

SCRA Corporate Plan 2024-2027



Welcome

A very warm welcome to our Corporate Plan 2024-27. This plan has been developed to take us through the next three years with ambition and optimism – to deliver an excellent service for children and young people, improving what we can now and planning for the transformational change of the future.

In the Children’s Hearings System we are in a period of much change, however, it is change for the better. Change to bring about the improvements that children, young people and families have been asking for - to ensure their rights and their voices are at the heart of it.

This plan has four key aims to deliver what will provide children, young people and their families with the best and most efficient experience of the Hearings System, and will ensure that everyone who works to deliver that service is skilled, valued and motivated to do so. We have aimed to capture and plan for what we know and have created space for what we don’t fully know yet - to help us adapt, re-prioritise and refine as we go. The outlook, whilst at times uncertain, is exciting too.

Over the course of this Corporate Plan, we will see the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Act coming into force in July 2024 and the Children’s (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill (CCJB) become an Act to enable more 16 and 17 year olds to be referred to the Reporter. The recommendations from the Hearings for Children (HfC) Report will move into the next stages – testing and implementation of approved change, further research of areas that need more evidence to take forward and, public consultation on those areas that require amendment through law – to fully realise the potential that these transformational recommendations will bring.

We will design our improvement with children and young people, as they are the experts in their lives and experiences. We recognise that each person is unique with different needs, preferences and views – and we will work to understand and support these.



Who are we and what do we do?

The Children's Reporter sits at the heart of the Children's Hearings System, providing continuity as the single point of referral for all agencies with concerns about a child or young person who may be at risk of harm (from others, to themselves, or to others). Children's Reporters routinely investigate and make critical decisions on the lives of each child and young person referred. To find out more, please visit our [website](#).

Our core role centres on:

- Receiving referrals for children and young people identified as being in need of protection, guidance, treatment or control and where it might be necessary for a Compulsory Supervision Order to be made (statutory criteria).
- Ensuring that other public agencies carry out enquiries and assessments into children and young people's circumstances so we can make informed decisions about the children and young people referred to us.
- Making decisions on whether to refer a child or young person to a Children's Hearing if they need compulsory measures of supervision.
- Drafting the Statement of Grounds for the Hearing.
- Arranging for Hearings to take place when we consider that it is necessary for a compulsory supervision order to be made and where there is sufficient evidence to prove the grounds, ensuring fair process takes place within the Hearing, including the rights of those in attendance being met.
- Establishing grounds of referral in court, where these are contested, and in defending decisions of Children's Hearings which are subject to appeal.



On reflection ... we achieved a lot

The Corporate Plan 2020-24 saw us and the rest of the world work through unprecedented times. The global pandemic pushed us to think on our feet, change, respond and support others in new ways and at a pace unlike anything we had encountered previously.

Overnight, Hearings had to become virtual to ensure that, regardless of the restrictions, no child or young person was placed at risk of an order lapsing – and not one did. Virtual Hearings took many turns over the course of the pandemic – as something very new and very basic to begin with, through to something now that is a great strength – an opportunity for children, young people, families and professionals to engage in Hearings from home, schools – or even just in the next room, to ensure maximum attendance, best opportunity for participation and a sense of safety for all.


Legislation was amended to allow us to work in different and flexible ways to support these changes.

Working closely with our partners during that time was critical to getting things right, and through the strength of good partnership working, we were able to not only maintain a safe service, but were able to seek opportunities to improve.

Just as the pandemic began to take hold of the world, The Care Review published its key reports following the Independent Review of Care in Scotland. Following this, the Hearings System Working Group was established in 2022/2023 and directed a year of exploration and collaboration – working closely with the collaborative redesign project – a very new and dynamic way of bringing together practitioners from across the system to design and develop what improvement could and should look like.

Together we worked towards the publication of the Hearings for Children report. This report was published in May 2023 and set out a series of recommendations for the Hearings System, and beyond.






For SCRA, the Hearings for Children report provided a fantastic guide to improvement that could be undertaken within current structures to improve the experience for children and young people going through the Hearings System now – and building towards the more transformational change to come.

A Keeping The Promise Route Plan was developed for SCRA and a programme framework set up to take forward the work in a robust, structured and measurable way.

SCRA recognised that in order to free up capacity to work towards meaningful improvement and greater quality for people experiencing the system, we would require a great deal of looking inwards to interrogate our internal systems, processes and practice to consider more efficient ways of working to enable this.

Our key programmes – Care (The Promise), Connect (Digital) and Protect (Effectiveness and Efficiency) were initiated at the start of 2023 and have undergone full programme set up to lay out clearly what they aim to do and deliver. These programmes have been audited by an external organisation to ensure that they are properly set up, managed and sustainable - and we have received substantial assurance that these are set to deliver as intended.

A series of improvement projects have been underway in SCRA to respond to what children and young people have asked for through The Promise, Our Hearings, Our Voice's 40 Calls to Action and the many other children and young people that we have the privilege of working with.



Looking forward

As we move into the new plan we feel confident that we have in place the structures and capability to plan, respond and absorb changes. We have worked hard to develop our approach to change – and this will be further developed as we move forward into more transformational improvements.

Major changes expected over the three years will be:

Exploration, preparation and rollout

- More 16 and 17 year olds being referred to the Reporter
- Embedding Language that Cares
- Relational work around decision making including working more closely with children, young people and families to understand the circumstances around the referral
- Pre-Birth Referrals to the Reporter

National roll out of successfully tested improvements including:

- Child Friendly Scheduling – giving children and young people more options and more control
- New communications to children and families to promote greater understanding, in language that cares
- Preparation for Hearing offer – a scrapbook – designed by young people for young people – to support them as they prepare for and attend their Hearing



Internal improvements

- Target Operating Model – an approach to delivering the most efficient and effective service whilst meeting the qualitative ambitions that we have for children and young people.
- Fully embed trauma-based practice into our operational environment
- Meet our equality outcomes that focus on data collection, inclusive recruitment and a key focus on race and discrimination
- Organisational action towards Net Zero – targeting eight priority areas including how we heat our buildings and the key stages towards reducing our emissions

Our Financial Context

As a strategic plan, this document describes our aims for the next three years however it is prudent to set out a very clear picture of the context through which we are to deliver this.

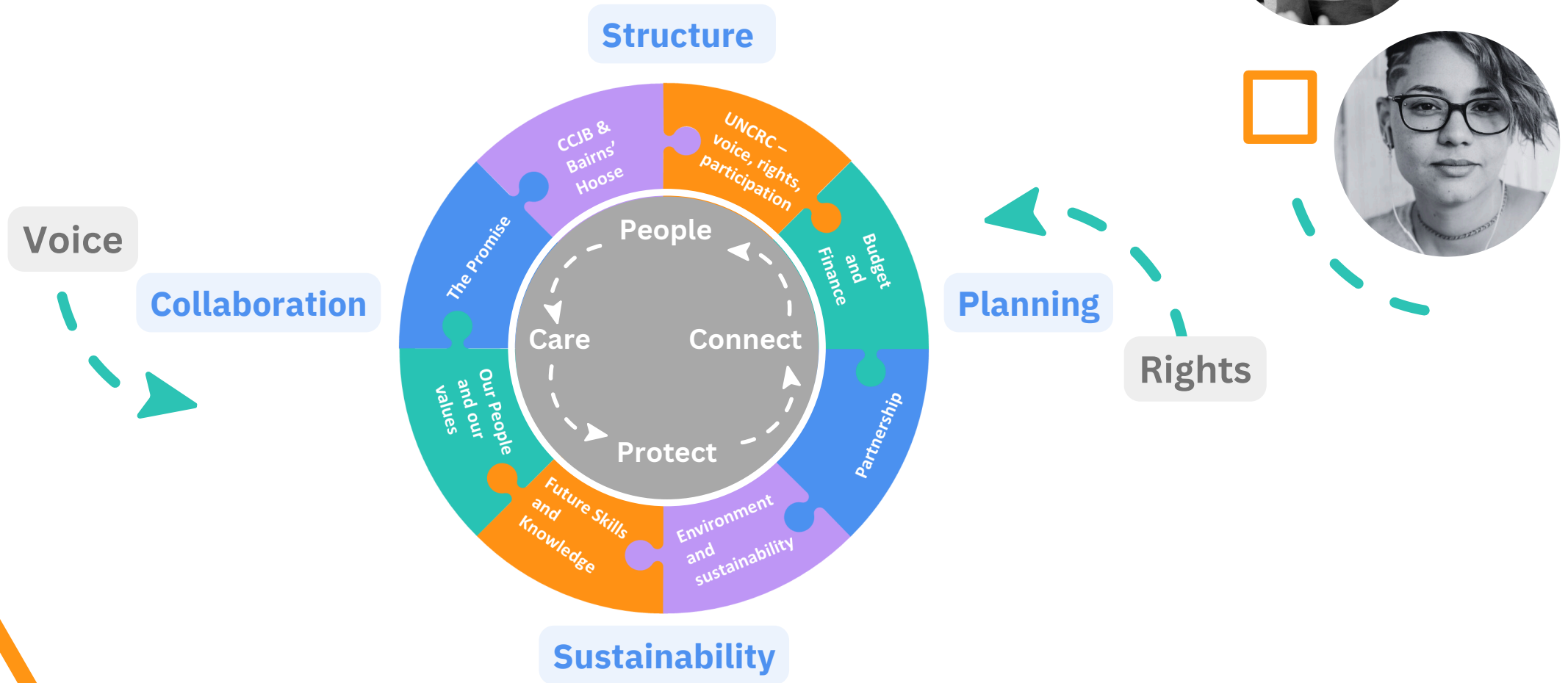
Scottish Government has a range of significant policy and legislative priorities that will impact on SCRA and all partners in the Children's Hearings System - the Care and Justice Bill has entered stage 2, a Redesign Board has been created to take forward the implementation of the Hearings for Children report, as well as associated challenges and opportunities arising from United Nations on the Convention of the Child (UNCRC) incorporation.

Whilst fully supporting these important changes and making the case for the investment that is required to deliver them, SCRA recognises that public sector funding is likely to remain constrained. Whilst this Corporate Plan is developed on the understanding that the resources required to deliver on Children's Care and Justice Bill (CCJB) and improvement activity envisaged by the Hearings for Children report (HfC) will be provided on a sustainable basis, SCRA is clear that greater efficiency through development of a revised operating model and the next phase of digital development is a key priority as public bodies are challenged to reform and do more with the same or lower funding.

It is accepted that there will be a need at times to make tough choices and prioritise services, based on safety, risk and legal compliance. With the necessary investment, the children and young people who need the welfare-based protection of the Hearings System will receive the best possible service and many other children and young people will avoid criminalisation with the associated harms and trauma this entails.

Environmental Context

The diagram below represents several internal and external drivers that influence the direction of this strategy over the next three years. Our overarching ambition is central, with our programmes of work – Care, Connect and Protect sitting between drivers and delivery – absorbing and responding to internal and external requirements, working towards key aims to deliver successful outcomes. Cross cutting is Voice and Rights – that require to be present in all that we do.



Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

Children and young people in Scotland will be cared for, included, respected and safe with opportunities for a positive future.

Our Mission

Together, we protect and uphold the rights of Scotland's children and Young People, making decisions in a compassionate, inclusive and trauma informed way.

Our Values

Our values are the shared motivations, beliefs and behaviours that underpin all that we do.

Supportive - We work with kindness to support children, young people and families, our partners and each other.

Child Centred - The rights and voice of children and young people are at the heart of everything we do.

Respectful - Everyone is respected and treated fairly, inclusively and lawfully.

Accountable - We are responsible for our decisions, our ethics and our learning.



Our Commitment

Bringing together the strength of our National reach with the best of our local knowledge to deliver a consistently high standard of service across Scotland;

We will:

- Ensure the rights of children, young people and families are upheld, promoted and respected.
- Make the right decisions at the right time for children and young people.
- Put the needs of children, young people and families first, working together with our partners in the Children's Hearings System.
- Include, listen and learn from people that are experts in their own lives and experiences.
- Efficiently deliver a timely service to make best use of our resources, keeping complexity to a minimum.
- Be effective and accountable as an organisation – measured against best practice, ambition and set standards.
- Develop, support and value our people to deliver the best service to children, young people and families with respect and compassion in a rights based, and trauma informed way.



Our Strategic Aims

The Best Experience – This will be delivered through our Care Programme

We will influence and implement policy and practice that enables us to work in a way that is compassionate, rights based and inclusive.

Clear Communications – This will be delivered through our Connect Programme

Our systems, properties and communications will be designed to ensure safe interaction, clear understanding and be accessible to everyone who uses them.

The Best Service – This will be delivered through our Protect Programme

Children and young people will have the most effective and efficient route through the Hearings System. Our services will be fair, inclusive and informed.

People who Care, Connect, and Protect – This will be delivered through our Workforce Plan

A trauma informed workforce who are valued, skilled, and motivated to deliver the best service for children, young people and families.



The Best Experience - Care

We will influence and implement policy and practice that enables us to work in a way that is compassionate, rights based and inclusive

What this will look like:

- Trauma based practice embedded in our service – our people, policy and practice.
- Children and young people with an understanding of the Hearings System, feeling prepared and understanding of their rights as part of it.
- Children and young people having more options and more control of where, when and how their Hearing is held.
- Hearings centres further improved to feel welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible for everyone
- Working with children and young people to design the parts of our service that they would like to influence, for example our letters and our Hearing rooms.
- Recognition of the legal status that UNCRC now holds by ensuring we are trained and prepared to meet these requirements and be able to respond when required.
- 16 and 17 year olds coming to the Hearings System will be enabled to fully exercise their rights to attend, participate and access the support they require.
- Exploration of what relational practice means for the Reporter role and how we would apply this to engage meaningfully with children, young people and families.
- Legislative proposals that have taken account of our views for the change that is needed to deliver a better system to children and young people.



Clear communications - Connect

Our systems, properties and communications will be designed to ensure safe interaction, clear understanding and be accessible to everyone who uses them

What this will look like:

- Our communications - written, digital and in person will be clear, in language that is understood and supportive of what people need to know.
- Information for children, young people and families will be relevant, easily accessible, in different formats and will provide information and support that is needed to feel informed, included and enables participation.
- Designing our services with children, young people and families to enhance the Hearings experience and allow wider access to everyone.
- Children and young people that are coming to Hearing having a range of options for interacting with us before, during and after the Hearing.
- Research and action to tackle digital exclusion as a barrier to connecting with us.
- Using evidence-based data and research to understand, inform and influence our operational delivery, our practice and the wider policy agenda.
- Providing technology that continues to meet and support the demands of a changing system.
- Working in a way that is kind to our environment demonstrating tangible improvements to support Net Zero.



The Best Service - Protect

Children and young people will have the most effective and efficient route through the Hearings System. Our services will be fair, inclusive and informed.

The Best Service is a service that works effectively and efficiently for today's children and young people - with minimal delay as changes and improvements are embedded for the future.

What this will look like:

- Referrals will be received at the appropriate time and with relevant information to allow us to make high quality, timeous decisions.
- Grounds for referral use clear language and all court proceedings are dealt with in a timely way.
- The processes, roles, skills and technology that we use will enable the most effective and efficient service delivery – this will be our Target Operating Model.
- Our Target Operating Model will be:
 - developed with our people, our key stakeholders and the children, young people and families that use our service.
 - adaptable and able to respond to the evolving policy and legislative environment.
 - achieved through testing and evaluating innovation and improvement, locally and nationally to produce a model that is sustainable and provides consistent outcomes.
- Mature partnerships and collective leadership in the Hearings System will continue to be nurtured to deliver meaningful improvements for the benefit of children, young people and families.



People who care, connect and protect

A trauma informed workforce who are valued, skilled, and motivated to deliver the best service for children, young people and families.

What this will look like:

- A deeper understanding of trauma - where it comes from, how to recognise the impact it has – in ourselves and in others and how best to work with it to ensure mental and physical safety.
- Opportunities for learning and development to gain the skills and knowledge required to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.
- Greater change capability and capacity across the organisation – a cohort of confident change leaders.
- A positive 'one team' culture where people are encouraged to engage, innovate and lead together.
- A firm focus on resilience and wellbeing to help our people to feel confident, motivated and supported.
- Robust implementation of additional capacity to meet the workload brought about through new legislation.
- Our people feeling valued, supported, skilled, and proud of the key role that they play.



Our alignment to Scotland's Outcomes

The National Performance Framework (NPF) for Scotland aims to create a more successful country by giving opportunities to all people living in Scotland; increasing the wellbeing of people living in Scotland; creating sustainable and inclusive growth; reducing inequalities and giving equal importance to economic, environmental and social progress. SCRA's work within the NPF is focused on giving opportunities, increasing wellbeing and tackling inequalities. Sustainability across the work we do and environmental and social progress are also active considerations.



Our Strategic Framework

Everything that we do is underpinned by our values, seeks to deliver on our aims and objectives and aspires to meet our vision. Our organisation’s vision maps through to the Scottish Government’s National Outcomes.

Scottish Government National Outcomes	Children and Young People Fair Work & Business Communities Culture Education Environment Health Poverty Human Rights
Our Vision	Children and young people in Scotland will be cared for, included, respected and safe with opportunities for a positive future.
Our Mission	Together, we protect and uphold the rights of Scotland’s children and Young People, making decisions in a compassionate, inclusive and trauma informed way.
Our Values	Supportive Child Centred Respectful Accountable
Our 2024-2027 Strategic Aims	The Best Experience Clear communications The Best Service People who Care Care Connect Protect Connect and Protect
Our Delivery Framework	<p style="text-align: center;"> Our Corporate Plan Aims Our Business Plan Objectives Delivered through our Programme Framework - Care, Connect, Protect Supported by our organisational strategies </p>

How we will measure ourselves

In SCRA we have a core set of delivery measures that are reported quarterly to the Board through our Organisational Performance Report.

On a quarterly basis a progress report of the Programmes – that deliver the objectives from the Business Plan, also goes to the Board to provide assurance that plans are progressing, issues are escalated in accordance with governance procedures and that risks are being managed.

Each programme of work that stands to deliver on the Business Plan, sets out a clear set of measures and benefits to be achieved and these are reported on through internal governance – the Programme Board.

We would be keen however to set some high level indicators, to demonstrate progress against this plan. For each aim, we have opted for two indicators – one that is data driven, one that is more qualitative.

The Best Experience

As the two most experiential objectives, we will seek to measure on an annual basis, the progress against these.

- Children and young people with an understanding of the Hearings System, feeling prepared and understanding of their rights as part of it. This will be evidenced through project evaluations.
- Children and young people having more options and more control of where, when and how their Hearing is held. This will be measured through project evaluations.



Clear Communications

Change should be grounded in evidence, we will seek to demonstrate our commitment to this statement in our improvement activity.

- Using evidence-based data and research to understand, inform and influence our operational delivery, our practice and the wider policy agenda. This will be demonstrated through linking data and analysis to change.

We are at the start of our Net Zero journey and aim to explore our maturity across 8 priority areas.

- Working in a way that is kind to our environment demonstrating tangible improvements to support Net Zero

This will be evidenced through the development of new plans and related actions.

The Best Service

- Referrals will be received at the appropriate time and with relevant information to allow us to make high quality, timeous decisions. The percentage of decisions made within 50 working days.
- Grounds for referral use clear language (case sampling) This will be measured through Case Sampling

People who Care, Connect and Protect

- A deeper understanding of trauma - where it comes from, how to recognise the impact it has – in ourselves and in others and how best to work with it to ensure mental and physical safety. We will measure this through engagement with staff.
- Greater change capability and capacity across the organisation – a cohort of confident change leaders – evidenced by good and sustained implementation of change, and through the development of robust change plans.





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