in line with the SG Pay Policy and laying the accounts (together with the annual report) before the Scottish Parliament.

NDPB Member Responsibilities

11.   The NDPB members, including the chairing member, ("collectively referred to in the rest of this document as members") consist of non-executive members appointed by the Scottish Ministers in line with the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland. The role of the members is to provide leadership, direction, support and guidance to ensure the NDPB delivers, and is committed to delivering, its functions effectively and efficiently and in accordance with the aims, policies and priorities of the Scottish Ministers. They have corporate responsibility, under the leadership of the chair member, for the following:

- Taking forward the strategic aims and objectives for the body agreed by the Scottish Ministers

- Determining the steps needed to deal with changes which are likely to impact on the strategic aims and objectives of the NDPB or on the attainability of its operational targets

- Promoting the efficient, economic and effective use of staff and other resources by the NDPB consistent with the principles of Best Value, including, where possible, participation in shared services arrangements.

- Ensuring that effective arrangements are in place to provide assurance on risk management (including in respect of personnel, physical and cyber risks/threats/hazards), governance and internal control. The members must set up an audit committee chaired by a non-executive member to provide independent advice and assurance on the effectiveness of the internal control and risk management systems.

- Taking into account relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers in reaching decisions

- Approving the annual accounts and ensuring Scottish Ministers are provided with the annual report and accounts to be laid before the Scottish Parliament. The Chief Executive as the Accountable Officer of the NDPB is responsible for signing the accounts and ultimately responsible to the Scottish Parliament for their actions

- Ensuring that the members receive and review regular financial information concerning the management and performance of the NDPB and are informed in a timely manner about any concerns regarding the activities of the NDPB

- Appointing, with the approval of the Scottish Ministers, the Chief Executive and Principal Reporter (noting that these roles may both be held by the same person), following appropriate approval of the Chief Executive's remuneration package in line with SG Pay Policy for Senior Appointments. New contracts for chief executives should include a notice period of no more than 3 months. Where a business case can be made, the notice period may be set at a maximum of 6 months. In consultation with the SG, appropriate performance objectives should be set which give due weight to the proper management and use of resources within the stewardship of the NDPB and the delivery of outcomes

- Demonstrating high standards of corporate governance at all times, including openness and transparency in its decision making.

Further guidance on how members should discharge their duties is provided in appointment letters and in On Board – A Guide for Members of Statutory Boards.

The chairing member's responsibilities

12.   The chairing member is accountable to the Scottish Ministers and, in common with any individual with responsibility for devolved functions, may also be held to account by the Scottish Parliament. Communications between the NDPB members and the Scottish Ministers should normally be through the chairing member. They are responsible for ensuring that the NDPB's policies and actions support the Scottish Ministers' wider strategic policies and that its affairs are conducted with probity.

13.   In leading the NDPB the chairing member must ensure that:

- the work of the members is subject to regular self-assessment and that the members are working effectively.

- the members, in accordance with recognised good practice in corporate governance, are diverse both in terms of relevant skills, experience and knowledge appropriate to directing the NDPB business, and in terms of protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and the Gender Representation on Public Boards Act and Guidance, where these apply.

- the members are fully briefed on their terms of appointment, duties, rights and responsibilities.

- they together with other members, receives appropriate induction training, including on financial management and reporting requirements, severance policy and, as appropriate, on any differences that may exist between private and public sector practice.

- succession planning takes place to ensure that member are diverse and effective, and the Scottish Ministers are advised of the NDPB needs when member vacancies arise.

- there is a code of conduct for members in place, approved by the Scottish Ministers.

14.   The chairing member assesses the performance of individual members on a continuous basis and undertakes a formal appraisal at least annually. The chairing member, in consultation with the members as a whole, is also responsible for undertaking an annual appraisal of the performance of the Chief Executive and Principal Reporter (noting that these roles may both be held by the same person).

Individual members' responsibilities

15.   Individual members should act in accordance their responsibilities and comply at all times with the code of conduct adopted by the NDPB and with the rules relating to the use of public funds and to conflicts of interest. In this context "public funds" means not only any funds provided to the NDPB by the Scottish Ministers but also any other funds falling within the stewardship of the NDPB, including trading and investment income, gifts, bequests and donations. General guidance on members' responsibilities is summarised in their appointment letters and is also provided in On Board.

NDPB Chief Executive responsibilities

16.   The Chief Executive of the NDPB is employed and appointed by the NDPB with the approval of the Scottish Ministers. They are the NDPB's principal adviser on the discharge of its functions and is accountable to the members. Their role is to provide operational leadership to the NDPB and ensure that the NDPB's aims and objectives are met and the NDPB's functions are delivered and targets met through effective and properly controlled executive action. Their general responsibilities include the performance, management and staffing of the NDPB. General guidance on the role and responsibilities of the chief executive is contained in On Board. Specific responsibilities to the members include:

- Advising members on the discharge of their responsibilities - as set out in this document, in the founding legislation and in any other relevant instructions and guidance issued by or on behalf of the Scottish Ministers - and implementing the decisions of the members

- Ensuring that financial considerations are taken fully into account by members at all stages in reaching and executing their decisions, and that appropriate financial appraisal and evaluation techniques, consistent with the Appraisal and Evaluation section of the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM), are followed

- Ensuring that the NDPB adheres, where appropriate, to the SG's Programme and project management principles

- Having robust performance and risk management arrangements - consistent with the Risk Management section of the SPFM - in place that support the achievement of the NDPB's aims and objectives and that facilitate comprehensive reporting to the members, the SG and the wider public. Risk management arrangements should include full consideration of organisational resilience to physical, personnel and cyber risks/threats/hazards.

- Ensuring that adequate systems of internal control are maintained by the NDPB, including effective measures against fraud and theft consistent with the Fraud section of the SPFM

- Establishing appropriate documented internal delegated authority arrangements consistent with the Delegated Authority section of the SPFM

- Advising members on the performance of the NDPB compared with its aims and objectives

- Preparing the NDPB's corporate and business plans, in the light of the strategic aims and objectives agreed by the Scottish Ministers

- Ensuring effective relationships with SG officials

- Ensuring that timely forecasts and monitoring information on performance and finance are provided to the SG; that the SG is notified promptly if over or under spends are likely and that corrective action is taken; and that any significant problems whether financial or otherwise, and whether detected by internal audit or by other means, are notified to the SG in a timely fashion

- Ensuring staff pay proposals are in line with SG Pay Policy and submitted in time and the necessary approvals obtained prior to implementing any annual award.

NDPB Accountable Officer responsibilities

17.   The Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration (the Permanent Secretary of the SG) will designate the chief executive as the Accountable Officer for the NDPB. Accountable Officers are personally answerable to the Scottish Parliament for the exercise of their functions, as set out in the Memorandum to Accountable Officers for Other Public Bodies. These include:

- Ensuring the propriety and regularity of the NDPB's finances and that there are sound and effective arrangements for internal control and risk management

- Ensuring that the resources of the public body are used economically, efficiently and effectively, and that arrangements are in place to secure Best Value and deliver Value for Money for the public sector as a whole

- Ensuring compliance with relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers, in particular the SPFM and SG Pay Policy

- Signing the annual accounts and associated governance statements

- A statutory duty to obtain written authority from the members/chairing member before taking any action which they consider would be inconsistent with the proper performance of the Accountable Officer functions. The Accountable Officer should also notify the relevant Portfolio Accountable Officer.

18.   It is incumbent on the chief executive to combine their Accountable Officer responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament with their wider responsibilities to members. The members/chairing member should be fully aware of, and have regard to, the Accountable Officer responsibilities placed upon the chief executive, including the statutory duty described above in paragraph 17.

Portfolio Accountable Officer responsibilities

19.   The Principal Accountable Officer for the Scottish Administration will designate the Director-General for Education and Justice as the Accountable Officer for the SG portfolio budget for the NDPB. The responsibilities of a Portfolio Accountable Officer are set out in detail in the Memorandum to Accountable Officers for Parts of the Scottish Administration. They are personally answerable to the Scottish Parliament for ensuring that:

- the financial and other management controls applied by the SG are appropriate and sufficient to safeguard public funds and, more generally that those being applied by the NDPB conform to the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management

- the key roles and responsibilities which underpin the relationship between the SG and the NDPB are set out in a framework document - and that this document is regularly reviewed

- effective relationships are in place at Director and Deputy Director level between the SG and the NDPB in accordance with the strategic engagement principles

- there is effective continuous assessment and appraisal of the performance of the chairing member of the NDPB, in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Scotland.

Scottish Government Director and Deputy Director

20.   The Director for Children and Families ("the Director") and the Deputy Director for Children's Rights, Protection and Justice have responsibility for overseeing and ensuring effective relationships between the SG and NDPB which support alignment of the NDPB's business to the SG's Purpose and National Outcomes and high performance by the NDPB. They will work closely with the NDPB chief executive and be answerable to the Portfolio Accountable Officer for maintaining and developing positive relationships with the NDPB characterised by openness, trust, respect and mutual support. They will

be supported by a sponsor unit in discharging these functions. The Deputy Director shall be responsible for assessing the performance of the NDPB chairing member at least annually.

Sponsor unit responsibilities

21.   The SG Sponsor Unit for the NDPB is the Children's Hearings Team ("the Sponsor Unit"). It is the normal point of contact for the NDPB in dealing with the SG. The Sponsor Unit, under the direction of the Director/Deputy Director, is the primary source of advice to the Scottish Ministers on the discharge of their responsibilities in respect of the NDPB and undertakes the responsibilities of the Portfolio Accountable Officer on their behalf.

Specific responsibilities include:

- Discharging sponsorship responsibilities in line with the principles and framework set out in the document 'Strategic Engagement between the Scottish Government and Scotland's NDPBs' and ensuring that sponsorship is suitably flexible, proportionate and responsive to the needs of the Scottish Ministers and the NDPB

- Ensuring that appointments to the NDPB board are made timeously and, where appropriate, in accordance with the code-practice for Ministerial Appointments in Scotland

- Proportionate monitoring of the NDPB's activities through an adequate and timely flow of appropriate information, agreed with the NDPB, on performance, budgeting, control and risk management

- Addressing in a timely manner any significant problems arising in the NDPB, alerting the Portfolio Accountable Officer and the responsible Minister(s) where considered appropriate

- Ensuring that the objectives of the NDPB and the risks to them are properly and appropriately taken into account in the SG's risk assessment and management systems

- Informing the NDPB of relevant SG policy in a timely manner.

Internal audit

22.   The NDPB shall:

- establish and maintain arrangements for internal audit in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Internal Audit section of the SPFM.

- set up an audit committee of its members, in accordance with the Audit Committees section of the SPFM, to advise both the members and the Chief Executive in their capacity as the NDPB Accountable Officer.

- forward timeously, to the SG, the audit charter, strategy, periodic audit plans and annual audit assurance report, including the NDPB Head of Internal Audit opinion on risk management, control and governance and other relevant reports as requested.

- keep records of, and prepare and forward timeously to the SG an annual report on fraud and theft suffered by the NDPB and notify the SG at the earliest opportunity of any unusual or major incidents.

23.   The SG's Internal Audit Directorate has a right of access to all documents held by the NDPB internal auditor, including where the service is contracted out. The SG has a right of access to all NDPB records and personnel for any purpose.

External audit

24.   The Auditor General for Scotland (AGS) audits, or appoints auditors to audit, the NDPB's Annual Accounts and passes them to the Scottish Ministers who shall lay them before the Scottish Parliament, together with the auditor's report and any report prepared by the AGS. For the purpose of audit, the auditors have a statutory right of access to documents and information held by relevant persons. The

NDPB shall instruct its auditors to send copies of all management reports (and correspondence relating to those reports) and responses to the SG.

25.   The AGS, or examiners appointed by the AGS, may carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the NDPB has used its resources in discharging its functions. The AGS may also carry out examinations into the arrangements made by the NDPB to secure Best Value. For the purpose of these examinations the examiners have a statutory right of access to documents and information held by relevant persons. In addition, the NDPB shall provide, in contracts and any conditions to grants, for the AGS to exercise such access to documents held by contractors and sub-contractors and grant recipients as may be required for these examinations; and shall use its best endeavours to secure access for the AGS to any other documents required by the AGS which are held by other bodies.

Annual report and accounts

26.   The NDPB must publish an Annual Report on the carrying out of its functions together with its audited accounts after the end of each financial year. + The Annual Report must cover the activities of any corporate, subsidiary or joint ventures under the control of the NDPB. It should comply with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and outline the NDPB's main activities and performance against agreed objectives and targets for the previous financial year.

27.   The Accounts must be prepared in accordance with relevant statutes and the specific accounts direction (including compliance with the FReM) and other relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers. Any financial objectives or targets set by the Scottish Ministers should be reported on in the accounts and will therefore be within the scope of the audit. Any subsidiary or joint venture owned or controlled by the NDPB shall be consolidated in its accounts in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards as adapted and interpreted for the public sector context.

28.   The draft report should be submitted to the SG for comment, and the draft accounts for information, by at least six weeks before the proposed laying date and in advance of full Board approval. The final version should be available for laying before the Scottish Parliament by the Scottish Ministers by 31 October each year. Whilst the statutory date for laying and publishing accounts audited by the AGS is by 31 December, following the close of the previous financial year, there is an expectation on the part of the Scottish Ministers that accounts will be laid and published as early as possible. The accounts must not be laid before they have been formally sent by the AGS to the Scottish Ministers and must not be published before they have been laid. The NDPB shall be responsible for the publication of the annual report and accounts.

Management responsibilities

Corporate and business plans

29.   The NDPB must ensure that a corporate plan, agreed with the Scottish Ministers, is in place and published on the NDPB's website. The NDPB shall agree with the SG the issues to be addressed in the plan and the timetable for its preparation and review. The finalised plan shall reflect the NDPB's strategic aims and objectives as agreed by the Scottish Ministers, indicative budgets and any priorities set by the Scottish Ministers. It shall demonstrate how the NDPB contributes to the achievement of the purpose and national outcomes set out in the   SG's National Performance Framework (NPF). The corporate plan for the NDPB should include:

- The purpose and principal aims of the NDPB

- An analysis of the environment in which the NDPB operates

- Key objectives and associated key performance targets for the period of the plan, the strategy for achieving those objectives and how these will contribute towards the achievement of the SG's primary purpose and alignment with the NPF

- Indicators against which performance can be judged

- Details of planned efficiencies, describing how the NDPB proposes to achieve better value for money, including through collaboration and shared services

- Other matters as agreed between the SG and the NDPB.

30.   The corporate plan should inform the development of a separate business plan for each financial year. The business plan for the NDPB should include key targets and milestones for the year immediately ahead, aligned to the NPF, and be linked to budgeting information so that, where possible, resources allocated to achieve specific objectives can be identified. A copy of the NDPB's business plan should be provided to the sponsor unit prior to the start of the relevant financial year.

Budget management

31.   Each year, in the light of decisions by the Scottish Ministers on the allocation of budgets for the forthcoming financial year, the SG will send to the NDPB a formal statement of its budgetary provision, and a note of any related matters and details of the budget monitoring information required by the SG. The terms of that letter, referred to as the Budget Allocation and Monitoring letter, should be viewed as complementing the content of this document. The monthly monitoring is the primary means of in-year budgetary control across the SG. As such bodies must comply with the format and timing of the monitoring together with any requests for further information. The statement of budgetary provision will set out the budget within the classifications of resource Departmental Expenditure Limits (RDEL), capital DEL (CDEL) and Ring-fenced (non-cash) (RfDEL). The NDPB will inform the sponsor unit at the earliest opportunity if a requirement for Annually Managed Expenditure (AME) budget is identified. The SG should also be advised in the event that estimated net expenditure is forecast to be lower than budget provision. Transfers of budgetary provision between the different classifications require the prior approval of the SG Finance Directorate. Any proposals for such transfers should therefore be submitted to the sponsor unit. Transfers of provision within the classifications may be undertaken without reference to the SG, subject to any constraints on specific areas of expenditure e.g. the approved pay remit.

32.   If the trading and other resource income realised (including profit or loss on disposal of non-current assets) – scored as negative RDEL, or the net book value of disposals of non-current assets – scored as negative CDEL is less than included in the agreed budget the NDPB shall, unless otherwise agreed with the SG, ensure a corresponding reduction in its gross expenditure. (The extent to which the NDPB exceeds agreed budgets shall normally be met by a corresponding reduction in the budgets for the following financial year.) If income realised is more than included in the agreed budgets the NDPB must consult and obtain the prior approval of the SG before using any excess to fund additional expenditure or to meet existing pressures. Failure to obtain prior approval for the use of excess income to fund additional expenditure may result in corresponding reductions in budgets for the following financial year. The only exception is where the income is from gifts, bequests and donations but this must be spent within the same financial year as the receipt, otherwise additional budget allocation will be required. In any event, income from all sources and all planned expenditure should be reflected in the monthly budget monitoring statement.

Cash management

33.   Any grant in aid (i.e. the cash provided to the NDPB by the SG to support the allocated budget) for the year in question must be authorised by the Scottish Parliament in the annual Budget Act. Grant in aid will normally be paid in monthly instalments on the basis of updated profiles and information on unrestricted cash reserves. Payment will not be made in advance of need, as determined by the level of unrestricted cash reserves and planned expenditure. Unrestricted cash reserves held during the course of the year should be kept to the minimum level consistent with the efficient operation of the NDPB - and the level of funds required to meet any relevant liabilities at the year-end. Grant in aid not drawn down by the end of the financial year shall lapse. Grant in aid shall not be paid into any restricted reserve held by the NDPB. Finance meetings between the NDPB and Sponsor Unit will be held at least 3 times yearly to monitor progress against planned expenditure.

34.   The banking arrangements adopted by the NDPB must comply with the Banking section of the SPFM.

Risk management

35.   The NDPB shall ensure that the risks that it faces are dealt with in an appropriate manner, in accordance with relevant aspects of generally recognised best practice in corporate governance, and develop an approach to risk management consistent with the Risk Management section of the SPFM. Reporting arrangements should ensure that the sponsor unit is made aware of relevant risks and how they are being managed. The NDPB audit committee is also required, at the earliest opportunity, to

notify the relevant Director General Assurance meeting if it considers that it has identified a significant problem which may have wider implications.

Organisational security and resilience

36.   As part of risk management arrangements, the NDPB shall ensure that it has a clear understanding at board level of the key risks, threats and hazards it may face in the personnel, physical and cyber domains, and take action to ensure appropriate organisational resilience to those risks/threats/hazards. It should have particular regard to the following key sources of information to help guide its approach:

- Having and Promoting Business Resilience (part of the Preparing Scotland suite of guidance)
- The Scottish Public Sector Action Plan on Cyber Resilience and associated guidance, in particular the Cyber Resilience Framework

Counter fraud arrangements

37.   The NDPB should adopt and implement policies and practices to safeguard itself against fraud and theft, in accordance with the Fraud section of the SPFM. Application of these processes must be monitored actively, supported by a fraud action plan and robust reporting arrangements. This includes the establishment of avenues to report any suspicions of fraud.

Performance management

38.   The NDPB shall operate management information and accounting systems that enable it to review, in a timely and effective manner, its financial and non-financial performance against the strategic aims, objectives, targets and milestones set out in the corporate and business plans. The results of such reviews should be reported on a regular basis to the NDPB board and copied to the SG. The SG shall assess the NDPB's performance, proportionately, on a continuous basis and hold a formal review meeting at least twice a year. The responsible Cabinet Secretary / Scottish Minister shall meet the NDPB chairing member at least once a year to discuss SCRA's performance, its current and any future activities and any policy developments relevant to those activities.

NDPB staff management

Broad responsibilities for NDPB staff

39.   The NDPB will have responsibility for the recruitment, retention and motivation of its staff. The broad responsibilities toward its staff are to ensure that:

- HR policies, practices and systems comply with employment and equalities legislation, and standards expected of public sector employers.

- the level and structure of its staffing, including grading and staff numbers, are appropriate to its functions and the requirements of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (subject to the SG Pay Policy for Staff Pay Remits).

- the performance of its staff at all levels is satisfactorily appraised and the NDPB's performance measurement systems are reviewed from time to time.

- its staff are encouraged to acquire the appropriate professional, management and other expertise necessary to achieve the NDPB's objectives.

- proper consultation with staff takes place on key issues affecting them.

- adequate grievance and disciplinary procedures are in place.

- effective whistle-blowing policy and procedures consistent with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 are in place.

- a code of conduct for staff is in place based on the Model Code for Staff of Executive NDPBs.

Pay and conditions of service

40.   The NDPB will comply with SG Pay Policy in relation to staff and the chief executive. The NDPB shall submit to the SG for approval (normally annually unless a multi-year deal has been agreed) a pay remit in line with the SG Pay Policy for Staff Pay Remits and negotiate a pay settlement within the terms of the approved remit. Payment of salaries should also comply with the Tax Planning and Tax Avoidance section of the SPFM. Proposals on non-salary rewards must comply with the guidance in the Non-Salary Rewards section of the SPFM. Where applicable, the NDPB will also seek appropriate approval under the SG Pay Policy for Senior Appointments for the chief executive's remuneration package prior to appointment, annually or when a new appointment or change to the remuneration package is being proposed.

Pensions, redundancy and compensation

41.   Superannuation arrangements for the NDPB staff are subject to the approval of the SG. NDPB staff shall normally be eligible for a pension provided by the Falkirk Pension Fund. Staff may opt out of the occupational pension scheme provided by the NDPB, but the employer's contribution to any personal pension arrangement, including stakeholder pension, shall normally be limited to the national insurance rebate level.

42.   Any proposal by the NDPB to move from existing pension arrangements, or to pay any redundancy or compensation for loss of office, requires the prior approval of the SG. Proposals on compensation payments must comply with the Settlement Agreements, Severance, Early Retirement and Redundancy Terms section of the SPFM. This includes referral to the SG of any proposed severance scheme (for example, a scheme for voluntary exit), business case for a settlement agreement being considered for an individual, or proposal to make any other compensation payment. In all instances, a body should engage with the SG prior to proceeding with proposed severance options, and prior to making any offer either orally or in writing.

Asset and property management

43.   The NDPB shall maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of its current and non-current assets consistent with the Property: Acquisition, Disposal & Management section of the SPFM. 'Non-current' assets should be disposed of in accordance with the SPFM. The SG's Property Division should be consulted about relevant proposed disposals of property that the NDPB holds for operational purposes (rather than investment) at the earliest opportunity so it may be advertised internally. An Internal Advertisement form must be completed and submitted at least one month prior to property being advertised on the open market. Any proposal to acquire land, buildings or other rights in property for accommodation / operational purposes should comply with the SPFM. The NDPB is also subject to the SG Asset Management Policy, including the requirement for acquisition of a new lease, continuation of an existing lease, decision not to exercise a break option in a lease or purchase of property for accommodation / operational purposes, to be approved in advance by Scottish Ministers. The Property Controls Team should be consulted as early as possible in this process. All assets (property, plant and equipment) are to be properly recorded and updated as necessary by the NDPB on the Cabinet Office electronic Property Information Mapping System (e-PIMS).

Specific financial provisions

Exceptional Cases Protocol for Legal Challenges

44.   The NDPB must ensure that a detailed protocol is in place setting out the process to follow within the NDPB when dealing with legal challenges relating to the NDPB's practice and the legislative framework for the children's hearings system, whereby cases raise systemic, structural and other issues and are exceptional in terms of complexity. The Protocol will be reviewed to ensure it reflects the NDPB's experience of legal challenges arising from current legislation and case law.

45.   The NDPB should alert the Sponsor Unit of impending exceptional legal cases and to the issues surrounding those particular cases; and will engage with the SG to discuss the merits of the case(s) prior to the formal process of instructing counsel.

46.   Applications for funding will be by submission of a business case to the Sponsor Unit covering a single or multiple cases. The Sponsor Unit will respond within 4 weeks of its submission, indicating

whether the expenses associated with each individual case can be covered – in full or in part – by the Protocol.

47.	The NDPB must have in place processes to monitor the costs of cases covered by the Protocol, along with an estimate of the costs. The NDPB must provide regular updates to the SG on costs incurred.

Delegated authorities

48.	The NDPB's specific delegated financial authorities - as agreed in consultation between the NDPB and the SG - are set out in the attached **Appendix**. The NDPB shall obtain the SG's prior written approval before entering into any undertaking to incur any expenditure that falls outside these delegations. The NDPB shall also comply with any requirements for prior SG approval included in the SPFM and/or this document, alongside spend control regimes including the utilisation of Accountable Officer templates, as applicable. Prior SG approval must always be obtained before incurring expenditure for any purpose that is or might be considered novel, contentious or repercussive or which has or could have significant future cost implications.

Income generation

49.	The NDPB shall seek to optimise income - grant in aid does not qualify as income - from all sources, and ensure that the SG is kept informed. Novel or contentious proposals for new sources of income or methods of fundraising must be approved by the SG. Fees or charges for any services supplied by the NDPB shall be determined in accordance with the Fees & Charges section of the SPFM.

50.	Gifts, bequests or donations received by the NDPB score as income and should be provided for in the agreed resource DEL and capital DEL budgets, updated as necessary in consultation with the SG. However, the NDPB should be able to demonstrate that expenditure funded by gifts etc is additional to expenditure normally supported by grant in aid (i.e. SG core funding) or by trading and other income. Before accepting such gifts etc the NDPB shall consider if there are any associated costs in doing so or any conflicts of interests arising. The NDPB shall keep a written record of any such gifts etc and what happened to them.

Financial investments

51.	Unless covered by a specific delegated authority the NDPB shall not make any financial investments without the prior approval of the SG. That would include equity shares in ventures which further the objectives of the NDPB. The NDPB shall not invest in any venture of a speculative nature.

Borrowing

52.	Borrowing cannot be used to increase the NDPB's spending power. All borrowing by the NDPB - excluding agreed overdrafts - shall be from the Scottish Ministers in accordance with guidance in the Borrowing, Lending & Investment section of the SPFM.

Lease arrangements

53.	Unless covered by a specific delegated authority the NDPB shall not enter into any finance, property or accommodation related lease arrangement – including the extension of an existing lease or the non-exercise of a tenant's lease break - without the SG's prior approval. Before entering/ continuing such arrangements the NDPB must be able to demonstrate that the lease offers better value for money than purchase and that all options of sharing existing public sector space have been explored. Non-property/ accommodation related operating leases are subject to a specific delegated authority. The NDPB must have capital DEL provision for finance leases and other transactions which are in substance borrowing.

Tax arrangements

54.	Non-standard tax management arrangements should always be regarded as novel and/or contentious and must therefore be approved in advance by the SG. Relevant guidance is provided in the Tax Planning and Tax Avoidance section of the SPFM. The NDPB must comply with all relevant rules on taxation, including VAT. All individuals who would qualify as employees for tax purposes should

be paid through the payroll system with tax deducted at source. It is the responsibility of the NDPB to observe VAT legislation and recover input tax where it is entitled to do so. The implications of VAT in relation to procurement and shared services should be considered at an early stage to ensure that financial efficiency is achieved. The NDPB must also ensure that it accounts properly for any output tax on sales or disposals.

Settlement, severance, early retirement and redundancy

55. The NDPB shall seek to deliver, and demonstrate, robust governance processes, best practice and value for money when developing and implementing a severance scheme or when developing a settlement agreement, in compliance with current policy, observing all policy limits as set out in the Settlement, severance, early retirement, redundancy section of the SPFM.

Lending and guarantees

56. Any lending by the NDPB must adhere to the guidance in the Borrowing, Lending & Investment section of the SPFM on undertaking due diligence and seeking to establish a security. Unless covered by a specific delegated limit the NDPB shall not, without the SG's prior approval, lend money, charge any asset, give any guarantee or indemnity or letter of comfort, or incur any other contingent liability (as defined in the Contingent Liabilities section of the SPFM)*,* whether or not in a legally binding form. Guarantees, indemnities and letters of comfort of a standard type given in the normal course of business are excluded from this requirement.

Third party grants

57. Unless covered by a specific delegated authority the NDPB shall not, without the SG's prior agreement, provide grant funding to a third party. Such funding would be subject to the guidance in the Subsidy Control section of the SPFM. Guidance on a framework for the control of third party grants is provided as an annex to the Grant & Grant in Aid section of the SPFM.

Impairments, provisions and write-offs

58. Assets should be recorded on the balance sheet at the appropriate valuation basis in accordance with the FReM. Where an asset - and that includes investments - suffers impairment it is important that the prospective impairment and background is communicated to the SG at the earliest possible point in the financial year to determine the implications for the NDPB's budget. Similarly any significant movement in existing provisions or the creation of new provisions should be discussed in advance with the SG. Write-off of bad debt and/or losses scores against the NDPB's resource DEL budget classification and is subject to a specific delegated limit.

Insurance

59. NDPB is subject to the SG policy of self-insurance. Commercial insurance must however be taken out where there is a legal requirement to do so and may also be taken out in the circumstances described in the Insurance section of the SPFM - where required with the prior approval of the SG. In the event of uninsured losses being incurred the SG shall consider, on a case by case basis, whether or not it should make any additional resources available to the NDPB. The SG will provide the NDPB with a Certificate of Exemption for Employer's Liability Insurance.

Procurement and payment

60. The NDPB's procurement policies shall reflect relevant guidance in the Procurement section of the SPFM and relevant guidance issued by the SG's Procurement and Commercial Directorate. Procurement should be undertaken by appropriately trained and authorised staff and treated as a key component of achieving the NDPB's objectives consistent with the principles of Best Value, the highest professional standards and any legal requirements. All external consultancy contracts over the value of £100,000 or any proposal to award a contract without competition (non-competitive action) over the value of £100,000 must be endorsed in advance by the Chief Executive.

61. Any major investment programmes or projects undertaken by the NDPB shall be subject to the guidance in the Major Investment Projects section of the SPFM [and is also subject to a specific

delegated authority]. The sponsor unit must be kept informed of progress on such programmes and projects and Ministers must be alerted to any developments that could undermine their viability. ICT investment plans must be reported to the SG's Office of the Chief Information Officer.

62.   The NDPB shall pay all matured and properly authorised invoices relating to transactions with suppliers in accordance with the Expenditure and Payments section of the SPFM and in doing so shall seek wherever possible and appropriate to meet the SG's target for the payment of invoices within 10 working days of their receipt.

Gifts made, special payments and losses

63.   Unless covered by a specific delegated authority the NDPB shall not, without the SG's prior approval, make gifts or special payments or write-off of losses. Special payments and losses are subject the guidance in the Losses and Special Payments section of the SPFM. Gifts by management to staff are subject to the guidance in the Non-Salary Rewards section of the SPFM.

Clawback

64.   Where the NDPB has financed expenditure on assets by a third party, the NDPB shall make appropriate arrangements to ensure that any such assets above an agreed value are not disposed of by the third party without the NDPB's prior consent. The NDPB shall put in place arrangements sufficient to secure the repayment of its due share of the proceeds - or an appropriate proportion of them if the NDPB contributed less than the whole cost of acquisition or improvement. The NDPB shall also ensure that if assets financed by the NDPB cease to be used by the third party for the intended purpose an appropriate proportion of the value of the asset shall be repaid to the NDPB.

Subsidy Control

65.   The EU State aid regime was effectively revoked from UK law from 1 January 2021 and subsidy control provisions are now covered by the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) and the UK's international obligations including various Free Trade Agreements and those arising as a consequence of World Trade Organisation membership. This position may be subject if the UK Government establishing its own domestic subsidies control regime: a UK wide consultation on this is set to take place in the first half of 2021. Currently any activity that the NDPB undertakes itself, or funds other bodies to undertake, that can be offered on a commercial market for goods and services is subject to the TCA subsidy rules. A full assessment is therefore required prior to disbursing any funding and would be subject to the guidance in the subsidy regime section of the SPFM.

Member expenses

66.   Remuneration (daily fees), allowances and expenses paid to members and any pension arrangements must comply with the SG Pay Policy for Senior Appointments and any specific guidance on such matters issued by the Scottish Ministers.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT: APPENDIX

SPECIFIC DELEGATED FINANCIAL AUTHORITIES

Capital investment projects	£249,000 * see Note 1 below
Cash loss, but excluding overpayments of salaries, wages, pensions and allowances	£3,000 in individual instances; annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Cash loss arising out of theft, fraud, arson or gross carelessness; includes cash equivalents e.g. stamps	£3,000 in individual instances; annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Stores and equipment losses arising out of theft, fraud, arson, sabotage or gross carelessness; or through events such as fire, weather or accident	£3,000 in individual instances; annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Compensation payment for loss or damage to personal property whilst on duty	£3,000 in individual instances, annual aggregate limit of £10,000
Personal injuries (employees)	NIL

*Note 1 – subject to SPFM guidance and Scottish Ministers current policies, alongside spend control regimes including the utilisation of Accountable Officer templates, as applicable. Capital Project approval limits are:

Up to £249k	appraised and approved by SCRA
£250k to £500k	outline details of Project sent to Sponsor Unit for consideration **
£501k to £999k	detailed appraisal sent to Sponsor Unit for approval
£1m or above	detailed appraisal sent to Sponsor Unit for approval
Novel, contentious or high-risk projects	detailed appraisal sent to Sponsor Unit for approval

*****this would determine whether SCRA could appraise and approve the Project itself, or whether a detailed appraisal would need to be submitted for approval*

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Board Dates January 2022 to December 2022

Accountable Member: Board Chair   **Date:**   22 September 2021

Recommendation:

To approve SCRA's Timetable of Board and Committee Meetings from January 2022 to December 2022

Reason for Report: Board Approval

Resource Implications: Within approved plans

Strategy: Within approved plans

Consultation: Board Members
                              Executive Management Team

Equalities Duties: Equalities Impact Assessment not required

Document Classification: Not protectively marked

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration

Schedule of Board and Committee Meetings 2022

Board Meetings - 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Board Meeting	Thursday 20 January
	Tuesday 22 March
	Wednesday 22 June
	Wednesday 21 September
	Wednesday 14 December
Board Development Day	Wednesday 27 April
	Wednesday 09 November

Audit and Risk Committee - 10.30 to 1 p.m.

Audit & Risk Committee	Thursday 17 February
	Thursday 19 May
	Thursday 28 August
	Thursday 18 November

Remuneration and Succession Planning Committee (meets same day as Board and as required)

Remuneration & Succession Planning Committee	Wednesday 22 June
	Wednesday 14 December

Nominations Committee (to meet annually and as required)

Nominations Committee	TBC

CHS/SCRA Joint Meeting of Boards 10.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

CHS/SCRA Joint Meeting of Boards	Tuesday 01 February
	Tuesday 04 October

All meetings will be arranged via MS Teams and where appropriate a hybrid meeting will be arranged, locations to be advised.