



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION



Communications and Engagement Strategy



Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Alignment with the Corporate Plan	3
3.	Communication and Engagement Strategy aims	4
4.	Key audiences	4
5.	Engagement with children and young people	5
6.	Internal communications	5
7.	External communications	6
8.	Strategy Objectives	7
9.	Strategy Actions	8

Appendix 1 - Communication methods

1. Introduction

SCRA's Communications and Engagement Strategy demonstrates how we will deliver on **SCRA's Corporate Plan** and our values:

- 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

2. Alignment with the Corporate Plan

Our Communications and Engagement Strategy reaches across all of our Corporate Plan's three strategic aims:

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.

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.

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.

3. Communication and Engagement Strategy aims

We have three key aims:

- 1. Engagement:** Our communication platforms will be varied and informed by experience, and we will work with and engage with Hearings-experienced children and young people through effective and trauma-informed methods of participation, to ensure that our service is child-centred with the voice of children and young people being a visible influence and driver in terms of service provision.
- 2. Communication:** Through multiple and ever evolving communication platforms, we will ensure that we effectively connect with others – internally, and with external partners, children, young people and their families.

- 3. Accessibility:** We will ensure that the information that we provide is accessible, relevant and in a format that is appropriate to make sure that everyone in receipt of information is able to be as informed about the Children's Hearings process and our service as possible.

Our strategy aims are supported by a number of objectives and actions (**section 8 & 9**).

4. Key audiences

SCRA has a wide and varied audience. To ensure effective communication and engagement, we must use a flexible mix of communication methods, as children, young people and families have different information and communication needs to our partners and our staff.

SCRA's key audiences include;

- Children, young people and their parents/carers in the Hearings System
- All members of SCRA staff
- SCRA Board Members
- Children's Hearings Scotland staff and Panel Members
- Victims and vulnerable witnesses
- Scottish Government – Ministers, officials and elected members
- Partner organisations, such as Social Work Scotland, Police Scotland and Education Scotland
- Groups such as the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership and the Youth Justice Improvement Board
- The Promise Scotland
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscals Service
- Health
- Our Hearings, Our Voice
- Local Champions Boards
- Voluntary organisations (Who Cares? Scotland, Barnardo's Scotland etc)
- Partnerships such as Stand Up For Siblings and the Community of Practice for Siblings
- Collaborative Corporate Parenting Network
- Participation Network
- UNISON
- Media – local and national
- Social media
- The general public
- Academics and researchers in children's services/child protection arena

5. Engagement with children and young people

Effective and meaningful engagement with the children and young people who are in contact with the Children's Hearings System is absolutely essential in ensuring that we

continue to improve, adapt and shape the way that we work to make the Children's Hearings System the best it can be for people that experience it. It is at the heart of this refreshed strategy and its supporting actions.

Working with our partners, SCRA hopes to deliver to children and young people a Children's Hearings System that feels designed for them – with options around how, where and when they attend their Hearings, how they choose to participate and what support they need to do that, what the centres look and feel like.

Children and young people will feel supported to take more control of how their Hearing is run and this will take partners and agencies to work effectively together through Keeping The Promise to make this happen.

We will continue to work with and strengthen partnerships with care experienced children and young people, from groups such as Our Hearings, Our Voice, local Champions Boards and organisations like Who Cares? Scotland, as well as SCRA's own care-experienced staff network, the Voice of Experience Reference Group.

6. Internal communications

SCRA has a large staff group based in offices and Hearing Centres across the country. Staff within SCRA cover a wide spectrum of roles, from those involved in the frontline delivery of the Reporter's service, to corporate functions such as human resources, finance and property.

SCRA continues to recognise the importance of internal communications in supporting the effective progress and development of the organisation.

In order to successfully implement an open, transparent and effective internal communications approach, it is important to understand the needs of staff and to appreciate there are differences in these needs, and plan communications to take account of them.

It is also important to recognise that internal communications are not always driven centrally and rightfully so - Localities and managers have a crucial role to play in achieving high quality internal communications. Two-way communication is vital to the success of this strategy and every member of staff has a role to play in making this happen.

Our internal communications must also be timely and appropriate to ensure maximum staff engagement and buy in. To achieve this, we will employ a number of internal methods (see Appendix 1 for a detailed list.)

7. External communications

As outlined in section 4 above, we have a large external audience, with a variety of different information and engagement needs. Therefore, we will continue to utilise a

number of communication methods to ensure maximum reach of our messages externally.

One of our most effective tools for reaching large numbers of people is our website. This routinely gets a lot of traffic. We continue to make improvements and refresh the content and review and respond to analytics on a routine basis.

Social media is also a key element of our communications and engagement approach. We actively use a number of popular platforms to reach a variety of different groups. We review our Social Media Handling Policy regularly to ensure it stays current and is meaningful for staff.

Traditional media – due to the continuing changing nature of the media landscape, we do not receive the same number of calls from the press. However, we do have an active media handling policy in place and this is supplemented by a joint media handling agreement with Children’s Hearings Scotland. Both of these are reviewed regularly.

More detail outlining all our external communication methods is available at Appendix 1.

8. Strategy Objectives

Our strategy will be delivered by a combination of our Press and Communications Team, EMT, Corporate Parenting & Participation Group, Inclusion Ambassadors, Neurodiversity Champions, as well as Localities at local level, but seeks to bring together a full picture of the communications, participation and engagement taking place across the organisation.

Our strategy objectives highlight how we will meet our aims:

Objectives	
1	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.
2	We will work as a team to continually improve and strengthen internal communication.
3	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.
4	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.
5	We will work with children and young people, including Champions Boards, Our Hearings, Our Voice, Modern Apprentices, work experience placements, and other groups such as SCRA's Voice of Experience Reference Group, we will review and refine/improve the information that we provide.
6	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 spaces, toolkits/information for people with particular needs.
7	We will continue to ensure all our information materials are accessible and available in multiple formats.

9. Actions linked to our objectives in 2025/2026

We will...	Linked to objective
Organise an in person Staff Event in 2026.	1
Build and launch a new cloud-based staff intranet and continue to develop its new functionality.	2
Launch a new/interactive Team Brief making it more accessible and engaging for staff.	2
Identify a team/Locality to host and support a Modern Apprentice or work experience placement.	3
Launch phase 2 of child friendly scheduling which includes a scrapbook and magazine co-produced with Hearings-experienced young people.	4
Develop a brand for the Learning Hub and build a new, interactive learning section on our website for partners to access.	4
Work with young people and partners to review and improve our information materials around going to court and secure accommodation	5
Re-establish our Participation Group and rebrand it our Corporate Parenting & Participation Group	5
Review and refresh our Chloe and Billy storybooks for young children	5

Write and design witness information booklets for children and young people	5
Launch phase 2 of the Communi-crate communication toolkit for children and young people	6
Develop British Sign Language information around going to court	7
Explore the introduction of a chatbot on our website	7
Develop a cartoon jargon buster for children on our website	7

Appendix 1 - Communication methods

The following tools are used for internal and external communications. The list is reviewed and revised on a regular basis as new tools become available.

Internal communications:

Method	When	Comments
Connect	Daily	The home page of our staff intranet is updated on a daily basis (article of the day, news items, vacancies etc). Other sections are updated as and when required. A new cloud-based version of Connect was launched in the spring of 2025.
National Reporter	Twice a year	The staff e-zine is issued every six months to all staff and contains a round-up of staff news (fundraising etc) from around the country.
Team Brief	Every six weeks	This is issued every eight weeks (approx.) to all staff. It is followed by with usually three online sessions which are open to all staff.
Podcasts	Ad hoc	Used to key topics such as Change/Keeping The Promise etc.
In Touch	Fortnightly	This e-communication is issued every second Friday afternoon to staff on long term sick leave, maternity leave, secondment to other organisations etc. This is an opt in communication.
Consultations/ surveys	Ad hoc	As and when required.
Staff Survey	Annual	Usually every November (theme-based surveys are issued throughout the year such as training needs, health and wellbeing etc).

Campaigns	Ad hoc	Campaigns such as our Equalities Monitoring exercise (every November) and one off campaigns such as the 31 day mental health calendar or the year -long environmental awareness raising campaign are launched as and when required.
Team Meetings	Usually every 4-6 weeks	This is dependent on individual teams/Localities – best practice guidance is available for managers on Connect.
Staff Event	Biennial	In person and usually every 24 months
Locality/Head Office Development Days	Annual	Up to individual Localities, but usually annual and around the planning cycle.
Email communication	Regular basis	Emails are used to either communication and engage with a specific group, such as LRMs, Business Continuity Leads or all staff.
Networks and forums	Regular	Inputs to key groups such as the Corporate Parenting & Participation Group, Practice and Quality Network etc are utilised to communicate and engage on specific topics.
Corporate Style Guide	Updated as and when required	This guide ensures staff have access to all the communication templates, briefing sheets etc to ensure consistency in our communications. This was last refreshed with a new suite of templates in January 2025.
The Box	Staff can submit a suggestion at any time	SCRA's Staff Suggestion Scheme which allows staff to submit ideas on a variety of topics.

Branded communications	As and when required	We develop branded communications for specific subjects, such as the Digital Strategy, HR, Operational Development, Learning and Development etc.
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External communications:

SCRA's website	Updated regularly	This is one of our key tools to reach out to a wide external audience. The website is split into sections (children, young people etc). There is a dedicated Keeping The Promise section and BSL section. It also includes our online interactive statistical dashboard
ReciteMe	Ongoing	SCRA's website has Recite Me software which provides additional functionality to website visitors with different needs. The functionality includes: text to speech functionality, dyslexia software, an interactive dictionary, a translation tool with over 100 languages and it works across all devices. We regularly review the analytics to determine usage/popular functionality.
Facebook	Updated several times a week	This is used to communicate quickly with partners and promote job vacancies, new research etc. A number of staff also follow us on Facebook and is an additional way of reaching them.
Instagram	Updated several times a week	Launched in January 2018 to mark Year of Young People and to reach out to more young people
Linkedin	Updated when external jobs are advertised	Using it increasingly to promote general information, as well as vacancies.

Bluesky	Updated several times a week	We joined Bluesky in January 2025 and are slowly building up our followers.
Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership website	Updated as and when required	SCRA built and maintains this website on behalf of the CHIP. The site is aimed at partners in the Hearings System.
Corporate Parenting website	Updated as and when required	SCRA built and maintains this website which is joint with Children's Hearings Scotland and is aimed at Hearings-experienced children and young people.
Stand up for Siblings website	Updated as and when required	SCRA built and maintains this website on behalf of the SUFS partnership. It also contains a space for the Community of Practice for Siblings of which SCRA is a founding member.
Our Hearings, Our Voice website	Updated as and when required	SCRA built and maintains the website for Our Hearings, Our Voice aimed at children, young people and partners
Hearings advocacy website	Updated as and when required	SCRA designed and built the Hearings advocacy website for the Scottish Government and we continue to host and maintain it for them.
Youth Justice Improvement Board website	Updated as and when required	SCRA designed and built the Youth Justice Improvement Board website for the Scottish Government and we continue to host and maintain it for them.
Bairns' Hoose website	Updated as and when required	SCRA designed and built the Bairns' Hoose website for the Scottish Government and we continue to host and maintain it for them.
Glasgow Promise website	Updated as and when required	SCRA designed and built the Glasgow Promise website on behalf of the multi-agency partnership. We continue to host and maintain the website.

East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee website	Updated as and when required	SCRA designed and built the East and Midlothian Public Protection website on behalf of the public protection committee. We continue to host and maintain the website.
You Tube/Vimeo	As and when a new video becomes available	We use these platforms to promote our films and animations.
Podcasts	Ad hoc	Like their use internally, we use podcasts to get messages across on key topics and also to provide learning for our partners in a different format
Media	Ad hoc	<p>We do receive enquiries from the traditional press, but these tend to be focused on individual children. We have a media handling policy in place to deal with these (updated November 2024).</p> <p>We also have a media handling policy in place with Children's Hearings Scotland (updated February 2025).</p>
E-news	Quarterly	Our e-news is issued every three months to local and national partners and contains all our latest news and links to items with more detail on the working in partnership section of our website.
Emails	Regular	Emails are used to target specific groups to highlight information such as new research reports. Often branded emails with a visual are created to give an email more prominence.
Meetings	Regular	We utilise particular multi-agency groups to inform our partners of updates etc.

Information materials for children, young people and families	Updated/reviewed on a regular basis	<p>We have a suite of information materials, both online and in paper format (leaflets, posters, flyers, animations, videos and forms) to inform children, young people and families of going to a Hearing, their rights etc.</p> <p>We have several films for young people, podcasts and easy read material for parents/carers with learning difficulties (developed in conjunction with the Scottish Consortium for Learning Disabilities and People First).</p>
British Sign Language	We continue to add to our BSL information	We have a dedicated British Sign Language (BSL) section on our website. This includes BSL videos with sub titles on key topics such as a walk-through of a Children's Hearings Centre. We also have a BSL video dictionary on our website. We work in partnership with organisations like the British Deaf Association (Scotland) on our BSL information.
Information stands at events	As and when required	We target specific events and conferences to promote the organisation and our information materials. We have a suite of marketing merchandise for these local and national events.
Briefing sheets	As and when required	These are used to communicate with key groups, to inform them of new developments such as Hearing room improvements, particular events etc.



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