



**Agenda of SCRA Board Meeting, held on  
Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025, at Ochil House, Stirling**

# A G E N D A

**SCRA BOARD CHAIR  
Cathie Cowan**

Item	Topic	Lead	Decision	Timings
1.	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum</b>			10:30
1.1	<b>AOB</b>			
2.	<b>Declaration (s) of Interest (s)</b>			
3.	<b>Chair/Non-Executive Updates</b>		For Information	10:30-10:35
4.	<b>Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025</b>	Chair	For Approval	10:35-10:40
5.	<b>Matters Arising from Minute Matters Arising from Action Log</b>	Chair	For Assurance	10:40-10:45
6.	<b>Workplan (Board)</b>	Chair	For Noting	
7.	<b>Committee Minutes and Committee Chair Escalation</b>			
7.1	<b>Minute of Audit and Assurance Committee held on 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025</b>	Committee Chair	For Noting	10:45-10:55
7.2	<b>Minute of Remuneration and Nominations Committee held on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2025</b>	Committee Chair	For Information	10:55-11:05
7.3	<b>Minute of Planning and Performance Committee held on 08<sup>th</sup> September 2025</b>	Committee Chair	For Noting	11:05-11:30
8.	<b>Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Report</b>			
8.1	<b>PR/CE Report</b>	PR/CE	For Noting	11:30-12:00
	<b>Break 12:00 12:15</b>			
9.	<b>People Management</b>			
9.1*	<b>Review of the Reporter Job Description - Update</b>	Head of Human Resources	For Approval	12:15-12:45
9.2	<b>Mainstreaming and Equality Outcome Progress Report 2025'</b>	Inclusion & Diversity Manager	For Approval	12:45-13:00
	<b>Lunch 13:00 13:45</b>			
10.	<b>Strategy &amp; Performance</b>			
10.1	<b>Annual Report</b>	Head of Strategy & OD	For Approval	13:45-13:55
11.	<b>Finance &amp; Resources</b>			
11.1	<b>Budget Monitoring Report</b>	Head of Finance & Resources	For Assurance	13:55-14:05
11.2*	<b>Financial Strategy</b>	Head of Finance and Resources	For Noting	14:05-14:15
11.3	<b>Annual Accounts 2024-25 &amp; Management Representation Letter</b>	Head of Finance and Resources	For Approval	14:15-14:25

<i>Item</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Timings</i>
11.4	<b>Procurement Report</b>	Head of Finance and Resources	<i>For Approval</i>	14:25-14:35
12.	<b>Governance</b>			
12.1	<b>Standing Orders</b>	Governance Officer	<i>For Approval</i>	14:35-14:40
12.2	<b>Proposed 2026 Board/Committee Dates</b>	Governance Officer	<i>For Approval</i>	14:40-14:45
13.	<b>Risk Management</b>			
13.1	<b>Strategic Risk Register</b>	Head of Finance & Resources	<i>For Assurance</i>	14:45-14:55
13.2	<b>New Risks</b>	Head of Finance & Resources	<i>For Assurance</i>	14:55-15:00
<b>Close</b>				

***Date of next meeting: Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2025, Bell Street, Glasgow***

***Items marked \* will be considered in private session to protect commercially sensitive or children-related information, in line with our Public Access to Board Meetings policy.***



## Scottish Children's Reporter Administration Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at Fountainhall Road, Edinburgh

### Present:

Cathie Cowan (Chair)  
Kay Barton  
Lynne Clow  
Jim Edgar  
Lorraine Moore  
Steve Renwick,  
Hazel Smith  
Ying Zhang (By TEAMS)

### In Attendance:

Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive  
Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer  
Lisa Bennett, Head of Organisational Development and Strategy  
Douglas Cameron, Head of Digital  
Susan Deery, Head of Human Resources (HR)  
Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources  
Paul Mulvaney, Senior Operational Manager  
Monica Sweeney, UNISON Branch Secretary/Reporter (by TEAMS)

Katie Pacholek, Locality Reporter Manager - Item 9.1 (by TEAMS)  
Donald Lamb, Data Manager - Item 10.1 (by TEAMS)  
Maryanne McIntyre, Press and Communications Manager - Item 10.4 (by TEAMS)  
Stephen Eodanable, Information Governance Manager - Item 13.1 (by TEAMS)  
Melissa Hunt, Policy and Public Affairs Manager - Item 13.3

Taiba Ali (Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government)

Item	Topic	Timescale	Owner
1.	<p><b>Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum</b></p> <p>The Board Chair welcomed Board members and Officers to the June 2025 meeting of the SCRA Board.</p> <p>Apologies received from Helen Etchells (Senior Operational Manager), Alistair Hogg (Head of Practice and Policy), Nick Rougvie (Children's Hearings Team Leader, Scottish Government)</p> <p>The Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p>		

1.1	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Updated Workplan</b></p> <p>The Board Chair provided an update on the Board workplan and proposed oversight and management of risks within the committee structure. The Board agreed to revisit the allocation of risk oversight to ensure alignment with committee remits and review the Remuneration and Nominations Committee's Terms of Reference to include staff governance related business.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Audit and Assurance Committee currently oversees risk management and assurance arrangements. A previous recommendation proposed transferring responsibility for quality assurance case sampling to the Planning and Performance Committee. The Board Chair emphasised the need to pace this transition carefully, noting that the Planning and Performance Committee is still developing its work programme. There is concern that transferring responsibilities prematurely could overload the committee and compromise its ability to provide effective assurance.</li> <li>• The Board reaffirmed that its primary role is to receive escalated risks and take assurance that these are being appropriately managed. Operational assurance will remain within current EMT arrangements, with confidence expressed in the management team's ability to manage risks and where necessary escalate these risks from operational to strategic for Board oversight and guidance.</li> <li>• The detailed nature of case sampling and associated action plans was noted as a significant workload, requiring careful management to avoid duplication and ensure effective oversight.</li> <li>• The Board discussed the importance of maintaining flexibility within committee remits, enabling operational issues to be escalated when necessary to support informed decision-making.</li> <li>• The need for clear strategic delineation between committees to prevent operational detail from overshadowing strategic oversight was discussed. The Board will continue to refine this balance as committee roles evolve.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To delay the transfer of case sampling responsibilities until the Planning and Performance Committee's work plan is fully developed and reviewed.</li> </ul>	Aug 25	CC/KB/ JE/LM
-----	--	--------	-----------------



2.	<b>Declaration (s) of Interest (s)</b> None		
3.	<b>Chair/Non-Executive Updates</b> None		
4.	<b>Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on 20 March 2025</b> The minute was approved as an accurate record.		
5.	<b>Matters Arising from Minute</b> Covered within the agenda.  <b>Matters Arising from Action Log</b> Reviewed and agreed. A number of items due for completion are covered within the agenda.		
6.	<b>Workplan (Board)</b> Reviewed and approved.		
7.	<b>Committee Minutes and Committee Chair Escalation</b>		
7.1	<b>Audit and Assurance Committee – 27 May 2025</b> The Committee Chair provided the following update to the Board, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case sampling exercise on The Reporter's Obligations Under UNCRC Article 12 and associated action plan were presented to the Committee.</li> <li>• Two Internal Audit reports were presented: one with substantial assurance (communications review), the other with borderline assurance (cyber security review).</li> <li>• Progress on internal audit actions was noted, with some items deferred to the next meeting.</li> <li>• Strategic Risk Register reviewed as part of the Committee's ongoing responsibilities.</li> <li>• Financial escalation processes were discussed, with confirmation that current management policies are providing adequate assurance.</li> <li>• A discussion is underway to enhance Board understanding of pension matters.</li> <li>• Comments were raised on the potential need for additional management support to help the Board navigate the ongoing financial position.</li> </ul>		
7.2	<b>Audit &amp; Assurance Committee Annual Report 2024/25</b> The Committee Chair introduced the annual report. The purpose of this report is to provide evidence to the Board as to how the SCRA Audit & Assurance Committee has fulfilled its remit, and how effectively it has discharged its responsibilities. It also supports preparation of the annual Governance Statement.		

	<p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board thanked the Audit and Assurance Committee for the work undertaken over the course of the year noting the extensive work undertaken by this Committee.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To approve the Audit and Assurance Committee Annual Report for 2024/25.</li> </ul>		
<b>7.3</b>	<p><b><i>Remuneration and Nominations Committee Update</i></b></p> <p>Board Members noted that no meeting had taken place since the previous Board update in March. The Head of HR provided a verbal update on pay negotiations, highlighting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further staff pay negotiations are on hold pending clarity on the Scottish Government's wider pay framework. Many organisations are similarly awaiting this guidance before proceeding.</li> <li>Discussions with UNISON are ongoing, with the aim of reaching a revised proposal by the end of the month.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board agreed to delay any formal response until clearer direction is available, ensuring a strategic and informed approach.</li> <li>There was a return to the discussion about managing ongoing staff related matters through the relevant committee to enhance staff governance Board oversight. The Board was open to this suggestion.</li> <li>The importance of managing communications and negotiations carefully was acknowledged, balancing timely action with alignment to broader public sector pay arrangements.</li> <li>No changes to pay remuneration arrangements are proposed at this time. The original offer and claims were briefly reviewed, with recognition of the complexities involved.</li> </ul>		
<b>7.4</b>	<p><b><i>Minute of the Planning and Performance Committee – 06 May 2025</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee Chair introduced the draft minutes, noting that the Committee is still shaping its role and determining how best to support the Board. Members acknowledged the Committee's broad terms of reference and the need to clarify which issues fall within its remit.</li> <li>The May meeting primarily served as a background briefing, updating members on the organisation's mix of improvement projects, and programmes, using a portfolio management approach.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A presentation on managing external uncertainty provided valuable context for the Committee's work.</li> <li>• A deeper dive into upcoming Board agenda items helped assess where Committee input would be most valuable and identified opportunities for further involvement.</li> <li>• Performance and planning discussions included business and corporate plan reporting, the Organisational Performance Report (OPR) and governance systems, including an initial review of future risk management arrangements (scheduled for further discussion)</li> <li>• Clarification was provided that the portfolio approach integrates all projects, programmes, and business-as-usual activities to prioritise resources effectively. The Executive Management Team (EMT) will implement this gradually, starting with the digital and CCJ programmes. The approach will evolve incrementally, aligning with existing governance structures rather than requiring any major restructuring.</li> <li>• The Board noted the draft minutes and the Committee's ongoing development.</li> </ul>		
<b>8.8.</b>	<b><i>Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Report</i></b>		
<b>8.1</b>	<p><b><i>PR/CE Report</i></b>  <i>The PR/CE introduced the update report.</i></p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members sought clarity on the model the Government might adopt in response to the <i>Reimagining Secure Care</i> report. The PR/CE explained that a blended approach is proposed combining small secure units, electronic monitoring and restriction-of-liberty orders and wrap-around therapeutic and family support. International examples (e.g., New Zealand, Australia, U.S. states) favour such mixed-modality models over large institutions. The upcoming <i>Programme for Government</i> will outline which elements Scotland will pilot first (e.g., e-monitoring with outreach, new unit designs).</li> <li>• With the 2026 Scottish parliamentary election approaching, members sought assurance that key reforms such as the age of criminal responsibility and secure care pilots would maintain cross-party backing. The PR/CE confirmed that the <i>Children's Care Bill</i> and related reforms currently have broad political support.</li> <li>• Members expressed caution regarding governance of AI-related pilots (e.g., voice recognition, OCR, machine learning). The PR/CE noted SCRA is registered on the Scottish Government's AI Register, an internal AI</li> </ul>		

	<p>Ethics Committee is being established, and all pilots must complete an Ethics &amp; Legal Approval Form before progressing beyond proof-of-concept. Full transparency and compliance with data privacy and legal standards are mandatory.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members requested reassurance that key sponsor departments remain actively engaged. At the recent workshop, all sponsors committed to bi-monthly deep-dives on priority funding streams.</li> </ul>		
<b>9.9.</b>	<b>People Management</b>		
<b>9.1</b>	<p><b>Review of the Reporter Job Description – Update</b></p> <p>Katie Pacholek, Locality Reporter Manager, presented an update on the comprehensive review of the Reporter Job Description and Person Specification. The full report, circulated in advance, outlined the phased approach, methodology, staff engagement, key findings, and next steps. The review is structured in three phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase One (Completed): Revision of the Job Description and Person Specification, informed by extensive staff engagement.</li> <li>Phase Two (Underway): External job evaluation to assess grading and remuneration, with a report expected by the end of June.</li> <li>Phase Three (Planned): Consideration of evaluation outcomes and potential investment proposals, with an update due in September.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board commended the inclusive, staff-centred approach and the Head of HR's leadership and communication throughout the process.</li> <li>Members emphasised the importance of transparency and objectivity in the evaluation phase, supported by an independent external validation report. The evaluation report will be critical in assessing potential impacts on grading, pay, and structure.</li> <li>The Board acknowledged that additional investment may be required and stressed the need for a compelling, evidence-based business case, particularly in the context of public sector financial constraints. It was noted that any significant changes may require Scottish Government approval.</li> <li>Staff frustration with the length of the review, which began in early 2023, was acknowledged. The Board highlighted the importance of clear, ongoing communication to manage expectations.</li> <li>Broader implications for other roles, including support staff, were discussed. Members noted the potential need for wider job evaluations to ensure consistency</li> </ul>		

	<p>and fairness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The degree requirement for Reporters was debated. While it is seen as supporting professionalism and analytical capability, concerns were raised that it may exclude capable candidates from non-traditional or disadvantaged backgrounds. Internal discussions noted that practical experience often correlates with holding a degree, creating a cyclical barrier.</li> <li>The organisation is exploring alternative progression routes, such as apprenticeships and accredited awards, to widen access and support workforce diversity.</li> <li>Gender balance, internal progression, and social equity remain key considerations, with recruitment policies and role design under active review.</li> <li>Ongoing collaboration with judicial and professional bodies continues to inform role development and case management standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To share the detailed HR paper outlining the rationale for the degree requirement with the Board.</li> <li>Ensure the external job evaluation report is shared promptly upon completion to support transparency and informed decision-making.</li> <li>Prepare for the September Board meeting to consider the business case for investment and any structural implications, including potential wider job evaluation for related roles.</li> </ul>		SD SD SD
<b>10.</b>	<b>Strategy &amp; Performance</b>		
<b>10.1</b>	<p><b>Organisational Performance Report &amp; Introduction to Official Statistics</b></p> <p>The Data Manager introduced the report, noting that much of the content had already been scrutinised by the Planning and Performance Committee.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board discussed the organisation's response to workload fluctuations and performance trends, particularly where targets may not be met. Key reflections included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for clear governance and action plans to address areas of concern.</li> <li>Recognition of a positive feedback loop between performance monitoring and operational management, with efforts to focus on understanding variation and trends rather than inherent 'background noise' within established limits.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Assurance that attendance management and workforce health wellbeing are being closely monitored, with a detailed report scheduled for the September Board meeting.</li> <li>• Fluctuating referral patterns were discussed, particularly spikes in police referrals and bypassing of traditional partnership routes. The organisation's resource allocation modelling was noted as a strength in adapting to shifting demand.</li> <li>• The sensitivity, volatility, and lack of understanding of data in this sector especially under media scrutiny was acknowledged. The communications team is prepared to manage public messaging around the statistics release.</li> <li>• The Board welcomed the transparent and detailed updates, expressed confidence in the governance and data-driven approach, and emphasised the need for continued vigilance on emerging trends and workforce wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comprehensive attendance management report will be presented at the September Board meeting.</li> </ul>	Sep 25	SD
10.2	<p><b>Corporate Plan Update</b></p> <p>The Head of Strategy and OD presented an update combining two key reports:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Year-End Business Plan Update – summarising progress against the ten business plan objectives, including quarterly performance highlights.</li> <li>2. Corporate Plan Year One KPI Report – the first formal presentation of key performance indicators aligned with the new three-year Corporate Plan, marking a shift toward sustained, evaluative monitoring beyond annual targets.</li> </ol> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members welcomed the new KPI approach as a sign of the organisation's growing maturity in performance management.</li> <li>• A suggestion was made to include visual tools, such as strategy diagrams or dependency maps in future reports to enhance clarity and engagement. While not currently included, this was positively received.</li> <li>• Members requested deeper analysis in future updates, with clearer links between activities, outcomes, and impact to support robust oversight of strategic delivery.</li> <li>• The Board endorsed the comprehensive updates and approved the continuation of the reporting approach, with enhancements to be incorporated in future</li> </ul>		

	<p>iterations.</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop and include visual tools (e.g., strategy diagrams, dependency maps) in future corporate plan and programme updates to better illustrate the relationship between objectives, KPIs, and activities.</li> <li>To present detailed findings from the staff survey and other workforce-related evidence at the September Board meeting, providing a fuller picture of organisational health and progress.</li> </ul>	Sep 25	LB  LB
<b>10.3</b>	<p><b>Programme Board Update</b></p> <p>The Head of Strategy and OD presented the quarterly Programme Update, providing an overview of the status and progress of key strategic and operational programmes.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board was reassured that successful test areas will not be withdrawn prematurely.</li> <li>Variation in readiness across localities was acknowledged, with continued support emphasised for those further from full implementation.</li> <li>Members endorsed the phased, evidence-led planning approach and welcomed progress in strategic areas such as referral reform and multi-agency collaboration.</li> <li>The Board will continue to receive updates on programme developments and key decision points through future quarterly reports.</li> </ul>		
<b>10.4</b>	<p><b>Communications Strategy</b></p> <p>The Head of Press and Communications presented three papers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Covering Report – outlining the strategic context and alignment with the corporate plan and SCRA's values.</li> <li>Communications Strategy Document – detailing key audiences, communication aims, and internal/external channels.</li> <li>At-a-Glance Visual Summary – highlighting recent engagement across the website and social media platforms.</li> </ol> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board welcomed the strategy and commended the ambition and quality of work delivered by the small communications team.</li> <li>The external communications audit and intranet launch were noted as strong indicators of progress and assurance.</li> <li>Members encouraged greater visibility of SCRA's</li> </ul>		

	<p>impact and broader public engagement, including the reputational value of sector partnerships. A related risk assurance update is being progressed via the Audit &amp; Assurance Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concerns were raised about the number of externally hosted websites, with a request for assurance on associated risks and capacity. It was noted that this is currently under review by the Audit &amp; Assurance Committee.</li> <li>Support was expressed for sharing human-centred stories from staff and service users to build public understanding and trust.</li> <li>The Board also discussed the value of promoting SCRA's work more widely and ensuring communications reflect the organisation's values and impact.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board approved the Communications Strategy and commended the team for their commitment to accessibility and effective engagement with key audiences.</li> </ul>		
<b>11.</b>	<b>Digital</b>		
<b>11.1</b>	<p><b>Digital Strategy Update</b></p> <p>The Head of Digital Operations and Development presented a detailed update on the progress of the Digital Strategy over the past six months and outlined the forthcoming implementation phases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Issues arising during the discussion:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of co-design with children and families was emphasised to ensure that child-facing services reflect actual needs and preferences. A prototype digital service is in development, with completion targeted for April 2026. Digital tools are intended to supplement, not replace, human contact.</li> <li>While current AI use is energy-efficient (non-generative), the growing carbon footprint of digital activity was acknowledged. Environmental implications will be monitored and factored into future policy, particularly in relation to AI.</li> <li>The Board welcomed the clarity, ambition, and direction of the strategy, noting the presence of strong governance structures and a balanced approach between ambition and deliverability.</li> <li>Members supported the child- and family-centred approach, highlighting that digital tools should enhance human relationships.</li> <li>The Board appreciated the proactive stance on</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		



	<p>cybersecurity and environmental responsibility, recognising the importance of public trust and ethical implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was noted that maintaining momentum is important, while also ensuring the workforce is supported and not overwhelmed.</li> </ul>		
<b>12</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Resources</b>		
<b>12.1</b>	<p><b>Budget Monitoring Report</b></p> <p>The Head of Finance and Resources introduced an early financial update for the 2025/26 financial year, which is earlier than would typically be expected (normally June or later), recognising that only one month of data is currently available. The rationale for this early report was to flag internal indicators already pointing to a net underspend for the year, despite the limited data. It was emphasised that the early insight is part of a broader strategy to improve budget holder engagement and responsiveness. Managers are being encouraged to make necessary investments early in the year to support delivery of services effectively, while also targeting in-year savings. This proactive approach is designed to reduce risk aversion, particularly where past underspending has occurred, and to improve the alignment between budget planning and operational needs.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Audit and Assurance Committee will review the progress of the external audit of 2024/25 accounts at its August meeting.</li> <li>The Board noted the early financial position and endorsed the proactive strategy to support early-year investment and savings planning, alongside targeted support to local budget holders.</li> </ul>		
<b>12.2</b>	<p><b>Property Strategy – Update</b></p> <p>The Head of Finance and Resources presented the annual update on the organisation's Property Strategy, which outlines how the estate supports operational delivery and business needs. The update also includes a summary of environmental and sustainability performance, as reported to the Scottish Government.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board discussed the potential for a more strategic, comprehensive review of the estate in future years to ensure alignment with sustainability goals. While current decisions are often made on a case-by-case basis, insights from previous reviews such as the MacDonald report are informing ongoing planning.</li> <li>Members explored opportunities for co-location with</li> </ul>		

	<p>other public sector partners in line with national collaboration policies. While such opportunities are considered through the Single Scottish Estate Programme, they are assessed individually, with key considerations including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suitability for service delivery (e.g., avoiding shared premises with courts to preserve the neutrality of children's hearings).</li> <li>○ Privacy, accessibility, and service user experience (e.g., maintaining a separate entrance at the Livingston site).</li> <li>○ Cost-effectiveness and operational compatibility.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board commended the transformation of the Property Team, which has evolved from a traditional estates function into a modern, business-partnering unit. Their proactive and responsive engagement with operational needs, and alignment with contemporary design and modernisation approaches, was welcomed.</li> </ul>		
<b>13,</b>	<b><i>Practice &amp; Policy</i></b>		
<b>13.1</b>	<p><b><i>Annual Complaints Report</i></b></p> <p>The Information Governance Manager presented the annual Complaints Report for 2024/2025. Two corrections to the published report were noted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Section 5.1 should state that ten complaints were dealt with at the frontline in 2024/25.</li> <li>2. Section 6.2 should refer to "the previous year" (not "previous years") when describing complaint volumes in the Central locality.</li> </ol> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of internal resolution was seen as a positive indicator of effective complaint handling. It was confirmed that Stage Two decisions are made internally by managers, with only one case escalated to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), reflecting confidence in the organisation's resolution processes.</li> <li>• Board members noted that many complaints stem from parental dissatisfaction with the circumstances of the hearing itself, rather than procedural failings by SCRA.</li> <li>• The Board welcomed the assurance provided by the report, recognising the organisation's robust complaint processes and its commitment to learning and improvement.</li> </ul>		
<b>13.2</b>	<p><b><i>Influencing Report (01 June 2023 – 01 June 2025)</i></b></p> <p>The Policy and Public Affairs Manager presented the Annual Influencing and Consultation Report, which provides a clear</p>		

	<p>overview of influencing activity over the reporting period. This year's report was restructured to align with both the Scottish Government's Programme for Government and SCRA's strategic objectives, helping to better demonstrate how consultation responses are shaped by organisational priorities.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board members welcomed the inclusion of government analysis of consultation responses, recognising it as a valuable new addition that highlights the impact of SCRA's contributions.</li> <li>• The legislative update section was commended for clearly outlining current and emerging issues relevant to the organisation.</li> <li>• The last section, presented in table format, was praised for effectively illustrating the scope, outcomes, and anticipated impact of SCRA's wider influencing work.</li> <li>• A question was raised about how decisions are made regarding which consultations or groups to engage with. It was confirmed that while SCRA rarely declines relevant policy work, internal processes led by the team and involving senior managers where needed to ensure that relevance, value, and capacity are carefully considered before engagement is confirmed.</li> <li>• It was noted that the level of detail in consultation responses varies depending on the issue's significance. In some cases, a brief submission may be used to highlight key points. The Board acknowledged the workload involved and expressed appreciation for the team's ongoing commitment and rigour.</li> <li>• The Board formally noted and endorsed the report as an accurate and valuable reflection of SCRA's policy engagement over the past year.</li> </ul>		
<b>14.</b>	<b>Governance</b>		
<b>14.1</b>	<p><b>Policy on Public Attendance at Board Meetings</b></p> <p>The Governance Officer introduced an update on the draft policy for public access to SCRA Board meetings. The policy outlines procedures for public attendance, including advance notification and the process for submitting questions. The Chair retains discretion over any public contributions during meetings.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board Members welcomed the clarity the policy provides and offered several suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clarify how the policy applies to Committee meetings to avoid confusion between Board and Committee arrangements.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strengthen the section on exclusions from public access, particularly in relation to personnel, industrial relations, or other sensitive matters.</li> <li>○ Reword the section on advance registration to reflect its practical value for planning and logistics.</li> <li>• The Board emphasised the need to balance transparency with the operational needs of meetings.</li> <li>• Members also discussed the increasing role of Board Committees and the importance of ensuring that key issues raised in those forums are clearly reported back to the full Board, potentially through concise summary papers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To approve the draft policy in principle, subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Clarification regarding its application to Committee meetings – i.e., not open to the public.</li> <li>○ Enhanced language on exclusions.</li> <li>○ Revised wording on advance registration.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Once final amendments are made, the policy will be published on the SCRA website, and procedures will be established to manage public access requests and questions in line with the published process.</li> <li>• A process will be developed for presenting summary reports from Board Committees to ensure appropriate visibility and discussion at Board level.</li> </ul>	<p>Jul 25</p> <p>Sep 25</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>PA</p> <p>PA</p> <p>PA</p>
<b>15.</b>	<b><i>Risk Management</i></b>		
<b>15.1</b>	<p><b><i>Risk Management Policy</i></b></p> <p>The Head of Finance and Resources introduced the Risk Management Policy, noting that it had previously been approved by both the Audit &amp; Assurance Committee and the Planning &amp; Performance Committee. The current version remains in effect until its scheduled review in November.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members observed that the policy's language is high-level and corporate, and recommended that it more clearly reflects SCRA's core responsibilities to children and young people. The inclusion of explicit references to these responsibilities within the policy framework was strongly supported.</li> <li>• The Board discussed the complexity of risk management within SCRA, particularly the distinction between the corporate entity and the Principal Reporter function, which carries statutory responsibilities and the management of associated risks through separate operational processes.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was acknowledged that while the policy provides a governance framework for strategic risks, it does not currently explain how statutory and child protection risks are captured or integrated.</li> <li>Members emphasised the need for clearer articulation of how operational, statutory, and strategic risk management are aligned, to reinforce the organisation's commitment to its core mission.</li> <li>The Chair noted that similar discussions are taking place across other public bodies, highlighting the importance of referencing vulnerable groups such as children and young people in risk management policies.</li> <li>The potential to supplement the policy with additional assurance materials outlining how operational risks in the Principal Reporter function are managed was welcomed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Risk Management Policy will be updated at its next review to include a dedicated section referencing SCRA's statutory obligations, child protection responsibilities, and their influence on risk management.</li> <li>Supporting documentation or a briefing paper will be developed to describe how statutory and operational risks are managed and aligned with the strategic risk framework.</li> <li>These updates and assurance materials will be presented to the Board to provide clarity on the integration of organisational and statutory risk management.</li> </ul>		
<b>15.2</b>	<p><b>Strategic Risk Register</b></p> <p>The Head of Finance and Resources presented the Strategic Risk Register, confirming that it had been reviewed and endorsed by both the Audit &amp; Assurance Committee and the Planning &amp; Performance Committee, with no significant changes since their reviews.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Board emphasised the importance of clearly assigning ownership for each of the strategic risks. The register should indicate the role of the Board (i.e., accountable for risk management framework and its effectiveness in the management of risks) vs. the role of the Board's Committees in providing oversight and guidance on the risk management processes for an assigned strategic risk. to ensure focused scrutiny and avoidance of duplication or oversight gaps.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members supported maintaining flexibility to allow risks to be discussed across multiple forums when appropriate, recognising the interconnected nature of some strategic issues.</li> <li>The Board welcomed stronger alignment between the risk management policy and the register, ensuring that key risks particularly those related to statutory duties, child protection, and operational delivery are appropriately captured and monitored.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Strategic Risk Register will be updated to explicitly assign each risk to a relevant sub-committee(s), clarifying oversight responsibilities.</li> <li>Sub-committees, including the Audit &amp; Assurance Committee and Planning &amp; Performance Committee, will continue to review the risks within their remit and provide regular updates to the Board.</li> <li>A process will be maintained for the ongoing identification and escalation of new or evolving risks, with Board members and senior managers encouraged to contribute proactively.</li> </ul>	Sep 25	RMack
		Ongoing	RMack
<b>15.3</b>	<b>New Risks</b> No new risks identified.		
	<b>Date of the next Meeting</b> Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> September at Ochil House, Stirling		

## Board Action Log as at March 2025

Meeting/Item	Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments	Status
<b>Sept 24 Financial Strategy</b>	It would be helpful to highlight in future reports risk and ambition. The risk around financial security and what cannot be achieved if flat cash continues, and what can be achieved if investment is forthcoming.	Sep 25	RMack		Addressed in financial strategy for approval at Sep25 board
<b>Sep 24 Sustainability, Energy Efficiency Review</b>	A number of recommendations from the Mott MacDonald report will be incorporated moving forward.	Sep 25	RMack		Addressed in financial strategy for approval at Sep25 board
<b>Dec 24 SCRA Absence Update Report</b>	It would be helpful to provide clarity on the breakdown of psychological-related absences and their correlation with work-related stress.	Sep 25	SD	A report was taken to the recent PPC. An update to the September Board will be provided via the PPC minute.	Suggest closed
<b>Jan 25 Future Insight Session Public Access to Board Meetings</b>	Facilitated session on creating a good governance system to be planned.	Apr 25	PA/CC	Provider and date still to be confirmed.	PA to discuss with CC and NH
<b>Sep 25 Board/Committee Workplans</b>	To delay the transfer of case sampling responsibilities until the Planning and	Dec 25	PA/CC/ KB	An update will be provided via the PPC minute of it's meeting on 08 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	In Progress

Meeting/Item	Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments	Status
	Performance Committee's work plan is fully developed and reviewed.				
<b>Jun 25</b> <b>Review of the Reporter Job Description</b>	To share the detailed HR paper outlining the rationale for the degree requirement with the Board.	August	SD	Provided w/c 15/9/25	Suggest closed
	Ensure the external job evaluation report is shared promptly upon completion to support transparency and informed decision-making.		SD	This has informed the development of the business case and the contents were shared with SCRA's JEC via presentation	Suggest closed
	Prepare for the September Board meeting to consider the business case for investment and any structural implications, including potential wider job evaluation for related roles.	Sep 25	SD	Will be covered at the September Board meeting	
<b>Jun 25</b> <b>Corporate Plan Update</b>	To develop and include visual tools (e.g., strategy diagrams, dependency maps) in future corporate plan and programme updates to better illustrate the relationship between objectives, KPIs, and activities.	Sep 25	LB	This item comes under the remit of the PPC. An update will be provided at the December meeting of the committee	Transfer to PPC action log
	To present detailed findings from the staff survey and other workforce-related evidence at the September Board meeting, providing a fuller picture of organisational health and progress.		LB	A detailed report on Staff Absence was presented at the September meeting of the PPC. Future reporting will be via the PPC.	Suggest closed
<b>Jun 25</b>	Clarify Committee meetings will not be open to the public and revised wording on advance registration.	Sep 25	PA	Policy had been amended to reflect the Board comments.	Suggest closed



Meeting/Item	Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments	Status
<b><i>Policy on Public Attendance at Board Meetings</i></b>	Once final amendments are made, the policy will be published on the SCRA website, and procedures will be established to manage public access requests and questions in line with the published process.	Sep 25	PA	In progress, policy and meeting information will be published ahead of the September Board meeting.	On track
	A process will be developed for presenting summary reports from Board Committees to ensure appropriate visibility and discussion at Board level.	Sep 25	PA	Agreed via Committee Chairs minutes will inform the Board of discussions and decisions and issues escalated to the Board where required	Update to be provided to the Sep Board
<b><i>Jun 25 Strategic Risk Register</i></b>	<p>The Strategic Risk Register will be updated to explicitly assign each risk to a relevant sub-committee(s), clarifying oversight responsibilities.</p> <p>A process will be maintained for the ongoing identification and escalation of new or evolving risks, with Board members and senior managers encouraged to contribute proactively.</p>	Sep 25	RMack	<p>Risk register will reflect Committee Ownership as agreed with Committee Chairs.</p> <p>Sep 25 This has now been discussed and agreed at each of the relevant Committee's of the Board. Each Committee will consider any risks to be escalated as part of their core agenda and will escalate these through their formal recording to the Board (minutes). EMT will escalate direct to strategic risk register and report in the normal way.</p>	Suggest closed

**SCRA BOARD****Date of Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025****Agenda number 6 Update to Board and Committee Workplans****Report Classification:** *Open***For:** *Approval***Non-Executive Sponsor:** *Cathie Cowan, SCRA Board Chair***Author:** *Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer*

---

**Executive Summary**

This report presents the updated SCRA Board Annual Workplan 2025/26 and how business activity aligns with Board corporate objectives and functions. It also updates the Planning & Performance Committee (PPC), Remuneration & Nominations Committee (RNC), and Audit & Assurance Committee (AAC) workplans for the period 2025/2026.

The report highlights changes from the original Board Workplan, and business activities transferred to relevant committees, notably: Quality Assurance & Case Sampling and the Annual Report (PPC), Workforce & People Strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and monitoring.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to:

- Approve the updated SCRA Board Annual Workplan 2025/26 and invite Committee Members, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and EMT to consider the attached workplans.
- Note the transfer of specific oversight items to the PPC and RNC, including Quality Assurance & Case Sampling and Annual Report from AAC to PPC from February 2026; and Workforce & People Strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EQI) Strategy and in year monitoring from the PPC to the RNC.
- Endorse the alignment of the revised workplans with the Board's corporate objectives and governance functions (setting direction, holding to account, managing risk, engaging stakeholders and influencing culture).

**Key Issues to be discussed/considered**

- Changes to the Board Workplan: transfer of Sustainability, Digital, Property to PPC; staff governance related business (e.g., workforce planning and absence monitoring) and EQI related business to RNC; and the requirement for each Committee to prepare and present an annual Self-Assessment report to the Board.
- Transfer of Quality Assurance & Case Sampling and Annual Report oversight from AAC to PPC from February 2026.
- Rationale for Board Committees and proposed changes: to enhance oversight and management of risks, strengthen due diligence (e.g., deep dives) and

improve governance by delegating business activity. Each Committee is responsible for escalating issues, risks and/or good practice to the Board as part of effective decision making and accountability.

- Strategic impact: enhances governance and enables the Board to focus on strategic issues whilst ensuring detailed oversight in key business activities.

### **Implications:**

#### **Service**

Transfer of Quality Assurance & Case Sampling and Annual Report oversight to PPC ensures deeper, and focused scrutiny of e.g., service improvement, property investment, net-zero targets, and performance metrics.

#### **Financial**

No direct financial impact.

#### **Workforce**

RNC ownership of staff governance related activities, notably workforce planning, pay negotiations, EQI and staff engagement (e.g., staff survey findings and actions) enables Committee members to undertake deep dives into key areas, leading to more effective oversight and decision making.

#### **Infrastructure including Digital**

Including delegation of Digital Strategy oversight to the PPC is intended to support focused deep dives to add to the Board's commitment to delivering effective governance.

#### **Information Governance**

No change to information governance related compliance - remains the responsibility of the Audit & Assurance Committee.

#### **Risk Assessment/Management**

Oversight of strategic risks remains a key feature on all Board and Committee business agendas. Work is underway to align strategic risks to relevant and responsible Committees. The Audit & Assurance Committee continues to be responsible for providing assurance on risk management arrangements to the Board.

**Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives** - workplans are intended to deliver against all corporate objectives (listed below) and the functions of the Board:

- Planning for the future
- Valuing and developing our staff
- Working in partnership
- Committing to delivering service improvement and sustainability
- Delivering best value using our resources
- Investing in developing and maintaining effective governance systems

#### **Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and the three aims of the Equality Duty; no adverse impact identified.

### **Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

- Board Members, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and EMT on Committee terms of reference that in turn have informed the attached workplans.
- Scottish Government Sponsorship Team informed of revised governance reporting arrangements.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - SCRA Board Workplan 2025/26

Appendix 2 - Planning & Performance Committee Workplan 2025/26

Appendix 3 - Remuneration & Nominations Committee Workplan 2025/26

Appendix 4 - Audit & Assurance Committee Workplan 2025/26

## Appendix 1

## SCRA Board Annual Workplan - 2025/2026

Business Item (supporting the delivery of our corporate objectives and functions)	Sept 25	Dec 25	Jan 26	March 26	June 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Planning for the future (Setting Strategic Direction)</b></li> </ul>					
Sustainability Annual Report				✓	
Digital Annual Report				✓	
Property Annual Report					✓
Procurement Annual Report	✓				
Policy Overview Annual Report		✓			
Health & Safety Annual Report				✓	
Policy & Influencing Report					✓
Research Programme		✓			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Investing in developing and maintaining effective governance systems (Managing Risk)</b></li> </ul>					
Audit & Assurance Committee Minutes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Planning & Performance Committee Minutes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Remuneration & Nominations Committee Minutes	✓	✓		✓	✓
Risk Register	✓	✓		✓	✓
SCRA Standing Orders Review	✓				
Committee Self-Assessment Annual Reports	✓				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Delivering Best Value using our resources (Holding to Account)</b></li> </ul>					
Budget Monitoring Report	✓	✓		✓	✓

Business Item (supporting the delivery of our corporate objectives and functions)	Sept 25	Dec 25	Jan 26	March 26	June 26
Draft Budget		✓	✓	✓	
Annual Report & Accounts	✓				
Financial Strategy	✓				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Committing to delivering service improvement and sustainability (Holding to Account)</b></li> </ul>					
Annual Business Plan (setting out improvements in line with the Board's Corporate Plan)					✓
Organisational Performance Escalation/Summary Report	✓	✓		✓	✓
Complaints Review					✓
Locality Performance Reviews			✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Valuing &amp; Developing our Staff (Influencing Culture)</b></li> </ul>					
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report	✓				
Annual Workforce Plan				✓	
Whistleblowing Policy and Annual Monitoring Report				✓	
Annual Staff Survey Results & Action Plan					✓
Business Case - Role of the Reporter (Job Review and Evaluation)	✓				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Working in Partnership (Engaging with Stakeholders)</b></li> </ul>					
Chief Executive's Report	✓	✓		✓	✓
Communication Plan					✓

**Appendix 2****SCRA Planning and Performance Committee Workplan - 2025/2026**

<b>Business Item</b>	<b>Sept 25</b>	<b>Dec 25</b>	<b>Feb 26</b>	<b>May 26</b>	<b>Aug 26</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Corporate Planning</b></li> </ul>					
Review and contribute to the Draft Corporate, Corporate Parenting & Business Plan (with final drafts to Board for approval)				✓	
Draft Annual Report with final draft to Board for approval)	✓				
Monitor progress against approved Business Plans	✓		✓		✓
Monitor progress towards delivery of Hearing Redesign and Children's Care and Justice Act	✓		✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Improvement, Performance and Quality Assurance</b></li> </ul>					
Organisational Performance Report (high level summary report to Board all monitoring via P&PC)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Programme Board Update	✓		✓		✓
Case Sampling - Annual Progress Report				✓	
Case Sampling - Annual Plan			✓		
Case Sampling Reviews - per Annual Plan				✓	✓
Joint Inspections			✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Sustainability</b></li> </ul>					
In year deep dive to ensure the Board can demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and meeting SCRA's net zero targets			✓		

Business Item	Sept 25	Dec 25	Feb 26	May 26	Aug 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Digital</b></li> </ul>					
In year deep dive to ensure the Board can demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and meeting SCRA's net zero targets		✓			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Property</b></li> </ul>					
In year deep dive to monitor the delivery of the Board's Property Strategy aims and targets to ensure delivery of investment in the estate for Hearings System redesign and wider Public Sector Reform				✓	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Governance</b></li> </ul>					
Risk Management - Risk Register	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee Self-Assessment - Annual Report				✓	



## Appendix 3

## SCRA Remuneration and Nomination Committee Workplan - 2025/2026

Business Item	Aug 25	Dec 25	Feb 26	May 26	Aug 26
• <b>Workforce &amp; People Strategy</b>					
In year deep dive to ensure the Board can demonstrate its delivery of the People's Strategy and commitment a fair, just and open culture			✓		
Absence Management		✓			
Monitor progress against the staff survey action plan		✓	✓		✓
• <b>Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion (EDI)</b>					
Review and contribute to the Draft EDI Strategy (with final draft to Board for approval)					✓
Monitor the delivery of the EDI Strategy aims, targets and supporting programmes of work including activity to reduce the Gender Pay Gap	✓		✓		
• <b>Pay Negotiations including remuneration</b>					
Oversee pay and conditions negotiations (in year dates as required)	✓			✓	✓
Receive and seek assurance on Principal Reporter/Chief Executive salary progression				✓	
Oversee staff pay banding changes including business cases (with final draft to Board for approval) (in year dates as and if required)					
• <b>Governance</b>					
Risk Management - Risk Register	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Committee Self-Assessment - Annual Report				✓	

Business Item	Aug 25	Dec 25	Feb 26	May 26	Aug 26
Support Board Member and Specialist Advisor Recruitment (in year dates as and if required)					

## Appendix 4

## SCRA Audit &amp; Assurance Committee Workplan - 2025/2026

Business Item	Aug 25	Nov 25	Feb 26	May 2026
• <b>Internal Audit</b>				
Annual Report				✓
Annual Audit Plan			✓	
Internal Audit Reviews per Annual Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
• <b>External Audit</b>				
Annual Report	✓			
Annual Audit Plan			✓	
• <b>Internal Control and Governance</b>				
Risk Management - Risk Registers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Risk Management Policy (with final draft to Board for approval)		✓		
Pensions Update	✓		✓	
Briefing for Audit Committee on preparation of accounts, governance statement etc.				✓
Annual Accounts including annual report	✓			
Accounting Policies				✓
Annual Fraud Report		✓		
Committee Self-Assessment Annual Report				✓
• <b>Information Governance</b>				
In year deep dive to oversee and review SCRA's compliance with statutory obligations to comply with information governance, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Network Information Systems Regulations including cyber scrutiny and improvements in information governance	✓		✓	
• <b>Other</b>	✓			
Private Meetings with Internal and External Auditors	✓			



**Scottish Children's Reporter Administration**  
**Minute of SCRA Audit and Assurance Committee**  
**held on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025.**  
**At Ochil House, Stirling**

**Present:**

Jim Edgar (Chair)  
 Steve Renwick (Vice Chair)  
 Hazel Smith, by TEAMS  
 Lynne Clow, by TEAMS

**In Attendance:**

Neil Hunter (Principal Reporter/Chief Executive)  
 Lisa Bennett (Head of Strategy and OD)  
 Pamela Armstrong (Governance Officer)  
 Lindsay MacFadyen (Quality Assurance Manager) – Item 8.1  
 Paul Mulvanny (Senior Operational Manager)  
 Alistair Hogg (Head of Practice and Policy)  
 Ross Mackenzie (Head of Finance and Resources)

**Internal Audit (BDO):**

Gemma MacLeod

**External Audit (Audit Scotland):**

Lisa Duthie, by TEAMS  
 Sean Cowan, by TEAMS

Item	Topic	Timescale	Lead
1.	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum</b> The meeting commenced with introductions from attendees.  Apologies received from Cathie Cowan (Board Chair)  The meeting was confirmed as quorate.		
2.	<b>Declaration (s) of Interest (s)</b> No declarations of interest were noted.		
3.	<b>Minute of SCRA Audit and Assurance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b> The minutes were approved without any further comments.		

4.	<p><b>Matters Arising from Minute of Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b></p> <p>Unauthorised access to systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The AAC Vice Chair noted that the issue discussed at the previous meeting has resonance with items later on the current agenda, particularly the internal audit report on authorised access. It was confirmed that the response given at the last meeting addressed the concern at that time. No update was requested; the comment was made to highlight a possible theme across reports.</li> </ul> <p><b>Matters Arising from Action Log</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising from the action log.</p>		
5.	<p><b>Workplan</b></p> <p>The Committee agreed to the work plan as presented.</p>		
6.	<b>External Audit</b>		
6.1	<p><b>2024/25 Auditor's Covering Letter, Proposed Independent Auditor's Report, Letter of Representation (ISA 580) and Annual Audit Report</b></p> <p>Audit Scotland confirmed that work on the 2024/25 audit is substantially complete, with an unmodified audit opinion expected once the Board approves the accounts in September. The Committee noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No instances of actual or suspected fraud reported</li> <li>Satisfaction with accounting estimates, methods, and data</li> <li>All related-party transactions fully disclosed</li> <li>No noncompliance with laws and regulations</li> <li>Materiality set at 2% of gross expenditure, consistent with public sector practice</li> </ul> <p>The Committee accepted the recommended adjustments, commended the finance team, and acknowledged the ongoing funding gap as a strategic risk.</p>		
6.2	<p><b>Annual Accounts and Audit Certification - Letter from Audit Scotland's COO</b></p> <p>The AAC noted the letter. SCRA has consistently been 'audit ready' and compliant including during COVID.</p> <p><b>Covering report and Draft 2024/25 Annual Accounts</b></p>		

	<p>The Committee reviewed and approved the draft 2024/25 Annual Accounts and associated Audit Scotland certification letter. Key updates included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance Statement disclosures on risks and governance arrangements</li> <li>• Depreciation and amortisation now separately disclosed</li> <li>• Strengthened user access controls for the finance system</li> <li>• Underspend of approximately £2 million due to vacancies and delayed implementation of the CCJA headcount increase</li> <li>• Ongoing deficit in the general reserve and pension asset treatment</li> </ul> <p>The Committee approved the Letter of Representation and noted a letter of comfort from the Scottish Government.</p>		
<b>7.</b>	<b>Information Governance</b>		
<b>7.1</b>	<p><b>Six-monthly Information Governance report</b></p> <p>The six-monthly Information Governance report highlighted continued strong performance alongside improvement work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 96% compliance with mandatory Data Protection training</li> <li>• 112 breaches and 12 near misses recorded; nondisclosure breaches have returned to average levels</li> <li>• Pilot of a new redaction tool in Glasgow shows promise; specification criteria to be developed</li> <li>• 69 Subject Access Requests, 14 FOI requests, and 5 PBT requests managed to a high standard</li> </ul> <p>The Committee agreed to flag direct impacts of nondisclosure failures in future reports and endorsed redesigning disclosure processes through the forthcoming case management platform.</p>		
<b>8.</b>	<b>Quality Assurance</b>		
<b>8.1</b>	<p><b>Reporters Analysis of their Case</b></p> <p>The Committee considered the report on Reporters' case analysis practices. Findings showed that about 75% of analyses were proportionate and meaningful. To drive consistency, the Committee supported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting findings to the Court Management Network</li> <li>• Sharing locality-level insights to support court preparation</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding case analysis within Programme Protect court improvement projects</li> <li>• Exploring appraisal and supervisory mechanisms to reinforce tool usage</li> </ul> <p>Governance arrangements were confirmed, with project reporting routed through the Programme Board to PPC.</p>		
<b>9.</b>	<b>Internal Audit</b>		
<b>9.1</b>	<b>Estates Management</b> BDO's review provided moderate assurance on control design and substantial assurance on operational effectiveness. Five recommendations were accepted, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPI narrative for red/amber indicators</li> <li>• Monitoring actual desk usage</li> <li>• Documenting capital project priorities and timescales</li> <li>• Version control for estate procedures</li> <li>• Quality assurance for reactive repairs</li> </ul> <p>The Committee praised the Property team for maintaining the estate in excellent condition.</p>		
<b>9.2</b>	<b>Follow-up Action Exception Report</b> Progress against prior recommendations remains strong: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven items nearing completion, pending final evidence</li> <li>• Five on track for delivery within agreed timescales</li> <li>• Cyber-security recommendation now included in follow-up</li> <li>• One recommendation under review via the Planning Promise Network</li> </ul>		
<b>10.</b>	<b>Risk</b>		
<b>10.1</b>	<b>Strategic Risk Register</b> No major changes were made to the Strategic Risk Register. The Committee noted ongoing audits and discussions to ensure gender recognition and estate compliance.		
<b>11.</b>	<b>Topical/Regulatory/Governance Issues</b> None		
<b>12.</b>	<b>Other Reports</b>		
<b>12.1</b>	<b>Covering report and draft Annual Report 2023-24</b> Scheduled for parliamentary publication on 29 September and public release on 30 September;		

	includes a new spotlight section for enhanced accessibility.		
12.2	<b>Pensions Update</b> Interim valuation shows assets at 162% of liabilities, supporting a potential continuation of a 17.6% employer contribution rate for the next three years; Scottish Government letter of comfort remains in place.		
12.3	<b>New Risks</b> None		
13.	<b>Summary of key issues and escalations to be reported to the Board</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmodified external audit opinion and confirmation of a strategic funding gap</li> <li>• Robust annual accounts with strengthened disclosures and controls</li> <li>• High Information Governance compliance and progress on redaction tooling</li> <li>• Embedded case analysis within court improvement projects under Programme Protect</li> <li>• Positive internal audit assurances on estate management controls</li> <li>• Stable Strategic Risk Register and ongoing compliance work</li> <li>• Pension fund remains well-funded, supporting future planning</li> </ul>		
	<b>Date of next meeting:</b> 10:30-13:00, 25th November by TEAMS		

### Acknowledgements and Thanks

The meeting concluded with formal acknowledgements and expressions of gratitude. The Committee Chair, Jim Edgar was commended for his eight years of exemplary service as the Audit Chair, with appreciation for his significant contributions in maintaining the Committee's diligence and focus. The PR/CE, Neil Hunter extended his sincere thanks to all Committee members, both present and virtual, for their collaborative efforts towards the common goals of the organisation.



Jim Edgar reflected on the progress made during his tenure and expressed his gratitude for the support and dedication of the Committee members. He emphasised the importance of continuous improvement and vigilance in audit practices to uphold the integrity of the organisation.

Draft

**21<sup>st</sup> August 2025, at 2.30 p.m.**  
**By Teams**

**Present:**

Lorraine Moore (Committee Chair)  
Lynne Clow (Committee Vice Chair)  
Steve Renwick (Committee Member)  
Hazel Smith (Committee member)  
Cathie Cowan (Committee Member/Board Chair)

**Attending:**

Neil Hunter (PR/CE)  
Susan Deery (Head of HR)  
Pamela Armstrong (Governance Officer)

Item	Topic	Timescale	Owner
1.	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b> The Committee Chair welcomed attendees.  The Committee Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.		
2.	<b>AOB</b> <b>Audit trail for offline decisions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreed that where Committee matters are progressed or concluded via offline discussion, outcomes will be recorded in the next formal minutes and summarised in the report to the Board to maintain a complete audit trail.</li> </ul>		
3.	<b>Apologies</b> None		
4.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> Members distinguished between formal conflicts of interest (to be declared at each meeting) and enduring tensions that can be documented in the Terms of Reference. This was to improve clarity and consistency in declarations.		
5.	<b>Minute of the Previous Meeting</b> Minute of previous meeting was approved with no changes required.		
6.	<b>Summary of the Last Meeting for Submission to the Board</b> Summary for the Board agreed as accurate.		

7.	<b>Staff Pay Update</b> The Committee received an update on the current position regarding the staff pay negotiations.  Next steps noted; Committee will reconvene if alternative proposals require consideration.		
8.	<b>Reporter Evaluation and Business Case to the Board</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External job evaluation confirmed the unique nature of the Children's Reporter role, resulting in scores spanning two evaluation levels.</li> <li>• Proposal to create a dedicated Children's Reporter grade, with minor consequential adjustments to related grades, was supported in principle.</li> <li>• Estimated costs are affordable within existing resources and are included in the five-year financial strategy.</li> <li>• Full business case to be presented to the September 2025 Board; any changes will be backdated to 1 July 2025 if approved.</li> </ul>		
9.	<b>New and Emerging Risks</b> Identified risk: a small number of staff may have unrealistic expectations of the evaluation outcome.  Mitigation: transparent post-Board communications.		
10.	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b> Thursday 04 December 2025, 10:30 via TEAMS  Additional meeting to be convened if pay negotiations require.		

**Minute of SCRA Planning and Performance Committee, held on Monday 08<sup>th</sup> September 2025, at Ochil House, Stirling**



**Present**

Kay Barton, Chair  
Ying Zhang, Vice Chair, by TEAMS  
Cathie Cowan, Board Chair, By TEAMS

**In Attendance**

Lisa Bennett, Head of Strategy and OD  
Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive  
Paul Mulvanny, Senior Operational Manager  
Ross MacKenzie, Head of Finance and Resources  
Donald Lamb, Data Manager, by TEAMS  
Andrew MacDonald, Planning and Performance Manager  
Lindsay MacFadyen, Quality Assurance Manager  
Pamela Armstrong, Governance Manager

<b>Item</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum</b></p> <p>The Committee Chair welcomed members and Officers the Planning and Performance Committee (PPC)</p> <p>Apologies were received from Lorraine Moore and Jim Edgar, Committee Members.</p> <p>The Committee Chair confirmed the meeting was quorate.</p>		
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Declaration (s) of Interest (s)</b></p> <p>None</p>		
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>None</p>		
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Minute of the last meeting held on Tuesday, 06<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b></p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Matters Arising:</b></p> <p>Children's Care and Justice Act (CCJA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Scottish Government has yet to confirm an implementation date for the Act, with</li> </ul>		

	<p>April 2026 serving only as a planning assumption that could shift—potentially until after the next election—given practical and resource constraints. In the meantime, The SCRA Digital team is advancing CSAS enhancements, including digital evidence-sharing capabilities, while drafting victim information provisions pending Ministerial approval. Among partners, SCRA are in the strongest state of readiness: CHS is recruiting panel members, but local authorities remain the greatest vulnerability due to limited intervention capacity for young people. The Scottish Government has been asked to define a “minimum state of readiness” so that all organisations understand the baseline resources and capabilities required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Switching on mandatory offence referrals is expected to trigger a rapid surge in volumes, whereas care and protection referrals should grow more gradually; once the age-related referral threshold is activated, the system operates in full, risking the organisation’s ability to deliver the intensive support young people need and potentially leading to suboptimal outcomes. To address this, SCRA will continue lobbying for a firm start date or a clear deferral plan, finalise CSAS upgrades and victim-information specifications, work with Ministers on readiness criteria, and engage local authorities now to strengthen early preparedness and develop surge-response protocols.</li> </ul> <p><i>Hearings System redesign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The redesign of the Children’s Hearing System is organised around seven work streams, four of which have approved project scopes and leadership in place. The remaining three—covering topics excluded from current legislation such as babies and infants and pre-referral pathways—will have project initiation documents drafted between November and February. To assess collective progress and shape an evaluation framework, the planning group is convening a full-day workshop with all</li> </ul>		
--	---	--	--

	<p>stream leads. While core metrics for measuring impact are still under discussion, teams are using proxy indicators and internal data to track delivery against the promise of system reform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel to this, the Children's Services (Promise) Bill is at Parliamentary Committee stage with a tight timeline ahead of the next election. A formal consultation response has been submitted, and senior colleagues are preparing for evidence sessions through mid-September. The Bill promises significant reinvestment in Reporter powers and aftercare provisions, although Committee dynamics and Ministerial changes inject uncertainty into its passage. Meanwhile, ongoing internal projects—such as the multi-agency referrals work with Police Scotland—and a comprehensive organisation-wide learning programme ensure momentum continues, even as stakeholders push for greater stability and clarity in the Hearing System's future.</li> </ul> <p><i>Others</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee Chair highlighted the value of the Planning and Performance Network, encouraging members to attend and observe its detailed work.</li> </ul>		
5.	<p><b>PPC Workplan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PPC work plan is in draft and will be finalised after the upcoming Board to ensure the Committee's timely input to Board discussions. The revised Terms of Reference and Standing Orders will return to the September Board for final approval, which will include moving workforce items to the Remuneration and Nominations Committee. Once the Board approves those changes, the PPC can finalise and circulate the workplan ahead of the next meeting.</li> <li>• It was noted that today's QA and annual report discussions should be slotted into this schedule.</li> <li>• The next PPC meeting will include a digital review.</li> </ul>		

6.	<p><b><i>How the Committee will Operate</i></b></p> <p>The PPC Chair presented a brief paper setting out the Committee's intended way of working as a standalone statement of intent, distinct from its formal Terms of Reference. Members welcomed having clear rules of engagement in writing, noting it helps align everyone's expectations. The PPC agreed to adopt the document as its statement of intent and to revisit it periodically as a reminder of their agreed approach.</p>		
7.	<p><b><i>OPR</i></b></p> <p>The Data Manager introduced the Operational Performance Report (OPR), covering the period from April to June 2025.</p> <p><b>Noted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), including the new 5-working-day initial-decision metric, alignment with the 50-working-day report-decision target, removal of the revenue-savings target, and an increase to the hearing scheduling target.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Data Manager explained the rationale for the 5-day decision indicator as an early warning to accelerate social-work reports and family contact. The PPC noted the close linkage to the 50-day report-decision target and widespread local focus on these metrics.</li> <li>• Central locality has experienced high long-term sickness among reporters and support staff. Recruitment above establishment is underway, supported by resource sharing from other localities and coverage for an extended court case. Performance is improving but remains below target pending full onboarding.</li> <li>• Glasgow locality dealt with a temporary spike in referrals but now demonstrates strong initial-decision responsiveness. A local multi-agency team reviews data monthly. Strategic projects are under way with Police Scotland and local authorities to refine referral processes.</li> <li>• The PPC noted, in relation to the joint reports target, that single-page report</li> </ul>		

	<p>(SPR) complexity and multiple marking options for police and Crown referrals create data uncertainty. A learning exercise fed back mis-marked cases to localities. Full accuracy is unattainable without reviewing each report. SPR version 3 presents a future opportunity to improve data capture and interoperability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A previous spike in child protection orders was traced to a few large families and treated as an anomaly.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full OPR will be linked in the Board papers for reference. Cover paper to include concise bullet points of the PPC's key scrutiny areas.</li> </ul>		
8.	<p><b><i>Business Plan Reporting</i></b></p> <p>The Planning and Performance Manager presented the Business Plan report, which follows a format similar to the highlight reports given to the Programme Board.</p> <p><b>Noted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report provides an overview of progress across various objectives within the Business Plan, aiming to offer assurance and highlight key risks or issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PPC discussed the format of the report, expressing appreciation for its clarity and conciseness and highlighted the importance of including dependencies in the report, particularly where objectives are interlinked and progress in one area may impact another. There was a consensus that the report should continue in its current format, with the addition of key dependencies where relevant.</li> <li>• Specific points raised included the need for more information on the impact assessment process and the target operating model. The Head of Strategy and OD explained that new impact assessment training is being rolled out, with updates to be provided to a future PPC. It was suggested that the Inclusion &amp; Diversity Manager could</li> </ul>		



	<p>present the new approach to the PPC to offer a deeper understanding of its implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regarding the target operating model, The Head of Strategy and OD noted that updates would be provided as part of the programme work.</li> <li>The PPC discussed the potential for more detailed reports on specific areas such as digital, sustainability, and property, recognising the need to balance detailed reporting with avoiding duplication. The PR/CE emphasised the importance of the business plan in driving developmental priorities for the organisation. The PPC agreed that scheduling deeper dives into specific areas of the business plan would be beneficial, allowing for more focused discussions on key topics.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Inclusion &amp; Diversity Manager to attend a future PPC to demonstrate the new impact assessment approach.</li> <li>Ensure both emerging risks and positive milestones are succinctly captured in each highlight report.</li> </ul>		
9.	<p><b><i>Absence Report</i></b></p> <p>The HR Business Partner presented a comprehensive absence report covering August 2024–July 2025 trends and drivers.</p> <p><b>Noted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall absence rose to 6.6%, with psychological-related absence the most significant contributor. The report also outlined refined recording categories and upcoming support initiatives.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Both short-term and long-term absence have increased, driven primarily by psychological factors.</li> <li>Since March, recording of psychological absence is split into work-related stress, bereavement, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues to enable more targeted support.</li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Employee Assistance Programme-backed psychological support scheme launches in October to intervene early and reduce unfitness-to-work episodes.</li> <li>• A spike in recorded disability absence reflects updated recording practices rather than a sudden rise in underlying conditions.</li> <li>• Operational teams (81% of headcount) show higher absence rates in line with demographics, with no single driver unique to these groups.</li> <li>• High carer prevalence prompted questions about the impact of statutory carer's leave and five days' dependent care leave on attendance and team capacity.</li> <li>• The Ill Health Retirement (IHR) process is lengthy—requiring medical evidence from GPs and consultants—and benefits from more proactive, manager-led discussions about options and phased returns.</li> <li>• Given the demanding nature of reporter roles and exposure to vicarious trauma, resilience should be a key criterion in future hiring.</li> <li>• Central and Glasgow areas report above-average absence. A deeper review is needed to understand localised factors (e.g., individual circumstances, work pressures, demographic determinants).</li> <li>• Potential clustering by day of week (e.g., Mondays) or month end—possibly linked to cost-of-living pressures—warrants data analysis.</li> <li>• The 2% long-term absence target is unlikely to be met given sector norms (~4%). Benchmarking against UK public sector data will inform any target adjustments. The high proportion of female staff at SCRA should be considered in benchmarking.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate root causes of elevated absence in Central &amp; Glasgow and report confidential findings at a future PPC meeting.</li> <li>• Align internal targets to UK public sector absence benchmarks; present analysis in time for 2026/27 planning.</li> </ul>		
--	---	--	--

	<b>Standing Items</b>		
10.	<p><b>Programme Update</b> The Head of Strategy and OD provided a comprehensive update on the current programmes and initiatives.</p> <p><b>Target Operating Model</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved last year following consultation and amendments. The model is aimed at guiding the organisation towards 2030.</li> <li>• Regular review points established to ensure ongoing relevance, including alignment checks against the proposed Children( Care, Care Experience etc) Bill</li> <li>• Next iteration will feed into the October EMT session for business-plan and corporate-plan priority-setting.</li> <li>• A progress visual is being developed to map current state against the end-state TOM.</li> </ul> <p><b>Combined Operational Test Roll-out</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brings together elements previously tested in isolation: national hearings arrangements, child-friendly (family-centred) scheduling, two-stage notifications, and court preparedness (witness statements and liaison).</li> <li>• Integrated approach will increase reporter capacity, boost service quality, improve staff morale and maintain or improve current performance metrics.</li> <li>• Evaluation completed over summer, reviewed by Strategic Programmes Group (August) and signed off by Programme Board.</li> <li>• Feedback gathered via Ayrshire and Southeast pilots; data analysis and staff focus groups; ensures changes do not degrade any existing measures.</li> <li>• Components approved for roll-out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mandated process for arranging hearings</li> <li>○ Consistent two-stage notification approach to support advocacy and legal-aid access.</li> <li>○ Child-friendly toolkits (scrapbooks, magazines and checklists) to empower children and families.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced guidance and tools for court preparation, incorporating Audit &amp; Assurance Committee's case-analysis findings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PPC welcomed the balance of consistency and local flexibility, and reassurances around staff skills and capacity.</li> <li>Appreciation expressed for the iterative "textbook approach" to change management and strong evidence base behind roll-out decisions.</li> <li>The importance of a careful and moderated approach to introducing portfolio management principles without disrupting existing programme deliverables was discussed.</li> </ul>		
11a	<p><b>Annual report – ongoing governance</b></p> <p>The discussion began with considerations regarding the Annual Report and ongoing governance. The PPC agreed that the Annual Report should be reviewed by the PPC.</p>		
11b	<p><b>Quality Assurance Programme – plans for handover</b></p> <p>The Quality Assurance Manager outlined the current schedule and proposed timelines for the handover.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PPC expressed support for the proposed timelines and emphasised the importance of flexibility and thorough preparation for the handover.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The PPC agreed to approve the programme for the next year's case sampling programme, with the AAC handling the February report and Planning and Performance taking the May report.</li> </ul>		
12.	<p><b>Risk</b></p> <p>The PPC discussed both current and emerging risks, noting that treated risks have remained</p>		

	<p>stable over the last six months and are actively monitored through updated actions and controls.</p> <p>The Audit &amp; Assurance Committee was confirmed as the lead on the risk management process, with the proposal to develop the risk register report to show which committee reports on each risk.</p> <p><b>Issues arising during discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The risks of going ahead with the current plans were acknowledged, including the potential increase in referral volumes and the challenges faced by local authorities. The discussion highlighted the importance of readiness and the need for support to young people subject to CSOs.</li> <li>• The progress of the legislation and the tight timetable for passing the bill were discussed, with concerns about the Parliamentary Committee's composition and political dynamics.</li> <li>• The importance of continuing work on non-legislative matters was emphasised, with some projects already making good progress.</li> <li>• The need for a comprehensive training programme was noted, with plans to develop an organisation-wide learning programme in response to the Care and Justice Act and The Promise.</li> </ul>		
13.	<p><b><i>Items for escalation to the Board</i></b></p> <p>It was agreed that the absence report, OPR, and programme updates would be shared with the Board. The quality assurance recommendations would also be documented and communicated to the Board.</p>		
	<p><b><i>Date of next meeting</i></b></p> <p>Monday 08<sup>th</sup> December, 10am, at Ochil House, Stirling</p>		



## **SCRA Board**

25 September 2025

### **Agenda item 8.1 - Chief Executive's Report**

**Report Classification:** *Open*

**For:** Information

**Executive Sponsor:** Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

**Author:** Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

---

### **Executive Summary**

This report provides an overview of the PR/CEO's activities as well as general areas of interest, not covered elsewhere in the Board agenda. It includes updates on national forums, Scottish Government liaison, ongoing work in multi-agency partnerships and internal workforce development initiatives.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to:

- Note the content of the report.
- Specifically note and endorse the position taken by the PR/CE on PSR outlined at section 4.

### **Key Issues to be Discussed/Considered**

SCRA's overall position on Public Services Reform

### **Implications**

- Service: None
- Financial: None
- Workforce: to note the Scottish Governments Medium Term Financial Strategy on public sector workforce
- Infrastructure (including digital): None
- Information Governance: None

### **Risk Assessment/Management**

N/A

### **Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

The areas covered in this report contribute to delivery of SCRA's strategic priorities, including:

- Service transformation and redesign.
- Partnership working and system improvement.

### **Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process.

Further to evaluation it is noted:

Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

### **Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

The following engagement activities are referenced within the report:

- Joint agency working through Redesign Board, Youth Justice Improvement Board and Locality-based partnerships.
- Consultation and planning via the National Partnership Forum and UNISON representation.
- Direct engagement with managers and staff

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Chief Executive Report

## Appendix 1

### 1. Staff Partnership

- 1.1 The National Partnership Forum met in July and had a very full agenda (see **appendix A**) and detailed discussion on a whole number of areas including :-
- SCRA's financial position – in year and long term
  - Preparation for CCJA
  - Change programme and specific implications for support staff
  - Staff Health and Well-being
  - Diversity and Inclusion
- 1.2 As the programme of change accelerates across SCRA and the first cycle of tests of change come to a conclusion SCRA and UNISON will pay particular attention to issues such as communication, engagement, the rationale for recommendations coming out of projects, the process of decision making and supported, well-paced implementation and support for staff. Discussions on these aspects have been timetabled.

### 2. Scottish Government Liaison

- 2.1 We met with SG in our regular accountability meeting in late August. Whilst the format was standard and relatively routine, we did take the opportunity to update on the progress of the Review of the Children's Reporter Job Description. The other agenda items focussed on finance, performance, practice, policy and legislation. Over and above this the meeting recognised the relatively high level of commissions for data and information from Ministers arising from the Public Services Reform Strategy (see below)

### 3. Strategic Partnerships

#### 3.1 Youth Justice Improvement Board

- 3.1.1 The YJIB met on 16 September. The main points of discussion were:-
- An update on the Whole System Approach Group which SCRA co-chairs along with Social Work Scotland, particularly noting work underway to strengthen Early and Effective Intervention (EEI), an ongoing review of guidance in relation to Movement Restriction Condition's (MRC) in light of the Care and Justice Act implementation which seeks to extend the use of MRC's in specific circumstances. The WSA Group is also taking the lead on the relaunch of [National Standards for Children in Conflict with the Law](#) as a joint venture between Scottish Government and YJIB. The original version of the standards were launched during 2020 in the midst of the pandemic and failed to get the necessary traction and



visibility. SG and YJIB have committed to an improved and more focussed implementation plan on this updated set of standards.

- The Children's Rights Implementation Group – which is co- chaired by the Children's Centre for Care and Justice (CYCJ) and Together Scotland and focusses on ensuring UNCRC compliance for children in conflict with the law. A significant mapping exercise is identifying areas where there may be gaps or opportunities to strengthen practice and/or legislation. The CRIG is also supporting the work of child friendly, children's rights respecting courts as part of the implementation of the Children's Care and Justice Act.

### **3.2 Criminal Exploitation of Children (CEC)**

#### **3.2.1** Action for Children and CYCJ recently launched a toolkit [Framework for Practice - The Criminal Exploitation of Children](#)

- Understanding and Identifying CEC
- Assessment of needs and risks
- Intervention for children and young people
- Tools for Practitioners

#### **3.2.2** SCRA is working with Action for Children to look at ways we can improve awareness of CEC, look beyond presenting issues for individual children, consider wider contextual safeguarding issues and look at how existing legal measures open to the Hearing System might better identify and protect children who are being criminally exploited. SCRA Practice Team have issued a practice note to Reporters on CEC, picking up many of these issues.

### **3.3 Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP)**

#### **3.3.1** The CHIP met on 21 August. Reports on progress were received in relation to the 2 major aspects of hearings system legislation currently in play (the Act and the Bill). The Children's Care and Justice Act remains to be implemented and we have a working assumption of April 2026.

#### **3.3.2** The CHIP approved a very positive proposal to support and implement local authority based partnerships for delivery of Hearing system improvement based on strong examples that exist in some areas of Scotland, most notably in Glasgow City, North and South Lanarkshire, Angus, Dundee City and Perth. A more detailed map of local CHIP's which bring all local delivery partners together under an improvement umbrella is shown at **appendix B**. These structures will be critical to embedding the whole range of changes across the Hearing system over the next few years. SCRA is ensuring that we can help support our LRM's in making a full and meaningful leading contribution.

## **4. Public Service Reform Strategy**

- 4.1 The Minister for Public Service Reform (PSR) announced a second summit to take place in mid October which SCRA will attend. [Scotland's Public Services Reform Strategy](#) was launched in June 2025. Priorities for the PSR Strategy are that public services will:
- Be efficient and effective with the right-size delivery landscape.
  - Better join up services and focus on helping people.
  - Prioritise prevention.
  - Empower people and communities to shape the services that matter to them.
  - Be fiscally sustainable
- 4.2 Youth Justice Services have been highlighted as an area of good practice in public services reform, given the implementation of Whole System Approach and EEI (see above) and the dramatic drop over more than a decade of children being referred to the Reporter on offence grounds, the number of children being subject to prosecution and the number of children held in custody (remand and sentenced).
- 4.3 PSR has established 18 work streams ranging from better collection and use of data, to service integration, workforce planning, digital skills, intelligent automation, simplification and shared services as well as foundational elements such as leadership, , accountability and understanding the nature of our delivery landscape. (see figure 1 below). Almost all of the 18 work streams are recognisable to SCRA and we can point to many existing programmes of work that fully capture these elements in part or (more often) in full. SCRA is therefore in a reasonably well prepared and organised place to deliver on PSR.
- 4.4 Alongside the PSR was an announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance as part of her Medium Term Financial Strategy Minister to reduce the public sector workforce headcount by 5% by 2030. Ministers have given a commitment to protect 'vital frontline public services'. Through the various budget and headcount commissions SCRA has submitted to SG over the summer our position is clear that we are unable to contemplate reductions to our workforce at a time of significant legislative and consequential expansion. Indeed the organisations financial and workforce strategies seeks to increase our workforce to meet new demands. Our ongoing reform programme has efficiency and effectiveness at its core and we embrace and are working to the principles of PSR. However our intent is that all potential savings in new and more efficient ways of working need to be redeployed into new, operational front facing, children focussed, quality add (and generally more labour intensive and skilled) tasks.
- 4.5 SCRA has consistently argued that, given the scale of change and improvement happening in SCRA, the proper vehicle for delivery of reform, including integrating

the principles and priorities of PSR should be the joint SG/COSLA Hearings Redesign Board, otherwise we risk being pulled in multiple different directions underpinned by a diverse range of policy and fiscal imperatives.

### Diagram 1: Root Cause Analysis

What needs to happen to enable systematic change?



Figure 1

## **5. Managers Event**

- 5.1 Our regular national managers event took place on 10 September. Managers from across the country came together to focus on the Children's (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill provisions and [SCRA's submission](#) to [the lead Parliamentary Committee](#), the outcomes and recommendations of the Combined Test of Change Project, focussing on the next steps, national roll out and implementation arrangements (see below). The afternoon session focussed on the revisions and refinements being made to the SCRA Equality and Human Rights Impact assessment process, round table discussions and case examples of effective approaches.

## **6. Locality Visits**

- 6.1 The PR/CE has recently visited Grampian, Ayrshire, and South East localities. EMT is scheduled to take place with Central staff in October, and in North Strathclyde in November. The sessions in Ayrshire and South East focussed on reflecting on their respective contributions to the combined operational testing of Child Friendly scheduling, witness statement and witness liaison and Keeping the Promise (KTP) Standards (specifically in Ayrshire). Of particular importance was recognising and thanking the localities for their leadership, adaptability and willingness to be involved in tests of change, move into areas of discomfort and step outside well established ways of working, whilst at the same time retaining operational stability and performance.
- 6.2 The Programme Board recently approved the national roll out of Child Friendly Scheduling (CFS) and the KTP commitment service standards after receiving a detailed evaluation of the combined operational tests which suggested strong evidence of efficacy. The CFS and KTP standards will now be rolled out nationally as part of an integrated, supported delivery plan and become known as 'Family Centred Scheduling'. This now becomes a cornerstone aspect of SCRA's future Target Operating Model.
- 6.3 Witness Statements and Witness liaison also showed promising evidence of efficacy but at this stage the Programme Board approved the proposal as a recommended for adoption, reflecting good and effective practice, The Board recognised the scope for further development and testing on witness statements and liaison which take place to fine tune the approaches further.
- 6.4 All Localities have been assessed in terms of their state of readiness and a handover will now take place between the Project Managers and the Business Change Manager, supported by the Operational Development Team.

## **7. Staff Survey Action Plan**

7.1 Planning is underway for the 2025 staff survey. The SCRA staff survey is a meaningful and important part of the annual calendar. The PR/CE pays particular attention to the staff survey results and has taken a lead responsibility in developing and overseeing a plan of action based on the survey results. The staff survey action plan for 2024 (for which the focus on delivery is across 2024). The action plan was brought to the Board in March 2025 and work has been underway across the year on progressing this. The headline actions agreed in March were:

- Pay and Reward
- Workload
- Morale
- Managing change
- Equalities and Inclusion

7.2 An update on progress of the agreed action plan is shown at **Appendix C**.

## **8. Roots & Wings podcast series (Episodes 1–4)**

8.1 Board Members will already have been sent details on the podcast series, entitled Roots and Wings. The links to the podcast episodes are shown below:-

- Episode 1: <https://vimeo.com/1110890618/afdc74f7b5?ts=4871&share=copy>
- Episode 2: <https://vimeo.com/1112863504/f75af5ddd1?ts=0&share=copy>
- Episode 3: <https://vimeo.com/1114809344/4c276dd8a8?share=copy>
- Episode 4: <https://vimeo.com/1117036913/06af106dbc?share=copy>

8.2 The episodes feature candid reflections from colleagues across SCRA about what change has meant in practice and document staff experience of the change programme. You may recall recent Board enquiries about our communications strategy and social media use — this series demonstrates our multi-channel approach in action: prioritising meaningful internal engagement and shaping messages that can be shared externally where it supports organisational objectives

## **9. Marking Black History Month**

9.1 As SCRA prepares to mark Black History Month this October, we are inviting SCRA staff to step forward as allies to help us celebrate and amplify the voices and experiences of Black people in the UK.

9.2 We're looking for volunteers to help identify events, resources, and materials to share with colleagues throughout the month. This is a light-touch commitment - around 1–2 hours per week between 22nd September and 24th October 2025.

- 9.3 Volunteers will be supported by members of SCRA's Race & Ethnicity Group, who will be on hand to offer ideas and guidance. You don't need to be an expert in Black history—just someone who is curious, open to learning, and committed to supporting others to learn too.
- 9.4 This is being encouraged development opportunity open to staff in all roles, and a meaningful way to contribute to our ongoing work on equity, diversity, and inclusion and as a ballast against the current climate of debate, division and racism that we are all experiencing in Scotland and the UK.

## Appendix A – NPF agenda – July 2025



**National Partnership Forum**  
**Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025**  
**10:30 – 1 pm, Ochil House, Stirling**

### A G E N D A

		Papers	Action
1.	Apologies		
2.	AOB		
3.	Note of Previous Meeting	Attached	NH
4.	Matters Arising		
5.	Update on role of Reporter review	Verbal	SD
6.	Recruitment – for CCJA and Reporters in general	Verbal	SD/HE
7.	Impact of changes on support staff	Verbal	MS
8.	Portfolio Management	Verbal	LB
	<b>STANDING ITEMS</b>		
9.	Strategic Programmes Group update	Verbal	LB
10.	Inclusion & Diversity Steering Group	Verbal	SD
11.	Health and Wellbeing Group update	Verbal	NH
12.	HR Sub Group Update	Verbal	SD
13.	Staff Survey Update	Verbal	NH
14.	Policy update (a) Hearings for Children - update (b) Care and Justice (Scotland) Act - Update	Verbal	NH
15.	Financial Update	Verbal	RMack
16.	New Risks	Discussion	All
	Date of next meeting: Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup> November		

## Appendix B - National Mapping of Children's Hearings Improvement Work – June 2025

Area/CHS Region	CHIP in Place (Yes/No)
<b>Central Region:</b> Stirling, Falkirk, Clackmannanshire, West Lothian	Yes (Region Wide – Early Stages as a Partnership)
<b>Ayrshire Region:</b> North, South, East Ayrshire	Yes (Region Wide)
<b>North Strathclyde Region:</b> Inverclyde, Argyle & Bute, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire	Yes (Inverclyde) Yes (Argyle & Bute) Yes (East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire combined CHIP)
<b>Lanarkshire and Dumfries and Galloway Region:</b> South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway	Yes (South and North Lanarkshire Combined) No (Dumfries and Galloway)
<b>Tayside and Fife Region:</b> Fife, Angus, Dundee, Perth and Kinross	Yes (Fife) Yes (Angus) Yes (Dundee) Yes (Perth and Kinross)
<b>Grampian Region:</b> Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Northern Isles	Yes (Aberdeen) No (Aberdeenshire, Northern Isles)
<b>Highlands and Islands Region:</b> Highland, Moray, Eilean Siar	No
<b>South East Region:</b> Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, and Borders	Yes (Edinburgh) No (East Lothian, Midlothian, Borders)
<b>Glasgow</b>	Yes



1	Appendix C	Initial Status March 25	Next Steps March 25	Status at Sept 2025
	Pay and reward – key actions			
a	We seek to try and maximise year on year cost of living increases for SCRA staff within the parameters of Ministerial policy.	Underway	To conclude mutually satisfactory terms via Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee (JNCC)	2025/26 pay negotiations are ongoing
	We will finalise the review of the Children's Reporter job description and person specification.	On track	On conclusion of the review of the job description and person specification a submission will be made for independent evaluation of the new material and to allow it to be evaluated against SCRA's pay structure. The outcome of this will be subject of a business case to the SCRA Board for approval <sup>1</sup>	Complete subject to Board approval of Business Case Sept 2025
2	Workload – key actions	Status	Next steps	

<sup>1</sup> This will essentially conclude the internal SCRA phase of this review. A revised job description and person specification that more clearly described the work and scope of Children's Reporter roles, duties, skills and knowledge, a full independent evaluation of the pay and reward which this job description should attract and the associated business case to the Board for any investment which may be required. The next phase is likely to involve a submission to the Scottish Government Remuneration Group for approval – over which SCRA has limited control.

a	We will seek to maximise the investment required to fulfil the workload requirements for SCRA arising from the Children's Care and Justice Act. We will proactively work with SG on a stable and sufficient financial framework for implementing the HSWG recommendations	Ongoing (CCJA). Internal planning and delivery group being established.	CCJA implementation is factored into budget plans 2025/26 based on planning assumption of April 2026.	1 <sup>st</sup> tranche of recruitment underway for Assistant Reporters and Senior Practitioners. Tranche 2 will focus on Reporters and will establish clear agreed ratio's (SP:R:AR) in each area as part of a sustainable model.
b	We will continue to make resource shifts between operational teams to improve alignment between assessed demands and staffing, using our existing resource allocation framework	Ongoing	Revised approach to anticipatory/predictive data analysis to assess whether we can get ahead of changes and fluctuations in demands – being assessed	Ongoing and will be completed by CCJA investment and recruitment (see above )
c	Improving job security	Significant progress – continue to monitor.	Further progress to be assessed after 2025/26 budget process is approved by Board in relation to fixed term working. <sup>2</sup>	Ongoing every opportunity to sustainably consolidate 'true temporary' roles is being taken
d	Optimising SCRA's operating model – delivering more efficient ways of working and freeing up and reinvesting time back to improve workload	Ongoing – Target Operating Model work has commenced. Operational Development Team has been established to act as dynamic conduit between Localities, SOM's and Digital Team priorities	Underway – now a core element of SCRA programme and is driving priorities across operations, digital, property and improvement programming etc.	TOM work is progressing well, on schedule and 1 <sup>st</sup> phase of populating from approved tests of change is underway

<sup>2</sup> SCRA continue to hold a significant number of posts generated mainly through internal promotions and secondments and related to 'acting up' or temporary cover arrangements. These posts are not in scope for further consolidation as temp postholders generally have substantive SCRA roles to revert to.

3	Morale	Status	Next Steps	
a	We will continue to build on the successful programme of work on health and wellbeing across SCRA – with a focus on individual and collective health, team building, respect, kindness and a positive organisational culture	Ongoing and showing strength and dynamism – highly rated in staff survey	Ongoing – continue to review investment, outcomes and impact as well as developments/good practice across public and private sector employers	Health and Wellbeing programme is well recognised, embedded at team and locality level and is well valued in staff survey
b	We will continue to build on the clear improvements in our multi-channel, multi-mode communications work, continue to commit to a culture of openness and transparency, increase the visibility of the Senior Team and the Board	Capacity continues to in part inhibit engagement and uptake in minority of staff	We will pick up any recommendations from our Internal Audit of our Communications Strategy (scheduled to be reported to AAC in May 2025)	Recently subject to internal audit and rated ‘substantial assurance’. The launch of ‘new’ Connect has led to a step change in internal comms
c	Working to the highest principles of engagement and consultation in Partnership with UNISON.	A successful series of workshops was delivered in 2024 to ensure detailed open dialogue on change management and planned programmes of work. UNISON are now core members of the Strategic Planning Group which co-ordinates activity on behalf of the Programme Board	Series of workshops on work of Projects and Programmes has been extended into 2025 and will continue to focus on managing change, communication with the workforce, issues being raised with UNISON by members et.	We continue to work on areas such as well paced communications, engagement, participation and consultation and are working through some issues jointly with UNISON
d	We will deliver a comprehensive plan of support and training in support of the delivery of the Locality Support Administrator job description, roles and responsibilities	Under constant review in terms of impact, reach and sufficiency.	Ongoing – with additional support from Operational Development Team across all localities.	Due for launch in October 2025 – a comprehensive programme capturing career progression and skills development is planned for delivery
e	We will build upon the progress made in recent staff survey results on areas such as	Ongoing – remains highly rated in staff survey. Need to	Managers development programme	Revised management and leadership programme has

	direct support from line managers, working in a supportive team and job/role enjoyment	assess ongoing support and capacity for managers across SCRA as signs of stress and stretch emerge		been approved for delivery by EMT with a tiered approach for new and existing managers and leaders as well as ongoing CPD
f	We will invest year on year capital to improve the SCRA office and hearing centre facility, comfort and design	Glasgow Hearing Suite to be completed by September 2025, work commenced in Dundee and Inverness in 2025/26. Ongoing whole estate programme.	Adoption of new design standards across the SCRA estate to embed and maintain key evidence based principles.	Major projects underway in Glasgow and Dundee in 2025/26
g	We will improve the visibility of the senior team across the organisation and develop more opportunities for SCRA staff to connect directly with senior team members	Ongoing – Dundee, Glasgow, Kilmarnock, Paisley, Inverness and Aberdeen have all hosted EMT sessions in 2024.	Further programme of work scheduled for 2025 will include Dumfries, Glenrothes, Hamilton, Edinburgh, Dumbarton, Greenock, Stirling	EMT have hosted sessions in Highland, Ayrshire, North Strathclyde, Dumfries, Grampian and Glasgow – with Central and Lanarkshire planned for this winter. Planning in how best to incorporate Head Office Teams underway.
<b>4</b>	<b>Managing Change</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Next steps</b>	
a	Deliver a comprehensive package of measures to lead and manage change more effectively across SCRA.	Extensive programme board structure now developed and overseeing 3 x core programmes – Care/Connect and Protect aligned to Corporate plan priorities and structure to 2027.  2 x gateway reviews have been undertaken with	Follow through on PPPA Hub recommendations.  Continue to work with UNISON on developing ongoing staff group communications and content.	Much progress has been made and we are the end of the first full cycle of tests and the difficult next phase of approval and implementation. All resources are in place – further work to be undertaken with UNISON on

		support from Scottish Government Portfolio, Programme, Project and Assurance (PPPA) Hub, both with Green/Amber ratings and helpful fundings and recommendations	Build on staff survey staff confidence levels on change management and future confidence ratings.	issues of engagement and consultation
B	Operational support to embed change and improvement across SCRA, improve skills and increase confidence	Range of training, mentoring coaching being delivered by Operational Development Team and is well planned and received at team level.	Continue to embed the approach of the team, align planning and resource to programmes and projects, new legislation and policy developments	Resources now well aligned to Change Strategy and planning has been overlaid with legislative imperatives
<b>5</b>	<b>Equalities and Inclusion</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	
a	We will roll out SCRA's by-stander training across the organisation on an elective basis with a reputable external supplier	Ongoing	Evaluate at mid-point	Ongoing – now refocussed on managers from October 2025
b	With UNISON we have updated our Dignity at Work Policy and our Staff Code of Conduct to re-inforce SCRA's organisational culture and values – including in relation to harassment, intimidation and bullying	To be fully implemented following Board approval	Ongoing monitoring via National Partnership Forum, HR Sub Group	Both policies updated and agreed with UNISON and implemented

**SCRA Board**  
**25 September 2025**

**Agenda Item 9.2: Mainstreaming and Equality Outcome Progress Report**

**Report Classification: Open/Public**

**For: Information**

**Executive Sponsor: Susan Deery, Head of Human Resources**

**Author: Sarah Wood, Inclusion & Diversity Manager**

---

**Executive Summary**

This report provides a mid-cycle update on SCRA's progress in embedding inclusive practice across the organisation between April 2024 and September 2025. It outlines achievements in mainstreaming equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and progress against the Equality Outcomes 2024–2027. The report highlights strategic alignment, workforce diversity, inclusive recruitment, anti-racism initiatives, and improvements in equality data collection.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to:

- Note the content of the report

**Key Issues to be discussed/considered**

As a listed authority under the Equality Act 2010, SCRA is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires the organisation to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, SCRA must publish a mainstreaming report a minimum of every two years and set equality outcomes at least every four years. In accordance with our statutory duties, SCRA has detailed within this report how it is progressing with embedding inclusive practice across the organisations functions and has reviewed its Equality Outcomes, ensuring they remain relevant and measurable. The organisation has also produced workforce data, gender pay gap information, and equal pay statements, fulfilling its legal obligations and promoting transparency.

SCRA continues to embed equality into its core functions, policies, and service delivery, demonstrating a commitment to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations. The report highlights several key achievements, including the integration of equality considerations into strategic planning, improvements in data collection and analysis related to protected characteristics, and enhanced staff awareness through training and engagement initiatives. These efforts reflect a proactive approach to mainstreaming equality and ensuring that services are inclusive and responsive to the needs of children, young people, and families.

SCRA has strategically embedded Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) within its Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting (RICP) Strategy, ensuring strong alignment with national frameworks such as the UNCRC and Keeping the Promise. Governance and leadership are supported by a robust structure, including the Inclusion & Diversity Steering Group, Locality EDI Leads, and a network of over 25 Inclusion Ambassadors. A positive workforce culture is reflected in staff survey results, which show high confidence in reporting discrimination and a strong understanding of inclusive behaviours. This culture is further strengthened by impactful initiatives led by groups focused on Mental Wealth, Neurodiversity, Women into Leadership, and Race & Ethnicity. Learning and development have been enhanced through refreshed mandatory EDI training, including new modules and targeted sessions on pronoun awareness, trauma-informed practice, and anti-racism. SCRA's commitment to inclusive practice has been recognised externally with the achievement of a Gold TIDE Award from enei, marking sector-leading performance.

SCRA's Equality Outcomes for 2024–2027 reflect meaningful progress across several priority areas. In relation to children's equality data, revised data categories have been developed, and a digital solution is being prepared for implementation in 2026–2027, with a collaborative approach taken to avoid direct data collection from children. Census-based reference data has been used to establish baselines. Inclusive recruitment efforts have led to increased applications from men, disabled people, and ethnic minorities, although disparities in shortlisting and appointments persist, with plans for an external audit being investigated. A new e-recruitment portal and refreshed website are also underway. The Anti-Racism Programme has been launched as a three-year initiative, including the piloting of a Black & Asian Staff Group, with mandatory training rescheduled for 2026–2027 and research into racial bias in decision-making planned. Work on socio-economic disadvantage includes a webinar series to deepen staff understanding, alignment with the Fairer Scotland Duty despite SCRA not being a listed authority, and a focus on digital inclusion and child-friendly scheduling.

Despite these successes, the report also identifies ongoing challenges. These include limitations in disaggregated data availability, which can hinder the ability to fully assess impact across all protected groups, and the need for continued organisational capacity to support equality work. There is also recognition of the importance of intersectionality and the need to better understand how overlapping identities affect experiences within the Children's Hearings System.

The progress report aligns closely with SCRA's strategic priorities—Care, Connect, Protect. Under Care, the organisation has taken steps to improve the experience of children and families through inclusive practice and trauma-informed approaches. The Connect strand is supported by efforts to strengthen internal and external communication around equality, including stakeholder engagement and collaborative working. Under Protect, SCRA has advanced its safeguarding responsibilities by embedding equality into risk management and governance structures.

Overall, the report demonstrates SCRA's sustained commitment to equality and inclusion, while acknowledging areas for further development. It provides assurance

to the Board that equality is being effectively mainstreamed and that progress is being made towards achieving meaningful outcomes for all service users and staff.

### **Implications:**

#### **Service**

Supports compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Enhances service quality and accessibility for children, young people, families, and partners through inclusive practices.

#### **Financial**

May require investment in training, communications, and digital tools.

#### **Workforce**

Positive impact on workforce diversity, health and wellbeing, and learning and development through training programmes and inclusive policies.

#### **Infrastructure including Digital**

Development of digital solutions for equality data collection and improvements to Hearing Centres to support accessibility and inclusion.

#### **Information Governance**

Equality data collection will be subject to GDPR compliance and secure data handling protocols.

#### **Risk Assessment/Management**

Links to strategic risks related to workforce diversity, service accessibility, and legal compliance. Risk assessment conducted as part of EHRIA process.

#### **Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

The Mainstreaming Report supports multiple Board objectives:

- Planning for the future: Through strategic alignment with UNCRC and national policy.
- Valuing and developing our staff: Via trauma-informed training and inclusive recruitment.
- Delivering service improvement and sustainability: Through the Care, Connect, Protect programmes.
- Working in partnership: With advocacy providers, youth organisations, and other corporate parents.
- Investing in governance systems: By improving data collection, risk awareness, and equality impact assessments.

The report also supports alignment with SCRA Programmes:

- Care: Focuses on compassionate, rights-based service delivery and understanding the impact of poverty and trauma.
- Connect: Enhances communication and engagement with children, families, and partners.
- Protect: Ensures fair, inclusive, and efficient service pathways through the Hearings System.



The report also mitigates several strategic risks:

- Compliance risk: Addresses legal obligations under Equality Act 2010.
- Reputational risk: Enhances transparency and accountability through improved public information.
- Operational risk: Supports workforce capability and inclusive service design, reducing barriers to participation

### **Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process.

Further to evaluation it is noted:

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) completed - *available on request*

### **Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Staff groups including Race & Ethnicity Group, Neurodiversity Champions, Disability Group were consulted when drafting the report. External partners such as NES, enei, Scottish Government, and Diversify World contributed to the development and implementation of the EDI programme.

The Report was circulated to the Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group for comment and approval. This group includes representation from Unison.

### **Appendices**

All associated and published reports, strategies and action plans are linked below for the information of the Board:

[Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027](#)

[Employee Information Statistic Report](#)

[Pay Gap Report 2024](#)

[Equal Pay Statement](#)

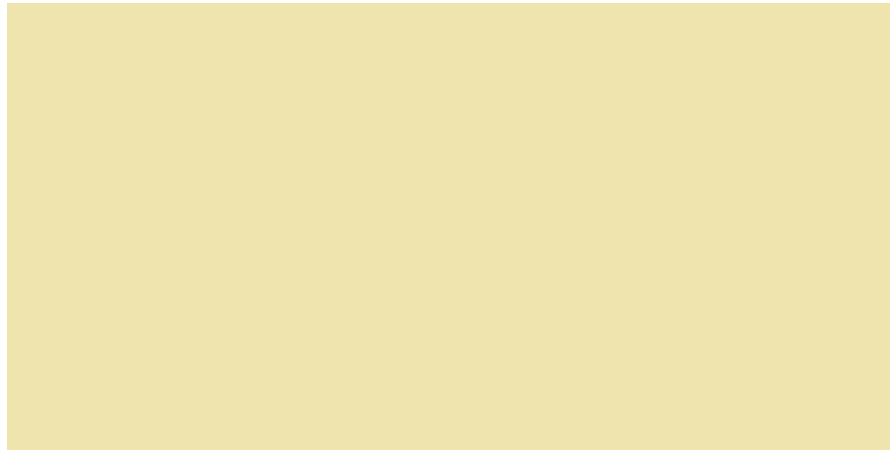
[Representation on Public Boards Report](#)

[British Sign Language Plan-2024-2029](#)

# EDI Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report September 2025



SCOTTISH  
CHILDREN'S REPORTER  
ADMINISTRATION



# Contents

1. Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Foreword
2. Introduction
3. About SCRA
4. Why EDI Matters at SCRA
5. Section 1. Mainstreaming of EDI
  - 5.1 Strategic Alignment of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
  - 5.2 Leadership & Governance
  - 5.3 Embedding Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Corporate Planning
  - 5.4 Embedding Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Localities
  - 5.5 Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment
  - 5.6 Core Corporate Activity
  - 5.7 The Fair Work Agreement
  - 5.8 Staff Survey
  - 5.9 Improving Equality Data
    - 5.9.1 Workforce and Pay Gap Reporting
    - 5.9.2 Key Findings from the Pay Gap Report 2024
    - 5.9.3 Key findings from the Employee Information Statistics Report
    - 5.9.4 Improving Equality Data: Workforce
    - 5.9.5 Improving Equality Data: Service Users
  - 5.10 Policies & Procedures
  - 5.11 Embedding Equality through Learning and Development
  - 5.12 Property
  - 5.13 Targeted Activity
    - 5.13.1 Age
    - 5.13.2 Disability
    - 5.13.3 Gender Reassignment
    - 5.13.4 Pregnancy, Maternity & Breastfeeding
    - 5.13.5 Race & Ethnicity
    - 5.13.6 Religion & Belief
    - 5.13.7 Sex
    - 5.13.8 Sexual Orientation
    - 5.13.9 Marriage/Civil Partnership
    - 5.13.10 Care Experience
    - 5.13.11 Intersectional Inclusion and Embedding Inclusive Culture
    - 5.13.12 Fairer Scotland Duty: Socio-economic Equality
    - 5.13.13 Embedding the Importance of Health & Wellbeing
    - 5.13.14 Understanding Trauma
  - 5.14 Notable Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Achievements
6. Section 2. Equality Outcomes Progress
  - 6.1 Equality Outcome 1.
  - 6.2 Equality Outcome 2.
  - 6.3 Equality Outcome 3.
  - 6.4 Equality Outcome 4.
7. Section 3. Summary
8. Glossary of Terms

# 1. Foreword

Welcome to SCRA's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Progress Report. This mid-cycle update outlines the progress we have made between April 2024 and September 2025 in embedding inclusive practice across our organisation.

At SCRA, our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion goes beyond statutory obligations. While we continue to uphold the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, our work is driven by a deeper ambition - to be an organisation rooted in rights, dignity, respect, fairness and compassion. This report reflects that ambition and the collective effort of our people to make it a reality.

Over the past 18 months, we have continued to strengthen our organisations inclusive culture and deepen our understanding of the barriers faced by children, families and colleagues. We have made meaningful progress in delivering our Equality Outcomes, including improving the collection of children's equality data, enhancing inclusive recruitment practices, and embedding trauma-informed approaches across our services. Our work to become a proactively anti-racist organisation is also well underway, supported by staff-led groups and external expertise.

We remain committed to recognising care experience as a 'tenth' protected characteristic and to addressing socio-economic disadvantage through the lens of the Fairer Scotland Duty. These priorities are reflected in our strategies, our plans, our delivery and in the everyday decisions we make about how we support children, young people, families and our staff.

A key focus of this reporting period has been supporting our Localities to lead inclusion and diversity work at a local level. The energy, insight and commitment of our Locality EDI Leads, Inclusion Ambassadors and Neurodiversity Champions has been exceptional, and their work continues to shape and strengthen our national programme.

As we prepare to support the reform, redesign and transformation of the Children's Hearings System, and the implementation of both imminent, new and planned legislation which will help us deliver on Keeping the Promise and deliver on UNCRC incorporation, the Children's Hearings System has never been at a more exciting and challenging place. It is therefore critical that our focus on inclusion and rights remain central to our day-to-day work and ways of being as a public body.

I want to thank all colleagues across SCRA for their continued dedication to helping us creating a more inclusive organisation, focussed on constructive and positive values, ever mindful of how we uphold our legal duties today and every day as a continuous journey of learning, reflection and improvement.

**Neil Hunter**  
**Principal Reporter/Chief Executive**

## 2. Introduction

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) remains firmly committed to the vision, values, and principles of the Equality Act 2010. We continue to uphold the three key elements of the general equality duty as set out in the Act:

1. Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
2. Advancing equality of opportunity between individuals who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
3. Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

The protected characteristics defined by the Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy, maternity, and breastfeeding
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership (in relation to the duty to eliminate discrimination only)

We also recognise care experience as a 'tenth' protected characteristic and continue to review and adapt our policies, practices, and procedures to reflect this commitment. In addition to meeting our statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, SCRA is committed to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of our work. We strive not only to comply with legal requirements but to cultivate an organisational culture rooted in fairness, dignity, respect, and the celebration of diversity.

### **This report:**

- Builds upon our previous Mainstreaming Report by providing an overview of key achievements and the progress made in embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across SCRA since the last publication.
- Sets out our progress towards delivering the Equality Outcomes 2024-2027, and highlights our ongoing work to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion among our staff, our partners, and the children, young people, and families we support.



### 3. About SCRA

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is a national body focused on supporting Scotland's most vulnerable children and young people. Established under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and operational since 1996, SCRA plays a central role in the Children's Hearings System - Scotland's unique care and justice system for children and young people.

At the heart of this system is the Children's Reporter, who acts as the single point of referral for concerns raised by any agency or individual about a child or young person who may be at risk. The Reporter ensures that decisions are made in the best interests of the child, based on careful assessment and collaboration with partners.

Children's Reporters routinely make critical decisions in the lives of children and young people experiencing adversity and trauma, including:

- Physical and emotional neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Parental substance misuse
- Mental health concerns
- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Disengagement from education
- Risk of offending

#### Our Core Responsibilities

SCRA's key functions include:

- Receiving referrals for children and young people who may be in need of care or protection
- Coordinating investigations and assessments with partner agencies to inform decision-making
- Deciding whether a child or young person requires compulsory measures of supervision
- Drafting and presenting grounds for referral to a Children's Hearing
- Arranging and facilitating Children's Hearings where necessary
- Ensuring fair process and upholding the rights of all participants in Hearings
- Representing the Reporter in court where grounds are contested or decisions are appealed
- Providing safe, accessible venues for Hearings to take place

#### Our Vision

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

## Our Mission

We protect and support Scotland's children and young people by making high-quality decisions, upholding their rights, and working collaboratively as compassionate, inclusive corporate parents to enable the most positive and personalised experience of the Children's Hearings System.

## Our Values

Our values are the foundation of everything we do. We are:

- Supportive
- Child-centred
- Respectful
- Accountable

# 4. Why Equality, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Matters at SCRA

Equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are not just policies or procedures — they are about culture. At SCRA, we recognise that this is an ongoing journey with no fixed destination. It is a journey of leadership, learning, change, and continuous improvement.

We are committed to fostering a culture where our differences are not only respected but actively valued. By embracing diversity, promoting equality, understanding equity and nurturing inclusion, we aim to create an environment where everyone can thrive - both within our organisation and in the services we provide.

## What does inclusion mean for everyone at SCRA?

Being inclusive means:

- We can bring our whole selves to work
- We attract and retain talented people from a wide range of backgrounds
- We understand, respect, and value each other's differences
- We are motivated and passionate about doing our best
- We encourage creativity and innovation
- We lead and behave in ways that are inclusive
- We feel safe to raise ideas and challenge one another respectfully
- We recognise and value everyone's contributions and lived experiences

Getting equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion right not only makes SCRA a better place to work — it also ensures we deliver the best possible service to children, young people, and families. A service that is accessible, responsive to individual needs, and firmly rooted in upholding rights.

## Our Commitment

SCRA aspires to be a sector leader in our behaviours, attitudes, and approach to equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). We are committed to going beyond our legal and statutory obligations, embedding EDI into the heart of everything we do.

SCRA recognises that achieving this ambition is a shared responsibility — one that requires collective leadership, continuous learning, and a culture of openness and respect. Our passion for EDI is reflected in our commitment to creating an organisation where everyone feels valued, included, and empowered to thrive.

SCRA is dedicated to promoting and practising equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion across all areas of our work — from service delivery and workforce development to our policies, partnerships, and organisational culture. We aim to build and sustain a workforce that is diverse, skilled, and reflective of the communities we serve, ensuring we SCRA is well placed to deliver high-quality, rights-based services to children, young people, and families.

SCRA is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination in all its forms
- Championing diversity across our workforce and services
- Advancing equity, by recognising and responding to individual needs and experiences
- Fostering a culture of inclusion, where everyone's identity, experience, and contribution is recognised and respected

Our aspiration is to be an organisation that not only reflects the diversity of society, but actively promotes equality, equity, dignity, and respect — enabling everyone to reach their full potential.

## 5. Section 1: Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming equality is a core requirement for public bodies under the Public Sector Equality Duty. It means embedding equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion into our everyday work — ensuring these principles are considered in all decisions, policies, and practices across SCRA.

Mainstreaming brings a range of benefits, including:

- Embedding equality into our organisational structures, behaviours, and culture
- Enabling SCRA to demonstrate how we actively promote equality and equity in all aspects of our work
- Supporting continuous improvement, better performance, and a more inclusive experience for children, young people, and families attending Children's Hearings



## Legal Framework: The Specific Duties in Scotland

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, and subsequent updates, public authorities like SCRA are required to take specific actions to meet the general Equality Duty. These duties are designed to support<sup>1</sup> transparency, accountability, and progress in advancing equality.

SCRA is required to:

- Report every two years on how we are mainstreaming the Equality Duty
- Publish progress against our Equality Outcomes
- Provide an annual breakdown of workforce equality monitoring data, demonstrating how we are using this data to inform and improve our practices
- Publish an annual Gender Pay Gap Report which includes the mean and median hourly pay gap between male and female employees; the distribution of male and female employees across pay quartiles; and commentary on trends and actions being taken to address the gap
- Report on the gender composition of our Board and outline steps taken to improve diversity across all protected characteristics
- Publish an Equal Pay Statement every four years

## Our Reporting History

SCRA has published Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Reports since 2013. We regularly produce updates on our progress in advancing equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion — reflecting our commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

## Purpose of This Section

This section of the report provides an update on our achievements and progress in relation to mainstreaming the equality, equity, diversity and inclusion elements. It highlights how we continue to embed inclusive principles across all areas of our work.

### 5.1 Strategic Alignment of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

In 2021, SCRA integrated its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy into a broader, holistic approach through the Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting (RICP) Strategy 2021–2023. This marked a significant step in recognising the intrinsic and inextricable link between our statutory and moral duties around human rights, equalities, inclusion, and corporate parenting.

Building on this foundation, the RICP Strategy 2024–2027 now serves as a key delivery mechanism for SCRA's commitment to Keeping the Promise. It places equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of both our transformational work and our day-to-day operations. This approach ensures that our responsibilities

<sup>1</sup> Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations

as a corporate parent are fulfilled in a way that is inclusive, trauma-informed, and rights-based.

Progress across our work in rights, inclusion, and corporate parenting continues to be reported through our accessible Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting Year Report Card, first published in 2022, and updated annually.

SCRA's Equality Outcomes (see Figure 1) are now aligned with our corporate aims of Care, Connect, and Protect. These aims are themselves aligned with the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, which localises the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Scotland. This alignment ensures that our work contributes meaningfully to national and international efforts to tackle inequality and promote sustainability.

**Figure 1:**

Scottish Government National Outcomes	Children and Young People	Fair Work and 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 2024-2027 Strategic Aims	The best experience <b>Care</b>		Clear communications <b>Connect</b>		The best service <b>Protect</b>		People who care, connect and protect		
Our Equality Outcomes	We will consistently ask for and check the accuracy of children's equality data to improve the recording of children's protected characteristics on SCRA's computer system, CSAS so that we can identify areas of inequality and also identify trends and patterns in outcomes between and within the protected characteristics.		We will review and revise our recruitment process so that it is more inclusive to attract more diverse candidates to work for SCRA and encourage greater workforce diversity.		We will become a proactively anti-racist organisation; this will include all staff taking part in a mandatory anti-racist programme of work led by an expert external provider, actively challenging racism and better understanding potential discrimination in our decision-making.		We will work to understand the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on how we engage with children and families, focusing specifically on how age, disability and sex influence their ability to engage with, and participate in, Children's Hearings; to ensure we do not discriminate against those who experience poverty.		
Our Values	Supportive		Child Centred		Respectful		Accountable		

By embedding equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion within our strategic aims, SCRA is actively working to create a fairer Scotland — one where all children, young people, and families are supported to thrive, regardless of background or identity.

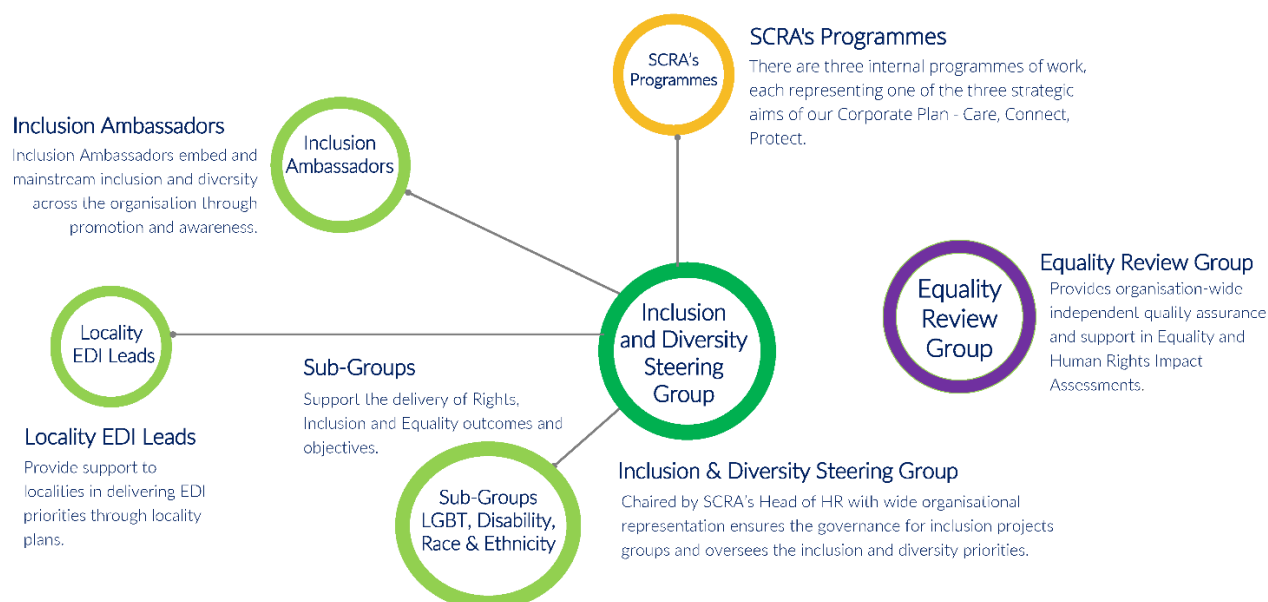
## 5.2 Leadership & Governance

SCRA's inclusion and diversity work is overseen by an Inclusion & Diversity Steering Group, chaired by the Head of HR, which takes a strategic overview of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion as it aligns with the Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting Strategy. The programme of work is led and managed by SCRA's Inclusion & Diversity Manager, who is supported by topical inclusion and diversity groups: our Disability Group, Race & Ethnicity Group; Fairer Scotland Group; Neurodiversity Champions; LGBT+ Group; Women into Leadership

Network; Locality Equality Leads Network; as well as a network of over 25 Inclusion Ambassadors from varying locations and roles throughout SCRA who continually champion inclusion and diversity across the organisation (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2:**

## SCRA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Structure



SCRA's approach to inclusion and diversity is that equality and equity is not just one person's or one group's job; it is the responsibility of all of us – it has, and should always be, a collective effort. True equality requires an equitable approach and that requires culture change and a recognition of what we do well and where we need to improve. This takes time, and it takes an army of enthusiastic, dedicated and knowledgeable people with real passion, drive and enthusiasm. Work towards achieving SCRA's Equality Outcomes takes place across many different groups, teams and plans – and the structure of the inclusion and diversity work in SCRA reflects that. To achieve our Equality Outcomes requires dedication and commitment, and SCRA acknowledges this in its support for staff from across the organisation to have the time and space to do this incredibly valuable work.

### 5.3 Embedding Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Corporate Planning

A strong strategic approach to inclusion and diversity is required to fully embed and mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion. By embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into SCRA's integrated Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting Strategy – which is a foundation strategy upon which all of SCRA's organisational planning is built on – we ensure that equality, equity, diversity and inclusion sit at the heart of everything we do, now and in the future.

Additionally, SCRA's Inclusion & Diversity Manager and Planning & Performance Manager continue to work together to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is

included in all corporate planning – strategic and operational, national and local. To further strengthen this approach, SCRA has aligned its current Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 with our corporate planning cycle and, as such, now produces a new set of Equality Outcomes every three years, with a progress update at 18months.

#### **5.4 Embedding Equality, Diversity & Inclusion in Localities**

We have continued to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in our Localities and Head Office teams and, as such, have been continuing to support them on mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion at Locality – and team – level. We now have at least one specific EDI Lead for each Locality. To support this group of geographically diverse colleagues, we have a Locality EDI Lead Network. This Network enables all Locality EDI Leads to share questions, good practice, ideas and get peer support or advice and guidance from SCRA's Inclusion & Diversity Manager, as well as being a mechanism to promoting inclusion and diversity opportunities and training.

The Network ensures that strategic national inclusion and diversity priorities are communicated and discussed within Localities, but that Localities can identify areas of local inclusion and diversity work to 'feed up' into the national programme. This top down, bottom-up approach to inclusion and diversity ensures that strategic priorities and local needs remain at the forefront of our inclusion and diversity work, in effect providing a feedback loop from Localities to ensure our inclusion and diversity work is needs-based. In 2025 and beyond we need to focus on further supporting Localities to take responsibility for embedding this work in their areas, and support Head Office teams to do the same.

In 2022-2023, we revised our locality planning process to ensure that local responsibility for embedding and reporting on our national equality, diversity and inclusion objectives are embedded locally and that progress continues to be reported and tracked by managers across SCRA. The Locality EDI Lead Network will be further enhanced in 2025-2027 by further embedding national EDI priorities around training and impact assessment in Locality Plans as well as identifying areas of local need to influence the national programme of inclusion and diversity work. A broader programme of training will also be implemented in 2025-27, ensuring that all staff have an awareness of what is expected of them working in SCRA.

Whilst all SCRA Localities and Head Office teams have EDI priorities reflected in their Locality/Team Plans, some localities, including SCRA's Glasgow Locality have active, established and committed Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Groups. These Groups promote EDI within the Locality and arrange learning and development sessions for staff around the protected characteristics and broader equality agenda, such as refugees and asylum seekers and neonatal abstinence syndrome, for example.

#### **5.5 Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment**

SCRA has a statutory duty to assess the equality impact of applying its policies, practices, systems and processes. SCRA interprets this duty widely to include the full range of SCRA's policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities,

including decisions and the delivery of services – essentially everything we do – and we welcome this as a mechanism to continually improve our service delivery, working environment and workforce diversity. Meaningful and timely completion of impact assessment for all new/revised policies, processes and procedures ensures that we consider equalities impact when we embark on any change – and thinking in this way as we work encourages us to think broadly about the impact of what we do and how we do it. In time, this way of thinking will become the norm and not something we have to actively engage in. We are also mindful that the general duties of the Equality Act 2010 require us to continually assess the impact of everything we do in relation to the protected characteristics. Our approach to impact assessment embraces that duty.

Our Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) is an integrated approach to the development/revision of our policies, processes and procedures ensures the promotion and safeguarding of the rights of the child (UNCRC), ensuring the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators are considered, the protection of parents' rights (ECHR) and our legislative responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. In addition, it ensures we consider the socio-economic implications (the Fairer Scotland Duty) in all that we do, so that we do not discriminate based on socio-economic status and that the impact of poverty (financial and opportunity) is minimised in our service delivery and working policies and practices. We also recognise the unique challenges faced by rural and remote communities, and we consider these impacts in our planning and decision-making. This ensures our services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of children, young people, and families across Scotland. To provide oversight, governance and quality assurance to our EHRIA process, we have an Equality Review Group. The remit of this group is to review all the EHRIs submitted to ensure equalities and human rights impacts have been adequately considered and negative impacts mitigated.

During 2024–2025, SCRA's focus has been on reviewing and improving our Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) process. This work reflects our commitment to embedding equality, equity, and human rights into all aspects of decision-making.

Building on feedback and learning from previous years, we have begun revising the EHRIA process to make it more accessible, practical, and user-friendly for staff across the organisation. The aim is to support more consistent and confident use of the tool, ensuring it adds value to both strategic and operational work. We are also developing a more dynamic and responsive approach, transitioning to a 'living document' model. Under this model, the EHRIA is actively updated throughout the lifecycle of a project or policy, allowing equality and human rights considerations to be embedded from the outset and continuously reviewed as work progresses. Completed EHRIA documents will be published on SCRA's website at the conclusion of each relevant piece of work, enhancing transparency and accountability.

To support this shift, we are rolling out updated EHRIA training across the organisation. This includes tailored sessions for teams to build confidence and

consistency in applying the process, ensuring it is both meaningful and accessible for staff at all levels.

This evolving approach reflects SCRA's commitment to making equality, equity, and human rights a continuous and integral part of our work — not a one-off exercise, but a core element of how we plan, deliver, and evaluate our services.

## **5.6 Core Corporate Activity**

Whilst some equality, diversity and inclusion work is specifically labelled and promoted as such, some of SCRA's core business-as-usual activity also contributes towards equality, diversity and inclusion mainstreaming. By embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in our business-as-usual activity we will, similarly to impact assessment, begin to naturally consider it and it will become part of our collective psyche and not something with which we have to actively engage

## **5.7 The Fair Work Agreement**

SCRA is committed to implementing the Fair Work Agreement. SCRA is recognised as an accredited living wage employer. SCRA also works in partnership with the recognised trade union UNISON, as set in our National Partnership Agreement and, as such, involves UNISON in decision-making and respects the right of UNISON to represent their members. SCRA also continues to employ Modern Apprentices.

As an employer we have always committed to flexible working wherever possible and our strategic well-being approach underlines our commitment to all staff achieving a positive and healthy working life. As of the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 SCRA has approximately 273 different working patterns, which evidences our flexibility and inclusivity. We also have an agile working policy that allows all staff to balance their working life between their home, our offices and our Hearings Centres.

## **5.8 Staff Survey**

We conducted our annual staff survey in November 2024. Our staff survey provides a key metric of employees' views on what it is like to work for the organisation and normally covers a range of diverse topics such as communication, learning and development, managing change, our organisational objectives and equality, diversity and inclusion.

Our 2024 staff survey found that:

- 98% (up 3pp) of staff think that SCRA is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion;
- 97% of staff understand the Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework and recognise how their individual actions, language, attitudes and approaches contribute to fostering an inclusive SCRA;
- 91% (up 8pp) of staff know how and where to report a concern about discrimination or harassment;



- 77% (up 10pp) of staff feel confident about reporting harassment, discrimination or victimisation; and if reported 81% (up 10pp) felt it was taken seriously;
- 94% (up 3pp) of staff feel they are treated fairly and respected in SCRA;
- 95% (up 3pp) of staff think that SCRA respects individual differences (e.g. cultures, working styles, backgrounds, ideas, etc);
- 96% (up 2pp) of staff think that their line manager demonstrates a commitment to and support for inclusion and diversity; and,
- 87% (up 8pp) of staff feel that SCRA provides an environment for free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs.

The results of the staff survey are positive in terms of our inclusion and diversity work, and people's understanding of their responsibilities, their managers responsibilities and SCRA's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Whilst these are strong results, we do acknowledge that there is always room for improvement. It is encouraging to note that there has been a marked improvement in the percentage of staff which indicated that they knew how and where to report any concerns around discrimination or harassment, said they would feel confident in reporting it and if reported felt it would be taken seriously. In early 2024 we trained our staff on our new Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework and been continuing to embed this within the organisation. In 2025 we have refreshed of our Dignity at Work Policy and Staff Code of Conduct, with accompanying guidance and training, including introducing Active Bystander training, all of which, we believe, will continue to have a positive impact on staff feeling more confident to report any instances of concerning behaviours.

## 5.9 Improving Equality Data

Recording and monitoring equality data is important, not just for data's sake, but to aid organisational and corporate planning. Equality data helps us to better understand the needs of the people we work with and for and provides us with an evidence-base for implementing and measuring change and improvement. Without it, we would not know how or where to target our action and resource. As a public sector organisation we have a finite budget, and robust equality data helps us to spend that budget in the most impactful way.

### 5.9.1 Workforce and Pay Gap Reporting

As part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement in equality, SCRA publishes detailed standalone reports on workforce demographics and pay gap analysis. These reports provide critical insights into our progress and challenges in achieving a fair and inclusive workplace.

We are pleased to share the latest findings from the following reports:

- [Pay Gap Report at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024](#)
- [Gender Representation on Public Boards Report 2025](#)
- [Employee Information Statistics Report 2025](#)

### 5.9.2 Key Findings from the Pay Gap Report 2024:

The gender pay gap at SCRA continues to show incremental improvement. As of the latest reporting period, the mean gender pay gap stands at 20.62%, while the median gap is 27.49%. Both figures represent a reduction from 2023, indicating steady progress. However, disparities remain when comparing full-time and part-time staff, with part-time employees experiencing a higher pay gap of 26.45% compared to 18.25% among full-time staff. A modest increase of 1.86% in the proportion of women in the upper pay quartile may have contributed to the overall reduction in the gap.

Age analysis reveals continued improvement in the 41–50 age band, although the highest pay gap persists in the 51–60 age group. The disability pay gap currently sits at 9.5%, a figure influenced by a revised calculation method that excludes the 66.04% of staff whose disability status is unknown. Ethnicity data shows a mean pay gap of 6.08%, with notable disparities between white and global majority males.

Over the past seven years, SCRA's gender pay gap has reached its lowest recorded level, with an 8.18% reduction in the mean gap. Despite this progress, the median gap remains persistent, likely due to occupational segregation and the gender imbalance in lower-paid roles. The current gender distribution in grades A to D—93.80% female and 6.20% male—continues to shape the overall pay gap.

To address these issues, SCRA has identified several next steps. These include expanding the Women into Leadership Network, reviewing recruitment and selection processes to attract more diverse candidates, developing a comprehensive equality and inclusion training programme, and engaging with Close the Gap to conduct an external gender pay gap audit and develop a tailored action plan in 2025.

### 5.9.3 Key findings from the Employee Information Statistics Report 2025:

As of 31 January 2025, SCRA employed 500 staff, marking an increase from 481 in January 2024. The report provides a comprehensive overview of workforce demographics across protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and care experience.

SCRA continues to have a predominantly older workforce, with under-representation in the 16–24 age band (1.8%) and the 65+ age band (1.2%) compared to census data (11.9% and 23.9% respectively). Conversely, the 35–55 age group is significantly over-represented at 52.6%, compared to 31.4% in the general population. Disability disclosure rates remain low, with only 5.2% of employees identifying as disabled, compared to 24.01% of the population. Efforts are ongoing to encourage more accurate and confident reporting.

There has been no increase in disclosures relating to gender reassignment, although SCRA maintains a strong commitment to inclusivity in this area. In terms of race and ethnicity, 64.2% of staff identify as white, 2.2% as global majority, and 33.6% chose not to disclose. When excluding unknowns, the workforce profile adjusts to 96.6% white and 3.31% global majority, indicating continued under-



representation. The gender profile remains predominantly female, with 88.4% of staff identifying as women and 11.6% as men, which contrasts with the more balanced gender distribution in the wider population.

Sexual orientation data shows that 2.8% of staff identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or other, while 32.8% identify as heterosexual and 64.4% did not disclose. This compares to census data indicating 87.8% heterosexual and 4.04% LGB or other. Only 0.6% of employees have identified as care-experienced, a figure that SCRA continues to monitor closely.

In terms of recruitment and retention, there was a notable increase in applicants declaring disability and non-white ethnicity during 2024. Male representation also rose, with 15.7% of applicants identifying as male and 14.1% of appointments being male. Access to training and development opportunities appears equitable across the workforce. SCRA continues to demonstrate strong support for maternity leave returners and employees on disability-related sick leave. Notably, the most common reason for leaving the organisation in 2024 was retirement, marking a shift from previous years where resignation was more prevalent.

#### **5.9.4 Improving Equality Data: Workforce**

As with previous years, our annual Equalities Monitoring Campaign 'Free To Be Me' was launched on the International Day of Tolerance in November 2024 and ran until International Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024. The purpose of this campaign is to encourage staff to record their own personal characteristics so that we continue to increase reporting in this area. Equalities monitoring of our workforce helps us to:

- Better understand our workforce demographics and where we should concentrate action and resource to better support and respond to our colleagues' needs;
- Measure the diversity of our workforce, and how that compares to the Scottish population (and areas where we need to improve diversity);
- Explore any trends and whether actual or potential disadvantage or discrimination exist;
- Inform policy, decision-making and make improvements through our inclusion and diversity programmes and action plans;
- Provide targeted information, support and positive action initiatives (e.g. menopause awareness and resources, mental health initiatives, etc);
- Comply with the law in protecting our people from discrimination, victimisation and harassment at work; and,
- Measure and report progress in meeting our Equality Outcomes and to inform impact assessments.

These reports are available on our website and are referenced here to ensure full compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations. They form an integral part of our mainstreaming approach and support our strategic equality outcomes.

### 5.9.5 Improving Equality Data: Service Users

SCRA is currently unable to produce reliable and reportable equality data on the children and families who engage with the Children's Hearings System. This presents a significant gap in our understanding of how different groups experience our services and limits our ability to identify and address potential inequalities.

Recognising the importance of this issue, we have committed to improving the collection and use of service user equality data through Equality Outcome 1 but 2027 and an update on our progress is provided in that section. This outcome focuses on strengthening our data systems and processes to ensure that we can better understand the diversity of the children and families we work with, including ethnicity, disability, sex, and other protected characteristics.

Improved data will enable us to monitor trends, identify disparities, and tailor our services to meet the needs of all children and families more effectively. It will also support our wider equality, diversity, and inclusion goals by ensuring that our decision-making is informed by evidence and lived experience.

This work is ongoing and will require collaboration across teams, engagement with children and families, and a commitment to embedding inclusive data practices throughout the organisation.

### 5.10 Policies and Procedures

We have a comprehensive package of policies and guidance that promote and mainstream equality and inclusion across SCRA. We have an established audit process to ensure that our policies are up to date and reflect current legislation, inclusive language and best practice. We are committed to providing an inclusive workplace where our people feel valued and cared for regardless of their age, religion or belief, race, disability, marital status, pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding, sexual orientation, gender identity, care experience or socio-economic background. Our policies and guidance support us to achieve that. In the reporting period, we reviewed the following:

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Discipline, Grievance and Investigation Guidelines
- Flexible Working Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Retirement Policy
- Leave and Associated Policies
- Neonatal Care Leave and Pay (New policy)
- People Strategy
- Induction Programme Guidelines
- Maximising Attendance Strategy
- Development and Supervision Framework (New policy)
- Stress Policy
- Eye Test Policy
- Manual Handling Policy
- No Smoking Policy

Sharps and Bodily Fluids Policy  
 Fire Safety Policy  
 Flu Vaccination Programme for staff

### **5.11 Embedding Equality through Learning and Development**

Previously, SCRA required all staff to complete three mandatory equality, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) e-learning courses: Bullying, Harassment & Victimisation, Unconscious Bias, and Diversity, Equality & Discrimination. These modules were also embedded into the induction process for new employees.

During this reporting cycle, we undertook a comprehensive review of these e-learning packages. As a result, we have transitioned to two new courses—Consciously Inclusive and Equity, Diversity & Inclusion—sourced from a new provider. This change reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and ensuring that our learning resources remain relevant and impactful.

As part of the review, we analysed completion rates for the previous modules. While the Unconscious Bias course had strong engagement, completion rates for the broader mandatory EDI package were below expectations. To address this, we have made completion of the new Equity, Diversity & Inclusion course mandatory for all staff by 31st December 2025, to promote a consistent standard of awareness and understanding across the organisation.

SCRA also provides access to additional equality, diversity and inclusion topical e-learning courses which focus on specific equalities related issues pertaining to the protected characteristics. We encourage managers to use these resources to address specific issues or areas of concern that may arise locally, such as age discrimination and disability discrimination.

In October 2023, we commissioned the Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (enei) to train all SCRA staff on the new Inclusive Standards & Behaviours Framework. This training commenced in November 2023 and to date over 80% of the staff group have attended the training.

During this reporting period, March 2024-September 2025, a Pronoun Awareness Session was also designed and introduced by our Inclusion & Diversity Manager. Initially delivered face-to-face this short online session explains some of the concepts around pronoun use and helps staff develop practice that contributes towards creating an inclusive environment for all members of our workforce; children, young people and their families; partner organisations; any other organisations and individuals we come into contact with. This session was well received and attended, with 68 staff undertaking it over several sessions. The session has now been converted into a e-learning package and adds to our existing suite of additional on-demand resources available to staff.

In addition to the training mentioned above a number of one-off training sessions have been held covering topics including Neurodiversity; LGBT awareness; Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; and Race and Racism.

Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) are fundamental principles that underpin a thriving and innovative workplace. As leaders within SCRA, it is imperative that managers champion these values to foster a culture of respect, collaboration, and excellence. To support this, SCRA has introduced a mandatory EDI learning objective for all managers, reinforcing the expectation that inclusive leadership is a core competency. This approach ensures consistency across the organisation and signals a clear commitment to embedding EDI into leadership development and performance management.

### **5.12 Property**

SCRA remains committed to ensuring that our estate supports accessibility, inclusion, and a welcoming environment for all children, young people, families, and staff. Details of our Hearing Centres—whether owned or leased—are published on our external website to help children and families prepare for their visit. We continue to offer Visual Information Guides for 32 of our Hearing Centres, providing clear and child-friendly information to support attendance and participation.

During the reporting period, the focus of our Hearing Room Improvement Programme shifted from physical refurbishments to the development of new Hearing Room Standards. In collaboration with architects Lee Boyd, SCRA undertook an extensive consultation exercise to inform the design of future hearing suites. This new approach considers the entire hearing suite—not just the hearing room—and introduces a circular layout, calming colour palettes, engaging visuals, and child-friendly features such as toys, blankets, and play areas including wigwams. These standards are already being incorporated into the design of the new Glasgow hearing suite and will inform future developments in Lerwick and Dundee during 2025/26.

In parallel, our programme of office improvements continued, with upgrades completed in Greenock, Inverness, and Aberdeen. These enhancements aim to create more comfortable, inclusive, and pleasant working environments for our staff, supporting wellbeing and productivity across the organisation.

### **5.13 Targeted Activity**

SCRA recognises that there are many aspects of our social and political identities that make us ‘us’, including things that are not covered by the Equality Act 2010, such as our upbringing, child and adulthood experiences, our education and our political beliefs. These aspects of our identity do not sit independently of one another, and we understand that multiple forms of inequality often compound experiences of discrimination, and of privilege. As such, we take a rights-based intersectional and cross-sectional approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and recognise that there is overlap and interplay between the protected characteristics. Some key equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives and work in 2024-2025 cross the protected characteristics and are intersectional and, are therefore reported under the subheading of ‘intersectional’.

Our activities outlined in this section all seek to eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment; advance equality of opportunity; raise awareness,

promote understanding and tolerance and foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not and, as such, fulfil part of our obligations under the general Equality Duty.

### **5.13.1 Age**

Whilst age in and of itself has not been the focus of targeted activity during the reporting period, issues pertaining to age have continued to be of significant focus throughout the year, such as menopause and supports into retirement for our staff. Much of our activity focusses on children and young people, they are central to SCRA's mission and our work is deeply rooted in supporting the rights and needs of children, particularly those involved in the Children's Hearings System.

Since March 2024, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) has undertaken several initiatives to support the incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), with a strong emphasis on strengthening age-related inclusion. Here are the key developments:

SCRA is actively preparing for the legal incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, which mandates public bodies to uphold children's rights in all decisions and services. This has led to:

- Embedding children's rights into organisational policies, practices, and culture.
- Ensuring that age-specific needs are considered in every aspect of service delivery, especially within the Children's Hearings System

SCRA launched a new programme of work focused on transforming the Children's Hearings System to be more rights-based and inclusive and aligning with the Hearings for Children recommendations, which are deeply rooted in UNCRC principles. This programme includes:

- Reviewing and updating practice standards to reflect children's rights.
- Enhancing participation mechanisms for children and young people in hearings.
- Training staff on rights-based approaches and age-sensitive communication.

SCRA is also aligning its work with the Children's Care and Justice Bill (CCJB), which complements UNCRC incorporation by:

- Promoting child-centred justice.
- Strengthening protections for children in care and justice settings.
- Ensuring that age is a central consideration in legal and procedural reforms

### **5.13.2 Disability**

In 2016, SCRA became a member of the UK Government's Disability Confident Scheme, which supports employers to make the most of the talents disabled people can bring to the workplace. We are currently accredited as a Disability Confident Employer (Level 2), with our certification extended until 2027. This level recognises

our commitment to inclusive recruitment, retention, and development practices for people with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions.

The Disability Confident Scheme encourages employers to challenge attitudes, increase understanding, and remove barriers to employment. As a Level 2 employer, SCRA has demonstrated that we actively promote inclusive job opportunities, make reasonable adjustments, and support disabled staff through effective policies and practices.

Looking ahead, SCRA is committed to progressing to Level 3 – Disability Confident Leader. This next stage involves not only embedding inclusive practices internally but also advocating for disability inclusion externally, sharing best practice, and influencing others. A key piece of work in support of this ambition will be a comprehensive review of our Reasonable Adjustment processes and practices, ensuring they are robust, responsive, and aligned with the lived experiences of staff and service users with disability(ies) and long-term health conditions.

### **Disability Sub-Group**

SCRA has an active staff-led Disability Sub-Group, consisting of staff from a variety of locations and roles, including those with lived experience. The group aims to raise awareness about disability - including 'hidden' disability - empower staff to tackle stigma and discrimination where this occurs and enable staff to best support colleagues and children and families with a disability(ies) who use our service.

The group work to an agreed annual action plan and during the 2024-2025 period concentrated on advancing neurodiversity; British Sign Language (BSL); and invisible disabilities inclusion and awareness raising. The group revised a number of guidance documents including SCRA's Guide/Assistance Dog Guidance. The group also introduced an Inclusive Language Guide on Disability, designed by SCRA's Inclusion and Diversity Manager. Based on best practice this guide includes some general principles, preferred terms and alternatives, plus some communication tips.

Future plans in the groups 2025-2026 Action Plan include building upon our existing neurodiversity and BSL inclusion work; continuing to support SCRA's Hearing Room Improvement Project; and the introduction of a Cancer Toolkit for SCRA staff and managers.

### **Enhancing Accessibility for BSL Users in the Children's Hearings System**

SCRA is committed to ensuring that all children, young people, and families—regardless of communication needs—have equal access to the Children's Hearings System. In recognition of the barriers faced by British Sign Language (BSL) users, SCRA has taken a proactive and inclusive approach to improving accessibility.

Central to this work is the publication of the BSL Action Plan 2024–2029, which builds upon the previous SCRA BSL Action Plan 2020-2023, and outlines our commitments to BSL users and is accompanied by a BSL video with subtitles. SCRA's plan links directly with the Scottish Government's British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan 2023–2029, a six-year strategy aimed at improving the lives of



BSL users across Scotland. It builds on the previous 2017–2023 plan and sets out 45 commitments across ten priority areas. These areas were shaped by consultation with the BSL community and focus on removing barriers and promoting inclusion.

SCRA actively participates in the British Sign Language (BSL) Justice Advisory Group. This national group brings together justice sector organisations and representatives from the Deaf and BSL communities to improve access to justice for BSL users. Through our involvement, we contribute to shaping policy and practice that supports equitable experiences for children, young people, and families who use BSL. Our engagement ensures that the unique needs of BSL users within the Children's Hearings System are considered in national discussions, and it strengthens our alignment with the Scottish Government's BSL National Plan 2023–2029.

Working in partnership with the British Deaf Association, SCRA has developed a suite of BSL information films with subtitles, designed to improve understanding of the Children's Hearings System. These include a BSL Dictionary explaining key terms, videos for adults covering processes and rights, and videos for children and young people including a walkthrough of a hearing centre and process.

To build internal capacity, in addition to the 36 staff members we previously funded to undertake a 6-week BSL taster course, we have funded 15 staff members across Scotland to complete a 20-week introductory BSL training course, enhancing communication and awareness. SCRA has also improved its communication channels by offering a text service for complaints and promoting the use of Contact Scotland BSL for direct engagement. In Hearings, BSL users can request interpreters, and SCRA endeavours to accommodate preferred interpreters wherever possible.

These actions have led to increased awareness and understanding of the Children's Hearings System among BSL users, greater confidence and participation in hearings, and enhanced staff capability in engaging with Deaf individuals. This work supports compliance with both the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Equality Act 2010.

Key lessons learned include the importance of co-production with BSL users and Deaf community organisations, the value of providing information in multiple formats, and the role of staff training in fostering an inclusive culture. SCRA will continue to implement the BSL Action Plan, expand training opportunities, monitor feedback on BSL resources, and explore further opportunities for digital accessibility and inclusive engagement.

### **Advancing Neurodiversity Inclusion through the Neurodiversity Champions Network**

SCRA continues to strengthen its commitment to neurodiversity inclusion through the Neurodiversity Champions Network, established in 2020. This staff-led initiative supports neurodivergent children, young people, families, and colleagues by

promoting inclusive practice, improving accessibility, and fostering understanding across the organisation.

The network now comprises 44 volunteer Champions across all nine SCRA Localities. Champions receive and deliver training in collaboration with partners such as Salvesen Mindroom and NHS Speech and Language Therapists. Sessions have taken place in Hamilton, Glasgow, Inverness, Glenrothes, and Stornoway. The network has marked World Autism Day and Neurodiversity Week with events and speaker sessions, many led by neurodivergent individuals. Every Hearing Centre now also includes in-room sensory baskets, take-away sensory bags, and inclusive book gifting programmes — the baskets and bags were designed by neurodiverse young people and our Champions support their installation and distribution.

Findings from the 2025 Impact Survey completed by the Champions highlights the positive influence of the network:

#### **Personal and Professional Growth:**

- 90% of Champions reported increased confidence in supporting neurodiverse individuals.
- 90% noted improved knowledge and skills.
- 70% experienced a greater sense of purpose and belonging.

#### **Service Improvements:**

- 80% observed changes in how SCRA supports neurodiverse children, families, and professionals.
- Reported improvements include better use of sensory items, more inclusive scheduling, and increased staff awareness.

#### **Workplace Culture:**

- 60% of respondents noticed changes in how colleagues support one another, with greater patience, understanding, and access to relevant training.

#### **Training Effectiveness:**

- 100% of attendees rated Champion-led training sessions as “extremely useful”.

#### **Champion-Led Delivery:**

- 60% of respondents had delivered training or awareness sessions, with all reporting positive outcomes, including improved staff motivation and increased group membership.

The Neurodiversity Champions Network has highlighted several key lessons that continue to shape SCRA’s approach to inclusion. Co-designing initiatives with neurodivergent individuals has proven essential in ensuring authenticity and relevance, allowing lived experience to inform practice meaningfully. The presence of Champions embedded within localities has enabled tailored support that reflects the specific needs of children, families, and staff in different areas. Sustaining the impact of the network requires dedicated time, resources, and visible leadership support, which has been instrumental in maintaining momentum. Celebrating neurodiversity through awareness events has energised staff and reinforced



inclusive values across the organisation as well as improving services for families attending Children's Hearings.

Looking ahead, SCRA plans to expand training opportunities and introduce a peer mentoring model to further support staff development. Efforts will continue to embed neurodiverse inclusive practices into everyday operations, ensuring they become a routine part of service delivery. The organisation will also monitor and evaluate the impact of sensory provisions and training to ensure they remain effective and responsive to need. Strengthening partnerships with external organisations and neurodivergent communities will be a key focus, helping to build capacity and share learning across sectors.

### **5.13.3 Gender Reassignment**

Gender reassignment, gender identity, and wider transgender inclusion are areas of significant public and political focus. These matters are also increasingly relevant within SCRA's work, particularly in relation to how we respond to and support trans children and young people.

We recognise the importance of ensuring that our approach is respectful, legally compliant, and informed by best practice. This includes considering how our policies, procedures, and staff training can best reflect the needs and rights of trans individuals, while maintaining clarity and consistency in decision-making. Our aim is to foster an inclusive environment where all staff, partners, stakeholders, children and young people feel seen, respected, and supported.

In 2024, our Inclusion & Diversity Manager introduced a Pronoun Awareness session, which was made available to all staff and delivered online. This 30-minute session sought to explain some of the concepts around pronoun use and help staff develop practice that contributes to creating an inclusive environment for all members of our workforce; children, young people and their families; partner organisations; any other organisations and individuals we encounter. A total of 68 staff members attended the multiple sessions held during the year. In 2025, the session was recorded and uploaded to our internal learning platform, where it is now accessible on demand as a short, 20-minute elective module.

This learning initiative coincided with the development and implementation of a Practice Direction for staff—particularly Reporters—on the use of names and pronouns. Our approach has prioritised legal compliance, informed by expert advice in the field of equality law. Wherever possible, we have sought to minimise the risk of any dispute regarding name or pronoun use becoming the focus of proceedings, recognising that such matters fall outside the scope of what a hearing can determine.

In November 2024, to mark Transgender Awareness Week, SCRA piloted a Trans Awareness Training session. The session covered key areas including: an introduction to trans and gender diverse identities; relevant legal frameworks; approaches to supporting trans and gender diverse children, young people, and staff; and guidance on being a trans ally. This pilot is currently under review, with a view to rolling it out more widely across the organisation in the coming year. The

training forms part of our broader commitment to fostering an inclusive and respectful environment for all, and ensuring staff are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to support transgender individuals appropriately and sensitively.

SCRA acknowledges the binding nature of the UK Supreme Court's decision in *For Women Scotland Ltd v The Scottish Ministers* [2025] UKSC 16, issued on 16 April 2025. The ruling clarified that the terms sex, man, and woman in the Equality Act 2010 refer to biological sex, rather than gender identity or certificated sex under the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

This judgment has significant implications for the interpretation of anti-discrimination law across public services, particularly in relation to single-sex provisions, positive action measures, and the Public Sector Equality Duty. While the Court reaffirmed that protections for transgender individuals under the Equality Act—such as those relating to gender reassignment—remain intact, it emphasised the need for clarity and consistency in statutory interpretation.

SCRA is currently reviewing the potential implications of this ruling for our policies, practices, and training. This includes considering whether updates to terminology, training content, or procedural guidance may be required to ensure continued legal compliance and clarity for staff and service users. No decisions have been made at this stage, but this remains an active area of review.

SCRA plans to undertake a review of its Transgender Policy and associated guidance documents by the end of the 2025 calendar year. This review will be carried out alongside an update to our LGBT+ Inclusive Language Guidance, last reviewed in June 2024, to ensure that all materials remain legally compliant, reflect current best practice, and support staff in delivering inclusive and respectful services to children, young people, colleagues and beyond.

#### **5.13.4 Pregnancy, Maternity & Breastfeeding**

SCRA is compliant with the legislation on pregnancy, maternity and breastfeeding including the Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999, Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992, Employment Relations Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.

We have longstanding generous family friendly leave policies including antenatal care leave; maternity leave; paternity leave; adoption leave; fertility leave; dependent care leave; parental leave; and parental bereavement leave. We are also a breastfeeding friendly workplace and organisation. Our 'New & Expectant Mothers Guidance' outlines what new and expectant mothers should expect from SCRA, including a pregnancy risk assessment and how SCRA can support them to continue breastfeeding on their return to work.

#### **5.13.4 Race & Ethnicity**

SCRA is committed to becoming a proactively anti-racist organisation, as outlined in Equality Outcome 3. This commitment is embedded within our broader equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy and reflects our recognition of the need for systemic

change in how we support staff and children from global majority and ethnic minority backgrounds.

We acknowledge that SCRA remains a predominantly white workforce. In response, we have used the Scottish Government's Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit to review our recruitment processes and identify areas for improvement. This work supports Equality Outcome 2, which focuses on increasing workforce diversity through more inclusive recruitment and retention practices.

SCRA also actively supports staff from ethnically minoritised backgrounds to attend external learning and networking opportunities, including the Ethnic Minorities in Leadership Conference, the Fair Justice System Scotland Equality Conference, and other relevant events. These opportunities help build confidence, foster professional development, and strengthen connections with wider anti-racist movements across Scotland.

Although we do not yet hold reliable data on the ethnic diversity of the children and families we work with, we are committed to improving our equality data collection, as outlined in Equality Outcome 1. Strengthening this data will help us better understand and respond to the experiences of children from ethnic minority backgrounds within the Children's Hearings System.

## **Race and Ethnicity Group**

Our Race & Ethnicity Group has led and coordinated much of this work throughout 2024–2025. They launched a three-year anti-racism programme beginning with a development session in February 2024, followed by a series of workshops aimed at deepening organisational understanding of anti-racist practice and identifying the steps needed to embed it across SCRA.

A key development has been the creation of the Black & Asian Staff Group, a positive action initiative piloted from November 2024 to May 2025. Facilitated by an independent anti-racist practitioner, the group provided a protected space for peer support, reflection, and learning. The pilot evaluation highlighted the group's value in fostering belonging, visibility, and psychological safety for staff, and recommended its continuation and expansion. The group will now form a core part of our ongoing anti-racism work, complementing the strategic leadership of the Race & Ethnicity Group.

Further detail on our progress against each of these outcomes is provided in the Equality Outcomes section of this report.

### **5.13.5 Religion and belief**

SCRA is committed to fostering an inclusive environment that respects and values the diverse religious and belief systems of our staff, children, young people, and families. We recognise that religion and belief—including non-religious beliefs such as humanism—are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, and we strive to ensure that they are not barriers to participation, employment, or access to our services.

While we did not undertake any specific activity related to religion and belief during the reporting period of March 2024 to September 2025, our organisational policies continue to support inclusion in this area. Staff are encouraged to request reasonable adjustments for religious observance, and managers are supported to accommodate these wherever possible. Our Inclusion Calendar remains a useful tool for raising awareness of key religious and cultural dates, helping to inform respectful scheduling and planning.

In our work with children and families, SCRA continues to promote child-friendly scheduling of Hearings, which includes making accommodations for religious or belief-related observances. This ensures that children, young people, and families are not disadvantaged or excluded due to the timing of Hearings conflicting with religious practices or significant cultural events. We aim to be flexible and responsive to individual needs, and to uphold dignity and respect in all aspects of our service delivery.

Looking ahead, SCRA will explore opportunities to strengthen our approach to religion and belief inclusion, including staff engagement, awareness-raising, and ensuring our services remain culturally sensitive and responsive to the needs of all communities we serve.

### **5.13.6 Sex**

SCRA, like many organisations in the care sector, has a predominantly female workforce. While the gender pay gap has been steadily narrowing, progress has been gradual, and SCRA continues to have one of the highest gender pay gaps in the Scottish public sector. We remain committed to addressing this through a range of actions, including reviewing our recruitment and selection processes and materials to ensure they are inclusive and encourage women to apply for senior roles. Currently, 65% (up 3 percentage points) of senior managers (Grades F–G) are women. At the same time, we are working to attract more men into lower-graded, non-management roles to help address occupational segregation. To support this, we use the Gender Decoder tool to identify and remove subtle gender bias in our job advertisements and descriptions.

We have also been exploring new opportunities for partnership working to support this aim and SCRA is planning a consultation during 2025-2026 with Close the Gap, Scotland's leading expert organisation on the gender pay gap, to support its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) reporting and broader gender equality work. Close the Gap brings over 20 years of experience in working with employers across sectors to address the structural causes of women's inequality at work. The planned consultancy will involve a detailed analysis of SCRA's gender pay gap data, identification of key contributing factors, and the development of a tailored action plan. This work will support SCRA in meeting its statutory obligations and in taking meaningful steps to reduce occupational segregation and improve gender equality across the organisation.

Despite the gender pay gap, SCRA has strong evidence of women progressing into leadership roles. Since 2018, 13 Locality Reporter Manager (senior frontline

manager) vacancies have been advertised, and 12 of these (92%) were successfully filled by female applicants, slightly above the female workforce average of 88.4%.

In 2023–2024, SCRA became a member of Henpicked, a leading menopause organisation, and achieved recognition as a Menopause Friendly Employer. We continue to promote our Menopause Toolkit, developed in 2022, and plan to introduce a Menstrual Health Toolkit in the future to further support staff wellbeing and inclusion.

### **Leadership Confidence and Visibility**

In November 2024, following feedback from the Women into Leadership (WiL) Network, SCRA delivered a workshop on Imposter Syndrome. The session helped participants recognise imposter moments and develop strategies to manage these feelings, enabling greater confidence and performance. Due to high demand, a second session was held in December.

To mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2025, SCRA hosted a conversation with Board Chair Cathie Cowan, who shared insights from her career journey, offered practical advice, and reflected on lessons learned. The event was engaging and well-received, offering attendees a valuable opportunity for inspiration and dialogue.

SCRA also continues to sponsor women to attend Scotland's annual Women into Leadership Conference, supporting professional development and visibility.

### **Women into Leadership Network**

SCRA's Women into Leadership (WiL) Network supports women across the organisation by empowering them to identify development opportunities, build meaningful connections, and achieve personal and professional growth. The network's purpose includes:

- Building confidence and self-belief
- Encouraging ownership of individual development
- Promoting peer support and mentoring
- Increasing visibility of women in leadership roles
- Identifying pathways for employment and progression
- Connecting colleagues with shared aspirations

A newly elected committee of dedicated women now leads the network, helping shape its future direction and advising SCRA on how best to support women in, and into, leadership roles.

#### **5.13.7 Sexual Orientation**

SCRA is committed to fostering a workplace and service environment where individuals of all sexual orientations feel respected, safe, and supported. Recognising sexual orientation as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act

2010, we actively work to ensure that no one experiences discrimination, exclusion, or disadvantage. Our organisational values and policies uphold LGBTQ+ inclusion, and staff are encouraged to bring their whole selves to work. The Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework (ISBF) promotes dignity, respect, and allyship across all teams.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our recruitment materials, internal policies, and service delivery are inclusive of all sexual orientations. This includes the use of inclusive language, flexible support options, and a commitment to ensuring that LGBTQ+ children, young people, and families feel seen, heard, and valued within the Children's Hearings System.

SCRA received the LGBT Youth Scotland Charter Foundation Award in 2019. The Charter journey is a structured programme that supports organisations to develop inclusive policies, practices, and cultures for LGBTQ+ people. Due to our geographically dispersed workforce, progressing to the Bronze Award is not currently feasible. However, in 2024, SCRA publicly recommitted to re-achieving the Foundation Award, and this work is now actively underway being led by our LGBT Sub-Group.

## **LGBT Group**

This group is central to driving forward the LGBT inclusion agenda, currently concentrating on the Charter journey, the group has led on key activities including the design and delivery of a staff survey focused on the experiences of LGBTQ+ colleagues. The Group is also responsible for reviewing internal processes, engaging with staff and service users, and identifying areas for improvement. Their work will culminate in a comprehensive action plan that will drive forward sustainable change and embed LGBTQ+ inclusion across the organisation.

This group also continues to mark key awareness dates such as LGBT+ History Month, Purple Friday, Pride, and IDAHOBIT (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia) through internal communications and signposting to resources. These observances help raise awareness, foster dialogue, and celebrate diversity within our workforce and the communities we serve.

In June 2024 and again in June 2025, SCRA proudly supported the Pride Picnic held in Ochil, a vibrant staff community event celebrating LGBTQ+ inclusion. At the June 2024 event a member of Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV) attended and gave a powerful reading of a poem, contributing to the visibility and voice of LGBTQ+ young people within the Children's Hearings System.

In February 2025, SCRA marked Purple Friday—a national day of action against homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia—with a pledge campaign led by the organisation's LGBTQ+ Group. Coinciding with LGBT History Month, the campaign invited staff across all offices to sign pledge cards affirming their commitment to equality and inclusion. The cards featured a bespoke mascot—a carrier pigeon with a rainbow flag—designed by a Hearings-experienced young person and member of Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV). This initiative formed part of SCRA's renewed



commitment to re-achieve the LGBT Youth Scotland Charter and was supported by wider organisational efforts including policy and practice reviews, training, and awareness-raising activities. By participating in Purple Friday, SCRA reinforced its message that LGBTQ+ staff, young people, families, and partners within the Children's Hearings System are safe, supported, and included.

#### **5.13.8 Marriage/civil partnership**

Marriage and civil partnership is recognised as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, specifically in relation to the duty to eliminate discrimination. At SCRA, we ensure that all policies and practices apply equally to staff regardless of marital status. SCRA remains committed to fostering an inclusive workplace where all staff are treated fairly and respectfully, irrespective of their relationship status. This commitment is reflected in our approach to policy development, staff support, and equality monitoring.

#### **5.13.9 Care experience**

SCRA recognises equality for staff and children with care experience as a 'tenth' protected characteristic, acknowledging the unique challenges and barriers faced by those who have been in care. While care experience is not currently listed as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, SCRA gives it equal importance in its equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion work. This commitment reflects our role as a Corporate Parent and our dedication to ensuring that care-experienced individuals are supported, respected, and empowered within both our workforce and the Children's Hearings System.

SCRA continues to value its Modern Apprenticeship Programme, which has been running since 2011, in providing not only the organisation with valuable care lived experience input but also in providing young people with care experience employment and training opportunities. To date, we have provided 14 Modern Apprenticeships to care experienced young people. In addition, we also run work experience programmes for people with experience of Children's Hearings and/or of being in care. In the reporting period we ran one work experience programme, and continued to support our trainee who completed their Modern Apprenticeship in 2024.

#### **Voice of Experience Reference Group**

Our Voice of Experience Reference Group (VOERG), which is comprised of colleagues from across Scotland with a wide range of experiences of care, including fostering, adoption, being in care and as kinship carers, was formed in March 2022. The group continues to meet regularly, both online and in person to identify areas of improvement not only for children, young people and families attending Hearings but for staff providing care to children too. They have submitted three reports to our Executive Management Team with recommendations for improvements.

The VOERG has also had guest speakers, including those specialising in care and trauma, as well as hosting staff who wish to consult with them about various service delivery and equality projects. They continue to consider improvements needed to

make the Hearings System – and the work of SCRA – care-experienced person friendly.

In 2024 the VOERG worked with the NHS to help in developing their training package for alternative caregivers as well as undertaking a consultation with architects for the design of the new Hearing Rooms programme. In February 2025 SCRA celebrated Care Day by hosting the Principal Reporter as well as the head of Advice and Investigations from the Children's Commissioner's Office. The VOERG also helped to develop a presentation and training document on Corporate Parenting.

### **5.13.10 Fairer Scotland Duty: Socio-economic Equality**

The relevance of the Fairer Scotland Duty continues to grow in the context of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and constrained public sector budgets. Introduced by the Scottish Government in April 2018 under provisions in the Equality Act 2010, the Duty places a legal responsibility on listed public authorities to actively consider how they can reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions.

Although SCRA is not currently listed as a public authority required to report under the Fairer Scotland Duty, we have embraced its principles since its inception. We recognise that socio-economic disadvantage intersects with other forms of inequality and can significantly impact the experiences of children, young people, families, and staff. Understanding and addressing these impacts is integral to our work, and we remain committed to embedding socio-economic equality across our policies, practices, and service delivery.

SCRA continues to offer virtual, as well as hybrid, Children's Hearings, in addition to traditional face-to-face Hearings and our approach is constantly being refined as we learn. In keeping with this more flexible approach to Hearings provision, we are able to provide a range of options for Hearings attendance to best suit individual children and family's needs, for example, where they live rurally to attend Hearings virtually, or for a child to attend a Hearing from school if they do not have the technology to do so from home.

As part of our quality improvement work, SCRA undertook a number of Child Friendly Scheduling projects which aimed to seek the views of children in terms of the scheduling and delivery of their Hearings (e.g. what time they would like their Hearing to be, what day of the week they would prefer, how they would like to attend – virtually or in-person – and how they would like to give their views during the Hearing). Following evaluation of the data gathered during the project, SCRA's Research Team published a Child Friendly Scheduling of Hearings report in January 2025. There was also a version produced for [children and young people](#). The findings of the evaluation are being reviewed, with a view to potentially rolling out Child Friendly Scheduling across SCRA.

Alongside this project our focus continues on digital improvements and the use of digital technologies, where appropriate. SCRA undertook specific research into digital exclusion so that we can fully understand the impact on children and families



from and we included in our Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 a specific outcome around poverty and digital inclusion to ensure this remains a strategic priority in the EDI work in SCRA, particularly in relation to age, disability and sex in recognition that there are differences in digital knowledge, experience and skill across those specific protected characteristics. A further update on progress on this equality outcome will be provided in the relevant section below.

### **Fairer Scotland Group**

Our Fairer Scotland Group has been refining SCRA's focus and determining what, in terms of socio-economic deprivation, SCRA should focus on. The Group's focus is on the impact of poverty (of resource and opportunity) on our service delivery, in terms of the impact that it has on the lives and experiences of the vulnerable children and families we work with. To this end, the Group has developed an Action Plan to: better understand these needs; better equip our people to be aware of what supports are available for families and the impact that poverty has on their lives in relation to Reporter decision-making through training and awareness raising; and some direct supports we may be able to provide (e.g. signposting to Food Banks and other supports.)

#### **5.13.11 Intersectional Inclusion and Embedding Inclusive Culture**

SCRA recognises that protected characteristics do not exist in isolation. We all have intersectional identities, shaped by overlapping experiences of age, race, disability, sex, and other factors. These identities influence how we experience the workplace and the Children's Hearings System, and they are central to how we embed inclusion across our organisation.

To support this, SCRA launched the Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework (ISBF) in 2023. The ISBF sets out six inclusive principles—covering leadership, communication, development, improvement, decision-making, and service delivery—and is now embedded across the organisation.

A key part of this work has been the delivery of Locality-led Staff Charter workshops, facilitated by the Inclusion & Diversity Manager. These sessions have taken place in areas including North Strathclyde, Highlands and Islands, Central, and Glasgow, and have enabled teams to co-create Local Staff Charters or Commitments that bring the ISBF to life in their own context. Staff have reported increased clarity around expectations, improved communication, and a stronger sense of shared ownership of inclusive behaviours.

The ISBF is now being integrated into recruitment, supervision, and performance development processes, helping to ensure that inclusive practice is not just aspirational—but embedded in everyday decision-making and team culture.

SCRA's approach to intersectionality is about recognising complexity and ensuring that our policies, practices, and culture reflect the lived experiences of our staff and service users. This work continues to evolve, with further Staff Charter workshops planned and good practice examples to be shared across the organisation.

### 5.13.12 Embedding the importance of Health & Wellbeing

Health and wellbeing remain central to SCRA's organisational culture. We continue to promote a respectful and supportive workplace, building on our Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework (ISBF). Following an internal review, we refreshed our Dignity at Work policy, making it more accessible and trauma-informed, with input from staff involved in the review. The Staff Code of Conduct was also updated in 2025 to reflect these values.

We've supported managers to use appreciative language and continue our journey to becoming a trauma-informed organisation. Our national and local wellbeing networks have delivered a range of initiatives, supported by updated guidance on wellbeing budgets. A new Wellbeing Strategy (2025–2027) is in development, shaped by staff feedback and aligned with best practice.

Access to Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA) remains a priority. In partnership with UNISON, we trained 12 more staff in 2024, bringing our total to 33. MHFA complements our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health services, which staff report as valuable supports. Additional wellbeing services are planned for rollout in 2025.

Managers have access to tailored resources, including guidance on menopause, cancer support, and dementia care. We've responded to legislative changes by updating policies on flexible working, paternity leave, carer's leave, and neonatal care pay—introduced ahead of April 2025 legislation.

Our Health & Wellbeing intranet page has been refreshed to improve access to resources, including benefits like the Cycle to Work scheme and Employee Savings Scheme. A resilience support programme for all staff is in development following a successful pilot with managers.

### Mental Wealth Group

The Mental Wealth Group has led several initiatives:

- SCRA's annual Big Team Challenge has become a popular highlight of the year. It sees teams walk, wheel, cycle a virtual route over 6 weeks, and is aligned timing wise to Mental Health Week in May of each year. The timing also recognises the improved weather, and the psychological and physical benefits of getting outdoors, connection and exercise. The theme in 2024 was "the mental health benefits of movement" and in 2025 "the benefits for our wellbeing of being part of a community in at work". With virtual routes across Italy and Ireland, respectively, 1/3 of our workforce took part. The Challenges were well received by participants reported much camaraderie and wellbeing benefit. Sustainability was also supported with the planting of a tree for each 10 participants each year.
- The Mental Wealth group ran an open survey in the autumn of 2024, aimed at helping to inform national plans for wellbeing and health awareness topics of interest to staff for the Group to focus on. 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the workforce took part and

told us they would like to see more information on mental health and breaking down the stigma and tools to support wellbeing, suicide prevention, supporting loss including baby loss, women's health including menstruation and menopause awareness, maternal health, cancer support, and the importance of exercise, sleep and nutrition on our wellbeing.

- In October we raised awareness of our menopause toolkit which provides helpful information for anyone experiencing peri menopause or menopause symptoms, as well as support and advice for partners, colleagues and managers. Further enhancement of the toolkit and awareness raising will be offered in October 2025.
- In October a 31-day wellbeing calendar was available to staff, to support Mental Health Awareness month, offering optional wellbeing activities and information / resources. For example, a reminder of access to our Cycle to Work Scheme and information about cycle routes; and a reminder of the availability and purpose of optional Wellness Plans which staff can take from role to role to explain what supports they may benefit from in the workplace to support their health and or their caring commitments, including reasonable adjustments. This was well received and another calendar is in planning for October 2025.
- In November we had a focus on men's mental health and suicide prevention, including awareness of Andy's Man Club, and information on male specific cancers including prostate and testicular cancer, raising awareness of the benefits of early diagnosis.
- In October and December 2024 we ran open raising awareness sessions on dementia and supports available to staff impacted by this condition including carers.
- In May 2024 and 2025 with the aim of supporting breaking down barriers by encouraging colleagues to listen and support others to talk about their mental health – we supported the national campaign Time to Talk Day lead by Mind and Rethink Mental Illness. This is a regular feature of our wellbeing calendar.
- In May 2025, we had a particular focus on maternal and paternal mental health, recognising the transformative experience of becoming a parent, which brings joy but can also for some bring psychological challenge. Supports include neo natal care and pay, paternity leave, parental leave, dependant care leave, flexible working, EAP, wellbeing plans and MHFA were highlighted.
- In November 2024 we marked Carer's Week, and June 2025 we had marked Carer's Rights Day offering a variety of related activities, resources and awareness raising. We recognise that ¼ of our workforce identify as carers, and more will become carers in the future. Our aim is to signpost to helpful policies and procedures. We set up a new landing page for carers, with easier access to information. We also offered webinars from Dementia Scotland and the Charity of the Civil Service, which were helpful and well received. We are currently looking at raising awareness for carers and other staff, around Will

writing and Power of Attorney. Further plans to widen the purpose and use of Wellness Plans / Passports to include information relating to supports for carers is also planned.

- In the summer of 2025, we have been working closely with our sustainability and environment champions, to promote sustainable activities and the wellbeing benefits that can bring, including cycle to work, getting outdoors through gardening, park runs etc.
- The annual opportunity for flu vaccinations was offered in 2024, and has been published for 2025, enabling staff who wish to receive the vaccination who are not necessarily offered this via the NHS, to have this opportunity. This is with the view of supporting their health and wellbeing and that of their families / households.

SCRA remains committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of our staff through inclusive policies, proactive engagement, and continuous improvement.

### **5.13.13 Understanding Trauma**

SCRA continues to embed Trauma Informed Practice across the organisation, recognising the significant and lasting impact that Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can have on children, families, and colleagues. Our approach is rooted in compassion, rights-based service delivery, and a commitment to creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for all.

To strengthen this commitment, SCRA has aligned its Trauma Training Programme with the NHS Education for Scotland (NES) National Trauma Training Framework. This ensures our training reflects national standards and supports the development of trauma-informed knowledge, skills, and behaviours across the workforce. Our staged approach began with the delivery of Secondary Trauma Sessions to all SCRA Localities and Head Office teams. These sessions focus on recognising the signs and symptoms of secondary trauma and emphasise the supports available to colleagues who may be affected by vicarious trauma. They encourage reflection on individual and team needs, and promote strategies to reduce the impact of working with vulnerable children and families.

Building on this foundation, SCRA has delivered Transforming Connections Training to 442 colleagues. This programme combines mandatory e-learning with an in-person session and supports staff to understand how trauma affects individuals, what trauma-skilled practice looks like, and how to build relationships that support recovery. It also highlights the importance of sensitive communication around trauma and the need to care for our own wellbeing in the context of trauma-responsive work.

With support from NES, SCRA developed a cohort of nine internal trainers who have successfully delivered the Transforming Connections Training across the organisation. These trainers have adapted the course to reflect SCRA's specific context, enhancing its relevance and impact for participants.

Recognising the vital role of leadership in embedding trauma-informed practice, SCRA managers and leaders participated in the NES Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training (STILT) webinar series. This programme has helped build confidence and capability among managers to lead trauma-informed change and support their teams effectively.

Trauma was also a central theme at SCRA's national managers' event, where participants reflected on the STILT programme, explored the supports needed for their teams, and considered how organisational systems and policies could better enable trauma-informed change. In collaboration with NES, SCRA developed reflective sessions for Managers and Senior Practitioners. These sessions provided a safe and supportive space to discuss trauma-responsive practice, explore the emotional impact of working with trauma, and engage with reflective models that promote containment and resilience.

This work complements our broader wellbeing strategy and builds on previous trauma initiatives, including mandatory trauma-informed e-learning and the development of an annual psychological support process for case-holding and access staff. Together, these efforts reflect SCRA's whole-organisation approach to trauma-informed practice—one that prioritises empathy, recovery, and psychological safety for children, families, and colleagues.

#### **5.14 Notable Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Achievements**

In June 2025, SCRA submitted its annual entry to the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei) as part of the TIDE (Talent, Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation) benchmarking exercise. Following assessment and audit, we were awarded a Gold TIDE Award in September 2025 — a significant recognition of our progress and commitment to embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation.

The TIDE benchmarking tool is a comprehensive framework used by employers across the UK to assess their performance in eight key areas: strategy and planning, leadership and accountability, workforce, recruitment and attraction, training and development, other employment practices, communication and engagement, and procurement. Participating organisations are benchmarked against one another, and awards are given based on performance.

This year's Gold Award marks a step up from the Silver TIDemark Awards we received from 2022 onwards and reflects the depth and breadth of inclusive practice now embedded across SCRA. The insights gained from the 2025 benchmarking process will continue to inform our national programme of work and support our ambition to be a sector leader in inclusive practice.

#### **5.15 Understanding EDI-Related Bias in Decision-Making**

SCRA is developing a research project to explore the potential for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) related bias in decision-making processes concerning children referred to the Children's Reporter. This initiative reflects SCRA's statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Scottish Specific Duties

Regulations, and is aligned with its broader commitment to embedding inclusive practice across all aspects of service delivery. The research will examine how EDI characteristics may influence two key decision-making stages: firstly, the Reporter's decision on whether a Hearing is necessary; and secondly, the Hearing's decision on whether compulsory measures should be applied and, if so, what those measures should be.

The study will focus on four specific EDI indicators: gender, ethnicity and race, neurodiversity, and socio-economic disadvantage, including the experiences of children and families in island and remote communities. These indicators reflect areas of strategic priority for SCRA and are closely aligned with Equality Outcome 1, which seeks to improve the collection and use of children's equality data, and Equality Outcome 3, which commits SCRA to becoming a proactively anti-racist organisation. The research will help to identify patterns and trends in decision-making and assess whether certain groups may be disproportionately affected by unconscious or structural bias.

Three distinct methodologies will be used to conduct the research. The first workstream will involve quantitative analysis of administrative data to identify correlations between EDI characteristics and decision outcomes. The second will consist of qualitative interviews with decision-makers, including Reporters and Panel Members, to explore their perceptions of how EDI factors influence their decisions. The third workstream will use case vignettes—hypothetical scenarios with varied characteristics—to assess decision-making patterns and identify potential bias. Vignette methodology is recognised as a cost-effective and reliable tool for examining decision-making in complex settings.

The research is scheduled to begin in the final quarter of 2025, with ethical approval sought in early 2026. Data collection and analysis will take place throughout 2026, with findings expected to be reported in the first quarter of 2027. This timeline ensures that the research will contribute meaningfully to SCRA's review of its Equality Outcomes and support the organisation's wider ambition to embed inclusive, rights-based practice across the Children's Hearings System.

This work represents a significant step in SCRA's journey to better understand and address inequality within its decision-making processes. It will provide an evidence base to inform future policy, practice, and training, and will support the organisation in fulfilling its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, particularly in relation to eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity.



## 6. Section 2: Equality Outcomes

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, public authorities in Scotland are required to develop and publish Equality Outcomes every four years. These outcomes must help the organisation to better perform the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

Equality Outcomes are intended to be strategic, measurable goals that reflect the organisation's priorities in advancing equality. They must be informed by evidence and stakeholder engagement, and progress must be reported at least biennially.

SCRA's consultation and engagement on our current Equality Outcomes began in summer 2023, with consultation taking place with our workforce, partner agencies, children and the public between November 2023 and March 2024.

Our Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 are:

1. We will consistently ask for and check the accuracy of children's equality data to improve the recording of children's protected characteristics on SCRA's computer system, CSAS so that we can identify areas of inequality and also identify trends and patterns in outcomes between and within the protected characteristics.
2. We will review and revise our recruitment process so that it is more inclusive to attract more diverse candidates to work for SCRA and encourage greater workforce diversity.
3. We will become a proactively anti-racist organisation; this will include all staff taking part in a mandatory anti-racist programme of work led by an expert external provider, actively challenging racism and better understanding potential discrimination in our decision-making.
4. We will work to understand the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on how we engage with children and families, focusing specifically on how age, disability and sex influence their ability to engage with, and participate in, Children's Hearings; to ensure we do not discriminate against those who experience poverty.

These outcomes reflect SCRA's commitment to going beyond compliance and embedding equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion into the heart of our organisational culture and service delivery. They are aligned with our strategic priorities and informed by both internal data and external evidence, including national equality statistics and feedback from children and families. This section will outline the progress SCRA has made on achieving its Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 since 1 April 2024.

## 6.1 Equality Outcome 1.

**‘We will consistently ask for and check the accuracy of children’s equality data to improve the recording of children’s protected characteristics on SCRA’s computer system, CSAS so that we can identify areas of inequality and also identify trends and patterns in outcomes between and within the protected characteristics.’**

SCRA is committed to improving the quality and reliability of equality data for children and families within the Children’s Hearings System. This work is central to Equality Outcome 1, which focuses on strengthening our ability to understand and respond to the diverse needs of our service users.

Currently, we are unable to produce reportable equality data on children and families, which limits our capacity to identify and address potential inequalities in service delivery. To address this, we have reviewed and revised the equality data categories we will use moving forward. These categories were developed in consultation with staff through a dedicated focus group and are designed to be meaningful and usable in practice, while also aligning with national census classifications for reporting purposes.

The next phase of this work involves developing a digital solution that enables staff to record equality data in a way that is intuitive and integrated into existing workflows. Our Digital Team is currently actively working on this, while the Organisational Development Team has mapped out all relevant points in the child’s journey where data could be captured — either by SCRA or through our partners.

Importantly, after reviewing how we may do this SCRA has decided we will not be directly asking children to provide equality information. Instead, we will work collaboratively with partners to ensure that this data is captured sensitively and appropriately through referral processes and other key touchpoints. This approach is being developed in alignment with related initiatives and projects, including child-friendly scheduling, the Police Hub project, and relational digital work, to ensure a joined-up and child-centred model.

This is a complex and challenging outcome, but it is integral to our ambition to better understand and meet the needs of children and families. The first phase aims to deliver a usable digital solution in 2026, with the goal of producing reportable data by 2027. We also recognise that once we begin reporting, we may encounter high levels of “unknown” data. A second phase will focus on working with partners to improve data completeness and quality.

Whilst we await reportable internal equality data, our Data Manager and Inclusion & Diversity Manager are currently developing a reference spreadsheet using census data to help us understand the demographic profile of children in Scotland. This will provide a baseline for future comparative analysis once we begin collecting and reporting our own equality data.



This work is essential not only for monitoring and evaluation, but also for informing research, policy development, and decision-making across the Children's Hearings System.

## 6.2 Equality Outcome 2.

**'We will review and revise our recruitment process so that it is more inclusive to attract more diverse candidates to work for SCRA and encourage greater workforce diversity.'**

SCRA is committed to reviewing and revising its recruitment processes to attract more diverse candidates and encourage greater workforce diversity, as set out in Equality Outcome 2. This outcome reflects our recognition of persistent under-representation of certain groups within our workforce, including men, disabled people, and individuals from global majority and ethnic minority backgrounds.

SCRA continues to monitor and address imbalances across our workforce. Our latest Employee Information Statistics Report shows encouraging progress, with increases in applications and appointments from men, applicants with a disability and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, disparities remain in shortlisting and appointment rates, particularly for disabled and global majority/ethnic minority applicants, and we are committed to addressing these through targeted action.

### Progress on Sex Representation in Recruitment

Historically, SCRA has had a predominantly female workforce, with men significantly under-represented, particularly in non-management roles. Our recruitment data for 2024-2025 shows encouraging signs of progress in attracting male applicants.

In 2024-2025, 15.7% of applicants identified as male, a notable increase of 4.6 percentage points compared to 2023-2024. This upward trend was also reflected in appointment data, with 14.1% of those appointed being male, up from 6.5% in 2023-2024.

There was also a 4.2% increase in applicants who chose not to disclose their sex, rising to 13.1% in 2024-2025 which highlights the need to build trust in our data collection processes and ensure applicants feel safe and supported in sharing personal information.

Despite these improvements, disparities remain in shortlisting and appointment rates. For example, while 15.7% of applicants were male, only 11.4% were shortlisted. We will continue to monitor these trends and explore whether unconscious bias or structural barriers may be influencing outcomes.

To support this work, SCRA uses the Gender Decoder Tool to review job advertisements and recruitment materials, helping to identify and remove gendered language that may discourage applicants of any sex.

## **Progress on Disability Representation in Recruitment**

In 2024, 8.6% of applicants to SCRA disclosed a disability—an increase from 7.8% in 2023 and 6.5% in 2021. This upward trend suggests that our awareness campaigns and inclusive messaging are beginning to have an impact. However, only 6.7% of those shortlisted and just 1.4% of those appointed disclosed a disability, indicating a significant drop-off through the recruitment process.

This disparity highlights the need for further investigation into potential barriers within our recruitment and selection procedures. Notably, no applicants used the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in 2024, despite its availability. This suggests a lack of awareness or confidence in the scheme, and we will explore ways to promote and improve its uptake.

As a Disability Confident Employer, SCRA remains committed to creating an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities and long-term health conditions. We will continue to monitor these trends and take action to ensure fairness and accessibility in recruitment, including reviewing reasonable adjustments, interview formats, and candidate support.

## **Progress on Race and Ethnicity Representation in Recruitment**

Our latest recruitment data shows encouraging progress in attracting applicants from the global majority/ethnic minority background but also highlights areas where further action is needed.

In 2024-2025, 9.4% of applicants identified as being from the global majority, a 3.3 percentage point increase from 2023-2024 and a significant rise from 2.5% in 2021-2022. This upward trend suggests that targeted efforts—such as using the Scottish Government's Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit—are beginning to have an impact.

However, the proportion of global majority applicants who were shortlisted (4.0%) and appointed (0.0%) in 2024-2025 was not representative of the applicant pool. This drop-off through the recruitment process raises concerns about potential barriers or biases in shortlisting and selection. We are committed to investigating these disparities and taking action to ensure fairness and transparency at every stage.

The percentage of applicants who chose not to disclose their ethnicity also increased to 13.3% in 2024-2025, up from 7.3% in 2023. While this may reflect a growing awareness of privacy and identity, it also underscores the need to build trust in our data collection processes and ensure that applicants feel safe and supported in sharing personal information.

To support this work, SCRA continues to use the Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit to benchmark and improve recruitment practices, review job advertisements and outreach strategies to ensure they are inclusive and accessible and monitor recruitment data closely to identify trends and inform targeted interventions.

In 2024–2025, we undertook several initiatives to start investigating how we may improve the inclusivity of our recruitment practices:

- We held a focus group with newly recruited staff to gather feedback on their experience of the recruitment process, helping us identify practical improvements and barriers to inclusion.
- We recognised that our recruitment section of the website is outdated and lacks engaging, inclusive content. Plans are underway to refresh this area to better reflect our organisational values and appeal to a wider range of candidates.
- We are preparing to launch a new e-recruitment portal, which will streamline the application process and include a revised Equality Monitoring Form aligned with Scottish Government guidance and census categories. This will improve the consistency and quality of equality data collected during recruitment and support more robust analysis of applicant diversity.
- We continue to use the Scottish Government's Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit and the Gender Decoder Tool to review job advertisements and recruitment materials, ensuring inclusive language and reducing unintentional bias.
- We are exploring the commissioning of an external talent attraction and recruitment audit. This audit will assess our current recruitment practices, identify barriers to diversity, and provide actionable recommendations to enhance inclusivity across employer branding, job descriptions, outreach strategies, candidate experience, and recruitment analytics.

These efforts are part of a broader strategic commitment to ensuring that SCRA's workforce reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. We recognise that inclusive recruitment is not only about attracting diverse candidates but also about creating a culture and environment where all individuals feel valued, supported, and able to thrive.

We will continue to monitor recruitment data closely, engage with staff and stakeholders, and implement changes that promote fairness, transparency, and equity throughout the recruitment lifecycle.

### 6.3 Equality Outcome 3.

**'We will become a proactively anti-racist organisation; this will include all staff taking part in a mandatory anti-racist programme of work led by an expert external provider, actively challenging racism and better understanding potential discrimination in our decision-making.'**

SCRA's commitment to becoming a proactively anti-racist organisation is central to our equality, diversity, and inclusion strategy, as set out in Equality Outcome 3. This outcome recognises the need to address both structural and interpersonal racism, and to ensure that our workplace and services are inclusive, equitable, and safe for people from all ethnic backgrounds. It also acknowledges the importance of lived experience, representation, and cultural competence in shaping meaningful change.

In 2024–2025, SCRA launched a three-year anti-racism programme, beginning with a foundational development session in February 2024. This session explored the origins of racism, its impact on professional practice, and the role of unconscious bias in decision-making. It also initiated a wider organisational conversation about inclusive language, recruitment, and the experience of children and families from ethnic minority backgrounds within the Children’s Hearings System.

Subsequent workshops have built on this foundation, with the third session in June 2025 focusing on the development of a tangible action plan and a set of learning outcomes to underpin future training. In support of this work, SCRA will develop a formal Anti-Racism Strategy. This strategy will outline our organisational approach to tackling racism, promoting equity, and embedding anti-racist practice across all areas of our work. It will be supported by a framework of learning outcomes, including both mandatory and elective learning opportunities for staff, designed to build confidence, competence, and accountability in anti-racist practice. While mandatory race and racism training has been rescheduled to 2026–2027 to allow for the rollout of revised mandatory EDI training and Active Bystander training for managers during 2025, the programme remains a priority and continues to evolve.

SCRA’s Research Team will also undertake a dedicated piece of work investigating potential bias, including racial bias, in decision-making across the Children’s Hearings System. This research will help us better understand how racial bias—conscious or unconscious—may influence outcomes for children and families, and will inform future policy and practice improvements.

In May 2025, SCRA hosted a thought-provoking event titled *“Race & Racism: What Is It, and How Far Have We Really Come?”* delivered by Diversify World, an organisation specialising in connecting marginalised communities with professional environments. The event was well attended and positively received, reinforcing our commitment to learning, reflection, and action.

A key driver of all of this work is the Race & Ethnicity Group, which continues to lead strategic activity, coordinate learning opportunities, and support the development of inclusive policy and practice. Their leadership has been instrumental in shaping the direction of the anti-racism programme and ensuring that staff voices are heard and valued.

Complementing this work is the Black & Asian Staff Group, a positive action initiative piloted from November 2024 to May 2025. Facilitated by independent anti-racist practitioner, the group provided a protected space for peer support, shared learning, and reflection. The pilot evaluation highlighted the group’s value in fostering belonging and visibility and recommended its continuation and expansion. The group will now form a core part of our anti-racism infrastructure, helping to inform recruitment, retention, and service delivery.

Together, these initiatives represent a significant step forward in our journey to becoming an anti-racist organisation. We recognise that this is long-term work that requires sustained commitment, honest reflection, and collective action. We will continue to build on this foundation, ensuring that anti-racism is embedded across our organisational culture, policies, and practices.

## 6.4 Equality Outcome 4

‘We will work to understand the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on how we engage with children and families, focusing specifically on how age, disability and sex influence their ability to engage with, and participate in, Children’s Hearings; to ensure we do not discriminate against those who experience poverty.’

As part of our commitment to inclusion and equity, SCRA is delivering a four-part webinar series in Autumn 2025 focused on deepening staff understanding of socio-economic disadvantage and poverty in Scotland. The programme is designed to spark meaningful conversations and support inclusive practice across the organisation. Each session is approximately one hour long, delivered online, and open to all staff. Colleagues are welcome to attend the full series or select individual sessions of interest. An overview of the webinar programme is detailed below:-

### Webinar Programme Overview

#### Child Poverty in Scotland

Delivered by the Tackling Child Poverty Team at the Scottish Government, this session explores key facts about child poverty and provides insight into the Six Priority Families—who they are and why they matter.

#### The Impact of Deprivation on Children and Families

Led by Aberlour: Scotland’s Children’s Charity, this session examines how social and economic deprivation affects children and families across Scotland.

#### Minimum Income Guarantee & Care Leavers

Presented by STAF (Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum), this session introduces the concept of a Minimum Income Guarantee and discusses its relevance to young people leaving care.

#### Rural Poverty, Stigma & Human Rights

The Poverty Alliance will conclude the series with an interactive workshop exploring rural poverty, the stigma surrounding poverty, and the human rights perspective.

This webinar series forms a key part of our work towards Equality Outcome 4. Following the completion of the series, SCRA will undertake a review to assess its impact and identify further steps we can take to advance this equality outcome. This may include additional staff development, policy review, or targeted engagement with children and families to ensure our services are equitable, inclusive, and responsive to socio-economic disadvantage.

## 7. Section 3: Summary

### SCRA Equalities & Inclusion Mainstreaming Progress Report – Summary (April 2024 to September 2025)

SCRA continues to make strong and sustained progress in embedding and mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of its service delivery and organisational culture. This mid-cycle update outlines the breadth of work undertaken since April 2024 and reflects the organisation's commitment to continuous improvement, transparency, and inclusive practice.

#### Strategic Integration and Governance

- EDI is embedded within SCRA's Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting Strategy, ensuring it underpins all strategic and operational planning.
- The Inclusion & Diversity Steering Group, supported by specialist sub-groups and over 25 Inclusion Ambassadors, continues to lead and coordinate activity across the organisation.
- SCRA remains an active member of national networks including enei, the NDPB Equalities Forum, the Cross-Justice Working Group on Race Data & Evidence, and the Fairer Justice Sector for Scotland Equality Network.

#### Mainstreaming EDI

- Localities are supported through the Locality EDI Lead Network, with each area having a designated EDI Lead.
- The Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework (ISBF) has been embedded through national training and Locality-led Staff Charter workshops, empowering teams to co-create inclusive commitments tailored to their context.
- EDI is integrated into recruitment, supervision, and performance development processes.

#### Workforce and Culture

- The 2024 Staff Survey showed high levels of confidence in reporting discrimination and strong understanding of the ISBF.
- SCRA continues to support staff wellbeing through trauma-informed practice, mental health initiatives, and flexible working policies.
- The Mental Wealth Group, Women into Leadership Network, Neurodiversity Champions Network and Voice of Experience Reference Group have led targeted activities to support carers, parents, neurodivergent staff, and those with care experience.

#### Data and Monitoring

- Improvements in workforce diversity data collection are ongoing, with campaigns like Free To Be Me encouraging disclosure.
- Pay gap reporting shows incremental progress, with the gender pay gap at its lowest in seven years.
- Disability and ethnicity pay gaps remain areas of focus.

## Equality Outcomes Progress

1. Children's Equality Data: Work is underway to improve the collection and accuracy of equality data for children and families, with a digital solution planned for 2026 and reporting by 2027. This will be developed in collaboration with partners and aligned with child-friendly scheduling and digital inclusion projects.
2. Inclusive Recruitment: SCRA has seen increases in applications and appointments from men, disabled applicants, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds. However, disparities remain in shortlisting and appointment rates. Actions include:
  - Launching a new e-recruitment portal with improved equality monitoring.
  - Using the Gender Decoder Tool and Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit.
  - Planning an external Recruitment Audit.
  - Refreshing the recruitment website and engaging new staff in feedback sessions.
3. Anti-Racism Programme: A three-year programme has begun, including workshops, a forthcoming Anti-Racism Strategy, and the creation of a Black & Asian Staff Group. Mandatory training is scheduled for 2026–2027, and research into racial bias in decision-making is planned.
4. Socio-Economic Disadvantage: SCRA is delivering a webinar series to deepen staff understanding of poverty and its impact on engagement with Hearings. This work is aligned with the Fairer Scotland Duty, despite SCRA not being a listed authority.



## 8. Glossary of Terms

### A–C

- **Accessibility:** The design of services, environments, and information to be usable by all people, regardless of ability or disability.
- **Active Bystander:** A person who intervenes in situations of discrimination, harassment, or inappropriate behaviour to support those affected.
- **Care Experience:** A term used to describe individuals who have been in care (e.g. foster care, residential care, kinship care). Treated by SCRA as a 'tenth' protected characteristic.
- **Co-production:** A collaborative approach where service users and professionals work together to design and deliver services.
- **Corporate Parenting:** The legal and moral duty of public bodies to provide the best possible care and protection for looked-after children.

### D–F

- **Disability Confident Employer:** A UK Government scheme that supports employers to be inclusive of disabled people and those with long-term health conditions.
- **Diversity:** The presence of differences within a given setting, including race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and more.
- **EDI:** Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – a collective term for efforts to promote fairness, representation, and belonging.
- **EHRIA:** Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment – a tool used to assess the impact of policies and practices on equality and human rights.
- **Equality Act 2010:** UK legislation that legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and wider society.
- **Equality Outcomes:** Specific, measurable goals set by public bodies in Scotland to advance equality under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Equity:** Fairness in treatment, access, and opportunity by recognising and addressing different needs and barriers.

### G–L

- **General Duty:** The overarching obligations under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality, and foster good relations.
- **Global Majority:** A term used to describe people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, Indigenous to the global south, and/or have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'.
- **Inclusive Language:** Language that avoids bias, slang, or expressions that discriminate against groups of people based on race, gender, ability, etc.
- **Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social identities (e.g. race, gender, class) and how they can lead to overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
- **ISBF:** Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework – SCRA's internal framework outlining expectations for inclusive conduct.

### M–R

- **Mainstreaming:** The process of embedding equality into the day-to-day work of an organisation.



- **Neurodiversity:** The concept that neurological differences (e.g. autism, ADHD, dyslexia) are natural variations of the human brain.
- **Pay Gap:** The difference in average earnings between different groups, most commonly between men and women.
- **Protected Characteristics:** Characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010, including age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.
- **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):** A legal duty requiring public bodies to consider how their policies and practices affect people with protected characteristics.

## S–Z

- **SHANARRI:** An acronym for the wellbeing indicators used in Scotland – Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included.
- **Specific Duties (Scotland):** Additional legal requirements placed on Scottish public bodies to help them meet the General Duty.
- **Trauma-Informed Practice:** An approach that recognises the impact of trauma and seeks to avoid re-traumatisation in service delivery.
- **Voice of Experience Reference Group (VOERG):** A group within SCRA made up of staff with lived experience of care, contributing to service improvement.



**SCRA Board Meeting**  
Thursday 25 September 2025

## **SCRA Annual Report 2024/2025**

**For:** Approval

**Report Classification:** Open

**Executive Sponsor:** Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

**Author:** Maryanne McIntyre, Press and Communications Manager

---

### **Executive Summary**

SCRA's Annual Report for 2024/25 has been prepared and a draft design version is now available at Appendix 1.

The report, which covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, has been written and designed in-house by the Press and Communications Team in conjunction with relevant managers/project leads.

SCRA has a statutory duty to produce and publish an Annual Report, along with our Annual Accounts.

The report has already been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee.

### **Recommendation**

The Board is invited to review and approve SCRA's draft Annual Report 2024/25 and to review and approve arrangements for the publication of SCRA's Annual Report 2024/25.

### **Key issues to be discussed/considered**

To ensure the Annual Report provides a true reflection on SCRA's work to meet the objectives of our 2024/2025 Business Plan. The report is our annual 'shop front' and it is an opportunity to showcase all the positive developments across the organisation. It also enables us to update, inform and influence our partners in the Children's Hearings System.

**Implications:****Service**

Internally, the Annual Report is an effective communications tool for condensing lots of information in a relatively short document providing staff with an overview of activity.

Externally, the report enables us to update, inform and influence our partners in the Children's Hearings System.

**Financial**

This report is produced in-house and has no funding implications. The time element is factored into the Press and Communications Team plan.

**Workforce**

N/A

**Infrastructure including Digital**

N/A

**Information Governance**

N/A

**Risk Assessment/Management**

N/A

**Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

The Annual Report reports on our Business Plan 2024/2025 and the Our Stories section is split into Care, Connect and Protect.

**Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process.

Further to evaluation it is noted:

✓ Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

**Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Board Chair, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, Head of Strategy, Audit and Risk Committee, Press and Communications Team

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – SCRA Annual Report 2024/2025

## **SCRA Annual Report 2024/2025 – in more detail**

### **Introduction**

SCRA's Annual Report for 2024/25 has been prepared and a draft design version is now available at Appendix 1. The report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The Annual Report will be published at 10am on Thursday 30 October 2025 and will be available on SCRA's website ([www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)). This date has been agreed with our Sponsor Branch at the Scottish Government and the report will be formally laid in the Scottish Parliament on the afternoon of Wednesday 29 October 2025.

### **Format and accessibility**

The report has been written and designed in-house by the Press and Communications Team in conjunction with relevant managers/leads.

For the 15th year now, the report will not be printed, however, as always, a PDF version will also be available on our website should people wish to print the report. The format of this year's report is similar to previous years.

As always, for accessibility purposes, accessibility tags will be added to the pdf version and an unformatted Word version of the report will also be available on request. This will be highlighted in promotional communications.

There will also be an online glossary covering all words/phrases in the Annual Report and this will link from the main report.

Our website continues to have Recite Me software which provides additional functionality to website visitors with different needs. The functionality includes: text to speech functionality (including from pdfs like the Annual Report), dyslexia software, an interactive dictionary, a translation tool with over 100 languages and it works across all devices. To access Recite Me, visitors to our website just need to click on the Accessibility Tools button which is on the bottom right of each page. We continue to regularly promote this tool on social media to help raise awareness and we monitor analytics of its use.

There will also be a version for children and young people.

### **Content**

The Annual Report will start with a foreword, authored by SCRA's Board Chair.

The report also includes some of the highlights and achievements in 2024/25, including a visual 'year at a glance' section.

We have introduced a new 'spotlight' section this year, where we highlight in more detail three topics under Care, Connect and Protect.

As the detailed statistics are published earlier in the year in the Official Statistics (19 June 2025), the report includes statistics at a glance and will link to the full statistical service online.

The report ends with a looking ahead piece written by the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive reflecting on the first six months of 2025/2026.

There will be a link in the Annual Report to the Annual Accounts 2024/25 which is a standalone document.

### **Publication arrangements**

The Annual Report will be laid in the Scottish Parliament on the afternoon of Wednesday 29 October 2025. It will then be published on SCRA's website ([www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)) at 10am on Thursday 30 October 2025.

A latest news item will be prepared and issued on our website. There will also be a latest news item posted on the home page of Connect so all staff are aware.

The report will also be promoted via the latest edition of our partner e-news bulletin. The e-news bulletin is issued every quarter to local and national partners (who have subscribed to the e-news). The next edition will be published on Monday 3 November 2025.

It will be promoted to partners via social media after it has been published on the website. Board Members will continue to receive regular information on our social media activity via the annual Communications Strategy updates to the Board.





SCOTTISH  
CHILDREN'S REPORTER  
ADMINISTRATION

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION  
SCRA BOARD SEPTEMBER 2025

# ANNUAL REPORT

CARE, CONNECT, PROTECT  
2024/2025





# ABOUT OUR REPORT

This report covers the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

It summarises SCRA’s achievements and performance during that period and includes an update on progress against our Business Plan 2024/25.

You can also view this report’s supporting information online, including the full set of our annual audited accounts and

performance report, plus our Official Statistics and interactive statistical dashboard at [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk).

You might also find our [Annual Report glossary](#) helpful.

If you want to find out more about our role and our work, please visit the [About Us](#) section of our website.



# CONTENTS



Our commitments to you: SCRA’s Vision, Mission and Values

05



Foreword: A welcome message from our Board Chair Cathie Cowan

07

03 **OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE:** SOME OF OUR HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024/25

05 **OUR PROGRESS:** A SUMMARY OF PROGRESS AGAINST OUR BUSINESS PLAN 2024/25

08 **OUR STORIES:** A ROUND UP OF SOME OF OUR MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACTIVITY IN 2024/25

10 **OUR STATISTICS:** SOME OF OUR KEY STATISTICS IN 2024/25

15 **OUR BOARD:** INFORMATION ABOUT OUR BOARD AND MEMBERS

18 **LOOKING AHEAD:** PRINCIPAL REPORTER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE NEIL HUNTER REFLECTS ON THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2025/2026



# OUR COMMITMENTS TO YOU...

## 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.



# FOREWORD

BY BOARD CHAIR, CATHIE COWAN

Where does a year go? I am delighted having taken up post in June 2024 to be looking back on my first year as Chair of SCRA. Firstly, in my observations I am immensely proud of the management and staff of SCRA and their commitment to support, care and respect children, young people and their families whilst being accountable for contributing to improving their lives and opportunities.

I want to firstly welcome two new Board members - Lynne Clow and Steve Renwick. Both Lynne and Steve bring a wealth of experience to the Board as well as their own personal undertaking to bring to life SCRA's values in their Board interactions and decision making. I also want to say goodbye and thank you to Suzie Vestri for her significant contribution as a SCRA Board Member over the last eight years - I wish Suzie well in her new ventures.

2024/2025 has been a year of delivery and change. In my interactions with staff, I recognise that for some change can be unsettling as we introduce new ways of working to keep children, young people and their families at the very heart

of what we do whilst ensuring we continue to enhance their experience of the Hearings System. It is therefore great to see and to hear staff's enthusiasm about their experiences in e.g., the roll-out of child friendly scheduling, Language that Cares Guide and developing Hearing Centre Design Standards. Thank you also to Our Hearings, Our Voice for their significant contribution in this work and for helping SCRA contribute to Keeping the Promise. To our partners, thank you for adding your weight and resources to our shared purpose of improving outcomes for children, young people and their families - a good example of this is our Learning Leads project and the work underway to improve and standardise referrals.

To Board Members - thank you for your welcome. In leading the Board I am keen to support the Board of SCRA in its commitment to having effective infrastructure in place to support delivery of change where required, and to this end with Board and the Executive Management Team members I have reviewed and enhanced our governance arrangements. Our new Planning and Performance Committee will further promote the development of a performance culture



in pursuit of our commitment to continuous quality improvement. In this regard, our ongoing commitment to deliver successful change was underpinned by investment in our properties to create a welcoming, caring and non-institutional environment to support the needs of everyone participating in the Hearings System. As a previous Children's Panel member, I am blown away by the attention to detail and the clear indication of the voice of the child, and young person playing out in the Hearing Centre design standards created.

Alongside this investment is SCRA's commitment to research, digital and change management resources and how these key areas of work can both enhance and support the experience of people accessing services and staff providing services. The research and digital programmes demonstrate the organisation's ambition and ongoing contribution to policy and practice both internally and externally. Using research to inform future policy and practice is a key future and personal objective. Sustainability is also a key feature in our investment decisions and our contribution to achieving net zero. Staff and their wellbeing remain a top priority for the Board and as expected is a prominent feature in all our discussions. At the heart have been the findings from the annual staff survey. This year, overseeing the implementation of the staff survey approved

action plan has seen us focus on the role of the Reporter in recognition of the changes notably in society and legislation and the unwavering consideration of a child's and young person's welfare in decisions made to protect and uphold their rights. Funding remains an issue for the Board and whilst I am, grateful to our Scottish Government Sponsorship Team for their ongoing engagement and support to ensure we meet our statutory duties, greater certainty about funding is needed. In going forward I am keen that we address the widening funding gap in the future medium-term to create the stability required to meet the new and ambitious legislative changes to the Hearings System.

In concluding and commending this report to you I wish to reiterate my thanks and appreciation to staff, partners and Board Members for your contribution to the work of SCRA in protecting and upholding the rights of children and young people involved in the Hearings System. Finally, I look forward to working with you all to deliver our commitments as set out in our Corporate Plan 2024/2027 and to increasing Board visibility as we look to improve our performance and effectiveness in our endeavours to ensure all children grow up safe, loved and respected so they can realise their full potential.





# OUR YEAR AT A GLANCE



We celebrated Care Experienced Week by joining thousands of people at the Love Rally in Glasgow.



Our Transforming Connections Trauma Skilled Training programme started to be rolled out for all staff.



We published an evaluation report into Child Friendly Scheduling, as well as a version aimed at children and young people.



A detailed review into the role of the Reporter job description and person specification got underway.

SCRA's Corporate Plan 2024-27 was published highlighting our plans for the next three years.

SCRA Corporate Plan 2024-2027



On World Environment Day we unveiled our 8 Sustainability Priorities, which will help make SCRA as sustainable and environmentally friendly as possible.

Our Neurodiversity Champions came together for invaluable training about FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder).



Our LGBTQ+ staff group relaunched and held a series of Pride picnics.

We were delighted to join the Scottish Government's Sikh Network at a visit to Glasgow Central Gurdwara.



Hearings are held in Hearing rooms like this one



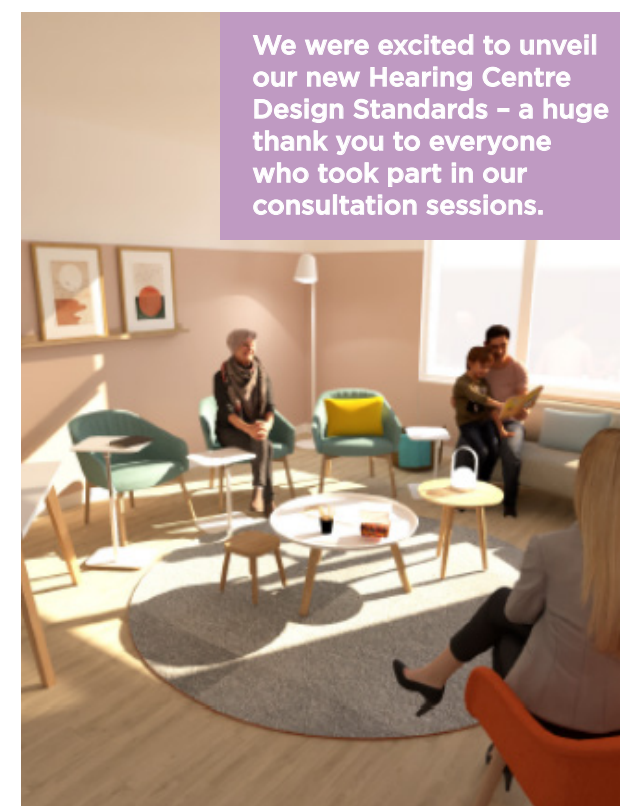
We produced our Language that Cares Guide and attended the launch of the fantastic Articulate Animation.



We were honoured to win the Care Conscious Employer award at Who Cares? Scotland's 10 year celebration of Corporate Parenting legislation.



It's good to talk



We were excited to unveil our new Hearing Centre Design Standards – a huge thank you to everyone who took part in our consultation sessions.



# REPORTING ON OUR BUSINESS PLAN

## OUR PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024/25

During 2024/2025, our focus remained on delivering the strategic programmes outlined in our Business Plan:



Delivering a service that feels right for each child, young person and family that experiences it.



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



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

During 2024/25, we successfully completed a high proportion of the actions in our Business Plan – some of which are highlighted in this next section of the report.

More detailed information is available in the Performance Review section of our [Annual Accounts 2024/25](#).

## OUR PERFORMANCE AND TARGETS

Decision making by Reporters within 50 working days at 72% was up 2.0 percentage points (pp) compared to 2023/24. It was slightly below the 74% target and was rated as amber for the year. In terms of delays in case processing, on average, 3.4% of referrals were open beyond 100 working days in the year. This was below the 4.1% target and this measure is therefore rated as green. It was an improvement of 1.7pp on the prior year.

There was a focus on improving performance in 2024/25 which included reinforcing expectations with operational teams and individual Reporters and the use of Quality Improvement methodology. However, Reporters are reliant on partner agencies to provide reports and information to help them make the right decision for a child. The time taken to receive this information continues to be impacted by resourcing pressures experienced by some local authority social work teams.

The scheduling of grounds Hearings within 20 working days of a Reporter decision to arrange a Hearing was up 3.7pp in the year to 70%. The performance in 2024/25 continues the improvements seen since the pandemic and the prioritisation that was required at that time. Performance was though below the 74% target and is rated as amber.

SCRA BOARD SEPTEMBER 2025

Short term absence at 1.9% was within the 2% target and was rated as green but was 0.4pp higher than the prior year. Short term absence meeting the target will be in part around staff having more flexibility about where they work from even when they are feeling unwell, but not unwell enough to be absent from work. The target being met may also be a result of the various health and wellbeing supports that SCRA has in place, such as EAP, vicarious trauma support, menopause support etc.

Long term absence at 3.9% was up 0.5pp from the prior year and well above the 2% target and is therefore rated as red. We recognise that long term absence remains a challenge in terms of available resources. We work closely with managers pre, during and post long term absence to ensure that the most appropriate supports are in place to sustain the employee at work.

Of the finance targets, revenue savings (target of 2.5%) and the efficiency savings (target of 0.5%) were both met. The revenue spend target was rated as red at 6.4% below

budget against a target of being within 1% of budget. Savings mainly arose from staffing underspends arising from vacancies and the timing of recruitment to additional posts in advance of Children (Care and Justice) Act implementation. The capital spends target was narrowly missed at 6.1% below budget against a target of being within 5% of budget and was rated as amber. Capital savings arose primarily due to the decision to treat the Glasgow refurbishment project as a two-year project, resulting in a reduction of spend within 2024/25.



# OUR STORIES

## PROGRAMME 1- CARE CORPORATE PARENTING

It has been another busy year of Corporate Parenting activity in SCRA. We continue to undertake a wide range of activities to deliver as well as promote our Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

Our Modern Apprenticeship and Work Experience programme exclusively for care and/or Hearings-

experienced people has been running for almost 15 years. In July 2024 we hosted a highly successful six month work experience placement for a young person in our Stornoway office and Hearings centre, who went on to permanent employment in the health and social care sector. We will be recruiting to our MA programme in 2025/2026.



In August 2024, to mark the 10 year anniversary of the Children and Young People (Scotland) 2014 Act, Who Cares? Scotland hosted their first Corporate Parenting Awards. SCRA were shortlisted for both the Care Conscious Employer award and the Lifelong Rights award, and won the Care Conscious Employer award.

In February 2025 we relaunched our highly successful and active Participation Group as the Corporate Parenting and Participation Group (CPPG). Working with partners such as Who Cares? Scotland, we are renewing our focus on fresh Corporate Parenting approaches, and work with partners such as Staf's Participation Group and the Who Cares? Scotland Corporate Parenting and Participation Network to achieve this.

Engaging with staff on our Corporate Parenting and Participation Group, as well as our Voice of Experience Reference Group, we have piloted a training programme on Corporate Parenting to be rolled out across SCRA. As a proud Corporate Parent, we were once again delighted to join thousands of people at the Love Rally in Glasgow in October 2024. It is always a highlight of our Corporate Parenting calendar.

As a proud Corporate Parent, we were once again delighted to join our friends from Who Cares? Scotland, along with thousands of other people at the Love Rally in Glasgow in October 2024. It is always a highlight of our Corporate Parenting calendar.

SCRA's Voice of Experience Reference Group (VOERG) has had another busy and successful year. Working with the NHS we supported the development of their trauma training programme for alternative carers in September 2024, and in February 2025 we celebrated Care Day with a visit from partners at the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and our Principal Reporter.

The Neurodiversity Champions Network has worked hard to continue to refresh and roll out In-Hearing Room Sensory Kits and take away sensory items across Scotland for children, young people and families attending Children's Hearings. We have also worked with partner agencies such as

Salvesen Mindroom and FASD Scotland to improve our understanding of neurodivergent conditions to tailor and improve our service delivery.

SCRA's unique book gifting programme has entered its second year and in 2024/25 we distributed and gifted hundreds of books for older children aged six plus. Our fantastic partnership with the Dolly Parton Imagination Library continues for children aged five and under, and in 2024/25, thousands of books were given to young children attending Hearings for them to keep.

SCRA has been proud to host and support Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV) since 2018. In October 2024, to mark four years since publication of the 40 Calls to Action, we prepared our fourth update for OHOV. We continue to work with young people from OHOV on a number of projects, including the Taking Control of my Hearing scrapbook and magazine, information leaflets, cartoon animations and VOICE magazine.

We are an active and founding member of Stand Up For Siblings and the Community of Practice for Siblings. It was a busy year for the Community of Practice for Siblings as the community continued to grow. SCRA's Press and Communications Team continues to support the partnerships.

The Transforming Connections trauma training programme (in partnership with the NHS and their education team NES) was nationally rolled out throughout the second half of 2024 and in to 2025. NES's and SCRA's work to Keep The Promise led to Trauma Skilled level training for all staff in SCRA to support care experienced children and young people, enhancing the skills and service of SCRA staff as well as developing a network of trainers to assist in the role out.

## INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY

At SCRA, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering an inclusive, accessible, and equitable workplace and service environment. In 2024/25, we made significant strides in embedding inclusive practices, enhancing accessibility, and strengthening our equality and diversity initiatives.

SCRA BOARD SEPTEMBER 2025



- Mainstreaming Equality
- Gender Pay Gap
- Gender Representation on the Board
- Workforce Statistics

We also launched our British Sign Language (BSL) Action Plan and agreed on our Equality Outcomes for 2024–2027, setting a clear direction for future progress.

### Enhancing Accessibility

To improve access to our services, we now offer Visual Information Guides for 33 Hearing Centres and continue to promote the ReciteMe accessibility software on our website. Our Disability Group, in collaboration with the British Deaf Association (Scotland), launched a BSL video dictionary and refreshed the BSL section of our website. We also reintroduced sunflower lanyards to support individuals with hidden disabilities. We were proud to retain the enei (Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion) silver award – a big thank you to our Inclusion Ambassadors for all their hard work!

**Neurodiversity and Sensory Support**  
Our Neurodiversity Champions Network has grown to 44 members. This group has successfully reintroduced sensory takeaway kits and neurodiversity kits in all Hearing rooms, ensuring that children and young people have the tools they need to feel comfortable and supported.

In addition, our Neurodiversity Champions came together for their first away day in December 2024 with invaluable training about FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder).

### Anti-Racism and Cultural Inclusion

In February 2024, we held our first anti-racism development session, marking the beginning of a three-year programme. We also launched a successful Black and Asian Workers Group pilot, which has received positive feedback and is expected to continue beyond its initial six-month term. In October 2024, we were delighted to join the Scottish Government's Sikh Network at a visit to Glasgow Central Gurdwara.

### LGBTQ+ Inclusion

In 2024, our LGBTQ+ staff group relaunched and held a series of Pride picnics across the country. We are actively working towards reaccreditation of the LGBT Youth Scotland Charter, reaffirming our commitment to creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ staff and service users.

### Workforce Representation and Engagement

Our Employee Information Statistics Report shows an increase in applications from men, candidates from an ethnic minority background, and individuals with disabilities – progress aligned with our second equality outcome.

We also established quarterly meetings for our Inclusion Ambassadors and Locality Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leads, fostering stronger engagement and information sharing across the organisation.

### Progress on Gender Equality

As of March 2024, our gender pay gap has reduced by 2% (mean) and 2.21% (median)—continuing a positive downward trend over the past seven years.

## SUSTAINABILITY

We are early in our journey towards achieving Net Zero and are committed to embedding sustainability across all aspects of our organisation. Our goal is to work in ways that are environmentally responsible, financially sustainable, and aligned with national climate targets.

This commitment is reflected in our strategic planning, operational improvements, and the work of our Environmental Ambassadors.

### Our Strategic Approach

In January 2024, our Strategic Sustainability Group (SSG) reaffirmed eight priority areas that are guiding our sustainability efforts.

These priorities are now embedded in our Corporate and Business Plans:

- Property Use – Creating energy-efficient offices and Hearing Centres.
- Energy Consumption – Using resources more intelligently and efficiently.
- Travel – Promoting active and sustainable commuting options.
- Waste Minimisation – Emphasising reduction, reuse, and recycling.
- Sustainable Procurement – Factoring in environmental, social, and economic impacts in purchasing decisions.
- Biodiversity – Enhancing and protecting our natural environment.
- Staff Awareness and Behaviour Change – Building knowledge and encouraging sustainable practices.
- Data Capture and Analysis – Tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement.
- Progress and Local Action.

### Targets and Accountability

SCRA is committed to meeting the following sustainability targets:

- 10–20% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from 2022/23 levels within three years.
- Zero waste to landfill by 2030.
- Net Zero GHG emissions by 2045.
- To support these goals, leads have been appointed for each of the eight priority areas, with a clear directive to identify 3–4 actionable workstreams for 2024/25.

A monitoring and reporting framework is being developed to track progress and ensure accountability.

### Making changes

We have already seen positive changes across our estate, driven in part by our Property Strategy, energy monitoring by our Business Development



Team and the efforts of our 25 Environmental Ambassadors across the organisation. Each Locality has developed tailored actions within their Locality Plans to support sustainability at a local level.

In January 2025, we launched a year-long environmental awareness campaign, with a different focus every month linking to our eight sustainability priorities.

The campaign has a dedicated section on our staff intranet which contains a host of resources and helpful information.

### Estate and Environmental Assessments

Significant environmental improvements have been made to our buildings, including:

- Upgrading lighting systems to energy-efficient LEDs.
- Replacing outdated gas boilers with more efficient alternatives.

These upgrades contribute directly to our Net Zero objectives by reducing energy consumption and emissions. Environmental assessments have been completed for all owned properties—approximately half of our estate—providing detailed recommendations for further improvements.

Work is ongoing to assess the remainder of the estate, including leased properties, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of our environmental impact across all sites.





# SPOTLIGHT ON ... KEEPING THE PROMISE

SCRA's is committed to working with our partners and transforming the Children's Hearings System in line with the Independent Care Review and The Promise.

Our work focuses on rights, participation, trauma-informed practice, and systemic redesign to better support children, young people and families and being the best Corporate Parent we can be.

## So what has been happening?

We have been working with some amazing groups of Hearings-experienced children and young people, including local champions boards and Our Hearings, Our Voice. Working together and genuine co-production has been key to some really successful initiatives and projects.

- We have been testing ideas across different parts of Scotland (many came from children and young people).
- Then we have been reviewing the results to see if they have made a difference.
- Where they have led to improvements, we are introducing them on a larger scale.
- We have also had tremendous support and buy in from our staff across the country.

## Here's some of the highlights:

**Development, launch and implementation of our Keeping The Promise Language that Cares Guide.** A huge thank you to the young people from Our Hearings, Our Voice in helping us roll this out to our staff across the country.

**Introduction of child friendly scheduling** to provide children and young people with more control over their Hearing – including where and when. Thank you to all the children and young people in Ayrshire, Fife, Paisley and the South East of Scotland who took part.

**Creation of new easy read letters** for children, young people and their parents to make sure they can be easily understood. We worked with so many people to get these letters right, including a speech and language expert to ensure the new letters are accessible and inclusive.

**Taking Control of my Hearing scrapbook:** this involved pro-actively inviting children and young people to a Pre-Hearing visit. To support their preparation, children and young people were also sent their own 'scrapbook' designed for and by young people from Our Hearings, Our Voice.

**Referral Patterns and Planning:** this project involves using data to drive improvements to ensure timely and proportionate referrals to the Reporter.

**Learning Leads:** this multi-agency project has been developing standardised training for partners on referrals and system roles. The first training packages will be launched in the autumn 2025.

**Early Engagement on Grounds:** this project has been exploring relational working practices, rights-based approaches to establishing grounds and its impact on children and families. Further work will continue into 2025/2026.

## Has this made a difference?

We think so, yes. We are making sure that everything we test is fully evaluated, so we know it is definitely making a difference.

Our Research Team are undertaking an in-depth piece of research where children, young people and their families can tell us if and where they have seen changes and improvements.

We know there are still improvements to be made, but by working together with our partners across the Children's Hearings System we will Keep The Promise.



## PROGRAMME 2 - CONNECT OUR PEOPLE

In 2024, SCRA launched its People Strategy 2024–2027, setting out four key aims: to recruit and retain talent, support and engage staff, and foster continuous development across the organisation. This strategy underpins our commitment to building a resilient, inclusive, and skilled workforce.

### Learning and Development

We published our Learning Plan 2024–2027, which includes a wide range of training opportunities:

- Trauma-informed practice to enhance awareness of trauma in the workplace and service delivery.
- Inclusion and Equalities training, including Active Bystander, British Sign Language (BSL), Pronoun Awareness, Neurodiversity, and Imposter Syndrome training.
- Practice-focused modules such as Harmful Sexual Behaviour, UNCRC Incorporation, and training for Locality Support Administrators (LSAs).
- Operational training in breach prevention and complaints handling.

We exceeded our learning Key Performance Indicators, averaging two learning events per employee. A new digital skills strategy was also introduced to boost confidence in digital capabilities.

### Supervision and Support

The Supervision Framework was revised to integrate annual development reviews, personal development, and wellbeing. Managers received guidance and support from HR Business Partners to embed the new approach.

Our e-learning platform was enhanced to improve accessibility and support internally produced content, including podcasts and policy briefings.

### Inclusive Culture and Engagement

Following the rollout of the Inclusive Behaviours

Framework (ISBF), we embedded equalities learning throughout the year.

Staff Charter workshops were held to deepen understanding and application of inclusive behaviours. We also reviewed and updated key policies:

- The Dignity at Work Policy was simplified and now includes cyberbullying.
- A revised Staff Code of Conduct was adopted, reinforcing our commitment to high standards.
- A new Retirement Policy was introduced, covering various retirement options and support.

### Health, Wellbeing and Mental Health

We trained our fourth cohort of Mental Health First Aiders, bringing the total to 31 across the organisation. We supported national campaigns such as Mental Health Week, Time to Talk, and Carer's Week, and ran a 31-day wellbeing calendar in October.

Our annual walking challenge in May saw over a third of staff participate, promoting physical and mental wellbeing. Based on staff feedback, we focused on topics such as menopause, baby loss, and sleep during October, and raised awareness of men's health during 'Movember'.

We also supported carers through dementia awareness webinars and updated policies to reflect new statutory carer's leave and neonatal leave and pay ahead of 2025 legislation.

In addition, we offered staff flu vaccination vouchers, with 85 taken up, as part of our ongoing commitment to staff health and wellbeing.

### Recruitment

To support inclusive recruitment, we trialled a process allowing candidates to view interview questions in advance, with a launch to roll out fully in April 2025. We also developed new eRecruitment functionality, set to go live after testing.

We welcomed a new Board Chair and two new Board Members to SCRA.

### Staff Engagement

A detailed review into the role of the Reporter job description and person specification got underway. This involved extensive consultation with staff across the organisation and was supported by an external consultant.

We carried out our annual staff survey and continued to work closely with UNISON through the National Partnership Forum, which hosted two development days and regular face-to-face meetings.

## POLICY AND PARTNERSHIP

The policy landscape for children and public services in Scotland has evolved over many years and continues to grow. The Children's Hearings System, alongside SCRA and Children's Hearings Scotland, plays a central role in this landscape. In 2024/25, the focus has shifted towards collaborative improvement, legislative reform, and system-wide transformation.

### Working in Partnership

SCRA staff across Scotland maintain strong working relationships with key partners, including social work services, Police Scotland, health and education professionals, Safeguarders, and advocacy providers. Joint corporate parenting and collaborative working at the local level are actively championed.

At the national level, SCRA's work reflects the broad remit of the Children's Hearings System. We responded to several key consultations, most notably the Scottish Government's extensive consultation on Hearings System redesign, which saw positive engagement from staff across the organisation. SCRA remains a committed member of the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP), and we continue to play a central role in the development of local CHIP initiatives across Scotland.

We also work closely with a range of national groups addressing issues such as child protection, trafficking and exploitation, Bairns' Hoose, youth justice, safeguarding, and secure care. In preparation for the implementation of the Children



(Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, we are collaborating with partners to ensure a coordinated, whole-system response. While we await the implementation timetable, we are actively engaging in discussions about the resources required to support these changes - particularly for services supporting 16 and 17-year-olds.

### Bairns' Hoose and Child Protection

SCRA is proud to contribute to the progress of the Bairns' Hoose initiative. Our staff are involved in both national and local discussions, including planning for Pathfinder Pilot sites and affiliated projects exploring new ways of working.

In 2024/25, we published a new Practice Note on Child Criminal Exploitation, complementing existing guidance on Child Sexual Exploitation and Missing Children. We continued to focus on this area in 2024/25, including contributing to a national conference on child exploitation hosted by Action for Children.

### Contextual Safeguarding and Risk Outside the Home

While the Children's Hearings System traditionally focuses on individual children, there is growing interest in contextual safeguarding - an approach that addresses risks outside the home, such as unsafe public spaces or community environments. This model brings partners together to improve safety in shared spaces, and interest in its application is growing across local authorities in Scotland.

### Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)

SCRA continues to support Family Group Decision Making at both national and local levels. We are active members of the national steering group and are working with Children 1st and other partners to explore how FGDM can be further embedded across Scotland.

### Trauma-Informed Practice

Our ambition to become a trauma-informed organisation continues to progress. In partnership with NHS Education Scotland (NES), we have trained staff to deliver trauma-skilled training across SCRA. Following this rollout, we will assess next steps to further develop our workforce. In March 2024, we also launched a new psychological support process, offering staff access to additional support through self-assessment and professional screening.

### Training and Knowledge Sharing

We have expanded our online training provision for partners, supported by our Learning Leads. In collaboration with CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection) and Social Work Scotland, we updated and relaunched A Guide to Referral to the Children's Reporter, along with a new training presentation. Our national online training programme for social work staff remains available, and we welcome opportunities to support local authorities with bespoke training.

### COVID-19 Inquiry

SCRA contributed to the UK COVID-19 Inquiry, submitting a full written statement and providing oral evidence from three senior managers. This was an opportunity to reflect on the challenges faced during the pandemic and to recognise the exceptional dedication of our staff.

### Looking Ahead

We are preparing for significant change. SCRA is working closely with the Scottish Government on the drafting of a Bill to redesign the Children's Hearings System. We expect the Bill to be introduced this year and are committed to shaping legislation that delivers on The Promise - ensuring a more compassionate, effective, and rights-based

experience for children, young people, and families who require statutory support.

## OUR PROGRAMME WORK

In 2024/2025, SCRA's Programme Team delivered the first version of the future Target Operating Model for the organisation, setting out the vision for the future. This has been developed using staff engagement, project outputs, external drivers for change and feedback. The vision outlines how the organisation will improve the service, Keep The Promise and create capacity for this through efficient processes across referrals, hearings and court.

A Programme Delivery Plan has been developed to guide the work to take the organisation towards that target through projects, further discovery work, operational testing and implementing changes. Work is underway testing change in a number of key areas:

- Referrals – a report analysing referral patterns and practice across the country, developed with operational input, has been delivered. This report has informed the next stage of operational testing and enhanced models of working with partners who are our key referrers.
- Working with partners to develop a learning programme about the Children's Hearings System and role of the Reporter.
- Testing in a combined project approach that aims to deliver capacity that is then used to focus on improved service delivery, is due to complete in June 2025. A full evaluation will then take place for decisions are made about rolling this approach out further.

### The combined approach includes:

- A consistent approach to scheduling and arranging Hearings.
- Child Friendly Scheduling – an approach to scheduling Hearings that involves liaising with children/trusted professionals in advance to ascertain preferences for day/date /

- An improved approach to court preparation by liaising with witnesses and undertaking witness statements proactively.
- The Keeping The Promise Commitment Standards project focuses on speaking directly to families ahead of the Hearing to ensure they are fully informed, supported and understand the process, as well as making sure practical are all elements taken care of. Planning is underway for phase 2 to begin in June 2025.
- Early engagement on grounds - a project to discover more about reporter practices for proactively engaging with children and families around grounds for referral. This project is also considering the benefits and risks and engaging the wider organisation on how an approach might be tested.

### Other project activity for the Programme Team in 2024/2025 includes:

- Collaboration with Children's Hearings Scotland exploring improvement to scheduling of Hearings. An interim report was presented to the Hearings Delivery Group in March 2025 and a final report and updated Hearings Management Guidance taking account of this work will be presented to the the Hearings Delivery Group in June 2025 for approval. Thereafter work will commence on an implementation plan to deliver the changes and improvements.
- SCRA has initiated an internal project to prepare for and co-ordinate the implementation of the Children Care and Justice Act.
- SCRA is working in partnership on the Children's Hearings redesign. The work making up the redesign includes proposed legislative change and multiagency improvement work. SCRA is represented on the Redesign Board and Redesign Planning Group and has worked to shape the workstreams and commit staff into project team roles.

The Programme Team has been working hard to ensure that voice is at the heart of the work we do.



We are working with children and young people to co-design aspects of our child friendly scheduling offering that supports participation.

The Research Team are working with the Programme Team, supporting evaluation of the impact of projects. Research has been approved to take place during 2025. We will ask children and families about their experience of changes we are testing.

The Programme Team recently had a follow up independent assurance review in January 2025, which provided a good delivery confidence outcome, feedback about good practice in the programme and recommendations to further strengthen the approach.





# SPOTLIGHT ON ... LOOKING AHEAD - PREPARING FOR CHANGE IN SCRA

We know change is on the horizon with a number of external drivers.

A key focus for 2024/2025 has been getting change ready.

One of the aims in our Business Plan is 'greater change capability and capacity across the organisation'. To take this forward, a Change Team has been created to support good, planned and managed, well communicated and supported change. Their role is to ensure smooth transitions as we adopt new ways of working.

The Change Team work with each of our Localities to understand their current state, their readiness, how 'close' they are to the areas of project work and test – and thus what it would take to implement – and what supports they would need to move from current to future state.

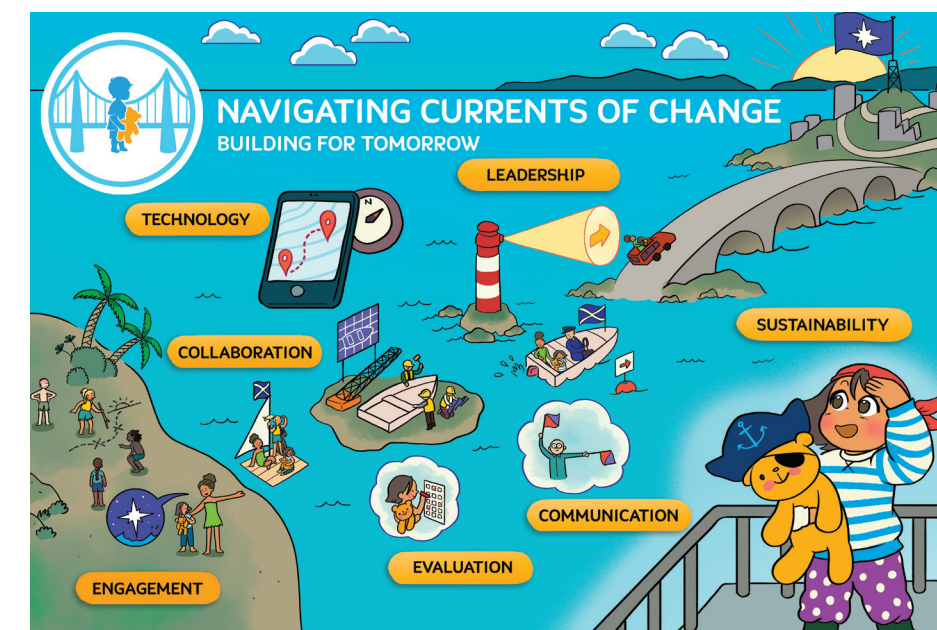
A Change Strategy has been approved which is supported by a Communication Strategy. A Business Change Manager is in place and is working closely with Project Managers and SCRA's Organisational Development Team ahead of implementation of any changes.

We know that an engaged staff group is essential to successful delivery of change. The Change Team are sharing updates and seeking feedback over multiple channels, and experimenting with new options such as podcasts to reach all of our people.

The Programme Team and Change Team have undertaken extensive learning and development to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to deliver change which is evaluated and can evidence benefits and to build confidence in our ability as an organisation to adapt, respond and create change, improving the way that we work and deliver our service.

Ensuring that our people are skilled and confident is critical to successful change – both in identifying, developing and implementing the change, and in working to it.

As we move forward with change and improvement to our service delivery, a key part of our Change Strategy is staff learning and development to support new ways of working which the Operational Development Team have a key role in supporting.



We recognise that change management is a key leadership skill and are supporting our managers to have the skills and knowledge to lead change confidently.



## PROGRAMME 3- PROTECT PRACTICE

In 2024/2025, the Practice Team provided the full range of practice activities to support Reporters in their day to day work. This included giving support and advice to localities throughout the year, developing practice materials, delivering practice training, managing cases in the higher courts, and working with partner agencies at a national level.

The two major areas of new activity in 2024/25 related to the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 (the UNCRC Act) and new practice training on harmful sexual behaviour.

A major part of the work on the UNCRC Act related to our approach to article 12 of the UNCRC - giving children who have been referred the opportunity to provide their views on the decision the Reporter will take, and for those views to be taken into account. This involved amendments to practice direction, a new practice note on the act, the development of practice training and working with other teams on related digital and operational changes.

The new practice training on harmful sexual behaviour was rolled out during the year. This was mandatory training for all Reporters with the required degree of experience. This 3 day course included sections on messages from research, Reporters' decision making, criminal evidence, drafting, and support for witnesses in proof proceedings, including protections against certain questioning.

Other practice materials produced during the year included revised practice notes on relevant and collateral evidence and sections 173 – 175 of the 2011 Act, and schedule 1 offences involving physical injury to a child. Both were revised to reflect recent decisions from appeal courts.

Practice Notes provide practical support to Reporters in relation to aspects of their work,

for example in explaining the law on a topic or providing style wording to be used in a document.

In addition, the team published revisions of 2 significant practice directions, one on relevant persons and the other on appeals.

As well as the harmful sexual behaviour training, we delivered the full schedule of core practice training and more specialised training through the year. Although some of this training was delivered remotely online, most was in-person. In total during the year, we delivered 53 full days of in-person training and 4 half days of online training to Reporters and assistant Reporters. The Practice Team also supported locality-led training and practice sessions on request.

Ten cases in the higher courts concluded during the year. Significant issues raised in these cases included questions relating to relevant persons and the hearsay evidence of an expert witness.

Of those that concluded, 3 were initiated by us – but we did not proceed with the appeals in any of them. Of the other 7, one appeal was refused after a full hearing, 2 were allowed after we did not oppose them, and the remainder were abandoned by the appellants. There was one judicial review.

Law Reports were published to support Reporter awareness and knowledge of developments in the case law, including cases involving the Principal Reporter and relevant cases in external proceedings.

We continued to be engaged in improvement work at a national level with partner agencies, including Police Scotland, the Scottish Government, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Children's Hearings Scotland and social work services. This work involved a wide range of subject matter, including the review of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019, the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, jointly reported cases, joint investigative interviewing, and restorative justice. We regularly delivered national external training to the police and joint investigative interviewers.

## OUR RESEARCH

The Research Team has conducted three pieces of primary research in the last 12 months. These have focussed upon understanding: the ethics, rights and legalities of using Artificial Intelligence (AI) within the Children's Hearings System; the nature of serious offences that are committed by children aged 12-15 years old and how these are addressed by the Children's Hearings System; perceptions around how the rights of children who harm and those who have been harmed by children should be balanced within the provision of victim information and supports. Data for each of the studies are currently being analysed.

Findings from all of the studies will be in the public domain by the end of 2025. It is anticipated that findings from these studies will contribute to a number of legislative and policy areas, including: Scotland's use of ethical, transparent and inclusive AI; the parliamentary review of the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland; the formation of a single point of contact for victims of offences; and the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) act 2024.

The Research Team has also provided research and evaluation support for a number of service improvement activities being undertaken by Programme Protect and the Digital Team.

This programme of work has included: the gathering and analysis of SCRA staff opinions related to the testing of Child Friendly Scheduling, the Keeping the Promise Commitment Standards and the joint operational test; an evaluation and cost-benefit analysis of AI-based transcription tools for the transcription of research materials, including an assessment of equality and bias; gathering and analysis of information from SCRA staff on the Role of the Reporter to inform the process of modernising the Reporter job description; and understanding barriers to effective, timely and appropriate referrals as part of the Referral Patterns and Planning project.

In addition to these activities, the Research Team has also supported desk research for both



programme protect and the practice team to help promote evidence-based practice and decision-making. Evidence gathered from these reviews have been included within the recently introduced children in conflict with the law course for Reporters, as well as a workshop conducted by Programme Protect to explore barriers to children and families understanding statements of grounds.

## DIGITAL ENABLEMENT

At SCRA, we are committed to designing digital services that enhance the experience of children, young people and families, while also improving the tools and systems our staff rely on. Our digital enablement efforts this year have focused on innovation, collaboration, and efficiency - ensuring that technology supports both service delivery and internal operations.

### Enhancing the Hearings experience

We are developed and delivered and are also testing several digital tools aimed at improving how children and families engage with the Hearings System:

- Electronic Paper Sharing: A proof of concept for securely sharing Hearing papers electronically with children and families has been developed and is ready for testing.
- Texting (SMS): Also, being tested, we have developed the capability to send text messages to children, young people and families, to consider



how we offer more ways of communication around the arrangement and attendance at Hearings.

- **Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC):** Together with our partners we are investing in new ways to store and share different forms of media, to establish richer forms of expressing information and views through video or audio for example.

- **Hearings Room Technology:** Free WiFi and the use of laptops is available to anyone attending a Hearing. We have upgraded to the latest generation of WiFi devices and continue to roll out the latest Audio Visual (AV) equipment, offering a higher quality and more inclusive experience of Virtual Hearings.

- **Chronology of Decisions and Reasons:** We have developed a process to extract the key information from historic Records of Proceedings, that we intend to use to reduce the size of Hearing papers and present only the relevant historical decisions and reasons from amongst all the lengthy procedural and administrative information.

### Improving internal systems

We continue to enhance our internal systems to support staff and streamline operations:

- **Artificial Intelligence:** As mentioned earlier in this Reporter, several of the new digital capabilities we are testing use Artificial Intelligence (AI) in an ethical and rights-respecting way, focusing on speeding up and reducing the complexity of processes. We are committed to our staff continuing to be the decision makers regarding all the information we receive, but aim to remove the unnecessary steps and labour, that currently extends the time to reach their conclusions.

- **Child Concern Reports Integration:** We are testing AI technology that can read information received in reports and save staff time from keying data and carrying out unnecessary processing steps, allowing them more quickly to get the relevant information and respond.

- **Lean Waste Assessment:** 'Lean' is a specific way to understand the way processes, people and systems

work together to achieve improved efficiency and effectiveness. We completed this analysis, identifying non-disclosure and court work as priority areas for improvement.

- **New Redaction Tool:** Non-disclosure is an important protection to children, where specific information is legally withheld from identified persons, and we use a 'redaction' tool that removes this information from other material we must legally share. We have been evaluating a new tool.

- **Calendar App:** Hearings are complex with lots to manage and consider in terms of arrangement and attendance. We have developed an application that pulls together all the relevant threads on information into a single view and rolled this out nationally in November 2024, enhancing scheduling and management of Hearings.

### Looking ahead

We have made significant progress in delivering key digital developments during this business plan period. Projects such as electronic paper sharing, redaction, SMS (text) notifications, and DESC are advancing well, with further stages planned for the coming year. Our digital strategy remains focused on improving the experience for children and families, while also driving internal efficiency. Continued engagement with users and staff ensures that our digital solutions are practical, inclusive, and impactful.

## OUR PROPERTY

Our buildings need to be safe, suitable and appropriate for everyone who uses them.

During 2024/25, we have continued with our programme of investment in our estate to ensure that both our Hearing centres and our offices continue to support our operational requirements. We have taken the experience of previous years, and built on this work to complete further internal reconfiguration work to support physical and hybrid Hearings, as well as improvements to workspaces to support staff flexibility.

We have also continued with our programme of large scale repair and maintenance projects following on from condition surveys completed in previous years.

Hearing facilities are central to the delivery of our services and property is one of our largest areas of expenditure. Over the last decade, we have rolled out a programme of improvements to our Hearing rooms, removing the large tables and introducing much more family-centred furniture and layouts. With the exception of Lerwick, which will be completed in 2025/26, every property on our estate now has at least one modern Hearing room.

This year, we took a decision to review what we have achieved, and how we would want to go forward in the future. In anticipation of undertaking a major project to the Glasgow Hearing centre, a firm of designers were appointed following a procurement exercise, to carry out a comprehensive consultation exercise with stakeholders in the Children's Hearings System, and to produce a new design blueprint for not only the Hearing room, but the whole of the Hearing suite including waiting rooms and receptions. Following the receipt of several hundred responses, and a number of focus group meetings, the outcome was the production of a new set of Hearing centre design standards which will be used as the basis for a new programme of improvements over the next few years.

Using the principles in the new design standards, the designers have completed a comprehensive redesign of the Hearing centre in Glasgow, and work commenced in March 2025 to completely remodel the ground and first floor Hearing centre. This will provide four new Hearing rooms along with new waiting, reception and toilet facilities. The Glasgow Hearings centre was created over 20 years ago and the majority of the mechanical and electrical installations that provide heating and ventilation are life expired. Replacement of this equipment with a modern energy efficient system increased the overall cost of the project but is entirely in line with the requirement to work towards net zero objectives.



We have also continued our focus of improving our working environments for staff, continuing the themes that we have developed, from previous schemes in locations such as Hamilton and Edinburgh. Building on our agile working policy, we have sought to reimagine space by providing different work settings for staff, and improved facilities for virtual Hearings and meetings.

In our Aberdeen office, a smart working project has created a modern flexible workspace by removing the bulk filing system, reducing the number of workstations and reconfiguring the available floor space. Improvements include the creation of new meeting spaces, virtual Hearing booths, wellbeing spaces and the provision of new furniture including a number of sit/stand desks.

In our Greenock and Inverness properties, we have initiated smart working projects involve works to create modern flexible workspaces that includes the creation of new meeting spaces, virtual Hearing booths, wellbeing spaces and the provision of new office furniture. The design proposal brings staff together within the workspace and through the adoption of smart working and agile principles it allows additional facilities to be created by reducing desk numbers and sharing use of resources. Design work completed in 2024/25 and physical work on both projects was completed in the first quarter of 2025/26.



Following on from the works in 2023/24 to the operational offices in Glenrothes, the second phase of the project continued on the first floor to upgrade the poor quality vacant space and create four new separately lettable offices. These units are now on the market to let through our appointed agent.

We continue to review the use of our estate, and wherever possible seek to find tenants for our surplus space. We have this year created additional good quality lettable space in Glenrothes, and we continue to look for opportunities share with other public sector bodies, or to generate income from our surplus property.

The next planned project is Dundee. The building was constructed by SCRA in 2005 and was configured to meet the workplace requirements of that time.

A number of building components have reached end of life and the space is significantly underutilised.

During 2024/25 a procurement exercise was completed to appoint architects and interior designers to develop a project to upgrade the workspaces and key building systems. The initial design work is now complete and detailed design and tendering will commence to progress comprehensive works to the building.

This includes reconfiguring how SCRA uses the office spaces to free up a floor of the building for leasing. Along with this the ground floor entrance and reception are being redesigned to accommodate shared use with a tenant of the lettable space. All staff will be accommodated on one floor following the smart working approach successfully adopted in SCRA's other offices.

Modern, flexible workspaces will be provided with sufficient meeting, breakout and shared spaces. The first floor of the building will provide additional flexible space for training, meetings and extra Hearing space capacity. The existing windows are approaching end of life and perform poorly

compared with modern replacements. Complete replacement of windows will improve the thermal and environmental performance of the building. Upgrading of heating and air handling systems are similarly planned to improve energy efficiency.

We have continued our programme of producing condition surveys to inform major repair and maintenance projects. We completed works to the fabric of our buildings in Fraserburgh, Selkirk and Bellshill, and our building surveyors have carried out surveys of Dumbarton, Greenock and Paisley with a view to completing projects in 2025/26.







# SPOTLIGHT ON ... HEARING CENTRE DESIGN STANDARDS

In 2024 we invited Hearings-experienced young people, partners from across the Children's Hearings System and our staff to take part in a series of design workshops.

The aim of the workshops was to create a new set of design standards for our Hearing centres across Scotland.

We worked with Hearings-experienced young people including:

- Children and young people from Glasgow children's houses
- Proud2Care
- Our Hearings, Our Voice
- Multiple internal and external stakeholders (including SCRA's Voice of Experience Reference Group, Panel Members, SCRA staff from across the organisation, Neurodiversity specialists, and Speech and Language Therapists).

The workshops were facilitated by architects, who were appointed following a procurement exercise.

They were supported by members of our Hearing room improvement project team which consists of colleagues from a range of areas, including property, operations, digital and participation. The consultation sessions found that the need for safe

and inclusive environments extended beyond the Hearing room to the whole Hearing centre.

Our new Hearing Centre Design Standards were launched in March 2025 and are built around eight key principles:

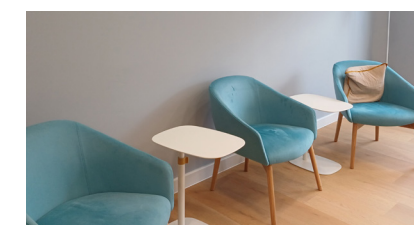
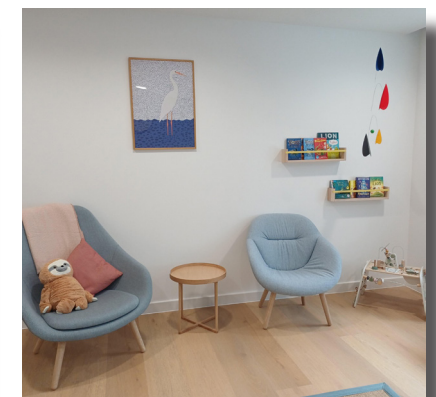
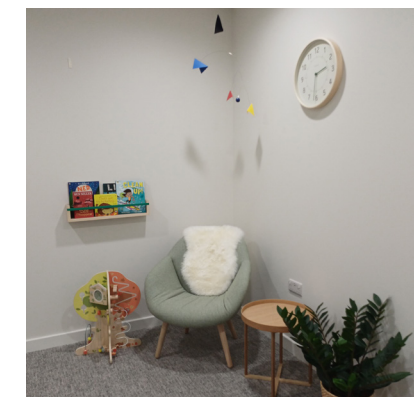
1. Welcoming
2. Caring
3. Safe
4. Trauma-informed
5. Calming
6. Non-institutional
7. Green
8. Sustainable

The new standards reflect the need for trauma-informed designs and draw on the feedback from multiple participants taking part in the consultation, as well as elements of the designs used in the Bairns' Hoose houses.

The designs also suit or can be easily adapted for neurodivergent people or those with physical disabilities. The standards also ensure our Hearing Centres are flexible and future-proofed, designed to help children and young people of all ages to participate effectively.

The process to develop the new standards was a significant undertaking, but we are confident they will support and enhance the work of our staff to create a welcoming, supportive and accessible environment for everyone coming to Hearings.

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in the consultation sessions. We hope you see that your views are reflected in the final standards.





# OUR STATISTICS IN 2024/25





# OUR BOARD IN 2024/25

SCRA operates under the direction of an eight person Board. As a Non-Departmental Public Body, SCRA's Board - although acting independently - is ultimately accountable to Scottish Ministers, and Board Members are appointed by Ministers.

Our Board Members reflect a wide range of experiences and backgrounds in relation to children and young people. The Board plays a significant role in setting the strategic direction of SCRA, and in challenging the organisation to ensure we deliver our plans.

More information about our Board, including a full Register of Board Members' Interests, can be found on our website at [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)

Here are details about our Board Members at 31 March 2025:

## Chair:

Cathie Cowan (appointed 2024)

## Board Members:

Kay Barton (appointed 2021)

Lynne Clow (appointed 2024)

James Edgar (re-appointed 2021)

Lorraine Moore (appointed 2021)

Steve Renwick (appointed 2024)

Hazel Smith (appointed 2022)

Ying Zhang (appointed 2022)





# LOOKING AHEAD

NEIL HUNTER, PRINCIPAL REPORTER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

2024/25 has been another exciting and challenging year for SCRA. Our commitment to Keeping the Promise and making progress with the Hearings System Working Group recommendations has led to a series of important and stimulating projects emerging, as well as a real commitment from SCRA staff to testing new ways of working and delivering our important statutory service to children and young people. We remain absolutely committed to keeping the detail and the spirit of The Promise and Hearings for Children and we are very aware of the work being done in the background on what has become known as the Promise Bill.

But we also understand that much change does not require legislation, rather commitment and energy for change and improvement for children and young people involved in the Hearings System – and that's where we will be putting so much of our work in 2025/26. We have welcomed and comprehensively responded to the range of consultations which have a feature of the last few years. This ensures everyone with an interest in Scotland's Hearings System to have their say. I'm very conscious that we have been over 5 years in a state of review and examination.

Whilst it is important we get the next few stages right, it's equally important that we end this prolonged and uncertain period of inward looking and move forward with certainty and confidence. In 2025/26 we expect to finally implement the Children's (Care and Justice) Act. Amongst all the review and examination this remains SCRA's primary focus for next year. The Act is a fundamental piece of the jigsaw to ensure Scotland is compliant with UNCRC and that children under 18 can access the

protections and support of the Hearings System when they need it.

This is a massive operational challenge for SCRA and we will embark on the biggest recruitment in our organisation for over a decade. Whilst this is welcome, we remain in a year on year extremely difficult financial position that must be stabilised. Nonetheless the safety and continuity of our service remains paramount and that will guide me and the senior team of SCRA over the next year.

Our SCRA staff remain our most valuable and precious asset, every day working hard on behalf of children and young people. We have been working hard in the background on a review of the Children's Reporter Job Description and we hope to complete and implement this in 2025/26. The last time we reviewed this was over 15 years ago and we are keen to ensure that the range of critical roles the Children's Reporter plays in the Hearings System are reflected in a contemporary way which narrates the range of skills and qualities this job entails.

To our Hearings System partners, I very much look forward to working with you again in 2025/26 – we have significant plans to refresh and strengthen some of our key partnerships over this next year to ensure the Hearings System works in a truly collaborative way for children and young people in Scotland.



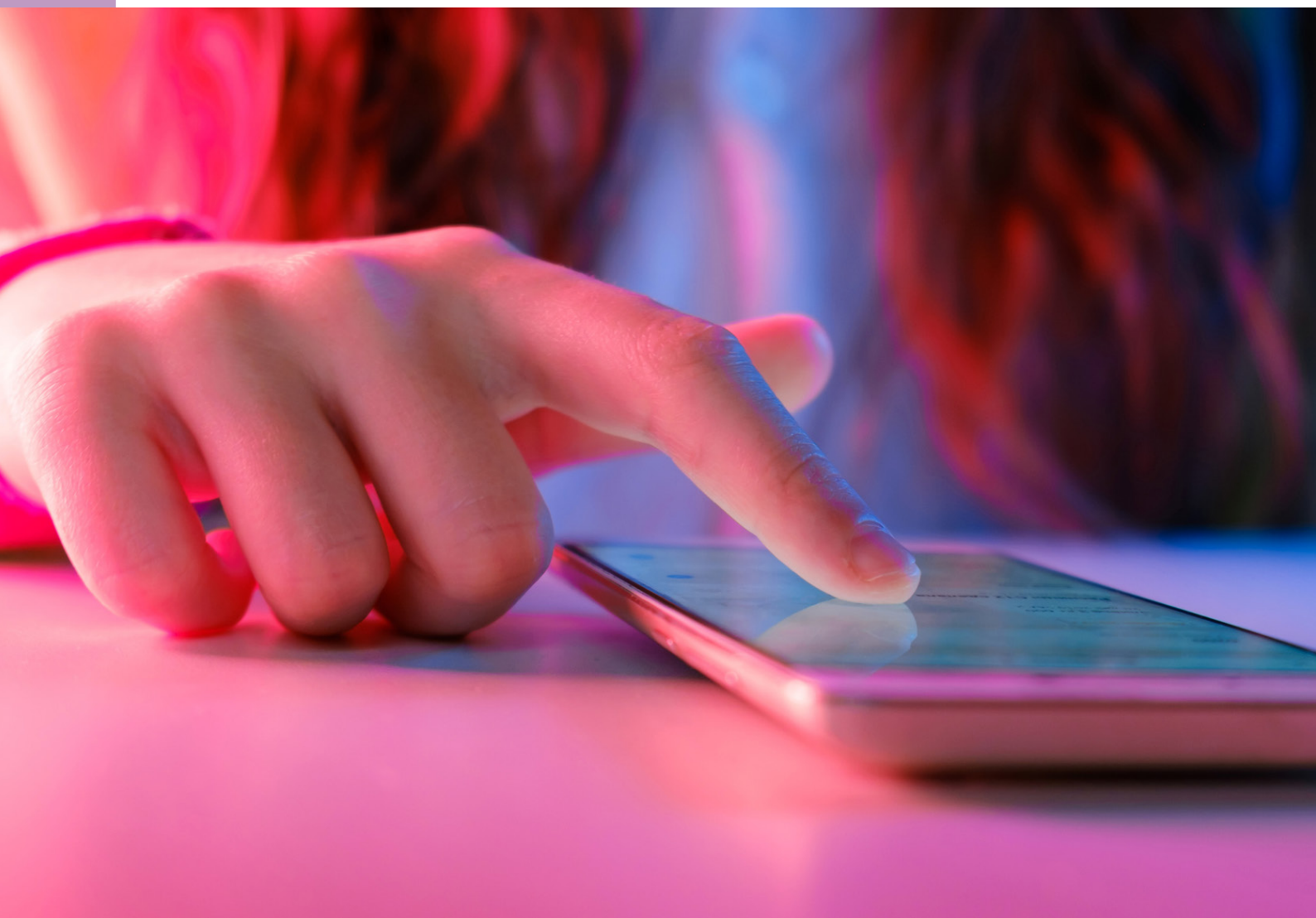




PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2025

---

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



**SCRA BOARD**

25 September 2025

**Agenda Item 11.1 Financial Forecast Outturn 2025/26****Report Classification:** Open**For:** Information**Executive Sponsor:** Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources**Author:** Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

---

**Executive Summary**

This report provides a summary of SCRA's financial position for financial year to date (YTD) and a forecast from budget leads (based on July results) for the year ending 31 March 2026.

SCRA has received £5.3m additional budget at ABR, effectively halving the budget deficit of £10.6m present at the start of the year.

A modest revenue underspend of £0.17m is currently forecast, with budget holders being discouraged from targeting savings where this comes at the expense of service delivery. However, this forecast remains at risk of changing significantly, depending on pay outcomes, the review of the Reporter job description, the timing of CCJA implementation and the achievability of recruitment plans.

Currently, capital plans are on target.

Frequent and open dialogue continues with Scottish Government (SG) to ensure the in-year budget pressure is resolved timeously, as in previous years.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to note the revenue and capital positions for the year to date and latest forecasts.

**Key Issues to be discussed/considered**

Further detail on the year to date position and forecast is contained in Appendix 1 but there are no concerns at this point in the year regarding funding availability, underspend, or achievability of SCRA's planning objectives.

**Implications:****Service**

N/A

**Financial**

The forecast indicates that all current activity is within financial plans.

**Workforce**

N/A

**Infrastructure including Digital**

N/A

**Information Governance**

N/A

**Risk Assessment/Management**

Regular budget monitoring and reporting, and dialogue with SG, are key mitigations against the financial sustainability risk on SCRA's Strategic Risk Register.

**Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

Spend and forecasts are broadly in line with the Board-approved budget which supported SCRA's corporate and strategic objectives.

**Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process.

Further to evaluation it is noted:

Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

**Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Budget holders

Executive Management Team members

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Background and further detail

## Appendix 1

### 1 Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Government (SG) allocated SCRA revenue funding of £24.318m for 2025/26 in its budget published on 4 December 2024. However, Deputy Directors of Children's Rights, Protection and Justice Brian Taylor and Ian Donaldson acknowledged in their budget allocation and monitoring (BAM) letter of 28 March 2025 to the Principal Reporter that "expenditure this financial year could be up to £34.92m". This effectively acknowledges an unfunded resource pressure of up to £10.6m and, given repeated assurances from the Director of Children and Families Andrew Watson to the Board, the Board duly approved a revenue budget of £34.92m on this basis in March 2025. While SCRA will seek to make in-year savings to mitigate some of the pressure, the remaining budget pressure will be resolved, as in previous years, in two tranches: Autumn Budget Revision (ABR) in August 2025 and Spring Budget Revision (SBR) in early 2026.
- 1.2 At ABR, SCRA received £5.287m additional budget, £0.287m of which was specifically to cover 60% of the projected increase in employer's NICs that SCRA faces.
- 1.3 SG allocated SCRA £4.2m of capital funding for 2025/26. The Board approved a £4.2m capital budget in March 2025.

### 2 Revenue

- 2.1 The table below summarises the position to 31 August 2025 by expense head. Previous year's actuals have now been audited. Depreciation is a non-cash charge and is excluded from the expenditure tables throughout. Payments in respect of unfunded pensions are also excluded.

Previous Full Year Actual £000	Expense Head	Budget Year to August £000	Actual Year to August £000	Variance Year to August £000	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Forecast Variance £000	Forecast Variance %
24,655	Staff Costs	11,791	10,695	-1,096	28,298	27,825	-473	-1.7%
2,457	Property Costs	1,049	695	-354	2,517	2,497	-20	-0.8%
203	Travel Costs	78	68	-10	186	195	+9	+4.8%
3,148	Other Operating Charges	1,310	1,007	-303	3,145	3,360	+215	+6.8%
159	Capital Financing	68	59	-9	163	163	+0	+0.0%
-244	Other Income	-108	-94	+14	-259	-160	+99	-38.2%
<b>30,378</b>	<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>14,188</b>	<b>12,430</b>	<b>-1,758</b>	<b>34,050</b>	<b>33,880</b>	<b>-170</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>
334	Lease payments	112	131	+19	675	675	+0	+0.0%
-30,130	Grant In Aid	-14,550	-13,400	+1,150	-34,920	-34,920	+0	+0.0%
<b>582</b>	<b>Net Total for SCRA</b>	<b>-250</b>	<b>-839</b>	<b>-589</b>	<b>-870</b>	<b>-1,040</b>	<b>-170</b>	

- 2.2 Year to date revenue expenditure is £1,758k under budget. On staff, this continues to be due to costs associated with Children (Care and Justice) Act (CCJA) implementation being back-ended, a partly-outstanding pay award, and

vacancies. Many ICT costs and some Property costs are also billed in arrears, resulting in YTD underspends that are forecast to reverse by year end.

- 2.3 The table below summarises the position to 31 August 2025 by budget centre, excluding depreciation, lease payments and unfunded pensions.

Previous Full Year Actual £000	Cost centre	Budget Year to August £000	Actual Year to August £000	Variance Year to August £000	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Forecast Variance £000	Forecast Variance %
250	Communications	126	104	-22	302	277	-25	-8.3%
11,577	East and Central Scotland Area	5,180	4,887	-293	12,431	12,423	-8	-0.1%
264	Executive	114	104	-10	274	269	-5	-1.8%
8,431	North West Scotland Area	3,888	3,608	-280	9,332	9,387	+55	0.6%
1,777	Practice and Policy	1,149	681	-468	2,758	2,359	-399	-14.5%
7,813	Support Services	3,730	3,046	-684	8,953	9,166	+213	2.4%
<b>30,112</b>	<b>Net Total for SCRA</b>	<b>14,187</b>	<b>12,430</b>	<b>-1,757</b>	<b>34,050</b>	<b>33,881</b>	<b>-169</b>	<b>-0.5%</b>

- 2.4 The forecast spend by locality is detailed below.

Locality	Variance Year to May £000	Forecast Variance to March £000	Variance %
East & Central Scotland Office	-13	+8	-2.1%
Tayside And Fife Locality	-55	-6	-2.0%
South East Locality	-62	-60	-2.8%
Central Locality	-50	+57	-2.6%
Lanarkshire Dumfries & Galloway Locality	-54	-56	-1.8%
Ayrshire Locality	-59	+49	-3.0%
North West Area Office	+9	+96	+1.7%
Highlands And Islands Locality	-70	-22	-4.6%
Grampian Locality	-41	+36	-2.6%
North Strathclyde Locality	-55	+12	-1.9%
Glasgow Locality	-121	-66	-4.4%
	<b>-571</b>	<b>+48</b>	<b>-2.6%</b>

- 2.5 Many of the locality underspends forecast earlier in the year have now reversed. Although the spends forecast above in 2.4 are ambitious, and may drop back as the year unfolds, this evidences the success of the new approach in 2025/26 where local managers no longer have a savings target to achieve, and instead are actively encouraged to recruit promptly to vacancies to mitigate the risk of service detriment. This is especially promoted where the recruitment is to front-line posts that would have soon been recruited to as part of CCJA-readiness anyway. Fixed term contracts continue to be used where appropriately, in order to manage the risk of starting 2026/27 with commitments that will be challenging to meet.



- 2.6 The forecast overspend forecast in Other Operating Charges in 2.1 relates to network charges from Scottish Government.
- 2.7 Currently SCRA is forecasting to spend around £0.5m of the £0.9m set aside for CCJA implementation, due to the increasing likelihood of a CCJA implementation date later than 1 April 2026. This accounts for the majority of the £473k forecast underspend on staffing in 2.1.
- 2.8 The budget approved by the Board in March included some provision for costs arising as a result of the Review of Reporter Job Description. The forecast above assumes this provision, and no more, will be spent. The forecast will be updated once the outcome of the review is settled.
- 2.9 Members are reminded that Jenny Gilruth MSP wrote to chairs of public bodies and CEOs on 23 August 2024, asking SCRA to:
- use underspends to support the wider financial position rather than repurpose them for new work, and
  - implement further controls on discretionary spending including pausing external recruitment, unless there are essential operational reasons to prevent this.
- 2.10 Dialogue between SG Finance, Sponsor Team and SCRA remains frequent and transparent to ensure SCRA can meet this request without risking SCRA's fulfilment of its core duties. SCRA continues to report forecasts to SG as part of the monthly budget monitoring process, in addition to monthly staffing data.

### **3 Capital**

- 3.1 Capital spend to August 2025 is £1,413k, being £363k within the Digital programme (principally CSAS Development) and £1,050k within the Property programme (principally Glasgow). Both the Head of Property and Head of Digital currently forecast to spend out on their budgets, although members should note that £500k of the spend planned on the Dundee refurbishment project is now anticipated to fall into 2026/27, and there is the prospect of a capital receipt within 2025/26 if the sale of Lochgilphead premises to Highland and Island Enterprise completes before 1 April as planned. Both the Head of Property and Head of Digital continue to develop contingency plans should opportunities arise to bring forward future spending in order to optimise use of 25/26 resource.



## SCRA BOARD

Date of Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Agenda number 11.3 Annual Accounts 2024-25 & Management Representation Letter**

**Report Classification:** *Open*

**For:** *Approval*

**Executive Sponsor:** *Principal Reporter/Chief Executive*

**Author:** *Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources*

### Executive Summary

*This report presents the draft 2024/25 annual accounts for the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, following completion of the external audit by Audit Scotland.*

*It summarises the key financial outcomes, audit findings and accounting issues identified during the year, and includes the proposed Independent Auditor's Report and standard Letter of Representation (ISA 580).*

*The Board is invited to approve these documents.*

### Recommendation

The Board is invited to:

- Approve the 2024/25 annual accounts.
- Approve the Letter of Representation (ISA 580).

### Key Issues to be discussed/considered

- *Net expenditure before Scottish Government funding of £34.1 m against Grant in Aid of £30.6 m*
- *Pension Reserve surplus of £26.0 m; IFRS recognition limits create a £2.3 m liability at year end*
- *General Fund deficit increased from £18.9 m to £19.7 m due to non-cash charges: pension service cost, pension net interest and depreciation in excess of capital GiA*
- *Operating expenditure for 2024/25 was £1.7 m below budget, driven by vacancies and lower-than-expected headcount costs*
- *Audit Scotland issued unqualified opinions and made recommendations in three areas:*
  - *Capital works revaluation approach*
  - *Timing of shared ICT cost recoveries with CHS*
  - *Depreciation calculation for leasehold improvements*
- *Controls to address these issues are being strengthened and prior year recommendations on WGA reporting and Performance Report structure are now complete*

**Implications:****Service**

N/A

**Financial**

N/A

**Workforce**

N/A

**Infrastructure including Digital**

N/A

**Information Governance**

N/A

**Risk Assessment/Management**

*A detailed risk assessment has been carried out and recorded in the Strategic Risk Register under the risk category “Financial Governance and Reporting.” Key risks and mitigation actions are as follows:*

- *Material misstatement in the financial statements: mitigated through Audit Scotland’s external audit, corrective adjustments in the 2024/25 accounts, and the implementation of additional review controls.*
- *Non-compliance with accounting standards (IFRS/FReM): addressed by updating the accounting policy for capital works revaluations and providing refresher training to finance staff.*
- *Timing of shared ICT cost recoveries: resolved by strengthening the month-end close timetable and formalising the cost-allocation process with CHS.*
- *Depreciation calculation errors for leasehold improvements: eliminated via revised calculation templates and dual-sign-off procedures.*

*All actions are tracked through the AAC’s audit action log and will be monitored in quarterly governance updates. Residual risk is assessed as low.*

**Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

- *Supports rigorous financial governance and accountability*
- *Demonstrates commitment to delivering best value through transparent reporting*
- *Aligns with Board objectives on sustainable resource management and risk mitigation*

**Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty. Screening completed – no discrimination noted.

**Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

- *Executive Management Team*
- *External Auditors (Audit Scotland)*
- *Audit and Assurance Committee*

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts

Appendix 2 – Proposed Independent Auditor's Report and Letter of Representation (ISA 580)

# **2024/2025 Annual Report and Accounts**



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



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Performance Report</b>	
1.1	Performance Overview	3
1.2	Performance Analysis	14
<b>2</b>	<b>Accountability Report</b>	
2.1	Director's Report	36
2.2	Statement of Accountable Officer's Responsibilities	39
2.3	Governance Statement	40
2.4	Remuneration and Staff Report	49
2.5	Parliamentary Accountability Report	60
2.6	Independent Auditor's Report	61
<b>3</b>	<b>Financial Statements</b>	
3.1	Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure	65
3.2	Statement of Financial Position	66
3.3	Statement of Cash Flows	67
3.4	Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity	68
3.5	Notes to the financial statements	69
	<b>Appendix</b>	
1	Direction by the Scottish Ministers	89

# 1. Performance Report

## 1.1 Performance Overview

### 1.1.1 Introduction

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is a national body focused on children and young people most at risk. SCRA was formed under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 ('the Act') and became fully operational on 1st April 1996.

The Children's Hearings System provides the operational setting in which SCRA and our partner agencies work. The aim is to provide a safety net for vulnerable children and young people, and deliver tailored solutions which meet the needs and rights of the individuals involved, while helping to build stronger families and safer communities.

**Our main responsibilities as set out in the Act are:**

- To facilitate the work of Children's Reporters;
- To deploy and manage staff to carry out that work;
- To provide suitable accommodation for Children's Hearings.

For more information about what we do and how we carry out our role visit [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk).

## 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 Strategic Aims

SCRA's 2024-27 Corporate Plan sets out four strategic aims.

## 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.



## Our Strategic Framework

The Corporate Plan's aims and objectives are delivered in the Business Plans by the supporting strategies and programme framework.

Strategies and action plans are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are fit for purpose. Reports are prepared for SCRA's Executive Management Team for review and are submitted to SCRA's Board on a quarterly basis for assurance – ahead of this, reports are now also reviewed by the newly introduced Planning and Performance Committee.

## 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 Care	Clear communications Connect	The Best Service Protect	People who Care Connect and Protect					
Our Delivery Framework	Our Corporate Plan Aims Our Business Plan Objectives Delivered through our Programme Framework - Care, Connect, Protect Supported by our organisational strategies								

### 1.1.2 Chief Executive's Foreword

Welcome to SCRA's 2024/25 Annual Report and Accounts, which reflects the first year of the 2024-27 Corporate Plan.

SCRA's Corporate Plan 2024-27 set out ambition and optimism for the next three years as the Hearings System goes through a period of change, making improvements to the way the system operates and delivers its service – to make the experience better for children, young people and families.

The Corporate 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.

The first year of that plan is the 2024/25 Business plan. This was agreed as a year focussed on improvement:

- testing, evaluating and planning for roll out of what has been evidenced to really work and make a difference
- internally to keep our processes lean and efficient, and externally to provide the best experience we can to children, young people and families
- better and clearer information, more say in how arrangements are made, better preparation for coming to hearings, new ways to support communication and participation.

The 2024/25 Business Plan incorporates ten high level objectives spanning across our four Strategic Aims of the Corporate Plan. These set out new activity or specific focus taking place in the year, in pursuit of the overall aims.

The KPI section within the Performance Analysis provides insight into the operational delivery of the critical core service that provides the foundation and backdrop to what we do as an organisation while at the same time attending to and striving for improvement.

Underpinning the delivery of all of this is the context of change – change in the external environment and change internally as we refine, prepare and plan for that. Managing change well requires a robust strategy and approach, financial stability, digital enablement and supported, skilled and motivated people.

### Approach to Change

- The first horizon of our Target Operating Model has been approved and communicated to staff to make the vision of the future really clear
- The approach to developing this model has undergone a second external assurance review with positive findings and supportive recommendations
- Further learning has taken place within the programme and change teams to support the wider staff group as change begins to roll out
- There has been a focus on benefits within the programme – to direct and promote the change ahead – ensuring that data is being identified and collected to support decision-making
- Evidence based decision making has been key to the approach being taken, ensuring that reasons are clear for doing things differently
- The programme team, digital team and operational development teams are working closely and collaboratively to ensure joint planning, dependency mapping and cohesive rollouts



## Digital Enablement

- Improvements to the Case Management System have been made to ensure that the system is in a stable, steady state ahead of change and improvement
- Key to this has been Lean Waste Assessment – highlighting key areas of focus to draw out efficiencies, decrease complexity and enhance ease of the user experience
- Exploration and testing of a new redaction tool to support a critical element of SCRA's work has been undertaken and evaluated for viability of adoption
- Introduction of a calendar app to the system to improve the way that Hearings are scheduled and managed – a key efficiency for staff
- Digital Training and Skills Development has been a rolling programme to support our people use and navigate our systems and new technology confidently

## Our People

- We focussed on bringing people together and the importance of connection – through our Management events, our Networks and in the ongoing locality engagement work with business partners and with the change team.
- The rollout of trauma training across the organisation gave further opportunities for teams to come together, to talk, to support and to develop – as well as to develop key skills and knowledge.
- Change requires resilience and resilience requires attention to wellbeing – and with this focus we:
  - delivered the first phase of resilience training to managers which focused on understanding resilience in leadership and looking at proactive strategies to develop personal resilience plans.
  - Trained the fourth cohort of Mental Health First Aiders, including UNISON representatives. We have 31 trained staff across a variety of roles and locations.
  - Supported many health and wellbeing awareness campaigns across the year including Mental Health Week, Time to Talk which encourages the power of conversation in supporting our mental health, collating resources to support Carer's Week, and a 31 day wellbeing calendar of resources in October.
  - Held our seventh walking challenge in May, encouraging connection and the health benefits of exercise and accessing nature – over a third of the workforce took part.
  - Followed up an open survey with our workforce in the autumn (aimed at helping to inform plans for wellbeing and health awareness topics) – with a focus on several topics including mental health, menopause, baby loss and sleep. The survey also informed events in November when we marked 'Movember' and raised awareness around some men's health issues including male cancers.
  - Training plans are being developed jointly across the organisation between HR, Programmes and Organisational Development – to ensure needs are identified, training is developed and it is rolled out in different modes and styles to support learning – confidence and skills development

## Moving forward

In October 2025, we will have reached the mid-point in our three year Corporate Plan and will be taking the opportunity to perform a critical analysis of its continued relevancy, our progress towards it, barriers, risks and issues to delivery.

We will undertake a further environmental analysis to support a look forward and will seek to undertake a robust assessment of priorities for delivery in the next period – to deliver what we have set out to, to embrace the change that is coming from external sources – and to be part of the planning and influence of how and when that lands to ensure the organisation is in the best possible place to deliver it.

The Business Plan 25/26 was published in May and seeks to further develop the progress made in 2024/25, developing the objectives – taking them into their next stage – working our way towards the second horizon of our Target Operating Model.

**Principal Reporter**  
**Neil Hunter**

### 1.1.3 Business Plan

SCRA's 2024-27 Corporate Plan sets out the strategic direction for the organisation under four aims.

- **The Best Experience**  
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**  
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**  
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.

These aims are actioned through three annual Business Plans – the first being 2024/25.

Ten key objectives were identified to describe the work to take place over the first year of the Corporate Plan. Section 1.2 Performance Analysis takes a more detailed look at each.

The Business Plan is managed through an online project system with dynamic live reporting. The action are all tracked, updated and reported to comprise a quarterly report to the Executive Management Team and to the Board to show progress, describe issues and identify risks.

Each objective contains multiple actions that sit across a range of organisational strategies and plans with a robust programme framework for delivery in place.

### 1.1.4 Performance Summary

Progress has been seen against each of the objectives in the Business Plan and a range of evidence and examples have been provided in section 1.2 below. Further work sitting alongside, around and supporting the delivery of these takes place within the organisational strategies, and through our core operating environment with each locality delivering that service, working with partners and supporting the organisation in delivery of its objectives through nine locality plans. SCRA is on an improvement journey along with the rest of the partners all working to deliver the care system in Scotland – and the Children’s Hearing System within that.

#### **Programmes**

In support of our ambition to improve the service and experience to children, young people and families – working within current resources and to current legislation, SCRA embarked on a plan to develop a Target Operating Model for the organisation – setting a vision for the future – at three different intervals, the first horizon by the end of 2024 – to stabilise the current process and working, a second horizon by 2027 to take on a programme of improvement within the current legislative context and then finally, a third horizon by 2030 – in line the Promise, to deliver the model and to implement the legislative change as set out by different Acts through Parliament.

Year one of the Corporate Plan 2024/27, the 2024/25 Business Plan, was predominantly focussed on testing and analysis working towards the development of the Target Operating Model and delivery of the first horizon.

Two external assurance reviews were carried out by Portfolio, Programme and Project Assurance (PPPA) within Scottish Government. Both were Gate zeros and both provided a positive level of assurance and findings at Amber/Green giving a confidence in successful delivery mindful of these. Assurance can be provided that work has been completed over the course of the year to respond to these.

Across the Business Plan work has progressed as planned however in most cases, the work described is part of an ongoing delivery – for example within the programme work, year one has been focussed on testing approaches, evaluating etc to inform decisions around further roll out. Similarly work on change has very much been around setting the conditions, understanding organisational readiness, identifying gaps and training needs in preparation for implementation over the years to come.

Across the legislative landscape this has been around engagement, collaboration and influencing – as well as preparation and planning in readiness for the future.

Work within Digital and Organisational Development has been around user requirements, mapping, elaboration and stabilisation in preparation for development.

It should be noted that there is a great bank of evidence forming around the effective joint work that is taking place across the organisation – between research and programmes, Digital and OD, Data and Policy – supporting more coordinated planning and implementation as well as providing a more robust decision making framework for planning and a cohesive governance structure to ensure alignment.

The research team worked closely with the project teams to support data collection and analysis – qualitative and quantitative. This allowed the project to identify what was working, what wasn't working and what they looked at changing for further testing.

#### **People**

People in SCRA are our greatest asset and are the experts in their field – through drawing on that expertise and by working collaboratively across the organisation, we have been able to deliver rich responses to external consultations, co-designed processes and new ways of working – have been open to testing and trying new things, utilising new skills – more relational working, our people have been integral to improvements to the ways that we connect with children and families, through letters, calls and language – and as an organisation it has been

critical to understand the skills, knowledge and development need to get us to the vision as set out for our people in the Target Operating Model.

A great achievement in the year has been the progress made in relation to trauma training, with all teams now trained in awareness and our approach and progress noted and commended by NES who we have been working closely with.

A key development that has taken place has been a full review of the Reporter Job Description. This describes the central role in the organisation and critical to the role going forward, was ensuring the job description was fully reflective of the role conducted – capturing the gravitas, the complexity and the breadth. This project was initiated, planned and successfully delivered in the year and was a great example of true engagement and consultation.

A second example of good, cross organisational collaboration is the consultation that took place across the summer of 2024 to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on Hearings Re-Design, potentially the most transformational proposals to changes in the Hearings System in over 50 years. SCRA conducted surveys, webinars, face to face sessions, brought Scottish Government to us, went to Scottish Government partnership sessions, workshopped ideas and ensured every member of staff that wanted to, could be involved. The complication, analysis and refinement led to the full and rich response submitted to Scottish Government in October 2024.

Externally we continue to fully engage with Scottish Government and remain key productive and positive partners to our system peers as we collectively navigate the change ahead.

Plans are in place to take the objectives forward into next year in the published Business Plan 2025/26 looking towards delivery of the second horizon of the Target Operating Model, rolling out successfully tested models of improvement and preparing for the implementation of legislative change.



### 1.1.5 Key Issues and Risks

The key strategic risks tracked throughout 2024/25, and a summary of their mitigations (controls and actions), are below. CSAS is SCRA's core case management system.

Risk	Mitigations
IT Security measures are insufficient to prevent a successful cyber-attack on SCRA case information which results in loss of data which cannot be recovered	Cyber Essentials Plus certification for SCOTS network Annual penetration testing of CSAS Cyber review against Scottish Public Sector Cyber Resilience Framework v1.2 Data Protection review CSAS support and maintenance contract controls Disaster recovery procedures Membership of Cyber-security Information Sharing Partnership (CiSP) Annual review of cyber security policy
The optimum model for CSAS ownership and accountability and a joint future partnership between SCRA and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) is not adequately defined and agreed	Digital Change Advisory Board (DCAB) Legal ownership agreed Audit testing of key systems and recommendations Digital Delivery Plan Licensing and software agreements Change Configuration Board (CCB) Shared investment profile between SCRA and CHS
SCRA does not maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce which can meet current demands and future needs	Workforce Planning and Resource Management Review Learning and Development Strategy and Review Agile working policy Agreed roles and responsibilities Focus on staff wellbeing in all plans People Strategy Alignment to SG Fair Work policy Digital Skills Survey and subsequent action plan Clear approach to change management
Significant policy, legislative and reform/transformation change agenda impacts on SCRA's ability to deliver core services or necessary change programmes	UNISON partnership framework SG dialogue and secondments to legislative programmes Membership of Hearings for Children Implementation Board Corporate and Business Plan priorities and budget Programme Board
Failure to progress Board approved Environmental plan and inability to accelerate plans to meet new targets	Annual Environmental reporting to Board and Scottish Government Sustainability review Strategic Sustainability Group Environmental Ambassadors Group Sustainability included in all locality plans and Business Plan Year-long environmental awareness campaign with monthly spotlights on different areas

Risk	Mitigations
Inability to engage with digital inhibits realisation of full potential of new technologies resulting in significant operational disruption	Virtual Hearings review People and Operational Plans DCAB and ongoing CSAS development Digital upskilling and confidence-building Operational Development team Digital Skills research formulating a digital skills strategy Locality Support Manager (LSM) Network
Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change	Board approval of budget Partnership with UNISON Sponsor Team support Remuneration Committee Scottish Government Pay Policy guidance Learning and Development Plan/Wellbeing Strategy Communications Strategy
2024/25 Scottish Government budget does not deliver required level of revenue funding with impact on ability to deliver a quality service to children and families and at the same time respond effectively to new legislative and policy pressures and drive the transformation and reform agenda*	5 year financial plan Regular budget reports to Board Audit reviews of financial sustainability arrangements Regular officer and Board dialogue with Ministers and Scottish Government (Director of Children and Families, Sponsor Team, Finance Business Partner) Continue to demonstrate and evidence SCRA's relevance to ministerial policy outcome ambitions and core statutory duties
High levels of uncertainty about the Hearings System which impacts our ability to plan, prepare and deliver change to meet our future needs	Good partnership-working model with Scottish Government in the lead up to any legislative change EMT and Leadership cohort Internal resources to assess the impacts of legislative change including Policy and Public Affairs Manager and Practice team Target Operating Model People Strategy Workforce Planning Programme Management Framework Change Manager and Change Strategy Communications and Engagement Strategy Regular engagement with Locality Management Teams and Head Office Managers Redesign Board Operational Development Team and Digital Champions

\* While the published 2024/25 Scottish Government budget did not meet SCRA's resourcing requirements, SCRA and Scottish Government collaborated to ensure required resources were in place during the year to delivery core services and prepare for policy and legislative change. Details of the risk management arrangements are set out in the Governance Statement in section 2.3.

## 1.2. Performance Analysis

### 1.2.1 Business Plan 2024/25

The following section provides further detail of the agreed Objectives set in the Business Plan 2024/25 with a summarised update of progress against each. SCRA's Board received quarterly updates against the objectives, and an annual round up in June. Additionally, the Board receive an annual progress report against the measures set out in the Corporate Plan – providing assurance of progress supported by data and evidence.

The below analysis sets the ten objectives against the Strategic Aim to which they relate.

#### **Aim 1 - The Best Experience**

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

**OBJECTIVE 1: Legislative Change and our Practice: We will fully prepare for changes to practice, policy and legislation through exploration, design, training and support and will seek to work with others through broader analysis and consultation.**

#### **Progress in year 1**

The policy landscape for children and public services that work for children in Scotland has built up over many years, and continues to expand. The Children's Hearings System, and within it SCRA, forms a key part of this landscape, with focus moving this year towards collaborative improvement and legislative and other reforms across the Children's Hearings System.

#### **Hearings Re-Design Consultation**

SCRA has been fully engaged with the Scottish Government (SG) in the Hearings System Re-Design consultation process and submitted a formal organisational response after broad internal consultation with staff. SCRA's full response can be found on our website.

Ongoing joint work with SG throughout the year to analyse consultation findings and assess likely policy direction has continued and SCRA is actively exploring options for both internal adaptation and system-wide reform, based on anticipated legislative outcomes.

There has been continued collaboration with SG and partners through the Hearings Re-Design Board, and the Multi-agency planning group. From these, four priority projects have been approved and are planned to be undertaken over the course of 2025/26.

#### **Children's Care and Justice(Scotland) Act 2024 (CCJA)**

SCRA has been working closely with SG and partners in relation to CCJA, in preparation for the proposed changes that still require to be implemented and the necessary planning required to support these. With dates still not confirmed, and specifically those around raising the age of referral, it is challenging to fully prepare for implementation, however internally early-stage work has begun to prepare. A project

team has now been stood up led by the Business and we are collaborating with our partners to support whole system preparation, continuing to consider how best to resource this change, and about the types of resource that may be needed. Front line partners continue to need a significant investment in services designed for 16 and 17 year old children.

## **Bairns Hoose**

The Bairns' Hoose movement in Scotland has again seen significant progress this year. SCRA staff are involved in national discussions and local authority discussions and planning as part of the Pathfinder Pilot sites to develop new houses. We are also involved as members of affiliated sites, looking at new ways of working.

**OBJECTIVE 2: Keeping the Promise together: We will test, evaluate and implement change to improve the Hearings System for people that are experiencing it now and use this to inform the transformational change of the future.**

## **Progress in year 1**

SCRA's is committed to working with our partners and transforming the Children's Hearings System in line with the Independent Care Review and The Promise. Our work focuses on rights, participation, trauma-informed practice, and systemic redesign to better support children, young people and families and being the best Corporate Parent we can be.

A number of key internal pieces of work are set out below – these are specific projects that are being tested, evaluated and rolled out. There is further work underway with partners in pursuit of Keeping the Promise as well as the extensive programme of internal training – trauma as referenced at Objective 10 as well as a range of skills based training around e.g. neurodiversity, BSL, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. This work has been promoted in external and internal communications and within our Keeping the Promise closure report published in February 2025.

### **Language that Cares**

The Language that Cares Project, was a multi-agency, co-designed project aiming to change the language used in and around the Children's Hearing System to prevent misunderstanding, distress or re-traumatising children.

The language guide had its external launch with key partners including Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV), Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) and SCRA. Our internal staff launch took place in June 2024 and has been followed up with team sessions to support embedding.

### **Child-friendly scheduling**

This is an approach to scheduling hearings that involves liaising with children and trusted professionals in advance to ascertain preferences for day, date and mode of hearing:

- Five operational tests of child-friendly scheduling were completed and evaluated by the Project Manager and Research Team.
- A comprehensive evaluation report was produced with recommendations to refine the process taking lessons from the different test sites.

- A new defined process was approved for further operational testing before full rollout (planned for 2025-2027).

The project also tested increasing the use of pre-hearing visits and tools to support participation in hearings this involved pro-actively inviting children and young people to a Pre-Hearing visit. To support their preparation, children and young people were also sent their own 'scrapbook' designed for and by young people from Our Hearings, Our Voice.

### **Keeping The Promise commitment standards**

This project focuses on speaking directly to families ahead of their hearing to ensure they are fully informed, supported and understand the process as well as making sure practical elements (for example, location of hearing centre, receipt of papers or travel expenses) are all taken care of. The objective is to promote better participation of parents and family members within Hearings by offering support to attend in a trauma informed way by recognising the central importance of relationships. Phase one has been evaluated and the project has delivered benefits to parents and families including addressing anxieties related to Hearings, providing practical support to overcome participation barriers and offering support and identifying children's support needs. When phase 2 is evaluated, the plan is to move towards a fuller rollout, based on a positive evaluation.

**Article 12** - This project aligned us to the UNCRC Incorporation Act, ensuring that children could contribute their views at referral, making this a consistent, proportionate operational process.

**Learning Leads** - Working with partners to develop a learning programme about the children's hearings system and role of the Reporter. Materials are being finalised for completion and launch in August.

**Early Engagement on Grounds** - This project has been exploring relational working practices, rights-based approaches to establishing grounds and its impact on children and families. Further work will continue into 2025/2026.

We are making sure that everything we test is fully evaluated, so we know it is definitely making a difference. Our Research team are undertaking an in-depth piece of research where children, young people and their families can tell us if and where they have seen changes and improvements. We are using this evidence to make changes to what we are testing and to learn lessons and refine processes e.g. early evaluation of child-friendly scheduling directed us away from direct engagement with children and young people, instead making contact through a link person. Similarly, feedback from young people about the scrapbooks being too babyish and aimed at younger children supported us to work with older young people to design a magazine format to promote with older children to support their preparation and participation.

### **Keeping The Promise Programme Closure and Transition**

- SCRA's Route Plan 2020-2024 for Keeping The Promise has now formally concluded with Projects either progressed to the next stage and are part of the target operating model programme, discontinued after evaluation, or were incorporated into Business as Usual.
- A closure paper was prepared and published [\[link\]](#).

SCRA's multi-layered work on Corporate parenting will continue across the organisation led by voice of experience and aligned with the target operating model.



## Aim 2 - Clear communications

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

**OBJECTIVE 3: Communications:** With children, young people and communication specialists, we will understand the types of communications that people need and the information, tools and language that supports this.

### Progress in year 1

Work has been taking place throughout the year, using innovative and inclusive approaches to create new easy read letters for children, young people and their parents to make sure they can be easily understood. This was a collaborative piece of work between SCRA's Operational Development team, digital team and programme team, with expertise from all roles across the organisation, voice of experience and a speech/language therapist to ensure the new letters are accessible and inclusive.

**OBJECTIVE 4: Digital Enablement:** With children, young people and families, we will design services and ways of interacting to give more options and help enhance the Hearings experience for everyone. With our people, we will deploy improvements to enhance the internal operating systems.

### Progress in year 1

#### Enhancing the Hearings Experience for Children, Young People and Families

- **Electronic Paper Sharing:**
  - A proof of concept (PoC) for sharing hearing papers electronically with children and families is built and ready for testing, but on hold pending risk assessment.
- **Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC):**
  - Development is **approximately 75% complete** and **on target** for delivery this year. Further stages are planned for the next business cycle.
- **Child Concern Reports Integration (AI):**
  - Discovery phase completed; **alpha testing** is planned with a locality in the final quarter. Around **75% of the planned scope** has been delivered.

#### Improvements to the Case Management System

- **CSAS Enhancements (Case Management System):**
  - Chronology of Decisions and Reasons: Development is 60% complete, progressing into testing.
  - Caseload Transfer Tool: In development to support case movement management.
  - Equalities Data Updates: Aligning with 2022 census and improving recording methods.
  - Task Management Enhancements: Improvements to categorisation and usability.
  - SMS Capability: Development complete, now in testing; 75% of scope delivered.
- **Lean Waste Assessment:**
  - Completed, highlighting non-disclosure and court work as priority areas.
- **Redaction Improvements (AI – Folding Space):**

- A smart redaction tool is in testing in Glasgow, though progress has been slowed by data hygiene issues. Around 60% of intended scope achieved.
- **SharePoint Strategy:**
  - Stage 1 implementation largely complete (90% of this year's scope), enabling better document indexing and court document management.
- **Calendar App:**
  - Rolled out nationally in November, improving Hearing scheduling and management. Project completed.

### Overall

- A number of key digital developments completed within this business plan period.
- Several areas (e.g., electronic paper sharing, AI redaction, SMS, and DESC) are progressing well, with next stages planned for the upcoming business year.
- Work remains firmly aligned with improving both user experience and internal efficiency, with continued engagement from children, families, and staff.

**OBJECTIVE 5: Data and Research: We will use data and research to evaluate, inform and influence to ensure that change and improvement has a firm base in evidence.**

### Progress in year 1

#### Policy Forecasting

For the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act (CCJA), data has been used to estimate, where possible, the impacts of the new legislation on the Hearing's system. This has been in the form of profiling the key areas of change, such as referral, Hearings and court to allow SCRA and the Scottish Government to provide the required resource for implementation. The profiles have been refreshed on an annual basis and this will again be done when the Official Statistics for 2024/25 have been compiled.

For Hearing's redesign, SCRA data has been heavily involved in providing analysis around what the different proposed changes will mean for ourselves and other stakeholders. It has also been used to help develop the financial memorandum including, for example, providing nuances around areas such as the number of cases which current require establishment at court purely due to the fact that the child is unable to understand the grounds. These specific pieces of analysis can help to refine a bill or act and provide confidence that proposals are based on the best available information.

#### Informed decision making

The Research Team has played a vital and ongoing role in supporting several major improvement initiatives, including Child Friendly Scheduling (CFS), Keeping The Promise (KTP) Commitment Standards, and the Referral Patterns and Planning Project.

As referenced in the examples above at objective 2 re CFS and KTP Standards, an improvement methodology is being followed with data capture, analysis and evaluation – and decisions are based on these findings. This is true across the programme approach albeit in different forms from case management data through to focus groups 'soft' data.

In terms of our internal programmes, the initial testing phase is complete and data have been collected and undergone interim analysis. Full data analysis and evaluation is due in 2025/26 within the second quarter to inform the direction taken to rollout. The data so far does not provide evidence of overall improvement (and wasn't predicted to): rather, it provides evidence that a number of changes aimed at balancing each other – i.e. capacity for quality as per the vision of the programme – broadly do work together and that the service remains on track and is no worse having implemented the changes. A key driver is to provide a consistent service for the children and families that experience it and so being tested is a model (designed with staff and children and families and following recommendations from the research team after different variations were tested) that will likely be rolled out nationally once full evaluation is completed.

There are some areas within the programme that are more difficult to measure in concrete terms due to the number of variables (courts/families/complexity of case etc) however the aim for these is to deliver a best practice model as determined by a range of quality measures around timeliness/preparedness/and consistent service delivery. Where there is no evidence that one way is any better (or worse) than another, decisions will be made based on a drive for consistency in service which plays to a benefit for children and families.

**OBJECTIVE 6: Our Environment: We will develop plans to tackle issues relating to Net Zero across eight key pillars.**

### Progress in year 1

We recognise that the way we deliver our services is contributing to Climate Change. Our priority will be to minimise our impact on the environment and allocate our property resources in the most sustainable way both in terms of Climate Change but also our Financial sustainability. Sustainability is a key priority for the organisation

The Strategic Sustainability Group met at the end of January and reviewed the key areas that have previously been identified for organisational action. The Group re-confirmed the eight priority areas for action by the organisation and these form part of our new Corporate and Business plans. These are:

- **Property Use** – Energy efficient offices and Hearing Centres.
- **Energy Consumption** – Smarter use of our resources.
- **Travel** – Active and sustainable journeys to work.
- **Waste Minimisation** – Reduce, reuse, recycle.
- **Sustainable Procurement** – Considering the environmental, social and economic impacts of what we buy.
- **Biodiversity** – Making the most of our environment.
- **Staff Awareness, Engagement and Behaviour Change** – Developing knowledge and skills.
- **Improving Data Capture & Analysis** – Helping to track progress, identifying areas for enhancement and where to direct our efforts and resources.

We have seen improvements across our estate through the work of our Property Strategy and our environmental ambassadors. For this coming year, each of our localities have developed actions as part of their annual Locality Plans to make further local improvements.

The Strategic Sustainability Group are in the process of focussing their planning and implementation of the 8 pillars to meet the ambitious targets set both by the Board and by legislation, to ensure that we deliver:

- 10% to 20% reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) between 2022/23 levels within three years
- Zero waste to landfill by 2030
- Net zero GHG emissions by 2045

### **Aim 3 - The Best Service**

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

**OBJECTIVE 7: Year one of the Business Plan will focus on our 'first horizon' of the development of our new operating model. This will mean delivery of the first set of approved projects, further discovery and exploration (internal), further exploration and consultation (Hearings For Children/External).**

### **Progress in year 1**

#### **Target Operating Model (TOM) Development**

The first horizon of our Target Operating Model has been approved and communicated to staff to make the vision of the future really clear, supported by a full communications pack including visual representations.

A second assurance review took place at the end of January 25. The review was to assess the state of readiness to proceed as a programme in the development of a Target Operating Model for the organisation – a second Gate Zero.

The outcome of the review was a very positive Amber/Green, with some recommendations to further strengthen the work, recognition of the progress made since the last review and feedback about observations of good practice including approach to learning lessons and training, the culture, energy and enthusiasm, and engagement of staff. None of the recommendations came as a surprise and are all areas we are already working on e.g. benefits management/development of portfolio management approach/further aligning the programme and digital work.

An action plan was developed and was sent back to the reviewers for their records – many of the actions are already underway or closed and progress is being overseen by the Programme Board.

#### **Projects live in 2024/25**

#### **Combined Operational Test**

Following isolated testing of various qualitative projects (as referenced under objective 2) as well as a number of 'efficiency projects', first combined operational test was launched - focusing on court processes and hearings scheduling. The test is designed to evaluate the combined impact of improvements across different parts of the system. Data collection and analysis has been taking place to assess whether the benefits and hypotheses of the test are being met (as referenced at Objective 5 – Informed Decision Making) Findings will inform future testing or wider implementation decisions through discussions at our Strategic Programme Group.

#### **The combined approach includes**

- a consistent approach to scheduling and arranging hearings so that we are using the most appropriate roles at the right time in the process and streamlined consistent processes to make the overall process more efficient. This is intended to generate capacity for Reporters.
- Child friendly scheduling – as described at Objective 2
- An improved approach to court preparation by liaising with witnesses and undertaking witness statements proactively to enhance the quality of the approach to court work, more efficiently establish grounds in the interests of children and families and increase the confidence and skills of Reporters carrying out court work.
- Keeping the Promise Service Standards – also described at Objective 2

### Referral Patterns and Practices

Aims to promote partnership working around referral practices to ensure proportionate timely referrals – the right referrals for the right children at the right time.

A report analysing referral patterns and practice across the country, developed with operational input, has been delivered. This report has informed the next stage of operational testing and two staff have been seconded to carry out enhanced models of working with partners who are our key referrers.

There is recognition that the delivery of the Target Operating Model runs through to 2030, and so each stage is being planned – the initial focus being on efficiency to enable quality improvement within how we deliver our service – the main focus in the year being on our processes. As the model evolves, the scope will broaden into other areas of the organisation.

**OBJECTIVE 8: Trauma informed: We will train and support staff to be able to recognise the impact of trauma – in themselves, in colleagues and in the children, young people and families that we interact with and make critical decisions for.**

Work progresses in SCRA in our ambition to become a trauma-informed organisation. We have worked with NHS Education Scotland (NES) to train a number of SCRA staff as trainers, and we have started rollout of comprehensive training for all SCRA staff, to a Trauma-Skilled level. After we have delivered this training we will discuss and consider next steps for our staff and develop them appropriately. SCRA has an annual psychological support process with our Occupational Health Provider, and offers all relevant staff the opportunity for further supports based on professional screening through a self-assessment process. This was launched in March 2024.

Feedback from NES was that we are one of the organisations leading the way with our approach being relatively far along in our journey. 17.5% of overall training last year was around trauma equating to 570 individual learning events.

### Next Phase Planning

Planning is underway to expand the training offer, including:

- Trauma Enhanced training specifically for Reporter staff.
- Multi-agency and inter-professional training models to complement SCRA's efforts.
- Training delivery that is collaborative with external partners (health, social care, justice).
- Leadership development opportunities focused on trauma-responsive practice in complex decision-making environments.



**OBJECTIVE 9: Development and Wellbeing: We will provide people with learning and development to support the change ahead – recognising that personal and team resilience is key to embedding and improvement in a positive and sustainable way.**

#### **Progress in year 1**

Working alongside the Project teams, a change team is now in place in SCRA to support good, planned and managed, well communicated and supported change. The Change Team work with each locality to understand their current state, their readiness, how 'close' they are to the areas of project work and test – and thus what it would take to implement – and what supports they would need.

A change strategy has been approved and the Board has had sight of this, and a communication strategy is in place to support this. A business change manager is in place as the key contact for teams and is working closely with the project managers and the organisational development team in preparation of training, communications etc ahead of any roll outs.

Critical to successful change is ensuring that our people are skilled and confident – both in identifying and developing the change, and in working to it.

Critical to sustainable change is resilience – personal and organisational. A series of training events have taken place to support this delivering the first phase of resilience training to managers which focused on understanding resilience in leadership and looking at proactive strategies to develop personal resilience plans.

SCRA launched the revised Supervision Framework, which now incorporates the annual development review, personal development and wellbeing within the framework. Managers were offered information sessions on the revisions and HR Business Partners engaged with Localities on the process of recording supervision sessions and personal development plans.

**OBJECTIVE 10: Inclusion and Diversity: Progress against our four organisational outcomes to support our Inclusion and Diversity work will be implemented through our EDI steering group action plan.**

#### **Progress in year 1**

We continue to make significant progress in our commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and equality across the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA). Our work this year has focused on embedding inclusive practices, improving data collection, and strengthening staff networks and training.

Key activities to note:

- There are Visual Information Guides for 32 Hearing Centres and continue to promote the ReciteMe accessibility software on our website.
- Our Disability Network launched a BSL video dictionary in collaboration with the British Deaf Association and revamped the BSL section of our website. We also reintroduced sunflower lanyards to support individuals with hidden disabilities.
- The Neurodiversity Champions Network has grown to 44 members and has successfully reintroduced sensory takeaway kits, and Neurodiversity kits in all hearing rooms.
- We held our first anti-racism development session in February 2024, launching a three-year programme. We also launched our Black & Asian Workers Group pilot, which is expected to continue beyond its initial 6-month pilot term.

- We are working towards re-accreditation of the LGBT Youth Scotland Charter.
- Our Employee Information Statistics Report shows increased applications from men and individuals from ethnic minority and disabled backgrounds (linked to equality outcome 2).
- We continue to support a wide range of staff networks and groups, including the Voice of Experience Reference Group, which brings lived experience of care into our organisational learning.
- We set up quarterly meetings of our Inclusion Ambassadors and Locality EDI Leads networks to lead to better engagement and information sharing.
- Our gender pay gap has reduced by 2% (mean) and 2.21% (median) as of March 2024, this represents a year-on-year ongoing decrease in our gender pay gap over the past 7 years.

## **SCRA Equality Outcomes 2024-2027**

### **Outcome 1: Equalities Data Monitoring**

- Categories for equality data within CSAS have been established and aligned with the 2022 census categories.
- Development of a practical, user-friendly digital solution to capture this data is underway, in coordination with related CFS/KTP digital projects for a joined-up approach.
- Children will not be directly asked equality questions; instead, data will be gathered via partner agencies during referrals and interactions.

### **Outcome 2: Inclusive Recruitment**

- A working group has been set up to revise recruitment webpages to attract a more diverse candidate pool.
- Consideration is being given to an external audit by Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion (enei) to improve recruitment marketing and advertising, pending EMT approval due to required investment.

### **Outcome 3: Anti-Racism and Black & Asian Workers Group**

- The six-month pilot of the Black & Asian Workers Group, facilitated by an external consultant, launched in November 2024, is ongoing and gradually increasing member-ship.
- An evaluation report will be prepared as the pilot concludes, with plans to continue the group beyond the pilot.
- A well-attended event on Race & Racism was held in May 2025, delivered by Diversify World, focusing on bridging marginalised communities with professional environments.
- The anti-racism planning workshop series continues, with a focus on developing mandatory and elective training for staff.
- Mandatory race/racism training is scheduled for 2026-2027, following revised mandatory EDI training and Active Bystander training for managers in 2025.

### **Outcome 4: Socio-Economic Disadvantage**

- The Fairer Scotland Group is working on a short-term action plan for 2024-2025, with development sessions planned for early and spring 2025 to expand this plan in line with the three-year mainstreaming cycle.

## 1.2.2 Financial Performance

In March 2024, following assurance from Scottish Government (SG) on available funding, SCRA's Board approved a revenue budget of £32.85m and a capital budget of £2.9m. As a result of in-year savings (below), the final budgets allocated to SCRA by SG was £30.572m revenue and £3.188m capital, with £0.288m of that capital being non-cash budget in respect of new and extended leases. Of these revised budgets, SCRA drew down £30.344m resource funding and £2.9m capital.

The following section provides a summary of our financial performance for the year against our annual operating budget. Total operating expenditure for the year was £1.74m (5.4%) less than original budget, with this underspend principally arising from staff vacancies and a provision for costs of implementation of Children (Care and Justice) Act that was not used.

Expense Head	Budget 2024/25 £000	Outturn 2024/25 £000	Variance £000
Staff Costs	26,709	24,655	(2,054)
Property Costs	2,392	2,457	65
Travel Costs	175	203	28
Other Operating Charges	2,964	3,148	184
Capital Financing	160	159	(1)
Other Income	(282)	(244)	38
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>32,118</b>	<b>30,378</b>	<b>(1,740)</b>
Revenue Grant In Aid	(32,850)	(30,344)	2,506
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>(732)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>766</b>

The operating budget and outturn above do not include the annual pension adjustments shown in note 11 of the financial statements, and do not include payments in respect of unfunded pensions.

Property and Digital Programme capital spend in the period to March 2025 was £2.69m, summarised below:

<b>Capital Investments</b>	<b>Cost £000</b>
Aberdeen improvements	205
Dalkeith improvements	21
Dundee improvements	35
Edinburgh improvements	27
Glenrothes improvements	330
Glasgow improvements	156
Greenock improvements	112
Hearing Room Improvement Programme	37
Inverness improvements	38
Other property enhancements	46
Audio Visual Hearing Rooms	419
CSAS Development	1,062
Device refresh	142
Wi-fi rollout	28
Other ICT	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,686</b>

A significant and wide-ranging programme of property and digital developments was delivered in 2024/25. A major property project in Glasgow has started, concluding in 2025, launching our revised hearing centre design standards following extensive consultation with all those who use our premises. Other offices continue to be refurbished in line with our commitment to smart working. The Digital programme delivered further enhancements to the core operating system (CSAS), and improvements to hearing room audio visual technology which has been very well-received by those attending hearings.

More detail regarding SCRA's income and expenditure can be found in the financial statements section of this report. The Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure shows net expenditure for the year of £34.1m (2023/24: £31.7m). This includes non-cash depreciation and amortisation costs of £3.2m (2023/24: £2.7m) and non-cash pension scheme finance costs of -£0.2m (2023/24: -£0.005m). These non-cash items are excluded from the table above.

The Statement of Financial Position shows that SCRA's assets exceed its liabilities by £9.4m (2023/24: £16.6m). This movement is principally due to a £6.4m decrease in the pension reserve, deriving from a restriction on the extent to which the current pension fund surplus, as valued by SCRA's actuaries, may be recognised within financial statements. For many years until 2022, the pension reserve was in a substantial deficit position, contributing to an overall position of net liabilities, and the volatility of pension asset and liability valuations means that SCRA may return to a net liability position in future. As a result, the Scottish Government has provided assurances to the SCRA Board that there is a statutory obligation to provide the services that SCRA delivers, and there are no plans to change the existing arrangement whereby pension contributions are paid from future Government grants. It has accordingly been considered appropriate to continue to prepare these financial statements on a going concern basis.

### 1.2.3 Key Performance Indicators



This section provides detail around SCRA's achievements in the year in terms of its key performance indicators and the operational context in which these have been achieved.

## Summary of Key Performance Indicators

### Performance Measures

SCRA has nine key performance indicators which are reported to the Board on a quarterly basis. During the pandemic, targets were not applied to the operational indicators (a) decisions within 50 working days and (b) Hearings within 20 working days. These were re-introduced in 2023/24. The annual outcomes are summarised below.

Performance measures	Target	Outcome	Prior Year
a) The percentage of decisions on referrals made within 50 working days of receipt	74%	72%	70%
b) The percentage of referrals over 100 working days	4.1%	3.4%	5.1%
c) The percentage of Hearings scheduled to take place within 20 working days	74%	70%	66%
d) The percentage of working days lost to short term absence	2%	1.9%	1.5%
e) The percentage of working days lost to long term absence	2%	3.9%	3.4%
f) Variance in annual revenue spends as a percentage of the available revenue budget	1%	5.4%	4.5%
g) Percentage of revenue savings achieved in the year	2.5%	9.7%	8.6%
h) Variance in annual capital spends as a percentage of the available capital budget	5%	6.1%	6.9%
i) The Scottish Government efficiency savings target will be met	0.5%	Met	Met

Key: - Green: Target met or exceeded; Amber: Target missed narrowly; Red: Target missed

(a) Decision making by Reporters within 50 working days was up 2.0 percentage points (pp) against the prior year. It was slightly below the 74% target and is rated as amber.

(b) On average, 3.4% of referrals were open beyond 100 working days in the year. This was below the 4.1% target and is rated as green.

(c) Hearing scheduling was up 3.7 pp in the year to 70%. The performance in 2024/25 continues the improvement seen in prior years. Performance was though below the 74% target and is rated as amber.

(d) Short term absence at 1.9% was within the 2% target and was 0.4pp higher than the prior year. Short term absence meeting the target will be in part staff having more flexibility about where they work from even when they are feeling unwell, but not unwell enough to be absent from work. But this reduction may also be a result of the various health and wellbeing supports that SCRA has in place, such as Employee Assistance Programme, vicarious trauma support, menopause support etc.

(e) Long term absence at 3.9% was up 0.5pp from the prior year and still well above the 2% target. We recognise that long term absence remains a challenge in terms of available resources. We work closely with managers pre, during and post long term absence to ensure that the most appropriate supports are in place to sustain the employee at work. We have trained a number of mental health first aiders and our Mental Wealth Group is particularly active across the organisation in terms of signposting supports, health and wellbeing tools and initiatives and local health and wellbeing groups are responding to Locality needs. Appropriate management of our long term cases is in place, including occupational health advice and guidance, employee assistance counselling provision, and potential ill-health retirements.

(f&g) Revenue savings mainly arose from staffing underspends arising from vacancies and the timing of recruitment to additional posts in advance of Children (Care and Justice) Act implementation.

(h) Capital savings arose primarily due to the decision to treat the Glasgow refurbishment as a two-year project, resulting in a significant reduction of spend within 2024/25.

There are two quality measures around property. SCRA's Hearing centres are our main public facing facilities and these are the main focus of our attention. The first quality measure therefore considers the operational suitability of our Hearing centres. Alongside this, there is a quality measure now included to measure the efficiency of how we use property and the cost effectiveness of our estate.

#### Quality Measures - 2024/25

1 Percentage of Hearing centres that comply with our requirements 69.7% (69.7% in 2023/24)

2 The average percentage quality score achieved across the estate 91.3% (91.1% in 2023/24)

### 1.2.4 Operational Performance and Strategy

The below provides the operational context and management information,  
**Children referred**

In 2024/25, 7,839 children were referred on non-offence grounds. This is down 4.4% from the previous year. The number of children referred on offence grounds in the year, at 2,447, was down 9.4%.

There are certain types of referrals that indicate greater or immediate concern about the child's safety. These include Child Protection Orders (CPOs). At 503, 25 more children had CPOs (5.2%) granted in the year.

#### Reporter Decisions

When making a final decision in relation to a referral, the Reporter will select the ground which reflects the principal concern(s) about the child. These grounds are set out in section 67(2) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, and are summarised below.

#### Section 67 ground

(a) Lack of parental care

(b)	Victim of a Schedule 1 offence
(c)	Close connection with a Schedule 1 offender
(d)	Same household as a child victim of Schedule 1 offender
(e)	Exposure to persons whose conduct likely to be harmful to child
(f)	Close connection with a person who has carried out domestic abuse
(g)	Close connection with Sexual Offences Act offender - Parts 1, 4 & 5
(h)	Accommodated and special measures needed
(i)	Permanence order and special measures needed
(j)	Offence
(k)	Misuse of alcohol
(l)	Misuse of a drug
(m)	Child's conduct harmful to self or others
(n)	Beyond control of a relevant person
(o)	Failure to attend school without reasonable excuse
(p)	Pressure to enter into civil partnership (or same household as such a child)
(q)	Force to marry (or same household as such a child)

For ease of reference, referrals on (j) Offence grounds are classed as offence referrals with the others being classed as non-offence.

Reporters investigate where necessary, when a referral is received, to assist them in considering the likely need for compulsory measures. They do so by obtaining information on the child and their circumstances from relevant agencies. Some of this information may now be provided at the point of referral rather than requiring to be requested. In the year, 25.2% of children with a referral decided, had a decision to arrange a Hearing. This was a 3.1pp increase on the prior year.

### **Pre-Hearing Panels and Hearings**

Pre-Hearing Panels (PHPs) are convened before some Children's Hearings to consider any special arrangements needed for the Children's Hearing. These are:

- whether to deem/undeed an individual as a relevant person;
- whether to excuse a child or relevant person from the obligation to attend the Children's Hearing;
- whether an individual has participation rights; and
- whether an individual should be allowed to attend only by electronic means.

PHPs increased by 4.3% to 1,843 against 1,767 last year, an increase of 76.

Children's Hearings decide whether compulsory measures of intervention are necessary (in respect of the child) to protect the child and/or address their behaviour. Hearings decreased by 1.4% to 21,313 against 21,613 in the prior year, a decrease of 300. Primarily this is due to the continued decreases in children with Compulsory Supervision Orders and the review Hearings associated with them.

### **Applications to the Sheriff for proof**

If the child and/or their relevant persons do not accept some or all of the statement of grounds for referral which form the basis of the Children's Hearing, or the child does not or cannot understand the grounds, the Children's Hearing may direct the Reporter

to apply to the Sheriff to establish the statement of grounds for referral (sections 93 and 94 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011). Overall, 1,925 applications were determined in 2024/25 and 91.1% were held to be established by the Sheriff. This was 76 fewer applications determined in the year (3.8%).

### **Compulsory measures of supervision**

Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs) are the most common form of compulsory intervention made by Children's Hearings. They are also the only longer-term option available to Children's Hearings. It is the statutory responsibility of local authorities to implement CSOs. At the year-end, 6,355 children were subject to CSOs. This is 135 fewer than the prior year-end, a decrease of 2.1%.

### **Appeals**

Children and/or their relevant persons can appeal to the Sheriff against decisions made by Children's Hearings and Pre-Hearing Panels. In 2024/25, 250 children had 296 appeals concluded, a 10.6% decrease from the prior year. A child may have multiple appeals within the year. Of the 296 appeals concluded, 31% found the Hearing's decision justified, 2% found the Hearing's decision justified but a change of circumstances was applied, 51% found the Hearing's decision not justified and in 16% of cases, the appeal was abandoned.

### **Consultation with employees**

SCRA is committed to involving staff throughout the organisation in its decision-making process, working in partnership with staff, and has a partnership agreement with UNISON as the recognised Trade Union. Working in partnership mainstreams consultation and engagement with staff in all aspects of SCRA's working environment through employment issues to service delivery issues.

There is an embedded structure of consultation and engagement through the National Partnership Forum which has a number of sub groups like the HR Sub Group, Health/Wellbeing and Staff Survey Group, Equalities Network and more standalone networks such as the Joint Negotiating and Consultation Committee, Health and Safety Committee, Participation Group, etc. Partnership working is strong across SCRA and is the root of our organisation development, consultation and collective bargaining processes. UNISON are our recognised Trade Union and work hard to ensure that partnership working is successful in SCRA. As an organisation we would encourage staff to join the SCRA UNISON branch so that they can feel the benefits and have a voice in a strong partnership relationship.

As part of the Partnership Agreement with UNISON, SCRA has an established Recognition and Procedure Agreement, which governs the negotiations of pay and national conditions of service for all staff. It formally acknowledges the importance of establishing and maintaining confidence in the negotiating arrangements.

The national partnership forum held 2 development days and held face to face meetings throughout the year to maintain strong partnership working and to ensure our UNISON colleagues were engaged in all aspects of the programme and change work.

## **Payment Performance**

In line with Scottish Government guidance, SCRA's policy is to pay all sums due to suppliers, that are not in dispute, within the lesser of 10 working days and the agreed contractual terms. During the year ended 31 March 2025, SCRA paid 86% (31 March 2024: 86%) of sums due to suppliers within the terms of its payment policy.

## **Anti-bribery**

SCRA's Executive Management Team and Board have taken steps to ensure SCRA has policies in place to guard against corruption and bribery, including SCRA's procurement policy, financial regulations and Fraud and Corruption policy.

## **Environmental Performance and Sustainability Reporting**

SCRA's Board and Chief Executive/Principal Reporter have overall responsibility for ensuring that the organisation meets its climate change duties. Implementation of the actions necessary is overseen by the Executive Management Team. SCRA's Board reviews the organisation's performance annually and oversees its key organisational strategies and priorities. SCRA's approach and progress in relation to climate change and sustainability is reported through SCRA's annual report and accounts. In addition an annual environmental report is prepared and submitted to the Board detailing the progress made over the previous year and updated greenhouse gas (GHG) emission figures.

SCRA's Corporate Plan recognises the impact of climate change and the need for our services to be delivered in the most sustainable way. Key organisational strategies, such as the Finance, Property and Procurement strategies reference climate change and the steps being taken to reduce emissions.

SCRA's 2024-27 Corporate Plan sets out that systems, properties and communications will be designed to ensure safe interaction, clear understanding and be accessible to everyone who uses them. This will be achieved through providing technology that meets and supports the demands of a changing system and through the organisation working in ways that are kind to the environment, demonstrating tangible improvements to support Net Zero. A target operating model is being developed to produce a service delivery model that is sustainable.

As a part of local planning, local Environmental Ambassadors champion climate change awareness, biodiversity and local GHG mitigation initiatives.

Two groups within SCRA are tasked with developing the organisation's strategic approach to implementing its climate change duties and to promote greater awareness and engagement within local offices. The Strategic Sustainability Group is led by SCRA's CEO and includes representatives from Head Office and Senior Operational Managers. The Environmental Ambassadors Group is led by a Senior Operational Manager and includes representatives from the network of locality offices. The Environmental Ambassadors group is made up of volunteers from teams across SCRA: their role is to promote SCRA's climate change ambitions, support their colleagues and embed climate change awareness within locality teams. Environmental Ambassadors are fully supported by the Strategic Sustainability Group. Two further groups within the organisation have climate change and environmental factors included within their remit. The Health & Wellbeing Group promotes biodiversity, staff awareness of climate change and encouraging positive actions to mitigate environmental impact. The Business Continuity Group considers adaptation



measures as a part of wider Business Continuity planning along with mitigating the risks that affect SCRA's ability to provide its services.

Climate change and sustainability forms part of SCRA's staff induction process to ensure that new employees are aware of their climate change duties and the need to mitigate the impact of services on the environment. Promoting and encouraging positive behavioural change in the staff group continues to be developed through the Human Resources Team and the Health & Wellbeing group. This is reflected in SCRA's Agile Working Policy and Travel Policy for business travel. The Agile Working policy, supported by greater use of mobile technology, introduces the ability to work more flexibly in different locations including from home, reducing the amount of office space required and reducing travel emissions from commuting. The Travel policy also discourages staff from unnecessary travel for work purposes, and actively encourages the use of public transport or video-conferencing (by Microsoft Teams) as alternatives where possible. Where longer car journeys are necessary, our policy promotes the use of hired hybrid vehicles where practical.

Wherever possible we use Scottish Government centrally-negotiated collaborative contracts and frameworks when purchasing goods and services to maximise the environmental benefits that can be leveraged through larger contracts.

Our Climate Change report for 2023/24 was submitted to Scottish Government at the end of November 2024. (Emissions data for 2024/25 are not yet available.) Our reported direct and indirect GHG emissions total 577.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO<sub>2</sub>e) as detailed below. These metrics are some of those used by SCRA to assess climate-related issues in line with its strategy and risk management process.

Emission Source & Scope			2023/24			2022/23		
			Unit	C		E	C	E
Heating – Natural Gas			1 kWh	1,287,540	↑	235.5	1,270,313	231.9
Heating – Oil			1 litres	2,501	↓	6.3	3,800	9.7
Electricity (generation)			2 kWh	685,926	↓	142.0	797,318	154.2
Electricity (transmission losses)			3 kWh	685,926	↓	12.3	797,318	14.1
Business Travel – miles			3 miles	139,759	↑	37.5	101,029	27.7
Water – Supply			3 m3	2,083	↓	0.2	2,898	0.3
Water – Treatment			3 m3	2,083	↓	0.4	2,898	0.6
Waste – mixed recycling			3 tonnes	13	↓	0.3	18	0.4
Waste – paper recycling			3 tonnes	31	↑	0.7	28	0.6
Waste – Landfill			3 tonnes	10	↑	5.1	10	4.7
Waste – Combustion			3 tonnes	22	↑	0.5	19	0.4
Refrigerants*			3 kilograms	3	–	4.9	n/a	n/a
Waste – WEEE recycled*			3 tonnes	2	↓	0.0	2	0.0
Homeworking			3 FTE working hours	395,095	↓	131.9	392,456	133.7
Total (tCO2e)				577.6				578.2

C – Consumption in units (↑/↓)

E – Emissions (tCO2e) calculated from consumption using emissions factor provided

\* Revised Boundary (see below)

As part of SCRA's climate change duties, the Board approved a 3 year target in 2024 for reducing SCRA's overall reported emissions by between 10% and 20%. In addition, the following corporate targets were included within the climate change return submitted for 2023/24:

- Net zero direct emissions from SCRA's estate by 2038
- Zero waste sent to landfill by 2030
- Become a net zero organisation by 2045

GHG emissions are recorded under three categories or "scopes" relating to direct and indirect emissions:

- Scope 1 emissions are those made **directly**, through the burning of fuels to heat business premises or are from fleet vehicles (not applicable for SCRA).
- Scope 2 emissions are those made **indirectly**, for example the electricity consumed in business premises that has been produced for the organisation.
- Scope 3 emissions are any **indirect** emissions associated with the organisation's business activity eg business travel, employee commuting, manufacturing of the goods and products used and customer activity that occurs as a result of SCRA's services.

SCRA has set its Climate Change reporting boundaries as Scope 1, 2 and parts of 3.

SCRA's climate change report for 2023/24 shows a very slight decrease in emissions from 2022/23. This figure includes activities that have recently been added to SCRA's reporting boundary and if calculated on same basis as last year would be closer to 572.6 tCO<sub>2</sub>e i.e. a 1% reduction. SCRA's data for climate change reporting (particularly scope 3 emissions) is not complete and the organisation's actual carbon footprint will be much higher. Improving data capture and analysis is one of SCRA's eight priority areas announced in 2024, alongside property use, energy consumption, travel, waste minimisation, sustainable procurement, biodiversity and staff awareness, engagement and behaviour change.

While property is currently the largest source of SCRA's GHG emissions, scope 3 activities are estimated by Deloitte to account for more than 70% of an organisation's actual emissions<sup>1</sup>. For public sector reporting, an increasing emphasis is being placed on measuring, managing and reducing Scope 3 emissions.

Scope 3 emissions can be influenced by a number of the priority areas set out above. In particular, procurement of goods/services, commuting/business travel, behaviours and organisational culture are areas where the work of the Strategic Sustainability group and the Environmental Ambassadors will contribute towards raising awareness and influencing changes that can help to reduce GHG emissions.

Climate-related risks are identified, assessed and managed using the same processes and controls as SCRA's other risks, detailed in section 2.3 below.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/focus/climate-change/zero-in-on-scope-1-2-and-3-emissions.html>

### **1.2.5 2025/26 Planning**

The Business Plan objectives for 2025/26 clearly set out how all parts of the organisation will contribute to delivery of our Corporate Plan aims and our contribution to greater improvement in the Hearings System.

The business plan will be delivered through our programme management framework and reported on through related governance structures which, in themselves, are reviewed regularly.

Work will continue with the Scottish Government and our Partners as we take forward the transformational change in the wider system – whilst improving what we can in our current – and of course, ensuring that the operational delivery of our critical service continues steadily, absorbing and positively responding to change as it is implemented to ensure the best service possible for the children and families that come into the system.

**Neil Hunter**  
**Accountable Officer**

## 2. Accountability Report

### 2.1 Director's Report

The table below shows the date of appointment for Board members in 2024/25.

Board Member	Appointment Date
Michelle Miller (Chair)	01 May 18 – 30 Apr 24
Cathie Cowan (Chair)	07 Jun 24
Kay Barton	01 Nov 21
Lynne Clow	01 Oct 24
James Edgar	01 Oct 17 – 15 Oct 25
Lorraine Moore	01 Nov 21
Steve Renwick	17 Jun 24
Hazel Smith	01 Dec 22
Martin Toye	01 Jun 16 – 31 May 24
Suzanne Vestri	01 Oct 16 – 30 Sep 24
Ying Zhang	01 Dec 22

All current Board members have fixed term contracts and, of the above, eight are female and three are male.

The Board members have been appointed by the Scottish Ministers. They are appointed on the basis of having knowledge or experience relevant to the general purpose of SCRA or to the functions of the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive.

The table below shows the date of appointment for Executive Management Team members in 2024/25.

EMT Member	Job Title	Appointment Date
Neil Hunter	Principal Reporter/Chief Executive	04 Apr 11
Lisa Bennett	Head of Strategy and Organisational Development	14 Sep 15
Douglas Cameron	Head of Digital Delivery	13 Dec 23
Susan Deery	Head of Human Resources	01 Oct 14
Helen Etchells	Senior Operational Manager	12 Aug 19
Alistair Hogg	Head of Practice and Policy	01 Jun 19
Ross Mackenzie*	Acting Head of Finance and Resources	01 Apr 24
Paul Mulvanny	Senior Operational Manager	12 Aug 19

\* Ross Mackenzie was appointed permanent Head of Finance and Resources, effective 01 April 2025.

All EMT members have permanent UK contracts and, of the above, three are female and five are male. The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive has specific responsibility for the discharge of Reporters' statutory functions.



## 2.1.1 Audit

The Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 places personal responsibility on the Auditor General for Scotland to decide who is to undertake the audit of each central government body in Scotland. For the financial years 2022/23 to 2026/27 the Auditor General has appointed Audit Scotland to undertake the audit of SCRA. The general duties of the auditors of central government bodies, including their statutory duties, are set out in the Code of Audit Practice issued by Audit Scotland and approved by the Auditor General.

## 2.1.2 Register of Interests

A Register of Interests for Board members and senior staff is maintained by SCRA and may be accessed by contacting the Governance Officer at Ochil House, Springkerse Business Park, Stirling, FK7 7XE, or on SCRA's website, <https://www.scra.gov.uk/about-scra/our-board/> and <https://www.scra.gov.uk/about-scra/senior-management/>.

## 2.1.3 Report of personal data incidents

SCRA reports all reportable breaches to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) in compliance with data protection legislation. A risk assessment is completed for each data breach to determine whether it is likely to result in a risk for the rights and freedoms of any individual. There was a total of three breaches reported to the ICO in 2024/25. The ICO has not taken any formal action against SCRA in relation to any of the reported breaches, but has made some recommendations for improvement, which we have accepted and implemented where appropriate.

## 2.1.4 Non-Disclosure Orders

A Non-Disclosure Order is a special provision attached to a child's case in instances when it is considered necessary to protect the whereabouts of a child, or person(s) with whom the child is residing, due to significant concerns about their safety.

There was a total of 28 incidents in 2024/25 where Non-Disclosure Orders/Rule 16 were breached. SCRA was responsible for 21 Non-Disclosure/Rule 16 breaches, and two of these were reported to the ICO. In comparison, there was a total of 26 Non-Disclosure/Rule 16 breaches in 2023/24, of which SCRA was responsible for 12.

## 2.1.5 Case Information

SCRA holds information on children and their families, who are involved in the Children's Hearings System. Much of this information is special category data as defined by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and by the Data Protection Act 2018. The three breaches that were reported to the ICO are summarised below:

- For a Non-Disclosure case, the forename of the prospective adoptive parent was not redacted on the Order. Plus, their forename and surname were not redacted on the Record of Proceedings. These documents were contained within the Hearing Papers, which were sent to the child's birth parents.

- For a Rule 16 case, a mother requested that her address be withheld from her former partner. A form containing the mother's address, which ought to have been redacted, formed part of the Hearing Papers that were issued to her former partner.
- A cover sheet containing a Panel Member's name and address was accidentally added to a mother's Hearing Papers.

SCRA continues to monitor breaches of personal data as part of its activities to improve information security and data protection compliance. Each locality has an Information Governance (IG) Lead and the IG Leads Group meets regularly to monitor activity, including lessons learnt from breaches. The lessons learned from the breaches are posted on Connect monthly for staff to read. All staff have been trained on GDPR; they are also required to do annual GDPR refresher training. The Board's Audit and Assurance Committee receives six-monthly reports on Information Governance.

## 2.2 Statement of Accountable Officer's Responsibilities

Under Schedule 3 of the Children's Hearing Scotland Act (2011), the Scottish Parliament has directed the SCRA to prepare for each financial year a statement of accounts in the form and on the basis set out in the Accounts Direction. The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis and must give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of SCRA and of its net resource outturn, application of resources, changes in taxpayers' equity and cash flows for the financial year.

In preparing the accounts, the Accountable Officer is required to comply with the requirements of the Government Financial Reporting Manual and in particular to:

- Observe the Accounts Direction issued by the Scottish Parliament, including the relevant accounting and disclosure requirements, and apply suitable accounting policies on a consistent basis;
- Make judgements and estimates on a reasonable basis;
- State whether applicable accounting standards as set out in the Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) have been followed, and disclose and explain any material departures in the financial statements; and
- Prepare the financial statements on a going concern basis

Under section 15 of the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000, the Accountable Officer of the Scottish Government Directorate with responsibility for sponsorship of SCRA designated the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive of SCRA as the Accountable Officer for the Administration. The Head of Finance and Resources is designated as Deputy Accountable Officer. The responsibilities of an Accountable Officer, including responsibility for the propriety and regularity of the public finances for which the Accountable Officer is answerable, for keeping proper records and for safeguarding the Administration's assets, are set out in the Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM).

As Accountable Officer, I confirm that:

- As far as I am aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the auditors are unaware, and I have taken all the steps that I ought to have taken to make myself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.
- The annual report and accounts as a whole is fair, balanced and understandable and that I take personal responsibility for the annual report and accounts and the judgments required for determining that it is fair, balanced and understandable.

## 2.3 Governance Statement

### 2.3.1 Scope of responsibility

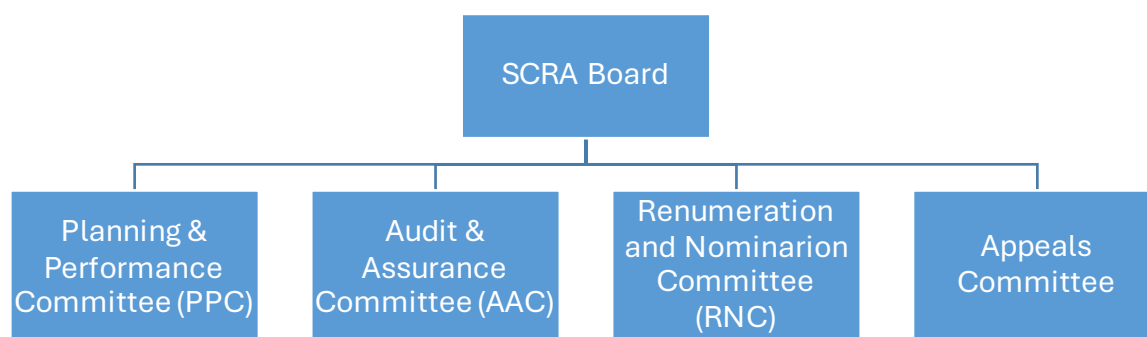
As Accountable Officer, I have responsibility for maintaining a sound system of internal control that supports the achievement of SCRA's policies, aims and objectives, as set by Scottish Ministers, whilst safeguarding the public funds and assets for which I am personally responsible, in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to me in the Memorandum to Accountable Officers for Other Public Bodies.

### 2.3.2 Governance framework

SCRA's governance framework accords with generally accepted best practice principles and guidance from Scottish Ministers in the SPFM and has been in place for the year ended 31 March 2025 and up to the date of the approval of the financial statements. The SPFM provides guidance to the Scottish Government, and other relevant bodies, on the proper handling of public funds. It is designed to ensure compliance with statutory and parliamentary requirements, promote value for money, high standards of propriety, effective accountability and robust systems of internal control.

### 2.3.3 Board and committee structure

The Board Committee structure encompasses an Audit and Assurance Committee (formerly named Audit and Risk Committee), a Remuneration and Nomination Committee (formerly known as Remuneration and Succession Planning Committee), a Planning and Performance Committee (implemented in February 2025) and an Appeals Committee. The Committees report into the Board, on a routine basis, on the business conducted at their meetings.



## 2.3.4 Operation of the board

SCRA's Board comprises the Chair and seven non-executive members. The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive attends ex-officio. Members of the Board are appointed by Ministers and the normal term of office for a non-Executive member is four years. Board members may serve for a maximum of eight years. The Board has responsibility for ensuring that SCRA fulfils the aims and objectives set by Scottish Ministers.

The role of the Board is to:

- Establish the overall strategic direction within the policy and resources framework agreed with the Scottish Government;
- Ensure that the organisation meets its objectives;
- Demonstrate high standards of corporate governance at all times;
- Ensure that any statutory or administrative requirements for the use of public funds are complied with.

The Board met five times during 2024/25 (June 2024, September 2024, December 2024, January 2025, March 2025) on regular business. Two Board Development days were held in April 2024 and November 2024.

The Board regularly review the organisation's key policies which include the Human Resources Policies, Health & Safety Policies, Information Security Policies, Data Protection Policies, Risk Management Policy, Fraud Policy, Location Policy (part of Property Strategy), Procurement Policy, Media Handling Policy, Environmental Policy and Complaints Policy.



### 2.3.5 Board programme of business

Standing Items	Specific Items for 2024/25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committee Minutes</li> <li>• Chief Executive's Report</li> <li>• Budget Monitoring</li> <li>• Organisational Performance</li> <li>• New Risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Board Updates</li> <li>• Staff Survey 2024</li> <li>• Draft Corporate Plan 2024/27</li> <li>• Draft Budget 2025/26</li> <li>• Draft Business Plan 2025/26</li> <li>• Review of risk policy</li> <li>• Digital Strategy</li> <li>• SCRA Framework Document</li> <li>• Climate Change Works</li> <li>• Agile Policy</li> <li>• Staff Absence Update</li> </ul>
Annual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget</li> <li>• Annual Accounts and Management Representation Letter</li> <li>• Annual Report</li> <li>• Corporate and Business Plans</li> <li>• Locality Performance Review</li> <li>• Complaints</li> <li>• Environmental Report</li> <li>• Property Strategy</li> <li>• Financial Strategy</li> <li>• Committee Annual Reports</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>• Workforce Planning Report</li> <li>• Overview of Policies</li> <li>• Research Programme</li> <li>• Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report</li> <li>• Annual Procurement Report</li> <li>• Board and Committee Standing Orders and Terms of Reference Review</li> <li>• Influencing Report</li> <li>• Programme Board Updates</li> </ul>	
Bi-annual	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic and Operational Risk Registers</li> </ul>	

### 2.3.6 Board Development Meetings

Business conducted at the Board Development Days (April and November 2024) included:

- SCRA's future (Target) Operating Model
- Board Effectiveness Internal Audit Action Plan

- Locality Update – South East
- SCRA's approach to Risk Management
- Public Sector Finance
- Hearings Redesign – governance and structure
- Board governance – learning plan, objectives, committee membership, recruitment, Internal Audit Governance Review

## 2.3.7 Audit and Assurance Committee

The Audit and Assurance Committee comprises the Chair, Vice Chair and two non-executive members. The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive attends ex-officio. It meets quarterly and reviews the adequacy of the arrangements for ensuring sound internal control and in particular scrutinises all audit reports and the actions taken by managers in response to audit recommendations. The Audit and Assurance Committee carries out an annual self-assessment and reports annually on its activities to the Board.

Standing Items	Other Business Items
<b>Information Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Protection and Information Governance Six-monthly Report</li> </ul>	<b>Annually</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report to the Board on the Audit and Assurance Committee's business</li> <li>• Meeting with Internal/External Auditors</li> <li>• Fraud Report</li> <li>• External Audit Report to those charged with Governance on the Audit Management Representation Letter</li> <li>• Internal Audit Annual Report</li> <li>• Annual Accounts, Governance Statement, Accounting Policies</li> <li>• Internal and External Audit Plans</li> <li>• Quality Assurance Programme</li> <li>• Joint Inspection of Children's Services – Overview</li> <li>• ARC self-evaluation</li> <li>• Internal Audit Recommendations Follow-up</li> <li>• Risk Management Policy review</li> </ul>
<b>Quality Assurance and Performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Case Sampling Reports</li> </ul>	
<b>External Audit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update on Topical/Regulatory Issues</li> </ul>	
<b>Internal Audit</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports on fieldwork</li> <li>• Annual Plan Progress</li> </ul>	
<b>Risk Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Risks</li> </ul>	<b>Bi-annual</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Strategic and Operational Risk Registers</li> <li>• Pensions Update</li> </ul>

## 2.3.8 Remuneration and Nominations Committee

The Remuneration and Nominations Committee comprises the Chair, Vice Chair and two non-executive members. It is responsible for governance of the pay and remuneration policy for the organisation and the approval of Principal Reporter/Chief

Executive appraisal and pay. It also monitors progress on the organisation's succession planning arrangements.

Business dealt with during 2024/25 (meeting held December 2024):

- Pay Award Development 2025/26
- Pay Award Proposal and Performance Appraisal PR/CE
- Committee Remit

### **2.3.9 Appeals Committee**

The Appeals Committee comprises a Chair and two non-executive members and meets as required. Its remit is to:

- hear appeals from SCRA staff in respect of any of the matters set out in SCRA's Manual of Personnel Policies & Procedures and in accordance with the arrangements set out therein;
- come to a substantive decision on any appeal; and
- report the outcome to the Board at its next meeting following any appeal.

The Committee did not meet in 2024/25.

### **2.3.10 Planning and Performance Committee**

The Planning and Performance Committee comprises the Chair, Vice Chair and two non-executive members. The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive attends ex-officio. The purpose of the Planning & Performance Committee is to scrutinise the quantitative and qualitative performance of the Board to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to deliver against organisational performance measures to secure efficient, economic and effective use of all resources, and provide reasonable assurance to the Board that the arrangements are working effectively. The inaugural meeting of the Planning and Performance Committee was held in February 2025 and focused in the remit of the committee. Meetings will be held four times per annum.

### **2.3.11 Executive management**

The Executive Management Team (EMT) comprises the senior managers in the organisation who are responsible for establishing and maintaining a sound internal control system. The EMT meets monthly and is supported by a Health and Safety Committee, Equalities Group, an Information Governance Leads Group and a Digital Change Advisory Board. EMT members also meet regularly as a Programme Board. The EMT receives regular reports on budget management, organisational performance and changes in strategic/operational risks, whereas the Board focuses on strategy, performance and behaviour. The Principal Reporter advises the Board on all matters and is solely responsible for operational issues. Board members have no authority to instruct the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive or any member of staff on operational matters.

### **2.3.12 Internal controls**

The internal control framework comprises a network of systems designed to provide assurance that organisational objectives will be achieved, with particular reference to:

- risk management;
- the effectiveness of operations;
- the economical and efficient use of resources;
- compliance with applicable policies, procedures, laws and regulations;
- safeguards against losses, including those arising from fraud, irregularity or corruption; and
- the integrity and reliability of information and data.

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. It is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks, evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised. The system of internal control has been in place in SCRA for the year to 31 March 2025, and up to the date of approval of the annual report and accounts.

The following internal control systems are assessed annually as part of the Scottish Government Certificates of Assurance process which must be completed by the Chief Executive. This process was completed in May 2025 and no major control gaps have been identified.

- |                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Risk Management      | • Procurement            |
| • Business Planning    | • Human Resources        |
| • Major Investment     | • Equality and Diversity |
| • Project Management   | • Information            |
| • Financial Management | • Health & Safety        |
| • Fraud                | • Compliance             |

### **2.3.13 Risk management arrangements**

A framework for measuring, controlling and monitoring strategic risks has been in place throughout the financial year. A regular review of the Strategic Risk Register is undertaken by the Executive Management Team and the Strategic Risk Register is reported to the Audit and Assurance Committee and Board every six months. Strategic risk management is fully established in the corporate planning and decision making processes of SCRA. The Operational Risk Register is overseen by the Senior Operational Managers. Localities maintain their own Risk Registers and these are continuously reviewed at Locality Management Team meetings. Digital Strategy risks are monitored by the Digital Change Advisory Board and programme/project risks are monitored by the Programme Board. EMT is supported in discharging its risk management responsibilities by the Planning and Performance Network.

The key strategic risks tracked throughout 2024/25 included:

- IT Security measures are insufficient to prevent a successful cyber-attack on SCRA case information which results in loss of data which cannot be recovered;
- The optimum model for CSAS ownership and accountability and a joint future partnership between SCRA and CHS is not adequately defined and agreed.

- SCRA do not maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce which can meet current demands and future needs;
- Failure to progress Board approved Environmental plan and inability to accelerate plans to meet new targets;
- Significant policy, legislative and reform/transformation change agenda impacts on SCRA's ability to deliver core services or necessary change programmes;
- 2024/25 Scottish Government budget does not deliver required level of revenue funding with impact on ability to deliver a quality service and respond effectively to new legislative and policy pressures;
- Inability to engage with digital inhibits realisation of full potential of new technologies resulting in significant operational disruption;
- Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change.
- Inability to spend 2023/24 Children's Care and Justice Bill (CCJB) capital allocations due to lack of specificity of the necessary adaptations to facilities and systems for referral of 16 and 17 year olds.

SCRA developed two joint risks with Sponsor Team relating to financial sustainability and preparation for new legislation.

SCRA's internal auditors are BDO, appointed for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026. In developing their new three year Internal Audit Plan the Internal Auditor identifies controls testing and assurance of key processes and systems on a risk prioritised basis.

### **2.3.14 Digital programme**

CSAS is SCRA's case management system, shared with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) staff and volunteers on a rights-based user access basis. There are three main boards and groups which are involved in the governance of digital development, including determining the viability and approving change requests to CSAS before they can be developed and implemented: these are the Digital Engagement Group (DEG), the Change Control Board (CCB) and Digital Change Authorisation Board (DCAB). The DEG considers users' requests for changes and those approved for action go to the CCB, which is attended by SCRA's digital managers and SCRA's third party supplier of CSAS software development. The DCAB comprises the CEOs, Heads of Digital and Heads of Finance of both SCRA and CHS in order to ensure oversight of investment (both joint investment and individual bodies' investment) in CSAS. Digital Development was reviewed by Internal Audit in 2024/25, providing moderate assurance of design and effectiveness and recommendations for improvements that are currently being implemented.



### **2.3.15 Programme Management Framework**

SCRA has an established Programme Management Framework, with the structures and governance arrangements required to manage change and implementation within the organisation, now, and into the future. It supports clear processes, scope, structures and controls for change activity.

The Programme Management Framework has four streams: Care, Connect, Protect and People. Lessons learned across previous change projects have been taken into the Programme Protect discovery work and the Programme Board approach. The Programme Manager and Programme/Project leads meet with EMT quarterly to review progress and confirm outcomes are on schedule.

### **2.3.16 Information governance**

All Information Governance duties are carried out by Information Governance (IG) Leads who meet frequently as a Group with the SCRA Senior Information Risk Officer (SIRO) as Chair. The day to day work of the Information Governance Team includes General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance.

### **2.3.17 Data security**

A total of three data breaches, including 2 breaches of non-disclosure orders, have been reported to me by SCRA's SIRO, who also ensures appropriate reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office.

The main cause of non-disclosure breaches is failing to redact documents correctly and the main cause of case information breaches is information being sent to an incorrect address because relevant parties failed to inform SCRA of the change of address, or SCRA is informed of the new address but delays updating it on CSAS. Controls are in place to mitigate the risk of information loss. SCRA works proactively with partners both locally and nationally to highlight information security, and assist them in managing their information more securely in their own locations/settings.

### **2.3.18 Quality and performance**

SCRA's Quality Assurance Team is responsible for providing assurance on the effectiveness of the arrangements within SCRA for discharging the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive's statutory responsibilities towards children referred to the Reporter and meeting agreed quality standards.

Audit & Assurance Committee considered reports on the following areas in the period 2024/25, and approved the management action plan made in response to the findings of each one.

- May 2024: Appeals not opposed by the Reporter
- August 2024: Reporter's assessment on participation rights in Hearings
- November 2024: Reporter's drafting of the statement of grounds involving offences
- February 2025: Reporter advocacy

The Practice and Quality network continues to meet throughout the year with a purpose to share best practice and to help improve the quality of the service provided

to children and young people. In addition to sharing the findings from case sampling and identifying and overseeing improvements arising from these, the network provides a forum for sharing learning from local partnership learning reviews (previously significant case reviews) and joint inspections of services for children.

### **2.3.19 Internal audit**

In addition to the Quality Assurance and Performance Team, SCRA has an internal audit service provided under contract, which operates to the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. They submit regular reports to the Audit and Assurance Committee which include an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of SCRA's system of internal control together with recommendations for improvement.

No high risk recommendations were identified by the auditors in 2024/25. In the auditors' opinion, the risk management activities and controls in the areas which they examined were found to be suitably designed to achieve the specific risk management, control and governance arrangements. Based on their verification reviews and sample testing the risk management, control and governance arrangements were operating with sufficient effectiveness to provide reasonable, but not absolute assurance that the related risk management, control and governance objectives were achieved for the period under review.

### **2.3.20 Assessment of corporate governance arrangement**

As Accountable Officer, I have reviewed the effectiveness of corporate governance arrangements. My review is informed by:

- the executive managers within SCRA who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control framework, including the organisation's Senior Information Risk Officer;
- the work of the internal auditors and the Quality Assurance and Performance Team who submit to the Audit and Assurance Committee regular reports which include the Head of Internal Audit's independent and objective opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of SCRA's system of internal control together with any recommendations for improvement;
- comments made by the external auditors in their management letters and other reports;
- assurances from senior staff in SCRA's 2024/25 Internal Control Checklist which will be submitted to the Sponsor Division as part of the Scottish Government's Certificates of Assurance process;
- a range of other accountability mechanisms including quarterly organisational performance reviews, end to end process reviews, regular assessment of management of key risks, regular review of organisational policies and potentially, information from whistle-blowers in line with the Whistleblowing Policy.

During the financial year 2024/25, no significant control weaknesses or issues have arisen, and no significant failures have arisen in the expected standards for good governance, risk management and control.

## **2.4 Remuneration and Staff Report**

### **2.4.1 Nominations and Remuneration Committee (unaudited)**

As detailed in the Governance Statement, the Remuneration and Nominations Committee is responsible for governance of the pay and remuneration policy for the organisation and the approval of Principal Reporter/Chief Executive appraisal and pay.

#### **Policy on remuneration**

SCRA's overall remuneration policy aims to:

- attract, retain and motivate competent and skilled staff at all levels of the organisation
- reward staff for their contribution to SCRA by arrangements which are simple, fair and transparent.

#### **Performance assessment methods**

Performance is measured in accordance with a performance appraisal scheme that includes annual objective setting and performance review. For senior managers these objectives relate to both individual performance and corporate performance.

Where performance is satisfactory, staff not at the maximum of their salary scale will progress to the next step in the scale.

#### **Policy on duration of contracts, notice periods and termination payments**

It is SCRA's policy normally to offer open-ended appointments, subject to Probationary Policy criteria, operational and resource considerations. The notice period for senior managers is three months. Any payment in relation to termination of employment through retirement or redundancy is governed by SCRA's relevant policies and procedures. Any discretionary payment made to any member of staff on termination is subject to approval by the Board and the Scottish Government.

## 2.4.2 Senior managers' service contracts (unaudited)

In the event of early termination of a senior manager service contract and subject to Scottish Government advice and necessary approvals, a payment in lieu of notice up to a maximum of 3 months' salary may be made.

	Date of contract	Unexpired term	Notice period
Neil Hunter	04 April 2011	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Principal Reporter/Chief Executive</i>			
Ross Mackenzie	01 April 2024*	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Acting Head of Finance and Resources*</i>			
Susan Deery	01 May 2016	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Head of Human Resources</i>			
Helen Etchells	12 August 2019	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>			
Paul Mulvanny	12 August 2019	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>			
Alistair Hogg	01 June 2019	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Head of Practice and Policy</i>			
Lisa Bennett	14 September 2015	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Head of Strategy and Organisational Development</i>			
Douglas Cameron	13 December 2023	Open-ended contract	3 months
<i>Head of Digital Delivery</i>			

\* Ross Mackenzie was appointed permanent Head of Finance and Resources, effective 01 April 2025.

### 2.4.3 Board members' and Senior Managers' remuneration (audited)

Non-executive Board Members	Salary and allowances 2024-25 £000	Salary and allowances 2023-24 £000
Michelle Miller (Chair) (left office 30 Apr 2024)	0-5*	20-25
Cathie Cowan (Chair) (appointed 07 Jun 2024)	20-25*	n/a
Kay Barton	0-5	0-5
Lynne Clow (appointed 01 Oct 2024)	0-5**	n/a
James Edgar	0-5	0-5
Lorraine Moore	0-5	0-5
Steve Renwick (appointed 17 Jun 2024)	0-5**	n/a
Hazel Smith	0-5	0-5
Martin Toye (left office 31 May 2024)	0-5**	0-5
Suzanne Vestri (left office 30 Sep 2024)	0-5**	0-5
Ying Zhang	0-5	0-5

\* The full-year equivalent remunerations for Michelle Miller and Cathie Cowan for 2024-25 fall within the band £20,000-£25,000.

\*\* The full-year equivalent remunerations for Lynne Clow, Steven Renwick, Martin Toye and Suzanne Vestri for 2024-25 fall within the band £0-£5,000.

SCRA does not make any contribution to the Local Government Pension Scheme, nor provide any other form of pension benefit, in respect of any Non-Executive Board Member.



<b>Executive Management Team Members</b>	<b>Salary and allowances 2024/25 £000</b>	<b>Pension benefits 2024/25 £000</b>	<b>Single total figure of remuneration £000</b>	<b>Salary and allowances 2023/24 £000</b>	<b>Pension benefits 2023/24 £000</b>	<b>Single total figure of remuneration £000</b>
Neil Hunter	105-110	59	165-170	100-105	14	115-120
<i>Principal Reporter/Chief Executive</i>						
Ross Mackenzie <sup>1</sup>	70-75	54	125-130	n/a	n/a	n/a
<i>Acting Head of Finance and Resources (appointed 01 April 2024)</i>						
Susan Deery	80-85	43	120-125	75-80	20	95-100
<i>Head of Human Resources</i>						
Helen Etchells	80-85	39	115-120	75-80	20	95-100
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>						
Paul Mulvanny	80-85	40	120-125	75-80	20	95-100
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>						
Alistair Hogg	80-85	40	120-125	75-80	18	95-100
<i>Head of Practice and Policy</i>						
Lisa Bennett	80-85	39	120-125	75-80	18	95-100
<i>Head of Strategy and Organisational Development</i>						
Douglas Cameron <sup>2</sup>	70-75	51	125-130	20-25	n/a	n/a
<i>Head of Digital Delivery (appointed 13 December 2023)</i>						

<sup>1</sup> Ross Mackenzie's 2023/24 salary and allowances, pension benefits and single total figure of remuneration cannot be reported due to absence of comparable data from 31 March 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Cameron's 2023/24 salary and allowances would be in the £65,000-£70,000 bracket if reported on an annualised basis. Pension benefits and single total figure of remuneration in 2023/24 cannot be reported due to absence of comparable data from 31 March 2023.

No senior manager received any benefits in kind or non-cash remuneration in 2024/25 (2023/24: £nil). No significant awards were made, or compensation paid, to former senior managers in 2024/25 (2023/24: none).

## Senior managers' pension entitlements

Executive Management	Real increase in pension in year to 31 March 2025	Real increase in lump sum in year to 31 March 2025	Total accrued pension at 31 March 2025	Total accrued lump sum at 31 March 2025	CETV <sup>1</sup> at 31 March 2024	CETV <sup>1</sup> at 31 March 2025	Real increase in CETV <sup>1</sup> during
Team Members	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Neil Hunter	2.5-5	0	30-35	0	474	544	44
<i>Principal Reporter/Chief Executive</i>							
Ross Mackenzie	2.5-5	2.5-5	25-30	20-25	329	409	63
<i>Acting Head of Finance and Resources</i>							
Susan Deery	0-2.5	0-2.5	45-50	70-75	895	982	50
<i>Head of Human Resources</i>							
Helen Etchells	0-2.5	0	35-40	0	491	548	34
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>							
Paul Mulvanny	0-2.5	0-2.5	35-40	45-50	719	796	46
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>							
Alistair Hogg	0-2.5	0-2.5	35-40	30-35	623	693	42
<i>Head of Practice and Policy</i>							
Lisa Bennett	0-2.5	0-2.5	25-30	15-20	365	411	27
<i>Head of Strategy and Organisational Development</i>							
Douglas Cameron	2.5-5	0-2.5	35-40	35-40	579	653	49
<i>Head of Digital Delivery</i>							

<sup>1</sup> CETV is Cash Equivalent Transfer Value.

## Senior managers' pension entitlements: prior year comparatives

Executive Management	Real increase in pension in year to 31 March 2024	Real increase in lump sum in year to 31 March 2024	Total accrued pension at 31 March 2024	Total accrued lump sum at 31 March 2024	CETV <sup>1</sup> at 31 March 2023	CETV <sup>1</sup> at 31 March 2024	Real increase in CETV <sup>1</sup> during year
Team Members	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Neil Hunter	0-2.5	0	30-35	0	403	474	47
<i>Principal Reporter/Chief Executive</i>							
Edward Morrison	0-2.5	0-2.5	45-50	65-70	823	953	92
<i>Head of Finance and Resources</i>							
Susan Deery	0-2.5	0-2.5	40-45	65-70	772	895	86
<i>Head of Human Resources</i>							
Helen Etchells	0-2.5	0	30-35	0	396	491	73
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>							
Paul Mulvanny	0-2.5	0-2.5	35-40	45-50	603	719	86
<i>Senior Operational Manager</i>							
Alistair Hogg	0-2.5	0-2.5	30-35	30-35	529	623	68
<i>Head of Practice and Policy</i>							
Lisa Bennett	0-2.5	0-2.5	25-30	10-15	292	365	55
<i>Head of Strategy and Organisational Development</i>							
Douglas Cameron <sup>2</sup>	n/a	n/a	30-35	35-40	n/a	579	n/a
<i>Head of Digital Delivery (appointed 13 December 2023)</i>							
Lawrie McDonald	0-2.5	0	5-10	0	83	91	5
<i>Head of Digital Delivery (left office 01 May 2023)</i>							

<sup>1</sup> CETV is Cash Equivalent Transfer Value.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas Cameron's real increase in CETV, pension and lump sum cannot be reported due to absence of comparable data from 31 March 2023.

### Fair pay disclosures

During 2024/25, the full-time equivalent remuneration paid to SCRA staff ranged from £21,924 to £107,697 (2023/24: £19,914 to £103,059). Remuneration figures exclude cash-equivalent transfer values and employer pension contributions.

	2024-25 Salary	2024-25 Allow- ances	2024-25 Total remun- eration	2023-24 Salary	2023-24 Allow- ances	2023-24 Total remun- eration
Highest paid Executive Management Team member	£107,697	£0	£107,697	£103,059	£0	£103,059
25 <sup>th</sup> percentile	£29,571	£0	£29,571	£28,071	£0	£28,071
Median	£37,861	£0	£37,861	£36,059	£0	£36,059
75 <sup>th</sup> percentile	£52,215	£0	£52,215	£49,729	£0	£49,729

The 25<sup>th</sup> percentile pay ratio has decreased from 3.67:1 to 3.64:1. The median pay ratio has decreased from 2.86:1 to 2.84:1. The 75<sup>th</sup> percentile pay ratio has decreased from 2.07:1 to 2.06:1. The remuneration of the highest-paid Executive Team Member has increased 4.5% from 2023/24. SCRA believes the median pay ratio for 2024/25 is consistent with its pay, reward and progression policies for SCRA employees taken as a whole.

### 2.4.4 Amounts payable to and from third parties for the services of a senior manager (audited)

Children's Hearings Scotland paid SCRA £2,562 in 2024/25 (2023/24: £2,910) in respect of senior management services from Ross Mackenzie.

### 2.4.5 Staff breakdown by gender and permanent/non-permanent contracts (unaudited)

	2024-25	2023-24
Staff with permanent contract - Male	45	42
Staff with permanent contract - Female	317	307
Agency staff/staff with short-term contract - Male	8	9
Agency staff/staff with short-term contract - Female	64	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>420</b>

Average numbers are calculated using actual whole-time person equivalents at 31 March 2024, 30 June 2024, 30 September 2024, 31 December 2024 and 31 March 2025.

Included in these numbers above are five male executive team members and three female executive team members. SCRA does not employ any senior civil servants.

### 2.4.6 Staff numbers and related costs (audited)

## (i) Staff costs – staff with a permanent (UK) employment contract

	<b>2024-25 £000</b>	<b>2023-24 £000</b>
Salaries and wages	15,817	14,785
Social security costs	1,660	1,519
Contributions to pension scheme	3,255	3,021
Cost of early retirement	210	(2)
IAS 19 adjustment to pension scheme contributions	(186)	69
	<b>20,756</b>	<b>19,392</b>

## (ii) Staff costs – other staff

	<b>2024-25 £000</b>	<b>2023-24 £000</b>
Salaries and wages	3,330	2,940
Social security costs	345	297
Contributions to pension scheme	649	604
	<b>4,324</b>	<b>3,841</b>

## (iii) Staff costs – all staff

	<b>2024-25 £000</b>	<b>2023-24 £000</b>
Salaries and wages	19,147	17,725
Social security costs	2,005	1,816
Contributions to pension scheme	3,904	3,625
Cost of early retirement	210	(2)
IAS 19 adjustment to pension scheme contributions	(186)	69
	<b>25,080</b>	<b>23,233</b>

The average pay per FTE employee, excluding the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, increased by 8.5% between 31 March 2024 and 31 March 2025, reflecting SCRA's implementation of its 2024/25 pay policy and a shift towards recruitment of higher-graded roles.

## (iv) Exit packages

SCRA agreed 1 exit package during 2024/25, the non-contractual element of which cost £30k, in addition to contractual pay in lieu of notice of £9k (2023/24: 1 exit package, the non-contractual element of which cost £13k). This package did not include compulsory redundancy, but did constitute 1 special payment of £39k as broken down above (2023/24: £nil compulsory redundancy, but 1 special non-contractual payment of £13k).

## (v) Consultancy

In 2024/25, SCRA spent £97,485 on consultancy (2023/24: £25,477).

## 2.4.7 Staff Sickness Absence (unaudited)



In the year to 31 March 2025 average staff sickness absence was 5.8% (2024: 4.9%). The target for the year to 31 March 2025 was 4.0% (2024: 4%). Further detail can be found in section 1.2.3 of the Performance Report.

## **2.4.8 Disability, Diversity and Equal Treatment (unaudited)**

SCRA is a Disability Confident Employer. We continue to work on our portfolio for assessment to become a Disability Confident Leader and will be engaging with other Disability Confident Leaders in learning from their journey. Currently, as a disability confident employer we are committed to and can demonstrate the following:

- We provide a fully inclusive and accessible recruitment process
- We offer an interview to disabled people who meet the essential criteria for the role
- We are flexible when assessing people so disabled job applicants have the best opportunity to demonstrate that they can do the job
- We plan for, and make reasonable adjustments to, the assessment and interview process
- We make sure people involved in the interviewing process understand the Disability Confident commitment and know how to offer and make reasonable adjustments
- During employment, we proactively offer and make reasonable adjustments as required
- We have appointed Inclusion Ambassadors from various locations and roles across the organisation and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Leads in each locality who continually champion and promote our inclusion and diversity initiatives across the organisation. We have and continue to provide them with appropriate awareness raising and training.
- We have a Disability Group/Network who drive forward key initiatives and work based on an annual action plan
- We provide paid employment both on a permanent and fixed term basis, including Modern Apprenticeships, to employees with a wide range of disabilities
- We engage with Jobcentre Plus, Work and Health Programme providers to provide training and/or access support as required
- We provide an environment that is inclusive and accessible for staff, partner organisations, children, young people and their families
- We support employees to manage their disabilities or health concerns
- We ensure there are no barriers to development and progression for disabled staff
- We ensure managers are aware of how they can support staff who are sick or absent from work
- We promote information and advice on mental health conditions
- We have signed up to the Mental Health at Work Standards and Commitments and have developed an action plan of activity to improve mental health supports to all staff
- We have trained Mental Health First Aiders available to staff across the organisation.
- We provide occupational health services and an employee assistance programme
- We have a Disability Leave Policy which supports staff with a disability in managing their time off related to their disability.

SCRA is committed to fostering a workplace that is inclusive, respectful, and representative of the communities it serves. Its approach is embedded across strategic planning, operational delivery, and organisational culture, with a strong emphasis on fairness, dignity, and equality of opportunity.

More information on SCRA's approach to supporting diversity and equal treatment in employment can be found in the following documents:

People Strategy 2024-2027

[Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy 2024-2027](#)

[SCRA Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Mainstreaming Report 2023/ 2024](#)

[Employee Information Statistic Report 2024-2025](#)

[Pay Gap Report 2024](#)

[Equal Pay Audit Statement](#)

### 2.4.9 Facility time (unaudited)

Under the Trade Union (Facility Time Publication Requirements) Regulations SCRA is required to publish the following information.

#### *Relevant union officials*

What was the total number of your employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period?

Number of employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period	Full-time equivalent employee number
9	8.76

#### *Percentage of time spent on facility time*

How many of your employees who were relevant union officials employed during the relevant period spent a) 0%, b) 1%-50%, c) 51%-99% or d) 100% of their working hours on facility time?

Percentage of time	Number of employees
0%	0
1%-50%	8
51%-99%	0
100%	1

#### *Percentage of paybill spent on facility time*

Provide the figures requested in the first column of the table below to determine the percentage of your total pay bill spent on paying employees who were relevant union officials for facility time during the relevant period.

Provide the total cost of facility time	£86,673
Provide the total paybill	£25,056k
Provide the percentage of the total paybill spent on facility time, calculated as: (total cost of facility time ÷ total paybill x 100)	0.35%

#### *Paid trade union activities*

As a percentage of total paid facility time hours, how many hours were spent by employees who were relevant union officials during the relevant period on paid trade union activities?

Time spent on paid trade union activities as a percentage of total paid facility time hours calculated as: (total hours spent on paid trade union activities by relevant union officials during the relevant period ÷ total paid facility time hours) x 100	100%
---	------

## 2.5 Parliamentary Accountability Report

SCRA is required to report on any high-value losses and special payments incurred in the financial year, any fees and charges receivable in the financial year and any remote contingent liabilities as at the date the accounts were signed by the Accountable Officer.

- No reportable losses were incurred in the financial year to 31 March 2025.
- No reportable special payments were made in the financial year to 31 March 2025.

- No reportable fees or charges were received in the financial year to 31 March 2025.
- There are no remote contingent liabilities as at the date the accounts were signed.

**Neil Hunter**  
**Accountable Officer**

## 2.6 Independent auditor's report to the members of Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the Auditor General for Scotland and the Scottish Parliament

I have audited the financial statements in the annual report and accounts of Scottish Children's Reporter Administration for the year ended 31 March 2025 under the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. The financial statements comprise the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, the Statement of Financial Position, the Statement of Cash Flows, the Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity and notes to the financial statements, including material accounting policy information. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2024/25 Government Financial Reporting Manual (the 2024/25 FReM).

In my opinion the accompanying financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the body's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its net expenditure for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards, as interpreted and adapted by the 2024/25 FReM; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

### Basis for opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with applicable law and International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)), as required by the Code of Audit Practice approved by the Auditor General for Scotland. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of my report. I was appointed by the Auditor General on 27 May 2025. My period of appointment is three years, covering 2024/25 to 2026/27. I am independent of the body in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the financial statements in the UK including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. Non-audit services prohibited by the Ethical Standard were not provided to the body. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

### Conclusions relating to going concern basis of accounting

I have concluded that the use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work I have performed, I have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the body's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

These conclusions are not intended to, nor do they, provide assurance on the body's current or future financial sustainability. However, I report on the body's arrangements for



financial sustainability in a separate Annual Audit Report available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

### **Risks of material misstatement**

I report in my separate Annual Audit Report the most significant assessed risks of material misstatement that I identified and my judgements thereon.

### **Responsibilities of the Accountable Officer for the financial statements**

As explained more fully in the Statement of Accountable Officer's Responsibilities, the Accountable Officer is responsible for the preparation of financial statements that give a true and fair view in accordance with the financial reporting framework, and for such internal control as the Accountable Officer determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Accountable Officer is responsible for assessing the body's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention to discontinue the body's operations.

### **Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements**

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. I design procedures in line with my responsibilities outlined above to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. Procedures include:

- using my understanding of the central government sector to identify that the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers are significant in the context of the body;
- inquiring of the Accountable Officer as to other laws or regulations that may be expected to have a fundamental effect on the operations of the body;
- inquiring of the Accountable Officer concerning the body's policies and procedures regarding compliance with the applicable legal and regulatory framework;
- discussions among my audit team on the susceptibility of the financial statements to material misstatement, including how fraud might occur; and
- considering whether the audit team collectively has the appropriate competence and capabilities to identify or recognise non-compliance with laws and regulations.

The extent to which my procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud, is affected by the inherent difficulty in detecting irregularities, the effectiveness of the body's controls, and the nature, timing and extent of the audit procedures performed.

Irregularities that result from fraud are inherently more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error as fraud may involve collusion, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. The capability of the audit to detect fraud and other irregularities depends on factors such as the skilfulness of the perpetrator, the frequency and extent of manipulation, the degree of collusion involved, the relative size of individual amounts manipulated, and the seniority of those individuals involved.

A further description of the auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website [www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities](http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities). This description forms part of my auditor's report.

## **Reporting on regularity of expenditure and income**

### **Opinion on regularity**

In my opinion in all material respects the expenditure and income in the financial statements were incurred or applied in accordance with any applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.

### **Responsibilities for regularity**

The Accountable Officer is responsible for ensuring the regularity of expenditure and income. In addition to my responsibilities in respect of irregularities explained in the audit of the financial statements section of my report, I am responsible for expressing an opinion on the regularity of expenditure and income in accordance with the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000.

## **Reporting on other requirements**

### **Opinion prescribed by the Auditor General for Scotland on audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report**

I have audited the parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report described as audited. In my opinion, the audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report have been properly prepared in accordance with the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

### **Other information**

The Accountable Officer is responsible for the other information in the annual report and accounts. The other information comprises the Performance Report and the Accountability Report excluding the audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report.

My responsibility is to read all the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or my knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If I identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, I am required to determine whether this gives rise to a material

misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work I have performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact. I have nothing to report in this regard.

My opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon except on the Performance Report and Governance Statement to the extent explicitly stated in the following opinions prescribed by the Auditor General for Scotland.

### **Opinions prescribed by the Auditor General for Scotland on Performance Report and Governance Statement**

In my opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Performance Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers; and
- the information given in the Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements and that report has been prepared in accordance with the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

### **Matters on which I am required to report by exception**

I am required by the Auditor General for Scotland to report to you if, in my opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept; or
- the financial statements and the audited parts of the Remuneration and Staff Report are not in agreement with the accounting records; or
- I have not received all the information and explanations I require for my audit.

I have nothing to report in respect of these matters.

### **Conclusions on wider scope responsibilities**

In addition to my responsibilities for the annual report and accounts, my conclusions on the wider scope responsibilities specified in the Code of Audit Practice are set out in my Annual Audit Report.

### **Use of my report**

This report is made solely to the parties to whom it is addressed in accordance with the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000 and for no other purpose. In accordance with paragraph 108 of the Code of Audit Practice, I do not undertake to have responsibilities to members or officers, in their individual capacities, or to third parties.

Lisa Duthie

Audit Scotland

4th Floor

The Athenaeum Building

8 Nelson Mandela Place

Glasgow

G2 1BT

### 3. Financial Statements

#### 3.1 Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure for year ending 31 March 2025

	Note	2024-2025	2023-2024
		£000	£000
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Staff costs	3	25,080	23,233
Other expenditure	4	6,121	5,858
Depreciation and amortisation	5,7,14	3,175	2,697
		<u>34,376</u>	<u>31,788</u>
<b>Income</b>	2	<u>(244)</u>	<u>(205)</u>
<b>Net expenditure</b>		34,132	31,583
Interest payable		159	109
Interest receivable		-	-
Pension scheme finance cost	11	(199)	(5)
<b>Net expenditure before Scottish Government funding</b>		<u>34,092</u>	<u>31,687</u>
<b>Other comprehensive net expenditure</b>			
Items which will not be reclassified to net expenditure:			
Actuarial loss/(gain) on pensions	11	(33,460)	(4,190)
Revaluation loss/(surplus) on property			(577)
<b>Comprehensive net expenditure for the year</b>		<u>632</u>	<u>26,920</u>



### 3.2 Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2025

	Note	31 March 2025 £000	31 March 2024 £000
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	5	8,670	8,513
Right of use assets	14	5,256	5,760
Intangible assets	7	3,776	3,924
<i>Total non-current assets</i>		<u>17,702</u>	<u>18,197</u>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Trade and other receivables	8	365	510
Cash and cash equivalents	9	2,901	3,869
<i>Total current assets</i>		<u>3,266</u>	<u>4,379</u>
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>20,968</b>	<b>22,576</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	10	3,055	3,711
Other provisions	13	40	37
Lease obligations	14	641	531
<i>Total current liabilities</i>		<u>3,736</u>	<u>4,279</u>
<b>Non-current assets less net current liabilities</b>		<b>17,232</b>	<b>18,297</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>			
Payables	10	45	45
Pension liability/(asset)	11	2,321	(4,307)
Provision for unfunded pensions	12	127	142
Other provisions	13	479	438
Lease obligations	14	4,901	5,344
<i>Total non-current liabilities</i>		<u>7,873</u>	<u>1,662</u>
<b>Assets less liabilities</b>		<b><u>9,359</u></b>	<b><u>16,635</u></b>
<b>Taxpayers' equity</b>			
General fund	19	(19,736)	(18,888)
Pension reserve	11	26,040	32,468
Revaluation reserve		3,055	3,055
<b>Total taxpayers' equity</b>		<b><u>9,359</u></b>	<b><u>16,635</u></b>

The Accountable Officer has authorised these financial statements for issue.

**Neil Hunter**  
**Accountable Officer**

### 3.3 Statement of Cash Flows for year ending 31 March 2025

	Notes	2024-2025 £000	2023-2024 £000
<b>Cash flows from operating activity</b>			
<b>Net expenditure</b>		<b>(34,132 )</b>	<b>(31,583)</b>
Adjustments for non-cash items			
Increase/(Decrease) in pension fund liability	11	6,628	(4,307)
Increase/(Decrease) in pension reserve		(6,428)	4,191
Depreciation and amortisation charges	5,7,14	3,175	2,697
Revaluation losses (gains) on non-current assets	5		22
Impairment on non-current asset	1(f),4,5	239	
<i>Movements in working capital</i>			
Decrease/(Increase) in trade and other receivables	8	145	117
Decrease/(Increase) in trade and other payables	10,13	(1,326)	(80)
<i>Movements in provisions</i>			
Increase/(Decrease) in provision for unfunded pensions	12	(15)	(17)
<b>Net cash outflow from operating activities</b>		<b>(31,714)</b>	<b>(28,960)</b>
<b>Cash flow from investing activities</b>			
Purchase of property, plant and equipment	5	(1,029)	(919)
Purchase of intangible assets	7	(983)	(358)
<b>Cash flow from financing activities</b>			
Scottish Government funding for year		33,244	32,731
Repayment of leasing liabilities		(526)	(722)
Interest paid on lease obligations		(156)	(106)
Other interest paid		(3)	(3)
Net interest expense on pension asset	11	199	5
<b>Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents</b>		<b>(968)</b>	<b>1,668</b>
Opening Cash Balance	9	3,869	2,201
<b>Closing Cash Balance</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2,901</b>	<b>3,869</b>

### 3.4 Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity

	General Fund £000	Pension Reserve £000	Revaluation Reserve £000	Total Reserves £000
Balance at 31 March 2023	(19,932)	28,277	2,478	10,823
<b>Changes in taxpayers' deficit for 2023-24</b>				
Net gain on revaluation of property			577	577
Actuarial gain on pension reserve		4,191		4,191
Net expenditure for the year	(31,687)			(31,687)
Total recognised income and expense for 2023-24	(51,619)	32,468	3,055	(16,096)
Funding from Scottish Government	32,731			32,731
<b>Balance at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>(18,888)</b>	<b>32,468</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>16,635</b>
<b>Changes in taxpayers' deficit for 2024-25</b>				
Net gain on revaluation of property				
Actuarial gain/(loss) on pension reserve		(6,428)		(6,428)
Net expenditure for the year	(34,092)			(34,092)
Total recognised income and expense for 2024-25	(52,980)	26,040	3,055	(23,885)
Funding from Scottish Government	33,244			33,244
<b>Balance at 31 March 2025</b>	<b>(19,736)</b>	<b>26,040</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>9,359</b>

### 3.5 Notes of the financial statements

#### 1. Statement of accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the 2024-2025 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) issued by HM Treasury.

The accounting policies contained in the FReM apply International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adapted or interpreted for the public sector context. Where the FReM permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of SCRA for the purposes of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The particular policies adopted by SCRA are described below. They have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material to the accounts.

##### a. Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, investment properties, plant and equipment and intangible assets to fair value as determined by the relevant accounting standard. The financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis.

##### b. Employee benefits

SCRA has an agreement with Falkirk Council under which all staff are eligible to enter the Local Government Pension Scheme managed by the Council in accordance with the rules thereof. It is a defined benefit scheme providing pension benefits and life assurance for all staff members.

The defined benefits pension scheme's assets are included at market value and this is compared to the present value of the scheme liabilities using a projected unit method and discounted at a rate in accordance with the FReM and consistent with IAS 19. The increase in the present value of the liabilities of the scheme expected to arise from employee service in the period is charged to net expenditure. The expected return on the scheme's assets and the increase during the period in the present value of the scheme's liabilities arising from the passage of time are included in pension scheme finance cost. Actuarial gains and losses arising from experience adjustments and changes in actuarial assumptions are charged or credited to reserves and are recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

The contributions are determined by a qualified actuary on the basis of triennial valuations using the projected accrued benefit method. The valuation used for contributions during 2024/25 was at 31 March 2023. Details of these valuations are included in reports published by Falkirk Council.

The contribution rates for 2024-25 were an average of 6.3% by employee and 17.4% by employer.

### **c. Property, plant and equipment**

SCRA's policy is to carry out a full independent external valuation of land and buildings every five years supplemented by interim desktop valuations. The full estate of Land and Buildings was valued on an open market basis as at 31 March 2024. An interim valuation of the Glenrothes property was carried out at 31 March 2025 due to substantial upgrading works during the financial year. It was deemed the valuation would not significantly impact the value of the property estate and therefore a full valuation was not carried out.

Other property, plant and equipment are stated at depreciated historical cost as a proxy for fair value as the assets in this category have a low value and short useful life. It is SCRA's policy to capitalise assets which have an expected useful life in excess of one year and cost more than £5,000 including VAT. Purchases as part of a project are considered together when applying the £5,000 minimum limit. This limit was increased from £1,000 to £5,000 for the year ending 31 March 2025.

Subsequent costs are included in the asset's carrying amount or recognised as a separate asset, as appropriate, only when it is probable that future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to SCRA, and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. The carrying amount of the replaced part is derecognised. All other repairs and maintenance are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure during the financial year in which they are incurred.

Increases in the carrying amount arising on revaluation of land and buildings are credited to revaluation reserve. Decreases that offset previous increases of the same asset are charged against revaluation reserve; all other decreases are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure.

### **d. Right of Use Assets and lease liabilities**

At inception of a contract, SCRA considers whether a contract is, or contains, a lease. A lease is defined as a contract, or part of a contract, that conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for consideration.

To apply this definition, SCRA assesses whether the contract meets two key evaluations:

- the contract contains an identified asset, which is either explicitly identified in the contract or implicitly specified by being identified at the time the asset is made available to SCRA;
- SCRA has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the identified asset throughout the period of use, considering its rights within the defined scope of the contract.

At lease commencement date, SCRA recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability on the balance sheet. The lease liability is measured as the present value of the lease payments that are not paid at that date, discounted using the HM Treasury discount rate promulgated in the PES papers. The interest element of the lease payments are charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure. The right-of-use asset is measured at cost, comprising the initial measurement of the lease



liability, any initial direct costs incurred by SCRA and an estimate of any costs to dismantle and remove the asset at the end of the lease net of any incentives received.

At the 31 March 2024, Ryden, Chartered Surveyors, valued the current market rents of SCRA's leased properties and it was deemed that this has not resulted in a material change to the overall valuation of right-of-use asset currently held at cost

SCRA depreciates the right-of-use assets on a straight-line basis from the lease commencement date to the earlier of the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset or the end of the lease term. SCRA also assesses the right-of-use asset for impairment when such indicators exist

In line with the FReM, SCRA accounts for short-term leases and leases of low-value assets as an expense in the Income and Expenditure Account on a straight-line basis over the lease term, rather than recognising a right-of-use asset and lease liability.

SCRA's right of use assets and corresponding lease obligations are for buildings used for offices and hearing centres.

#### **e. Depreciation**

Depreciation is provided on property, plant and equipment on a straight-line basis at rates sufficient to write down their cost or revalued amounts to their residual values over their estimated useful lives. The depreciation rates for the principal categories of assets are as follows:

Land	Not depreciated
Assets under construction	Not depreciated
Buildings	5 – 50 years
Fixtures & Fittings	4 years
Plant & Machinery	10 years
Computer Equipment	2 – 4 years
Other Equipment	4 years
Leasehold Improvements	lesser of 10 years and the remaining term of the lease
Right of Use assets	lesser of useful life and the remaining term of the lease

#### **f. Impairment**

Assets which are subject to amortisation or depreciation are reviewed for impairment whenever events or circumstances indicate that the carrying amount may not be recoverable. An impairment loss is recognised by the amount by which the carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount. Any impairment loss is recognised immediately in Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure, except for assets previously re-valued where the revaluation was taken to the asset revaluation reserve. In this case, the impairment loss is recognised in Other Comprehensive Net Expenditure to the extent that the impairment loss does not exceed the amount in the revaluation surplus for that same asset.

**g. Assets held for sale**

A property is derecognised and held for sale under IFRS 5 when all the following requirements are met:

- A management decision has been made to dispose of the property;
- The property is being actively marketed for sale;
- The sale is highly probable within 12 months of classification as held for sale

**h. Government grants**

It is SCRA's policy to credit all government grants and grant-in-aid to the General Reserve in line with the FReM.

**i. Liabilities**

All material amounts outstanding as at 31 March 2025 have been included in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure irrespective of when actual payment was made.

**j. Provisions**

Provision is recognised in the Statement of Financial Position when there is a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event, and it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation.

**k. Other income**

SCRA recognises other income in the year to which it relates.

**l. Intangible assets**

Intangible assets are stated at historic purchase cost less accumulated amortisation. Acquired computer software licences and developed software are capitalised on the basis of the costs incurred to acquire and bring to use the specific software. These costs are amortised using the straight-line method over the asset's useful life of between 2 and 10 years.

**m. Other administration and programme costs**

The costs reported in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure include other administration costs but there is no specific expenditure on programme costs.

**n. Pensions**

The accounts have been prepared incorporating the requirements of *International Accounting Standard 19 – Employee Benefits* (IAS 19) and include an actuarial valuation of the pension scheme liability as explained in note 11 to the accounts. This reflects the inclusion of liabilities falling due in future years in respect of pension liabilities arising from the application of IAS 19 to SCRA. Hymans Robertson, the

actuary to the pension scheme who has collated the information from the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) fund in which SCRA participates, has calculated the liability arising under IAS 19. The actuary to the LGPS fund in which SCRA participates conducts a triennial review of the funding basis of the pension scheme, along with yearly reviews when appropriate. The last formal valuation of the funds was conducted as at 31 March 2023. In preparing the projected pension expense for the year to 31 March 2025, the actuary has assumed employees continue to earn new benefits in line with the regulations as they currently stand and that the pensionable payroll remains stable with new entrants replacing leavers. The other main financial assumptions are set out in note 11.

To the extent that the pension deficit is not met from SCRA's sources of income it may only be met by future grant in aid from SCRA's sponsoring department, the Scottish Government Education Department. This is because, under the normal conventions applying to parliamentary control over income and expenditure, such grants may not be paid in advance of need.

SCRA is required to meet the additional costs of benefits beyond the normal pension scheme benefits in respect of employees who retire early. SCRA provides in full for these costs when the early retirement has been agreed. SCRA, rather than the pension scheme, is liable for that portion of pensions relating to early retirement.

#### **o. Trade payables**

Trade payables are obligations to pay for goods or services that have been acquired in the ordinary course of business from suppliers. Accounts payable are classified as current liabilities if payment is due within one year or less (or in the normal operating cycle of the business if longer). If not, they are presented as non-current liabilities. Currently SCRA has no trade payables classified as non-current liabilities.

#### **p. Value Added Tax**

SCRA is not registered for VAT and all costs are shown inclusive of irrecoverable VAT.

#### **q. Review of accounting policies and estimation techniques**

These financial statements have been prepared under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Areas of judgement in how SCRA's accounting policies are applied include the fair values of properties (see note 1.c), right of use assets/lease liabilities (see note 1.d) and pension estimation technique.

#### **Sensitivity analysis**

The most significant financial impact arising by assumptions are those used to calculate the pension asset/deficit. The sensitivities regarding the principal assumptions used to measure the scheme liabilities are set out below.

	Approximate % increase to Defined Benefit Obligation	Approximate monetary amount £000
Change in assumptions at 31 March 2025		
0.1% decrease in Real discount Rate	2%	2,187
1 year increase in member life expectancy	4%	4,842
0.1% increase in the Salary Increase Rate	0%	168
0.1% increase in the Pension Increase Rate (CPI)	2%	2,078

The principal demographic assumption is the longevity assumption (i.e. member life expectancy). For sensitivity purposes, the actuary estimates that a one year increase in life expectancy would approximately increase SCRA's Defined Benefit Obligation by around 3-5%. In practice the actual cost of a one year increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival rates predominantly apply at younger or older ages).

In order to quantify the impact of a change in the financial assumptions used, the value of the scheme obligations as at 31 March 2025 have been calculated and compared on varying bases. The approach taken is consistent with that adopted to derive the IAS19 figures provided in these financial statements, based on the profile (average member ages, retirement ages etc.) of SCRA as at the date of the most recent actuarial valuation.

The approach taken in preparing the sensitivity analysis shown is consistent with that adopted in the previous year.

**r. Accounting standards not yet adopted**

As at the date of authorisation of these financial statements, the following international financial accounting standards (IFRSs) were not yet adopted:

- IFRS 17 Insurance contracts
- IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements
- IFRS 19 Subsidiaries without Public Accountability

These standards are not UK-adopted per the Government's Financial Reporting Manual (FReM) and, when adopted, will have no material impact on SCRA's financial statements or reporting.

## 2. Income

Income of £244k (2023-24: £205k) is comprised mainly of property rental income, shared services income, and staff secondment income.

## 3. Staff Costs

A detailed breakdown of Staff Costs and Numbers is contained within the Remuneration and Staff Report section of the Accountability Report.

## 4. Other expenditure

	2024-25 £000	2023-24 £000
Running costs <sup>2</sup>	2,443	2,652
Other property costs	2,442	2,319
Hearing and legal costs	387	256
Training, recruitment and other staff costs	467	449
Short-term and low-value leases	15	33
Board fees and expenses	49	50
Auditor remuneration	48	48
Internal auditors' remuneration	31	29
Loss on revaluation of non-current assets	0	22
Impairment of non-current asset	239	0
	<b>6,121</b>	<b>5,858</b>

## 5. Tangible non-current assets

Additions of total property, plant and equipment in the schedule of £1.595m (2023/24: £1.703m) appear in the cash flow as £1.029m (2023/24: £0.919m) after adjustment for opening and closing property, plant and equipment accruals in trade and other payables.

At 31 March 2024	At 31 March 2025	Net book value	At 31 March 2025	Revaluation	Withdrawn on disposal	Provided in year	At 1 April 2024	Accumulated depreciation	At 31 March 2025	Impairment	Revaluation	Disposals	Transfers	Additions	At 1 April 2024	Cost/Valuation		
------------------	------------------	----------------	------------------	-------------	-----------------------	------------------	-----------------	--------------------------	------------------	------------	-------------	-----------	-----------	-----------	-----------------	----------------	--	--

<sup>2</sup> Running costs exclude £45k of costs that relate to 2024/25 that were accounted for within the 2023/24 financial year.

Land	Buildings	Assets under	Leasehold Improvements	Fixtures and fittings	Computer Equipment	Other equipment	Plant and machinery	Total
£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
1,430	3,857	51	4,258	2,563	1,739	2,469	145	16,512
	2	725	180	92	596			1,595
	360	(460)	3	70		27		0
			(1,657)	(85)	(4)	(50)		(1,796)
	(239)							(239)
1,430	3,980	316	2,784	2,640	2,331	2,446	145	16,072
0	0	0	3,287	1,264	1,003	2,300	145	7,999
	149		217	431	327	75		1,199
			(1,657)	(85)	(4)	(50)		(1,796)
0	149	0	1,847	1,610	1,326	2,325	145	7,402
1,430	3,831	316	937	1,030	1,005	121	0	8,670
1,430	3,857	51	971	1,299	736	169	0	8,513



Prior year comparatives

	Land	Buildings	Assets under construction	Leasehold improvements	Fixtures and fittings	Computer Equipment	Other equipment	Plant and machinery	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>Cost/Valuation</b>									
At 1 April 2023	1,473	3,644	52	3,929	1,765	1,327	2,383	145	14,718
Additions			663	280	335	425			1,703
Transfers			(664)	49	527		88		0
Disposals					(64)	(13)	(2)		(79)
Revaluation	(43)	213							170
At 31 March 2024	1,430	3,857	51	4,258	2,563	1,739	2,469	145	16,512
<b>Accumulated depreciation</b>									
At 1 April 2023	0	257	0	2,995	1,088	780	2,234	145	7,499
Provided in year		128		292	240	236	68		964
Withdrawn on disposal					(64)	(13)	(2)		(79)
Revaluation		(385)							(385)
At 31 March 2024	0	0	0	3,287	1,264	1,003	2,300	145	7,999
<b>Net book value</b>									
At 31 March 2024	1,430	3,857	51	971	1,299	736	169	0	8,513
At 31 March 2023	1,473	3,387	52	934	677	547	149	0	7,219

6. Assets held for sale

SCRA has no assets held for sale as at 31 March 2025 (2024: none).

## 7. Intangible assets

Additions of total intangible assets in the schedule of £1.090m (2023/24: £0.757m) appear in the cash flow as £0.983m (2023/24: £0.358m) after adjustment for opening and closing intangible asset accruals in trade and other payables.

	Software licences £000	Information Technology £000	Total £000
<b>Cost/Valuation</b>			
As at 1 April 2024	280	7,193	7,473
Additions	0	1,090	1,090
Transfers	0	0	0
Disposals	0	0	0
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>8,283</b>	<b>8,563</b>
<b>Accumulated amortisation</b>			
At 1 April 2024	277	3,272	3,549
Provided in year	3	1,235	1,238
Withdrawn on disposal	0	0	0
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>4,507</b>	<b>4,787</b>
<b>Net Book Value</b>			
<b>At 31 March 2025</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,776</b>	<b>3,776</b>
At 31 March 2024	3	3,921	3,924
<b>Prior year comparatives</b>			
<b>Cost/Valuation</b>			
As at 1 April 2023	280	6,436	6,716
Additions	0	757	757
Transfers	0	0	0
Disposals	0	0	0
At 31 March 2024	280	7,193	7,473
<b>Accumulated amortisation</b>			
At 1 April 2023	273	2,310	2,583
Provided in year	4	962	966
Withdrawn on disposal	0	0	0
At 31 March 2024	277	3,272	3,549
<b>Net Book Value</b>			
At 31 March 2024	3	3,921	3,924
At 31 March 2023	7	4,126	4,133

**8. Trade and other receivables****(i) Current assets**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Prepayments	302	230
Other receivables	63	280
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>510</b>

**(ii) Intra governmental balances**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Balances with local authorities	4	7
Balances with other central government bodies	29	256
Balances with bodies external to government	332	247
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>510</b>

**9. Cash and cash equivalents**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Balance at 1 April	3,869	2,201
Net change in cash and cash equivalents	(968)	1,668
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>2,901</b>	<b>3,869</b>
Bank accounts	2,898	3,866
Petty cash balance	3	3
	<b>2,901</b>	<b>3,869</b>

All bank balances at 31 March 2025 are held with commercial banks.

**10. Trade and other payables****(i) Current liabilities**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Trade payables	1,023	1,156
Tax and social security	489	465
Other payables	415	465
Accruals	1,128	1,625
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>3,711</b>

The decrease in total trade and other payables of £0.656m (2023/24: increase £1.108m) is shown in the statement of cash flows as a decrease of £1.326m (2023/24: decrease £0.08m) after adjustment for movements in property, plant and equipment (note 5) and intangible assets (note 7).

**(ii) Non-current liabilities**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) loans	37	37
Other payables, accruals and deferred income	8	8
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>45</b>

**(iii) Intra governmental balances**

	<b>Payables: current</b>	<b>Payables: non- current</b>	<b>Payables: current</b>	<b>Payables: non- current</b>
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Balances with local authorities	399	0	476	0
Balances with other central government bodies	731	37	696	37
Balances with bodies external to government	1,925	8	2,539	8
<b>At 31 March</b>	<b>3,055</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>3,711</b>	<b>45</b>

## 11. Pensions

### Financial assumptions

The assumptions SCRA instructed the actuary to use are:

Period Ended	31 March 2025 % per annum	31 March 2024 % per annum
Pension Increase Rate (CPI)	2.75%	2.75%
Salary Increase Rate	3.25%	3.25%
Discount Rate	5.80%	4.85%

As at the date of the most recent valuation, the duration of the Employer's funded liabilities is 17 years.

### Demographic assumptions

Life expectancy is based on the Fund's VitaCurves with improvements in line with the CMI 2023 model, with a 15% weighting of 2023 (and 2022) data, a 0% weighting of 2021 (and 2020) data, standard smoothing (Sk7), initial adjustment of 0.25% and a long term rate of improvement of 1.5% per annum for both males and females. Based on these assumptions, the average future life expectancies at age 65 for SCRA, assuming future pensioners members are aged 45 as at last formal valuation date, are:

	Males	Females
Current Pensioners	20.6 years	23.4 years
Future Pensioners	22.1 years	25.0 years

Life expectancies for the prior period end are based on the Fund's VitaCurves. The allowances for future improvements, for both current and future pensioners, are CMI 2022 model with a 25% weighting of 2022, a 0% weighting of 2021 (and 2020) data, standard smoothing (Sk7), initial adjustment of 0.25% and a long term rate of improvement of 1.5% per annum.

Please note that the mortality assumptions used to value SCRA's obligations in the Closing Position are different to those used to value SCRA's obligations in the Opening Position. A commutation allowance is included for future retirements to elect to take 75% of the maximum additional tax-free cash up to HMRC limits. All other demographic assumptions are as per the latest funding valuation of SCRA.

### Asset ceiling adjustment

The fair value of plan assets from 31 March 2023 to 31 March 2025 exceeded the estimated present value of liabilities. In accordance with International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee Interpretation 14 ("IFRIC 14"), SCRA only recognises that net asset, in its Statement of Financial Position, to the extent that it represents the present value of any economic benefits available in the form of refunds from the plan or reductions in future contributions. SCRA has no unconditional right to refunds from the plan. When expressed as the present value of estimated future service costs less the present value of estimated future service contributions, the economic benefit available in the form of reductions in future contributions is £0, before accounting for unfunded pension liabilities; this is what SCRA has recognised in its

Statement of Financial Position. Without an asset ceiling, SCRA would have recognised a net pension asset of £37.567m at 31 March 2025 (2024: £15.672m).



**Change in the fair value of plan assets, defined benefit obligation and net asset/liability  
for the year end 31 March 2025**

	Assets £000	Obligation s £000	Impact of asset ceiling adjustment s £000	Net asset (liability) £000
Fair value of plan assets	152,385			152,385
Present value of funded liabilities		134,000		(134,000)
Present value of unfunded liabilities		2,713		(2,713)
Effect of the asset ceiling			(11,365)	(11,365)
<b>Opening position as at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>152,385</b>	<b>136,713</b>	<b>(11,365)</b>	<b>4,307</b>
Service cost				
- Current service cost	0	3,902		(3,902)
- Past service cost (including curtailments)	0	0		0
- Effect of settlements	0	0		0
<b>Total service cost</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,902</b>		<b>(3,902)</b>
Net interest				
- Net income on plan assets	7,391			7,391
- Net cost on defined benefit obligation		6,641		(6,641)
- Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling			(551)	(551)
<b>Total net interest</b>	<b>7,391</b>	<b>6,641</b>	<b>(551)</b>	<b>199</b>
<b>Total defined benefit cost recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure</b>	<b>7,391</b>	<b>10,543</b>	<b>(551)</b>	<b>(3,703)</b>
Cash flows				
- Participants' contributions	1,209	1,209		0
- Employer contributions	3,317	0		3,317
- Estimated benefits paid	(4,276)	(4,276)		0
- Estimated unfunded benefits paid	(186)	(186)		0
- Estimated contributions in respect of unfunded benefits paid	186	0		186
- Effect of business combinations and disposals	0	0		0
<b>Expected closing position</b>	<b>160,026</b>	<b>144,003</b>	<b>(11,916)</b>	<b>4,107</b>
Remeasurements				
- Change in financial assumptions	0	(21,448)		21,448
- Change in demographic assumptions	0	(232)		232
- Other experience	0	(1,269)		1,269
- Return on assets excluding amounts included in net interest	(1,405)	0		(1,405)
- Changes in the effect of the asset ceiling	0	0	11,916	11,916
<b>Total remeasurements recognised in Statement of Taxpayers' Deficit</b>	<b>(1,405)</b>	<b>(22,949)</b>	<b>11,916</b>	<b>33,460</b>
Fair value of plan assets	158,621			158,621
Present value of funded liabilities		118,733		(118,733)
Present value of unfunded liabilities		2,321		(2,321)
Effect of the asset ceiling			(39,888)	(39,888)

Closing position as at 31 March 2025	158,621	121,054	(39,888)	(2,321)
--------------------------------------	---------	---------	----------	---------

**Change in the fair value of plan assets, defined benefit obligation and net asset/liability  
for the year end 31 March 2024**

	Assets £000	Obligation s £000	Impact of asset ceiling adjustment s £000	Net asset (liability) £000
Fair value of plan assets	146,682			146,682
Present value of funded liabilities		123,510		(123,510)
Present value of unfunded liabilities		3,008		(3,008)
Effect of the asset ceiling			(20,164)	(20,164)
<b>Opening position as at 31 March 2023</b>	<b>146,682</b>	<b>126,518</b>	<b>(20,164)</b>	<b>0</b>
Service cost				
- Current service cost	0	3,710		(3,710)
- Past service cost (including curtailments)	0	0		0
- Effect of settlements	0	0		0
<b>Total service cost</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,710</b>		<b>(3,710)</b>
Net interest				
- Net income on plan assets	6,997			6,997
- Net cost on defined benefit obligation		6,034		(6,034)
- Interest on the effect of the asset ceiling			(958)	(958)
<b>Total net interest</b>	<b>6,997</b>	<b>6,034</b>	<b>(958)</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total defined benefit cost recognised in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure</b>	<b>6,997</b>	<b>9,744</b>	<b>(958)</b>	<b>(3,705)</b>
Cash flows				
- Participants' contributions	1,092	1,092		0
- Employer contributions	3,641	0		3,641
- Estimated benefits paid	(4,117)	(4,117)		0
- Estimated unfunded benefits paid	(181)	(181)		0
- Estimated contributions in respect of unfunded benefits paid	181	0		181
- Effect of business combinations and disposals	0	0		0
<b>Expected closing position</b>	<b>154,295</b>	<b>133,056</b>	<b>(21,122)</b>	<b>117</b>
Remeasurements				
- Change in financial assumptions	0	(8,310)		8,310
- Change in demographic assumptions	0	(2,505)		2,505
- Other experience	(7,190)	14,472		(21,662)
- Return on assets excluding amounts included in net interest	5,280	0		5,280
- Changes in the effect of the asset ceiling	0	0	9,757	9,757
<b>Total remeasurements recognised in Statement of Taxpayers' Deficit</b>	<b>(1,910)</b>	<b>3,657</b>	<b>9,757</b>	<b>4,190</b>
Fair value of plan assets	152,385			152,385
Present value of funded liabilities		134,000		(134,000)
Present value of unfunded liabilities		2,713		(2,713)
Effect of the asset ceiling			(11,365)	(11,365)

<b>Closing position as at 31 March 2024</b>	<b>152,385</b>	<b>136,713</b>	<b>(11,365)</b>	<b>4,307</b>
---	----------------	----------------	-----------------	--------------

**Fair value of employer assets at 31 March 2025**

<b>Asset Category</b>	<b>Quoted prices in active markets  £000</b>	<b>Quoted prices not in active markets  £000</b>	<b>Total  £000</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Equity securities:</b>				
Consumer	14,873.4	-	14,873.4	9%
Manufacturing	12,661.3	-	12,661.3	8%
Energy and utilities	7,513.4	-	7,513.4	5%
Financial institutions	11,083.2	-	11,083.2	7%
Health and care	5,622.5	-	5,622.5	4%
Information technology	8,313.6	-	8,313.6	5%
Other	1,270.8	-	1,270.8	1%
<b>Debt securities:</b>				
Corporate bonds (investment grade)	-	-	-	0%
Corporate bonds (non-investment grade)	-	-	-	0%
UK Government	22,155.4	-	22,155.4	14%
Other	2,052.5	-	2,052.5	1%
<b>Private equity:</b>				
All	-	544.0	544.0	0%
<b>Real estate:</b>				
UK property	-	8,584.3	8,584.3	5%
Overseas property	-	-	-	0%
<b>Investment funds and unit trusts:</b>				
Equities	24,199.4	-	24,199.4	15%
Bonds	2,530.5	-	2,530.5	2%
Hedge funds	-	-	-	0%
Commodities	-	-	-	0%
Infrastructure	-	23,161.7	23,161.7	15%
Other	-	2,730.4	2,730.4	2%
<b>Derivatives:</b>				
Inflation	-	-	-	0%
Interest rate	-	-	-	0%
Foreign exchange	-	-	-	0%
Other	-	-	-	0%
<b>Cash and cash equivalents:</b>				
All	11,324.6	-	11,324.6	7%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>123,601</b>	<b>35,020</b>	<b>158,621</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Fair value of employer assets at 31 March 2024**

<b>Asset Category</b>	<b>Quoted prices in active markets £000</b>	<b>Quoted prices not in active markets £000</b>	<b>Total £000</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Equity securities:</b>				
Consumer	11,218.7	-	11,218.7	7%
Manufacturing	12,381.4	-	12,381.4	8%
Energy and utilities	6,223.2	-	6,223.2	4%
Financial institutions	11,197.8	-	11,197.8	7%
Health and care	6,424.2	-	6,424.2	4%
Information technology	10,229.1	-	10,229.1	7%
Other	1,200.8	-	1,200.8	1%
<b>Debt securities:</b>				
Corporate bonds (investment grade)	-	-	-	0%
Corporate bonds (non-investment grade)	-	-	-	0%
UK Government	16,098.6	-	16,098.6	11%
Other	2,025.5	-	2,025.5	1%
<b>Private equity:</b>				
All	-	1,391.9	1,391.9	1%
<b>Real estate:</b>				
UK property	-	8,357.0	8,357.0	5%
Overseas property	-	0.5	0.5	0%
<b>Investment funds and unit trusts:</b>				
Equities	28,343.8	-	28,343.8	19%
Bonds	6,932.3	-	6,932.3	5%
Hedge funds	-	-	-	0%
Commodities	-	-	-	0%
Infrastructure	-	22,584.4	22,584.4	15%
Other	-	3,521.6	3,521.6	2%
<b>Derivatives:</b>				
Inflation	-	-	-	0%
Interest rate	-	-	-	0%
Foreign exchange	-	-	-	0%
Other	-	-	-	0%
<b>Cash and cash equivalents:</b>				
All	4,254.2	-	4,254.2	3%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>116,530</b>	<b>35,855</b>	<b>152,385</b>	<b>100%</b>

**12. Provision for unfunded pensions**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Balance at 1 April	142	159
Provisions utilised during the year	(36)	(16)
Actuarial valuation adjustment	21	(1)
Balance at 31 March	<u>127</u>	<u>142</u>

**13. Other provisions**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Balance at 1 April	475	507
Released in year	0	(55)
	<u>475</u>	<u>452</u>
Provided in year	44	23
Balance at 31 March	<u>519</u>	<u>475</u>
Not later than one year	40	37
Later than one year and not later than five years	23	23
Later than five years	456	415
	<u>519</u>	<u>475</u>



**14. Leases****(i) Right-of-use-assets**

	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
<b>Cost/valuation</b>		
Opening Balance	7,421	7,973
Remeasurement of existing leases	234	36
Transfers		
Termination of lease	(71)	(588)
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>7,584</b>	<b>7,421</b>
<b>Accumulated depreciation</b>		
Opening balance	1,661	1,435
Provided in year	738	814
Transfers		
Termination of lease	(71)	(588)
<b>Closing Balance</b>	<b>2,328</b>	<b>1,661</b>
<b>Net Book Value</b>	<b>5,256</b>	<b>5,760</b>

**(ii) Obligations under finance leases at 31 March**

	<b>Lease payments</b>	<b>Finance charges</b>	<b>Lease payments</b>	<b>Finance charges</b>
	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2024-25</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Within one year	641	154	531	157
Between 1-2 years	645	139	625	145
Between 2-3 years	669	122	627	132
Between 3-4 years	681	105	652	115
Between 4-5 years	675	88	664	99
Between 5-10 years	1,864	199	2,333	252
Between 10-15 years	367	32	411	47
Between 15-20 years	0	0	32	0
<b>Balance at 31 March</b>	<b>5,542</b>	<b>839</b>	<b>5,875</b>	<b>947</b>

## **15. Events after the reporting date**

No events occurred between the reporting date and the authorisation date that materially affect any of the information contained in these financial statements.

## **16. Financial instruments**

As the cash requirements of SCRA are met through grant-in-aid, financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply in a non public sector body of a similar size.

The majority of financial instruments relate to cash or cash equivalents and to contracts for non-financial items in line with SCRA's expected purchase and usage requirements. SCRA is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

## **17. Related party transactions**

SCRA is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by Scottish Government Education and Skills Department (SGESD). SCRA receives funding from SGESD which is regarded as a related party. During the year SCRA had a number of transactions with other government departments and agencies. No Board Member, key manager or other related party has undertaken any material transactions with SCRA during the year 2024/25 (2023/24: none).

## **18. Capital commitments**

As at 31 March 2025, SCRA had contracted capital commitments of £1.270m not otherwise included in these financial statements for the refurbishment of properties in Glasgow and Inverness which are expected to be completed in the next 12 months (2024: £nil).

## **19. Reserves**

SCRA's General Fund balance as at 31 March 2025 is a deficit of £19.7m (31 March 2024: £18.9m). The deficit has arisen due to an excess of total pension service costs over employer's contributions, and pension net interest costs. SCRA received written assurance from the Scottish Government in April 2023 that Ministers have an ongoing commitment to SCRA as a going concern, and that there are no plans to change the existing arrangements whereby the Scottish Government funds SCRA, including pensions, through grant-in-aid and non-cash budgets.

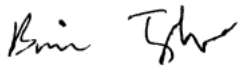
## Appendix 1

### Direction by the Scottish Ministers



#### **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 2025, 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 12 June 2024 is hereby revoked.



Brian Taylor

A member of the staff of the Scottish Ministers  
Dated: 2 July 2025

**Appendix 2**



Lisa Duthie  
Audit Director  
Audit Scotland  
4th Floor  
8 Nelson Mandela Place  
Glasgow  
G2 1BT

Dear Lisa

**Scottish Children's Reporter Administration**

**Annual report and accounts 2024/25**

This representation letter is provided in connection with your audit of the annual report and accounts of Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, hereafter referred to as SCRA, for the year ended 31 March 2025 for the purpose of expressing an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and have been properly prepared, and for expressing other opinions on the regularity of income and expenditure, Remuneration and Staff Report, Performance Report, and Governance Statement.

I confirm to the best of my knowledge and belief, and having made such enquiries as I considered necessary, the following representations given to you in connection with your audit of SCRA's annual report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025.

**General**

I have fulfilled my responsibilities for the preparation of the 2024/25 annual report and accounts as set out in your 2024/25 Annual Audit Plan. All the accounting

records, documentation, and other matters which I am aware are relevant to the preparation of the annual report and accounts have been made available to you for the purposes of your audit. All transactions undertaken by SCRA have been recorded in the accounting records and are properly reflected in the financial statements.

I confirm that the effects of uncorrected misstatements are immaterial, individually and in aggregate, to the financial statements as a whole. I am not aware of any uncorrected misstatements other than those reported by you.

## **Regularity of Income and Expenditure**

I confirm that, in all material respects, income was applied, and expenditure was incurred, in accordance with applicable enactments and guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.

## **Financial Reporting Framework**

The annual report and accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by the Scottish Ministers.

I have ensured that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of SCRA at 31 March 2025 and the transactions for 2024/25.

## **Accounting Policies and Estimates**

All material accounting policies applied are as shown in the note included in the financial statements. The accounting policies are determined by the 2024/25 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM), where applicable. Where the FReM does not specifically apply, I have used judgement in developing and applying an accounting policy that results in information that is relevant and reliable. All accounting policies applied are appropriate to SCRA's circumstances and have been consistently applied.

The methodology, significant assumptions, and data used in making accounting estimates are reasonable, and have been properly reflected and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with the 2024/25 FReM. Judgements made in making estimates have been based on the latest available and reliable information. Estimates have been revised where there are changes in the circumstances on which the original estimate was based or as a result of new information or experience.

## **Going Concern Basis of Accounting**

I have assessed SCRA's ability to continue to use the going concern basis of accounting and have concluded that it is appropriate. I am not aware of any material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt on SCRA's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting.

## **Assets**

All assets at 31 March 2025 of which I am aware have been reported in the financial statements.

Where a rolling programme of asset valuations has been used, I have satisfied myself that the carrying amount of assets at 31 March 2025 does not differ materially from that which would be determined if a revaluation had been carried out at that date.

I carried out an assessment at 31 March 2025 as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired and have recognised any impairment losses identified in the financial statements.

I have provided you with all information of which I am aware regarding any valuation exercises carried out after 31 March 2025.

There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value or classification of the assets recognised in the financial statements.

Owned assets are free from any lien, encumbrance, or charge, except as disclosed in the financial statements.

## **Liabilities**

All liabilities at 31 March 2025 of which I am aware have been reported in the financial statements.

Provisions have been recognised in the financial statements for all liabilities of uncertain timing or amount at 31 March 2025 of which I am aware where the conditions specified in IAS 37, as adapted by the 2024/25 FReM, have been met. The amount recognised as a provision is the best estimate of the expenditure likely to be required to settle the obligation at 31 March 2025. Where the effect of the time value of money is material, the amount of the provision has been discounted to the present value of the expected payments.

Provisions recognised in previous years have been reviewed and adjusted, where appropriate, to reflect the best estimate at 31 March 2025, or to reflect material changes in the assumptions underlying the calculations of the provisions.

The accrual recognised in the financial statements for annual leave untaken by 31 March 2025 has been estimated on a reasonable basis.

There are no plans or intentions that are likely to affect the carrying value or classification of the liabilities recognised in the financial statements.

## **Contingent Liabilities**

There are no significant contingent liabilities arising either under formal agreement or through formal undertakings requiring disclosure in the financial statements. All



known contingent liabilities have been fully and properly disclosed in accordance with IAS 37, as adopted by the 2024/25 FReM.

## **Litigation and Claims**

All known actual or possible legal claims have been disclosed to you and have been accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with the 2024/25 FReM.

## **Fraud**

I understand my responsibilities for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control to prevent fraud and I believe I have appropriately fulfilled those responsibilities.

I have provided you with all information in relation to:

- my assessment of the risk that the financial statements may be materially misstated as a result of fraud,
- any allegations of fraud or suspected fraud affecting the financial statements, and
- fraud or suspected fraud that I am aware of involving management, employees who have a significant role in internal control, or others that could have a material effect on the financial statements.

## **Laws and Regulations**

I have disclosed to you all known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations whose effects should be considered when preparing financial statements.

## **Related Party Transactions**

All material transactions with related parties have been appropriately accounted for and disclosed in the financial statements in accordance with IAS 24, as adopted by the 2024/25 FReM. I have made available to you the identity of all of SCRA's related parties and all the related party transactions of which I am aware.

## **Remuneration and Staff Report**

The Remuneration and Staff Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by Scottish Ministers, and all required information of which I am aware has been provided to you.

## **Performance Report**

I confirm that the Performance Report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by Scottish Ministers, and the information is consistent with the financial statements.

## **Corporate Governance**

I have fulfilled my responsibilities for SCRA's corporate governance arrangements. I have disclosed to you all deficiencies in internal control identified from this review or of which I am otherwise aware.

I confirm that the Governance Statement has been prepared in accordance with the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and directions made thereunder by Scottish Ministers, and the information is consistent with the financial statements. There have been no changes in the corporate governance arrangements, or issues identified, since 31 March 2025 which require to be reflected in the Governance Statement or annual report and accounts.

## **Events Subsequent to the Date of the Statement of Financial Position**

All events subsequent to 31 March 2025 for which IAS 10, as adopted by the 2024/25 FReM, requires adjustment or disclosure have been adjusted or disclosed.

Yours sincerely

Neil Hunter  
Accountable Officer

**SCRA BOARD**

25 September 2025

**ITEM 11.4 Annual Procurement Report****Report Classification:** Open**For approval****Executive Sponsor:** Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources**Author:** Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

---

**Executive Summary**

SCRA is required to publish an Annual Procurement Report, summarising in a prescribed format its procurement activity, strategies and compliance with legislation and Scottish Government guidance. SCRA is achieving its strategic objectives and complying with legislation and guidance, and acknowledges where further activity can be directed to achieve continuous improvements.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to approve the Annual Procurement Report.

**Key Issues to be discussed/considered**

Members are particularly invited to comment on

- SCRA's compliance with procurement legislation and guidance
- the extent to which SCRA is demonstrating achievement of its procurement priorities in section 3.2;
- any concerns around SCRA's procurement activity as detailed in section 8.3 and Appendices A and B.

**Implications:****Service**

N/A

**Financial**

N/A

**Workforce**

N/A

**Infrastructure including Digital**

N/A

**Information Governance**

N/A

**Risk Assessment/Management**

N/A

**Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

Publication of this report demonstrates our commitment and compliance to transparent procurement processes, delivering best value and developing and maintaining effective governance systems.

**Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process. This paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity.

**Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Procurement Officers

**Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Annual Procurement Report



SCOTTISH

CHILDREN'S REPORTER

ADMINISTRATION

# Procurement in SCRA

## Annual Procurement Report

For the period  
1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

Published: September 2025

### VERSION CONTROL

Version No.	Revised By	Description of Changes	Date
1.0	Helen Mora	First Issued Version	31/07/2022
2.0	Helen Mora	Second Issued Version	23/08/2023
3.0	Christina Thomson	Third Issued Version	01/08/2024
4.0	Christina Thomson	Fourth Issued Version	17/09/2025

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. Summary of Regulated Procurements Completed
3. Review of Regulated Procurement Compliance
4. Community Benefits Summary
5. Supported Businesses Summary
6. Future Regulated Procurements
7. Non-regulated Procurements Completed
8. Procurement Performance
9. Other Procurement Activities
10. Continuous Improvement Activities
11. Annual Procurement Report Template
12. Ownership and contact details

Appendix A: Summary of Regulated Procurements Expected to Commence in the next two financial years.

Appendix B: Summary of non-regulated procurements completed.

Appendix C: Annual Procurement Report Template

Appendix D: Glossary



## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 About SCRA

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is a national body focused on making effective decisions concerning the welfare of children most at risk. SCRA was formed under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and became fully operational on 1st April 1996. Our main responsibilities as set out in the Act are:

- To facilitate the work of Children's Reporters
- To deploy and manage staff to carry out that work
- To provide suitable accommodation for Children's Hearings

The Children's Hearings System provides the operational setting in which SCRA, and its partner agencies work. The 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.

SCRA's Procurement Strategy 2024-27 was approved by the Board in March 2024 and refreshed in April 2025<sup>1</sup>. The Strategy details the principal aims of SCRA Procurement as follows:

- Deliver a professional and flexible procurement service to both internal managers and external suppliers through an inclusive procurement approach, ensuring that SCRA receives best value for money in the procurement of all goods, services and works in order to deliver an effective and efficient service to children and families.
- Contribute to SCRA carrying out its functions and the achievement of its purposes by ensuring that suitable contracts are in place; to allow the dissemination of information and data and to ensure we have adequate premises for hearings to take place.
- Ensure full compliance with UK legislation and Public Sector Regulations, in accordance with the General Duties and Sustainable Procurement Duty, giving due regard to SCRA's needs and requirements to ensure operational effectiveness is maximised.
- 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.

The Strategy set out six priorities for the four years covered by the Strategy. The priorities and progress/compliance to date are in the table at section 3.2.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scra.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/SCRA-Procurement-Strategy-2024-2027.pdf>

The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive is clear in his Procurement Strategy foreword that the solid approach to procurement, captured in the strategy, allows SCRA localities and teams across the country to have the kind of access to specialist support and advice they need, now and in the future, to make wise, best value decisions about goods and services, to benefit from the scale of national contracts and to vision future ways of making things ever more efficient, responsive and adaptable to our changing needs.

## **1.2 Procurement Vision**

Our vision for the future is one where the approach to procurement and contract management is inclusive and fully integrated into our business strategies and a culture of best practice is embedded which will deliver legally compliant procurement processes, ensuring value for money, sustainability, quality services and continuous improvement.

## **1.3 Looking Ahead**

In developing plans for 2025/26 and beyond, the Procurement Team will ensure objectives align with the seven public procurement priorities published by the Public Procurement Group (PPG) in April 2023: Leadership & Visibility, Sustainable Economic Recovery, Supply Chain Resilience, Maximise Impact of the Sustainable Procurement Duty, Climate Emergency, Achieving professional excellence and Developing use of systems to drive sustainable outcomes and support reporting.

Specific activity in 2025/26 includes

- Refreshed and updated face-to-face contract and supplier management (CSM) training to all Contract Managers
- Continuing to implement Scottish Government Procurement and Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) recommendations
- Ensuring all relevant Delegated Purchasers and Environmental Ambassadors undertake the SG Climate Literacy e-learning modules
- Ensuring all tender evaluators undertake Scotland Excel e-learning modules
- A review of SCRA's procurement function and processes by SCRA's internal auditors

## **1.4 Publication of Report**

This report will be published on SCRA's website at [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk).

## 2. SUMMARY OF REGULATED PROCUREMENTS COMPLETED

The following regulated procurements were completed in the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

Date of Award	Contract Title/ Subject Matter	Supplier	Total Value (Including Extensions (Ex. VAT)	Est Total Value (Excluding Extensions) (Ex. VAT)	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date (Excluding Extensions)
28/03/2025	AV Deployment & Support (Framework)	Computacenter	£53,995	£53,995	28/03/2025	TBC
24/01/2025	Digital Evidence Sharing Capabilities (DESC) (SG single supplier)	Axon Public Safety Ltd	£200,000	£200,000	01/04/2025	31/03/2028
14/11/2024	Laptop Refresh (Framework)	Hewlett Packard Ltd	£117,925	£117,925	14/11/2024	31/03/2025
01/05/2024	Legal Services – One stop shop (Framework)	Anderson Strathearn LLP	£702,000	£526,500	01/06/2024	31/05/2027
25/06/2024	Secure Mailing Bags (Re-let)	Bayard Packaging	£110,700	£83,025	27/06/2024	26/06/2027
26/02/2024	Supply of Electricity (Framework)	EDF Energy Customers Ltd	£1,506,500	£602,600	01/04/2024	31/03/2026
02/08/2023	Water & waste Water Billing Services (Framework – agency agreement)	Scottish Water Business Stream Ltd	£216,360	£162,270	01/04/2024	31/03/2028

The above table does not include contract extensions which were taken during 2024/25.

### 3. REVIEW OF REGULATED PROCUREMENT COMPLIANCE

3.1 In compliance with Section 15(5) of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 and published Statutory Guidance, SCRA is now required to set out how it will ensure its regulated procurements will:

- Contribute to the carrying out of its functions and achievement of its purposes
- Deliver value for money
- Be carried out in accordance with the General Duties and the Sustainable Procurement Duty
- Ensure payment of invoices are made no later than 30 days after the invoice relating to payment is presented

### 3.2 Review of compliance with Corporate Procurement Strategy

Key Priorities	Compliance/progress in 2024/25
Implementation of Fair Work First Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressed by Scottish Procurement &amp; Property Directorate (SPPD), Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO), Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and Scotland Excel (SXL) in setting up Frameworks (G-Cloud, Estates Management Services, Managed Print Solutions, Drinking water)</li> <li>• Statements on workforce matters, CSR, Environmental performance and Sustainability included in Invitations to Tender (ITTs) and evaluation criteria where applicable.</li> </ul>
Working with Suppliers including SMEs, Supported Business and Third Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressed by SPPD, YPO, SXL and CCS in setting up Frameworks as above and by including SMEs in non-regulated procurements.</li> <li>• Efforts were made to engage with Supported Businesses but has not yet resulted in opportunities.</li> </ul>
Ensuring Inclusive Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where appropriate SCRA engaged with internal stakeholders either by setting up User Intelligence Groups (UIGs) or in discussions with contract/business leads.</li> </ul>
Realising Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addressed by SPPD, YPO, SXL and CCS in setting up Frameworks as above.</li> <li>• Sustainability Test included in Procurement Strategies and Evaluation Criteria included in tenders issued, where appropriate.</li> <li>• No Cat C Community Benefits opportunities.</li> </ul>
Continuous improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procurement Strategies identify best route to market and ensure demand is justified to ensure Value for Money (VfM).</li> <li>• Business Cases include whole life costing where appropriate to ensure VfM.</li> <li>• Opportunities for collaboration actively considered to ensure VfM.</li> <li>• Adherence to Contract &amp; Supplier Management (CSM) guidance was assessed in 2022/23 and a number of improvement actions agreed with contract managers.</li> </ul>

	<p>Monitoring of CSM contract performance meetings took place in 2024/25 across all SCRA contracts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegated Purchaser (DP) Training continued to be delivered to new DPs in 2024/25. Refresher Training for all DP's was successfully completed in September 2024.</li> <li>• Mandatory in-person CSM training is taking place in September 2025.</li> <li>• Other training captured in Section 10.</li> <li>• Regular meetings with Property, Digital and HR Teams throughout 2024/25.</li> <li>• 2025/26 will see the Business Development team (formed in 2024/25) included in the regular meeting cycle</li> <li>• Good relationships with Scottish Government Procurement and membership of Cluster Group.</li> </ul>
Information Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing compliance with internal policies and governance legislation including GDPR.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Review of regulated procurements

SCRA's Head of Finance and Resources reviewed all regulated procurements in the period April 2024 to March 2025, as shown in the table above, for compliance with the organisation's Procurement Strategy and Policy.

In summary all eight of our regulated procurements:

- where relevant were tendered via PCS;
- complied with SCRA Procurement Policy thresholds;
- where appropriate, included statements in the ITTs on Fair Work Practices, sustainability including fair and ethically traded goods and payment performance for suppliers and sub-contractors.

One was awarded after advertising, six were awarded under Scottish Government Frameworks, one was awarded via the single supplier of SG Digital Evidence Sharing Capability (DESC) contract. There were no regulated procurements awarded by Non-Competitive Action (NCA).

### 3.4 Change of regulated works advertisement policy threshold

Scottish Government reviewed its thresholds for advertisement of regulated works in January 2024, increasing the threshold for advertising from £500,000 to £2,000,000. SCRA, due to its relative size, continues to apply a threshold 50% lower than Scottish Government's. Consequently, SCRA now has a policy of only requiring regulated works to be advertised if the anticipated value is over £1,000,000, effective from 1 April 2024.

#### **4. COMMUNITY BENEFITS SUMMARY**

- 4.1 Consideration is given to the inclusion of Community Benefit Clauses (CBCs) in our procurement exercises, however, there were no relevant procurements during the reporting period. We did award the Hamilton House furniture contract to Wagstaff who included details of community benefits as part of their answer to the scored sustainability question, which included providing educational talks to primary school children and site visits for local students to raise awareness of how to protect the environment.

#### **5. SUPPORTED BUSINESSES SUMMARY**

- 5.1 SCRA actively take steps to facilitate contract opportunities for Supported Businesses where possible. Although initial enquiries were made regarding furniture this was not pursued any further and no other suitable opportunities were identified during 2024/25.
- 5.2 We have liaised with Supported Businesses Framework managers to try to get at least one Hearing Loop supplier added to the Framework to enable them to be considered for our Hearing Loop procurement project, however although the Framework managers are attempting to progress this there haven't been any suppliers added to date.
- 5.3 A Scottish Procurement Policy Note (SPPN 1/2025) was issued 28/05/2025 detailing guidance on how to define a supported business and, information on the Supported Business Dynamic Purchasing System and information to ensure organisations remain compliant with legislation
- 5.4 In order to assist with closing an identified gap on supported business monitoring we included a request for info on SME's and Supported Businesses on our revised New Supplier Form and re-issued to staff for use from 1/8/24. 2025/26 will be the first full year of information being monitored.

#### **6. FUTURE REGULATED PROCUREMENTS**

- 6.1 A summary of regulated procurements expected to commence within the next two financial years is included at Appendix A. Of the 11 identified exercises (excluding Works contracts which are for information only) which total £6.4M, it should be noted that a significant amount of this spend includes commitment to various sized contracts over a longer period of time. Details may be subject to change due to budget revisions/resource availability, in particular, following the development of the organisation's Digital Capital Programme for 2025/26 as well as the re-let of our Core Systems and Applications Solution (CSAS).



## 7. NON-REGULATED PROCUREMENTS COMPLETED

- 7.1 There has been a change of SCRA policy thresholds in line with SG review of their guidelines on 1/1/24. Regulated works are not being advertised under £1M (SG's updated threshold is now £2M).
- 7.2 A summary of non-regulated procurements and contract extensions with an estimated value above £20k, awarded in the reporting period, is included at Appendix B.
- 7.3 In addition 5 non-regulated procurements below £20k, with a total value of around £28k were awarded in the reporting period.

## 8.0 PROCUREMENT PERFORMANCE

### 8.1 Supporting national policies

#### Digital

SCRA and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) continued to develop the shared core system CSAS this year. In addition, there was significant investment in virtual hearings technology, and refresh of laptops. SCRA hearing rooms now have cloud-based video conference and collaboration units and guest Wi-Fi provision. The Procurement Team have supported the Digital Programme Manager by providing procurement advice and leading on any tendering requirements.

#### Environment

The potential for environmental benefits are considered in procurement exercises and where appropriate sustainability is included as one of the criteria for tender evaluation with bidders advised that sustainability is a key feature of the Procurement Reform Bill and a focus of Scottish Government.

Procurement also contributes to the mandatory environmental reporting by completing the procurement section of the annual Climate Change Report.

There is now more prominence given to Climate Change in the organisation's Corporate Procurement Strategy and Sustainability Tests are completed for all regulated procurements as well as all Procurement Strategy documents that are valued above £20K.

The Procurement Team support the Business Development Team and the Head of Property in their efforts to review historical electricity and gas consumption patterns with a view to reducing future emissions.

## **8.2 Procurement & Commercial Improvement Programme (PCIP) - Health check**

Further to SCRA's 2024 PCIP report recommendations and the creation of an SCRA action plan to improve performance, strides have been made throughout the past year to review, action and monitor several key areas. The Action Plan is reviewed at our regular full Procurement team meetings as a standing item and SG periodically request plan progress updates. To date, we have closed most of the recommendations.

SCRA is awaiting the publication of the high-level outcomes/themes that were garnished from all the PCIP reviews undertaken by Scottish Government. At this time (Sept 2025) these have not yet been made available.

## **8.3 2024/25 Published Spend Data**

The following table is extracted from the data published by DXC Technology.

**Annual Data Publication Report for****Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)**The 24/25 annual spend data has now been published to the [Hub](#).**24/25 Published Data Overview**

<b>£8,307,854 Total Spend</b>			<b>£7,322,968 Core Trade Spend</b>	
<b>583 Input Suppliers</b>	<b>576 De-duplicated Total Suppliers</b>	<b>7 Duplicate Suppliers</b>	<b>98 SME Suppliers</b>	<b>3 Local Suppliers</b>
<b>2,345 Transactions</b>	<b>£14,423 Avg. spend per supplier</b>	<b>3.59% PCard Spend</b>	<b>34.82% SME Spend</b>	<b>10.88% Local Spend</b>

**Key:**

Total Spend - the total amount of spend for the year.

Input Suppliers - The number of suppliers, before de-duplication.

De-duplicated Total Suppliers - The number of unique suppliers.

Duplicate Suppliers - The number of suppliers which are duplicates of another supplier.

PCard Spend - Percentage of transactions by value of spend that are identified as Purchase Card transactions in the extract.

Transactions - The total number of transactions.

Avg. spend per supplier - The average spend per unique supplier.

Core Trade Spend - Core Trade is a sub-set of your supply base that includes all Trade Suppliers and Social Care Providers with whom you have spent £1,000 or more in the financial year.

SME Suppliers - Small &amp; Medium sized businesses where the supplier has less than 249 employees or where the annual revenue is less than £22.8m.

SME Spend - Spend with SME as a percentage of classified suppliers.

Local Suppliers - Spend with suppliers within the same local authority area as your organisation (based on Postcodes).

Local Spend - Spend with local suppliers as a percentage of classified suppliers.

**8.4 Contracted Spend**

Of the total procurement spend of £8,307,854 in 2024/25, £7,827,805 was contracted spend (including non-regulated contracts). This represented around 94.22% of all procurement spend in the year.

Procurement spend is closely monitored by the Procurement Team with support from the Contract Managers.

## 8.5 Spend with SMEs

During 2024/25, 34.82% of SCRA's Core Trade Spend was with SMEs, however, it should be noted that DXC (Spikes) still do not have sufficient data from all suppliers on their number of employees to be able to classify them, so the number of SME's is likely to be understated. As noted in the DXC table 'Key' section above only spend of £+1K is used in the overall calculations which will reduce our reported spend with numerous smaller SMEs.

Of the eight regulated procurements completed within the reporting period, one was awarded to an SME. A further fourteen non-regulated contracts above £20k were awarded to SMEs and c. four contracts below £20k.

## 8.6 Sums due to suppliers paid within 10 working days

During the year ended 31 March 2024 SCRA paid 86% of all sums due to suppliers within the terms of its payment policy.

## 8.7 Collaborative working

SCRA utilises Scottish Government Frameworks wherever possible. In addition, SCRA participates in the SG UIG's where relevant and works with CHS where possible. We have also extended an invite to 3 CHS employees being offered places on our Contract Supplier Management training course taking place in September 2025.

Internal collaborative working is also a key priority for the procurement team as this allows information garnished from different sources/sectors/networks /events to be circulated within SCRA to encourage participation in events, promote development and increase awareness and knowledge.

## 8.8 Savings & Benefits

Scottish Procurement have confirmed the full year savings that SCRA achieved from their use of Scottish Government collaborative framework agreements, which was £277,380. This includes both Category A and B Frameworks. It should be noted that these are not savings which reduce SCRA's costs or help SCRA to operate within the approved level of Grant in Aid so are not counted as efficiency savings.

Savings from SCRA contracts (as distinct from Frameworks above) are captured on SCRA's Savings Tracker. Information on these savings has been captured throughout 2024/25 for regulated and non-regulated procurements, and the accumulated savings, largely based on the difference between the average of all tenders less the winning bid, amount to around £306k across five procurement exercises, including Aberdeen, Glasgow, Greenock, and Inverness property projects, alongside Amazon Business Account identified savings.

## 9.0 OTHER PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES

### 9.1 Inclusion & Diversity

SCRA's Inclusion & Diversity Manager looked to update SCRA's non-scored wording in procurement documents with full review of a weighted question being asked in larger procurement documents. The review of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion question & weighting, alongside FWF info, remained incomplete by the end of March 2025 but will be completed after April 2025. This will also result in further training for some members of the HR team who evaluate and score the tender responses.

The Procurement Officer continued to work with the Inclusion & Diversity Manager to discuss further opportunities for improving inclusion and diversity in our procurement processes.

Basic Impact Assessments are completed for all regulated goods and services procurements and individual works contracts over £100k. Where possible a joint EHRIA is completed for works contracts between £50k and £100k and for any non-regulated procurements which are likely to have more of an impact on equalities and the Strategy was recently updated to reflect a more inclusive approach.

The Procurement Officers will continue to work with the Inclusion & Diversity Manager during 2025/26 to ensure SCRA's procurement policies and processes continue to support inclusive procurement.

### 9.2 Policy development

In line with the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act, SCRA's Procurement Strategy was revised in March 2025 with changes approved by the senior management team before being published early April 2025 and a link sent to the Scottish Ministers.

The Procurement Policy is now reviewed every year; the latest update was approved by the senior management team and published on our website in April 2025.

In response to Construction Policy note (CPN) 1/2024 which was issued in June 2024, which further enhances CPN 3/2022, the note adds further guidance and reporting of cash retentions in construction contracts. SCRA's general policy (no.8) on Retention was created and approved on 27/9/24. SCRA published its first SG retention return on the website on 28/8/24 (to be reviewed annually no later than 31<sup>st</sup> August) with a link sent to the Construction Procurement Policy Unit. There is a secondary requirement to complete a compliance statement on completed project retentions which must also be published no later than 20<sup>th</sup> February every year – this return was first published 14/2/25.

SCRA has also chosen to complete a Construction Pipeline Forecast tool in response to CPN 2/2024. This bi-annual return via Scottish Futures Trust shows data on planned and potential construction projects over £200K and helps provide a national forecast of projects with data being published through interactive dashboards where projects can be searched by value, sector, public body and geography. SCRA's first return was completed 3/12/24.

CPN 3/2024 – Graduated Price Mechanism implementation – it was agreed that the use of GPM would be used in Works contracts, effective from 1/4/25 and will be reported in the next Annual Procurement Report.

### **9.3 Cyber Resilience / Artificial Intelligence (AI)**

In January 2020, the Scottish Government advised that a Supplier Cyber Security Guidance Note had been developed to meet the commitment to develop a proportionate, risk-based policy in respect of supply chain cyber security for Scottish public sector organisations.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, the Procurement Officers had embedded cyber security in our procurement processes by considering the importance of cyber security before commencing each procurement and where relevant completing the Cyber Security Procurement Support Tool and including relevant wording in tender documentation and Terms & Conditions of contracts where required. This tool was discontinued on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023, and the Digital Security & Governance Manager had sourced a spreadsheet questionnaire consistent with the tool which is being used in the interim in advance of SG completing trial testing of a new tool (Supply25-Civ Tech) in the near future.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) - Standard AI disclosure questions will be added to procurement tender documents to improve transparency around the use of generative AI in bid writing. Responses are non-scored but ensures suppliers confirm any AI-generated content is checked for accuracy, helping to mitigate the risk of misleading or over-optimised responses.

### **9.4 Fair Work**

We include a statement on Fair Work in all our tender documents and where relevant and proportionate we include a scored question as part of the award criteria.

Refreshed Guidance on Fair Work First published via SPPN 1/2024 (which superseded SPPN 6/2021) has been reviewed and changes required to our Policy and Procedures has been implemented during 2024/25.



## 10.0 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITY

### 10.1 Contract and Supplier Management (CSM)

New CSM guidance was issued in late 2020/21 to key Contract Managers. The Procurement Team now meet with Property, HR, Bus Dev and Digital Teams to review recent procurement exercises and plan for upcoming exercises.

### 10.2 Delegated Purchaser Training

The Procurement Officers delivered comprehensive refresher Delegated Purchaser training sessions to all Delegated Purchasers between September and November 2024. Any new Delegated Purchaser appointed after November 2024 will receive introductory training by the Procurement Officers which will be followed up by the comprehensive training at a later date.

### 10.3 Risk Management

The Procurement Team maintains a risk register which is regularly reviewed. The risk “insufficient capacity and/or lack of training/resilience results in failure to delivery key business plan and team plan objectives” was closed following an assessment of the controls in place and actions undertaken. The risk that market conditions lead to tender prices significantly exceeding budgets and/or lead to significant project delays was also closed, as this sits with the relevant budget holders rather than procurement. The sole remaining risk (ineffective contract management leads to poor supplier performance resulting in contract dispute or delivery failure) remains open and mitigated through controls and actions including contract management training in September 2025.

### 10.4 Networks and Training

SCRA's Procurement Officers are members of a Cluster Group which meet regularly throughout the year.

The Procurement Officer was unable to attend the SG 19<sup>th</sup> National Procurement Conference & Professional Procurement Skills Training Zones, in October 2024 during the reporting period, however, registration has taken place for the return of the event in October 2025.

Other training attended/undertaken included:

- GDPR Refresher Training (Annual)
- SG Climate Literacy e-learning (Apr 2024)
- Delegated Purchaser refresher training (Sept 2024)
- SG Fair Work First in Procurement (Dec 2024)
- Scotland Excel Tender Evaluation for Evaluators e-learning (March 25)
- Scotland Excel Evaluation for Procurement Leads e-learning (March 25)

## **11.0 ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT TEMPLATE**

In accordance with Scottish Procurement Policy Note SPPN 02/2023 an Annual Procurement Report template has been completed and attached at Appendix C.

## **12.0 OWNERSHIP AND CONTACT DETAILS**

The owner of SCRA's Annual Procurement Report is as follows:

Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance & Resources  
[ross.mackenzie@scra.gov.uk](mailto:ross.mackenzie@scra.gov.uk)

## Appendix A

### SUMMARY OF REGULATED PROCUREMENTS EXPECTED TO COMMENCE IN THE NEXT 2 FINANCIAL YEARS

Subject Matter	Type	Expected Contract Notice Publication Date	Expected Award Date	Expected Start Date	Estimated Value of the Contract or Extension
E-learning Platform	Re-Let	TBA	Oct 2025	31/10/25	£120,000
Virtual Hearings Extension	Re-Let	N/A	01/10/25	01/11/25	£180,000
Core Systems & Applications Solution	Re-Let	TBA	March 2026	01/07/25	£3-4m
Laptop refresh 2025/26	New	TBA	TBA	Feb 2026	£145,000
Financial Management Software Solution & Hosting	Re-Let	TBA	Jan 2026	Jan 2026	£250,000
Provision of Postal Services	Re-Let	TBC	Apr 2026	01/10/2026	£913,000
Dundee – refurbishment hearing room furniture	New	Jan 2026	Jan 2026	1/3/26	£100,000
Interpreting, Translation & Transcription Services	Re-Let	Dec 2025	May 2026	12/06/2026	£611,000
Enterprise Service Agreement Software	Re-Let	N/A	Sept 2025	01/10/2025	£640,000
Payroll and eHR Software - iTrent	Extension (2 yr)	N/A	Dec 2025	15/01/2026	£150,000
Supply of Electricity	Extension	N/A	March 2026	01/04/2026	£300,000
Dundee – refurbishment – Principal Contractor	New (Works)	N/A	Oct 2025	Nov 2025	£900,000
Lerwick – external repairs/reconfiguration - Principal Contractor	New (Works)	N/A	Sept 2025	Dec 2025	£130,000
Dumbarton – reconfig/upgrade - Principal Contractor	New (Works)	N/A	Mar/Apr 2026	May/June 2026	£320,000
Paisley – Design team – design consultant	New (Works)	N/A	Mar/Apr 2026	May/June 2026	£400,000

#### Notes:

Contract Extensions shown above are not included in Section 9 of the template at Appendix C. Call Off's from Frameworks are included in the template.

Works contracts with an estimated contract value above £50k are included in the above table for information, however, these are non-regulated due to their value and not included in Section 9 of the template at Appendix C.

## Appendix B

### SUMMARY OF NON-REGULATED PROCUREMENTS & CONTRACT EXTENSIONS ABOVE £20K - AWARDED BETWEEN 01/04/2024 AND 31/03/2025

Contract/PO Ref.	Contract Title	Supplier Name(s)	Est. Total Value (ex VAT)	Contract/ Extension Award Date
SCRA/2024/06	Aberdeen - Smart Working - Principal Contractor	Interact Interiors Ltd	£70,316	17/10/2024
SCRA/2024/03	Building Surveying Services 2024/25	Hardie's Property & Construction Consultants	£35,720	10/07/2024
SCRA/2024/09	CSAS Audit Data Management	Bridgeall	£21,400	15/08/2024
SCRA/2023/26	Cyber Security Testing Services Re-Let	NTA Monitor (T/A Intertek NTA)	£45,900	30/04/2024
SCRA/2024/02	Dundee, Inverness & Greenock - Smart Working -Design Consultant	Space Solutions Ltd (Scotland)	£107,013	23/07/2024
SCRA/2023/28	Fraserburgh - Condition Survey Remedial Works - Principal Contractor	Ross & Laidlaw & Sons Ltd	£54,253	23/05/2024
SCRA/2024/23	Furniture Inverness	Gresham Office Furniture	£28,821	28/02/2025
SCRA/2024/10	Glasgow - Hearing Suite Refurbishment - Principal Contractor	Insite Group Contracts Ltd	£969,645	05/02/2025
SCRA/2025/02	Greenock Furniture	Gresham Office Furniture	£26,855	24/01/2025
SCRA/2024/11	Greenock - Smart Working - Principal Contractor	Interact Interiors Ltd	£84,337	03/02/2025
SCRA/2024/19	Hearing Room Furniture Pilot Hamilton	Wagstaff Bros Ltd	£20,731	16/01/2025
SCRA/2024/12	Inverness Principal contractor	Interact Interiors	£144,141	03/03/2025
SCRA/2025/07	Occupational Health Services	Working on Wellbeing Ltd trading as Optima Health	£20,000	18/03/2025
SCRA/2025/17	M365 & Azure Services improvement	Bridgeall	£35,940	01/10/2024
SCRA/2024/16	Transcription Tool (Magic Notes)	Softcat (as reseller for Beam Up)	£29,473	11/11/2024

**Notes:** Works contracts below £2m are classed as non-regulated

## Appendix C

### Annual Procurement Report template

[NOTE: reference to contract is also to be construed as meaning a Framework Agreement]

<b>1. Organisation and report details</b>	
a) Contracting Authority Name	Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
b) Period of the annual procurement report	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025
c) Required by s18 Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 to prepare an annual procurement report? (Yes / No)	Yes
<b>2. Summary of Regulated Procurements Completed</b>	
a) Total number of regulated contracts awarded within the report period	8
b) Total value of regulated contracts awarded within the report period	£3,057,227
c) Total number of unique suppliers awarded a place on a regulated contract awarded during the period	7
i) how many of these unique suppliers are SMEs	1
ii) how many of these unique suppliers how many are Third sector bodies	0
<b>3. Review of Regulated Procurements Compliance</b>	
a) Number of regulated contracts awarded within the period that complied with your Procurement Strategy	8
b) Number of regulated contracts awarded within the period that did not comply with your Procurement Strategy	0
<b>4. Community Benefit Requirements Summary</b>	
<b>Use of Community Benefit Requirements in Procurement:</b>	
a) Total number of regulated contracts awarded with a value of £4 million or greater.	0
b) Total number of regulated contracts awarded with a value of £4 million or greater that contain Community Benefit Requirements.	0
c) Total number of regulated contracts awarded with a value of less than £4 million that contain a Community Benefit Requirements	0
<b>Key Contract Information on community benefit requirements imposed as part of a regulated procurement that were fulfilled during the period:</b>	
d) Number of Jobs Filled by Priority Groups ( <i>Each contracting authority sets its own priority groups</i> )	Data not held
e) Number of Apprenticeships filled by Priority Groups	Data not held
f) Number of Work Placements for Priority Groups	Data not held

g) Number of Qualifications Achieved Through Training by Priority Groups	Data not held
h) Total Value of contracts sub-contracted to SMEs	Data not held
i) Total Value of contracts sub-contracted to Social Enterprises	
j) Total Value of contracts sub-contracted to Supported Businesses	
k) Other community benefit(s) fulfilled	1
<b><u>5. Fair Work and the real Living Wage</u></b>	
a) Number of regulated contracts awarded during the period that included a Fair Work criterion.	
b) Number of unique suppliers who have committed to pay the real Living Wage in the delivery of a regulated contract awarded during the period.	3
c) Number of unique suppliers who are accredited Living Wage employers and were awarded a regulated contract awarded during the period.	
<b><u>6. Payment performance</u></b>	
a) Number of valid invoices received during the reporting period.	2345
b) Percentage of invoices paid on time during the period ("On time" means within the time period set out in the contract terms).	86% - this figure includes Credit Card payments and Direct Debits
c) Number of regulated contracts awarded during the period containing a contract term requiring the prompt payment of invoices in public contract supply chains	
d) Number of concerns raised by sub-contractors about the timely payment of invoices within the supply chain of public contracts	0
<b><u>7. Supported Businesses Summary</u></b>	
a) Total number of regulated contracts awarded to supported businesses during the period	0
b) Total spend with supported businesses during the period covered by the report, including:	£972
i) spend within the reporting year on regulated contracts	
ii) spend within the reporting year on non-regulated contracts	£972



**8. Spend and Savings Summary**

	£8,307,854
b) Total procurement spend with SMEs during the period covered by the annual procurement report.	£2,549,857 (34.82% of Core Trade Spend)
c) Total procurement spend with Third sector bodies during the period covered by the report.	Data not held
	17.51%
	£583,380
	9
b) Total estimated value of regulated procurements expected to commence in the next two financial years.	£5,959,000

## Glossary

## Appendix D

Term	Description
<b>Collaboration</b>	When two or more groups of people or organisations engage in procurement work together for mutual benefit (CIPS).
<b>Contract Management</b>	The process of monitoring the performance of a supplier to contract.
<b>Critical Suppliers</b>	Those suppliers identified as business critical in terms of risk/value and business continuity.
<b>Framework Agreement</b>	An agreement or other arrangement between one or more contracting authorities and one or more economic operators which establishes the terms (in particular the terms as to price and, where appropriate, quantity) under which the economic operator will enter into one or more contracts with a contracting authority in the period during which the framework agreement applies.
<b>Procurement Exercise</b>	Full end to end procurement exercise documentation from strategy development to contract & supplier management.
<b>Procurement function</b>	The business management function that ensures identification, sourcing, access and management of the external resources that an organisation needs or may need to fulfil its strategic objectives.
<b>Procurement Journey</b>	Revised public procurement toolkit with guidance and templates on the procurement process or Construction manual when appropriate. The Procurement Journey will be enhanced on an on-going basis with feedback from users and any other identified good practice guidance and tools where appropriate to ensure a standardised approach to the supply base.
<b>Procurement Officer</b>	Individual who spends the majority of their time working in a role that adds value to the quality, cost and effectiveness of the procurement or acquisition of goods, works and services; impacting upon commercial relationships during one or more stages of the procurement cycle and contributing towards best practice contract and supplier management.
<b>Procurement strategy</b>	Strategy for procurement within an organisation (can be called policy).
<b>Public Contracts Scotland</b>	The national advertising portal used to advertise all Scottish Government goods, services or works contract opportunities.
<b>Retention</b>	An amount deducted and withheld from each progress payment made to a contractor or subcontractor to secure obligations under a construction contract and ensure defects are remediated without the holder becoming liable for costs arising from unmet contract performance.
<b>Small Medium Enterprise (SME)</b>	The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding 50 million euro and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding 43 million euro.
<b>Supply Chain</b>	All activities, resources, products etc. involved in creating and moving a product or service from the supplier to the procurer.
<b>Supply Chain Management</b>	The coordinated set of techniques to plan and execute all steps used to acquire raw materials from suppliers, transform them into finished goods, and deliver both goods and services to customers. It includes chain-wide information sharing, planning, resources and performance measurements.
<b>Supported Business</b>	Either the organisation's main aim should be the social and professional integration of disabled or disadvantaged persons, or the contract should be performed within a sheltered employment programme.
<b>Value for Money</b>	An economic assessment by the public sector as to whether a project represents value for money; the optimum combination of cost and quality to provide the required service.

<b>Whole Life Costing</b>	The costs of acquiring goods or services (including consultancy, design and construction costs, and equipment), the costs of operating it and the costs of maintaining it over its whole life through to its disposal – that is, the total ownership costs. These costs include internal resources and overheads.
---------------------------	---

**SCRA BOARD***Date of Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025***Agenda number 12.1 SCRA Standing Orders****Report Classification:** *Open***For:** *Approval***Non-Executive Sponsor:** *Cathie Cowan, SCRA Board Chair***Author:** *Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer***Executive Summary**

This paper presents updated Standing Orders for the Board and its Committees, incorporating proposed revised Terms of Reference and membership updates.

The proposed amendments bring governance documents in line with recent strategic developments, notably: reaffirming approved Board Corporate Objectives to support core programmes (Care, Connect and Protect), realigning workplans (separate paper) to strengthen Board Committee oversight roles and advice to Board and to update Committee membership changes.

Appendix 1 summarises all revisions at a glance; Appendix 2 contains the full updated Standing Orders and Terms of Reference for the Board and its Committees.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to:

- Approve the updated Standing Orders for Meetings of the Board and Board Committees
- Approve the revised Terms of Reference for the Board and Board Committees Committee
- Note and approve the updated Committee Membership, including the appointment of the Board Vice Chair

**Key Issues to be discussed/considered**

- Ensuring Terms of Reference define the structure, purpose, authority and operating framework for the Board and its Committees
- Alignment with Board Corporate/Strategic Objectives and mitigation of strategic risks
- Enhanced oversight and advice to the Board
- Commitment to non-executive development and exposure to Board key functions including supporting succession planning
- Impacts on public access, transparency and accountability

**Implications:****Service***N/A***Financial***N/A*

## **Workforce**

N/A

## **Infrastructure including Digital**

N/A

## **Information Governance**

Updated ToR include explicit oversight of GDPR, cyber-security and records management

## **Risk Assessment/Management**

Work underway to align strategic risks to Board Committees as part of enhancing overall risk management arrangements.

## **Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

- Planning for the future - setting well informed strategic direction through enhanced Committee governance oversight arrangements
- Valuing and developing staff - fostering a positive and inclusive culture and committing to the principles of being a 'good employer'
- Investing in developing and maintaining effective governance systems - aligning strategic risks to Board Committees whilst supporting the Audit & Assurance Committee fulfil its risk management role and advice to Board on risk management arrangements
- Committing to delivering service improvement and sustainability - aligning Corporate/Strategic Objectives to support business activities including implementation of the Care, Connect and Protect programmes
- Working in partnership - internally with staff and externally through the EMT to support Ministerial priorities and to enhance accountability and transparency

## **Equality Declaration**

The author confirms due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and the three aims of the Equality Duty. Screening completed – no discrimination noted.

Further to evaluation it is noted:

Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

Screening completed - no discrimination noted

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) not required

## **Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Board Members were consulted on the proposed revisions; and feedback has informed the updated documents.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1** - Executive Summary of Changes

**Appendix 2** - Updated Standing Orders and Terms of Reference:

- (a) SCRA Board
- (b) Audit & Assurance Committee
- (c) Planning & Performance Committee
- (d) Remuneration & Nominations Committee
- (e) Appeal Committee

**Appendix 1****Executive Summary of Changes**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Change Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
Board Terms of Reference (ToR)	Updated	All meetings in person with the exception of the January meeting
Board ToR	Added	Corporate programmes (“Care, Connect, Protect”)
Board ToR	Updated	Vice Chair appointment: Steve Renwick, two-year term (review Sept 2027)
Audit & Assurance Committee ToR	Updated	Membership refreshed - e.g., Chair and Vice Chair updated; one vacancy added
Audit & Assurance Committee ToR	Updated	Explicit Information Governance/GDPR and cyber-security oversight
Planning & Performance Committee ToR	Added	Quality assurance & case-sampling annual programme oversight transferred from AAC
Remuneration & Nominations Committee ToR	Updated	Overview / Purpose updated to reflect staff governance related oversight; Membership refreshed - Vice Chair updated
Remuneration & Nominations Committee ToR	Added	Workforce & People Strategy, EDI/Gender Pay Gap monitoring transferred from PPC
Remuneration & Nominations Committee ToR	Updated	Pay negotiation strategy and appeal process clarified
Remuneration & Nominations Committee ToR	Updated	Clarity on Board Member induction programme and review
Appeals Committee ToR	None	No changes made



**Appendix 2****Updated Standing Orders and Terms of Reference****Standing Orders for Board and Board Committees Overview**

The Board has made the following arrangements for the discharge of its functions, these arrangements to be referred to as the Standing Orders for Meetings of the Board and Board Committees.

These Standing Orders take effect until further notice and supersede all prior Standing Orders for Meetings of the Board and Board Committees.

Standing Orders apply to the Board and its Standing Committees and unless the Board specifies to the contrary, to any other Committees, or Sub-Committees which may be set up by the Board from time to time but shall not apply to working parties or groups.

Standing Orders may be suspended at any meeting of the Board and Board Committees at which the majority of the members' present are in favour. Unless expressly agreed otherwise by these members, such suspension will have effect only for the item of business immediately following, and Standing Orders will come into force again immediately afterwards.

**1. Board and Board Committee Meetings**

Board Meetings will be held in person (exception January meeting). Board Committee meetings will adopt a mixture of in person and online meetings.

Any members unable to attend a meeting of the Board or its Committees in person may participate in the meeting via a video link or telephone conference call. A member participating in this way will have the same rights and responsibilities as members attending in person, including full voting rights, and his/her participation will count as attendance for the purposes of establishing whether a quorum is present.

The quorum of Board and Board Committees will be agreed by the Board.

**2. Conflict of Interest**

All Board and Board Committee agendas will include a standing item at the start of the meeting inviting Board Members to declare any (a) financial interests, (b) non-financial interests or (c) the interests, financial or non-financial, of other persons.

If a member declares a financial interest, the member must leave the meeting room until discussion of the relevant item is concluded. If a non-financial interest is declared, the member in collaboration with the Chair must decide whether to stay and participate in the discussion and decision, or to leave the room.

The Board will establish a register of members' interests and maintain a regular review of the Register. The Register of Interests will be published on SCRA's website.

### **3. Adjournment of Meeting**

A meeting of the Board or of a Committee of the Board may be adjourned by the Chair to any other hour, day or place. Unless the time and place are specified in the motion for adjournment, the adjournment will be until the next scheduled meeting.

### **4. Voting**

A meeting may make a decision unanimously or by a majority of the members present. In the latter case, a vote of the members may be taken orally, in writing or by a show of hands at the Chair's discretion. The Chair shall have a casting, as well as a substantive vote.

The minute of the meeting shall record any decision taken. In the absence of a statement to the effect that the decision was taken by a majority, it will be deemed to record a unanimous decision. A member dissenting from a majority decision may ask for their dissent to be recorded in the minutes.

A member not present at a meeting at which a decision is taken from which he or she dissents may raise his or her concerns with the Chair. Such a decision will normally be implemented. However, it is within the discretion of the Chair to defer that the matter will appear as an item on the next agenda of the Board or Committee or arise through the minutes.

### **5. Ruling**

The ruling of the Chair on the conduct of the meeting and the application of Standing Orders will be final and will not be open to question or discussion.

### **6. Admission of the Public to Board Meetings**

Board meetings are open to be observed by members of the public and the dates will be advertised on SCRA's website.

All meetings which allow public access will be held in venues that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Any members of the public may attend and receive a copy of papers other than those dealing with the private business of the Board.

Business will only be conducted in private where there are overriding reasons for non-disclosure that outweighs any possible interest. Examples are matters relating to individual staff, private discussions with Ministers and areas where SCRA would not be required legally to disclose information.

A member of the public who disrupts the business of the meeting may be asked to leave the meeting after due warning has been given. Re-admission to that or other public meetings held by the Board will be at the discretion of the Chair.

### **7. Minutes**

The names of members present at a meeting of the Board or of a Committee of the Board will be recorded in the minutes.

Formal Minutes will be kept of proceedings and submitted for approval at the next meeting of the Board. Recognising the issue of the relative timing draft minutes may be presented to the SCRA Board Meeting to ensure Board Members are aware of issues considered and decisions taken by respective Committees.

The draft Minute will be cleared by the Chair of the Board (Vice Chair in absence of Chair) and the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive prior to distribution.

Minutes and other papers may be circulated to such non-members of the Board on such conditions as the Board may determine. In addition, papers will be available under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act and in accordance with SCRA's publication scheme.

## **8. Board Committees**

The Board may appoint Committees to exercise functions on its behalf. Such Committees may also appoint Sub-Committees.

Where functions are being carried out by Committees or Sub-Committees, their members will be acting on behalf of the Board.

The Chair of the Board will appoint a Vice Chair in addition to the Chair. The Chair shall preside at every meeting of the Committee. The Vice Chair shall preside if the Chair is absent.

Committees and Sub-Committees may co-opt members with relevant expertise and knowledge who are not members of the Board. Co-opted members should not make up more than half the membership of the Committees and Sub-Committees. Co-opted members will have full voting rights.

Co-opted members of Committees and Sub-Committees who are not members of the Board may claim certain travelling and other allowances but will not be remunerated.

Minutes of Committees and minutes of Sub-Committees will be submitted to the Board.

The Board has established the following Standing Committees, these are:

- Audit & Assurance Committee
- Planning & Performance Committee
- Remuneration & Nominations Committee
- Appeals Committee

The membership numbers and names of the Standing Committees and the matters remitted to them may be varied by the Board from time to time. Membership of Standing Committees may include, or consist of persons who are not Board members,

The Board may also form other Committees or Sub-Committees adhoc which may include, or consist of, persons who are not Board members.

## **9. Working Parties or Groups**

Working parties or groups may be set up from time to time by the Board. A working party or group is not an executive arm of the Board and may regulate its procedure as it sees fit unless any particular procedure has been prescribed for it by the Board.

Working parties or groups need not contain Board members. Were the conclusions of any working party or group require the authority of the Board or a Committee before they can be implemented; the working party or group shall submit a report to the Board or the relevant Committee setting forth its recommendations. Working parties or groups should have a Chair, maintain minutes of proceedings and report no less frequently than quarterly to the Board or appropriate Standing Committee. These reports may be in writing or verbal.

#### **10. Exceptional circumstances where Board business may be dealt with by Correspondence**

Where there is urgent business of the Board, and it is not practicable to convene a special meeting, the Chair may under exceptional circumstances deal with the matter (s) by correspondence.

In these exceptional circumstances relevant papers and recommendations will be circulated by email. Every effort will be made to contact Board members accepting that this may not be possible. There will require to be a quorate and majority decision that actions/decisions arising from such exceptional circumstances will be reported to the subsequent Board meeting.

#### **11. Collective Responsibility and Confidentiality**

The Board and Board Committees operate based on collective responsibility for decisions. Members are therefore expected, if questions on a matter were the Board or a Committee has taken a view, to support the position reached.

If members are questioned on matters that fall within the remit of SCRA but on which a Board or Board Committee view has not been taken, they may give a personal view but should stress that it does not necessarily reflect the view of SCRA. Before doing so, they are advised to consult with the Chair.

All members are required to maintain confidentiality as detailed in the SCRA Code of Conduct and any guidance to that code provided.

All members are required to fulfil their responsibilities as set out in their terms and conditions or appointment. Any issues in relations to non-performance will be addressed as part of the appraisal process for Board members.

#### **12. Revision of Standing Orders**

The Standing Orders will routinely be reviewed annually in line with Board and Board Committee annual effectiveness review and/or earlier in light of:

- relevant legislative changes
- request from the Board Chair
- guidance issued by Scottish Government or Sponsor Department
- recommendations made by either internal or external auditors

**Appendix 2 (a)****Terms of Reference (2025 Review)****SCRA BOARD****TERMS OF REFERENCE****OVERVIEW**

The **Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)** is an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government with responsibility for protecting children at risk. SCRA was formed under the Local Government (Scotland) Act and became fully operational from 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1996. SCRA operates within a legislative framework, and at arm's length from government, it receives oversight and direction from its Board, whose members are appointed by Scottish Ministers. As a non-departmental public body, SCRA's although acting independently is accountable to Scottish Ministers.

The Board of SCRA is responsible for articulating an ambition or vision - 'Children and Young People will be cared for, included, respected and safe, with opportunities for a positive future' whilst managing the risk contained within that ambition and demonstrating leadership by undertaking 3 key roles:

- formulating strategy for the organisation, including the development of an annual delivery plan
- ensuring commitment and accountability by holding the organisation through the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive to account for performance and the delivery of continuous improvement whilst operating within a context of both affordability and sustainability
- shaping a positive culture for the Board and wider organisation including how it engages with partners

**1. COMPOSITION****Membership**

Members, of SCRA including the Chair, constitute the Board. Board Members are non-executives appointed by the Scottish Ministers in line with the Act and Code of Ministerial Public Appointments in Scotland. The Board is accountable to the Scottish Ministers and to the Scottish Parliament. [This is a link to our Board Members.](#)

**Appointment of Vice Chair**

Steve Renwick is proposed to take up the role of Vice Chair, a role that will be reviewed in 2 years (Sept 2027) as part of the Board's commitment to succession planning and Board Member opportunities and development. The Chair will preside at every meeting of the Board. The Vice Chair shall preside if the Chair is absent.

## **Attendance**

The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and members of the Executive Management Team (EMT) shall normally attend all meetings of the Board. The Board can request the attendance of any officer of SCRA.

## **Quorum**

No business shall be transacted unless a minimum of five (this includes the Chair and/or Vice Chair) Board Members are present. (If the meeting is inquorate discussion of business may take place, but no decisions can be made.)

## **2. MEETINGS**

### **Notice and Frequency**

The Executive Office will notify members of all Board meetings.

Meetings will be held five times per annum with **four meetings being held in person** (January meeting held online via MS Teams). The timetable should also assist with scheduling key items of business to be discussed at each meeting.

### **Special Meetings of the Board to deal with Exceptional or Urgent Business**

The Executive Office will arrange that a meeting of the Board be called if:

- required by the Chair
- a request signed by one third of the whole number of members is made in writing for that purpose (at least three calendar days' notice will be given of any special meeting and of the business proposed for that meeting. No business will be transacted beyond that specified in the request which called for that special meeting)

### **Agenda and Papers**

The agenda and papers will be sent five days in advance of the meetings. All papers will clearly state the agenda reference, the author, the purpose of the paper together with the action the Board is being asked to consider. The Chair of the Board, and Principal Reporter/Chief Executive will be responsible for agreeing the agenda, supported by the Governance Officer.

### **Minutes**

Formal Minutes will be kept of proceedings and submitted for approval at the next meeting of the Board.

The draft Minute will be cleared by the Chair of the Board (Vice Chair in the absence of the Board Chair) and Principal Reporter/Chief Executive.



### 3. REMIT

The Board in line with the approved '[Framework Document](#)' has corporate responsibility, and will:

- provide strategic leadership and direction to enable SCRA to fulfil its statutory duties, powers and functions including effectively contributing to improving outcomes as described in the National Performance Framework, the Programme for Government and Scotland's Economic Strategy in collaboration with Scottish Government and other public bodies
- be accountable for overseeing and scrutinising SCRA performance, including risk management, financial performance, quality assurance and improvement
- promote the efficient, economic and effective use of resources in line with Best Value, and through the budget setting/allocation process to address national and organisational priorities
- approve the annual report and accounts and present as required to Scottish Ministers to be laid before the Scottish Parliament
- ensure that there is a robust governance and accountability framework in place to monitor compliance with all necessary standards, outcomes and targets
- champion the wellbeing, learning and development of all staff
- operate in a manner that is open and transparent with regular reviews on how it performs

#### Corporate Objectives

The Board's Corporate Objectives as set out below are defined as the goals of the organisation and are intended to provide strategic direction for the organisation, including to the Corporate Programmes.

- Planning for the future
- Valuing and developing our staff
- Committing to delivering service improvement and sustainability through our care, connect and protect principles
- Delivering best value using our resources
- Working in partnership
- Investing in developing and maintaining effective governance systems including risk management

#### Corporate Programmes

- Care - delivering a service that feels right for each child, young person and family that experience it
- Connect - working together to receive the right referrals for the right children, at the right time
- Protect - making high quality and timely decisions for children and young people using the right information that is relevant, clear and secure

## Values

SCRA values are the shared motivations, beliefs, and behaviours that provide Board Members and the organisation with purpose and direction in pursuit of its vision 'our vision is that children and young people in Scotland will be cared for, included, respected and safe with opportunities for a positive future.' Our values are set out below and include:

- 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.

## Conduct, Accountability and Openness

Board Members are required to comply with the Members Code of Conduct and to promote by their personal conduct the values of:

- Public Service
- Leadership
- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Openness
- Accountability and stewardship
- Honesty
- Respect

## 4. OTHER

The Board has a duty to review its own performance, effectiveness and terms of reference on an annual basis - 'Board Effectiveness Review'. The Chair will ensure this is undertaken and presented to the Board with an improvement plan (as a commitment to continuous improvement) to support and inform good governance going forward. In addition, the Board will include Board Effectiveness as part of its 3-year audit programme.

**Appendix 2 (b)****Audit & Assurance Committee Terms of Reference (2025 Review)****SCRA AUDIT & ASSURANCE COMMITTEE****TERMS OF REFERENCE****OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the Audit & Assurance Committee is to ensure that SCRA Board activities operate within the law and regulations governing Scotland's executive non-departmental public bodies. Its primary concern is to ensure:

- an effective system of internal control is established and maintained to be able to give reasonable assurance to the Board that SCRA's financial reporting, internal controls including the workings of both internal and external auditors, governance and risk management are effective and can be relied upon

**1. COMPOSITION****Membership**

The membership of this Committee shall consist of:

- Up to four Non-Executive Members of the Board

Steve Renwick, Chair  
 Lynne Clow (Vice Chair)  
 Hazel Smith  
 Vacancy

The Chair of the Board is not eligible for membership to the Audit & Assurance Committee.

**Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair shall be appointed at a full business meeting of the SCRA Board. The Chair of the Board will appoint a Vice Chair in addition to the Chair. The Chair will preside at every meeting of the Committee. The Vice Chair shall preside if the Chair is absent.

**Attendance**

The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and Head of Finance & Resources, the Chief Internal Auditor and the statutory External Auditor shall normally attend meetings. The Committee can request the attendance of any officer of SCRA. All Board Members shall have the right of attendance and have access to papers, except where the Committee resolves otherwise, e.g., papers containing confidential or person identifiable information.

## **Quorum**

No business shall be transacted unless a minimum of two Audit & Assurances Committee Members are present.

## **2. MEETINGS**

### **Frequency**

Meetings will be held four times per annum with at least one meeting held in person. The timetable should also assist with scheduling key items of business to be discussed at each meeting.

Meetings of the Committee will be timetabled annually to coincide with the important events of the year e.g., annual accounts and before important decisions are made.

### **Agenda and Papers**

The agenda and papers will be sent five days in advance of the meetings. All papers will clearly state the agenda reference, the author, the purpose of the paper together with the action the Committee is being asked to consider. The Chair of the Committee, Vice Chair and Committee Executive Management Team (EMT) Lead will be responsible for agreeing the agenda.

### **Minutes**

Formal Minutes will be kept of proceedings and submitted for approval at the next meeting to the Committee. Recognising the issue of the relative timing of draft minutes may be presented to the SCRA Board Meeting to ensure Board Members are aware of issues considered and decisions taken by respective Committees.

The draft Minute will be cleared by the Chair of the Committee (Vice Chair in the absence of Chair) and the nominated Committee EMT Lead prior to distribution.

### **Other**

The Chief Internal Auditor and a representative from External Audit shall have free and confidential access to the Chair and Members of the Audit & Assurance Committee.

## **3. REMIT**

The Audit & Assurance Committee shall oversee legal regulatory and code of conduct compliance and where appropriate challenges non-compliance. The Committee will also oversee the effectiveness of SCRA's system of internal control to be able to give reasonable assurance to the Board that SCRA's financial reporting, internal controls including the workings of both internal and external auditors, governance and risk management are effective and can be relied upon.

The duties of the Audit & Assurance Committee are in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Scottish Government Audit Committee

Handbook. The Audit & Risk Committee will periodically review its own effectiveness and report the results of the review to the Board and Accountable Officer.

### **Internal Control and Corporate Governance**

The Audit & Assurance Committee will evaluate the system of internal control and corporate governance, notably to promote and demonstrate high standards of corporate governance, by:

- helping the Board address the key risks facing the SCRA in carrying out its statutory functions and working towards its strategic objectives
- providing assurances relating to:
  - corporate governance requirements for the organisation
  - strategic processes for risk, control and governance
  - the Governance statement
  - the effectiveness of the internal control environment
- based on a needs assessment, agreeing a regular and responsive programme of audit on the management and control of work within the Administration and receiving reports on that audit
- agreeing the most efficient and effective means of carrying out the agreed programme of audit
- reporting on the planned activity and results of both internal and external audit, and on the adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's management letter/report
- overseeing the finalisation and submission of the accounting policies, the accounts, including the process for review of the accounts and governance statement prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and the management's letter of representation to the external auditors and thereafter recommending approval to the Board of the Annual Accounts
- alerting the Board to factors which might affect the ability of the Administration to carry out its statutory functions and achieve its strategic objectives
- considering any proposals for tendering for internal services or for the purchase of non-audit services from contractors who provide audit services
- overseeing and alerting the Board, where appropriate, on anti-fraud policies, whistle-blowing processes, and arrangements for special investigations

## **Information Governance**

- overseeing and reviewing SCRA's compliance with statutory obligations to comply with information governance, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Network Information Systems Regulations including cyber scrutiny
- overseeing and scrutinising improvements in information governance

## **Standing Orders and Financial Instructions**

- reviewing changes to the Standing Orders and Financial Instructions
- reviewing and approving the Scheme of Delegation
- examining circumstances associated with any occasion when Standing Orders are waived or suspended

## **4. OTHER**

The Audit & Assurance Committee has a duty to review its own performance, effectiveness and terms of reference on an annual basis and the Chair will submit an Annual Report of the work of the Committee to the Board.

The Committee is authorised to obtain legal or other professional advice it considers necessary.

A standing agenda item on each committee meeting shall be the agreement of matters to both report and escalate to the Board at its next meeting.



**Appendix 2 (c)****Planning & Performance Committee Terms of Reference (2025 Review)****SCRA PLANNING & PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE****TERMS OF REFERENCE****OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the Planning & Performance Committee is to scrutinise the quantitative and qualitative performance of the Board to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to deliver against organisational performance measures to secure efficient, economic and effective use of all resources, and provide reasonable assurance to the Board that the arrangements are working effectively.

**1. COMPOSITION****Membership**

The membership of this Committee shall consist of:

- Up to four Non-Executive Members of the Board, including the Board Chair

Kay Barton, Chair  
Ying Zhang, Vice Chair  
Cathie Cowan  
Lorraine Moore

**Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair shall be appointed at a full business meeting of the SCRA Board. The Chair of the Board will appoint a Vice Chair in addition to the Chair. The Chair will preside at every meeting of the Committee. The Vice Chair shall preside if the Chair is absent.

**Attendance**

The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and (at his/her discretion) members of the Executive Management Team shall normally attend meetings. The Committee can request the attendance of any officer of SCRA. All Board Members shall have the right of attendance and have access to papers, except where the Committee resolves otherwise, e.g., papers containing confidential or person identifiable information.

The Committee shall have the right to invite, as required, external experts to attend meetings.

## **Quorum**

No business shall be transacted unless a minimum of two Planning & Performance Committee Members are present.

## **2. MEETINGS**

### **Frequency**

Meetings will be held four times per annum with at least one meeting held in person. The timetable should also assist with scheduling key items of business to be discussed at each meeting.

The Planning & Performance Committee will be timetabled annually to coincide with the important events of the year e.g., annual delivery plan and before important decisions are made.

### **Agenda and Papers**

The agenda and papers will be sent five days in advance of the meetings. All papers will clearly state the agenda reference, the author, the purpose of the paper together with the action the Committee is being asked to consider. The Chair of the Committee, Vice Chair and Committee Executive Management Team (EMT) Lead will be responsible for agreeing the agenda.

### **Minutes**

Formal Minutes will be kept of proceedings and submitted for approval at the next meeting to the Committee. Recognising the issue of the relative timing of draft minutes may be presented to the SCRA Board Meeting to ensure Board Members are aware of issues considered and decisions taken by respective Committees.

The draft Minute will be cleared by the Chair of the Committee (Vice Chair in the absence of Chair) and the nominated Committee EMT Lead prior to distribution.

## **3. REMIT**

The Planning & Performance Committee will oversee and scrutinise current qualitative and non-qualitative performance against approved aims, objectives and projected performance targets. The work of the Committee will include:

### **Corporate Planning**

- contributing to the development of Board Strategies and Plans, specifically the Corporate and Business Plan, the Corporate Parenting Plan in advance of being presented to the Board for approval
- monitoring progress against the approved Annual Business Plan to ensure delivery against plan is achieved

- monitoring progress towards delivery on Hearings Redesign and Children's Care and Justice Act (phase 1) and UNCRC incorporation

### **Improvement and Performance**

- promoting the ongoing development of a performance culture within SCRA to support a continuous quality improvement and change agenda in response to Ministerial priorities
- approving the Board's performance management framework informed by Corporate and Locality Plans
- reviewing the Board's overall approach to performance and planning objectives to ensure SCRA can demonstrate through its decision-making best value, improved efficiency and effectiveness
- seeking assurance from the quality assurance and case sampling annual programme including annual progress report, annual plan, case sampling reviews and joint inspections
- maintaining an overview of the Strategic Risks aligned to the Planning & Performance Committee and agreeing appropriate escalation to the Board

### **Sustainability Strategy**

- overseeing and reviewing overall development of major projects to ensure the Board can demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and meeting SCRA's net zero targets

### **Digital**

- monitoring the delivery of the Board's Digital Strategy aims and targets to ensure delivery of investment in digital solutions in response to Hearings System redesign and wider Public Sector Reform

### **Property Strategy**

- monitoring the delivery of the Board's Property Strategy aims and targets to ensure delivery of investment in the estate for Hearings System redesign and wider Public Sector Reform

## **4. OTHER**

The Planning & Performance Committee has a duty to review its own performance and effectiveness including terms of reference on an annual basis and the Chair will submit an Annual Report on the work of the Committee to the Board.

A standing agenda item on each committee meeting shall be the agreement of matters to both report and escalate to the Board at its next meeting.

## Appendix 2 (d)

### Remuneration & Nominations Committee Terms of Reference (2025 Review)

#### SCRA REMUNERATION & NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

##### OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Remuneration & Nominations Committee is to:

- provide the Board with assurance that the culture within SCRA is informed by our values (supportive, child-centred, respectful and accountable) and robust staff governance mechanisms that includes strong partnership and collaborative working
- ensure application and implementation of fair and equitable pay systems on behalf of the Board, noting the inherent tension for Board Members between rewarding staff whilst working within financial regulatory controls. The Committee also oversees the remuneration arrangements for the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive whilst also discharging specific responsibilities on behalf of the Board as an employing organisation

#### 1. COMPOSITION

##### Membership

The membership of this Committee shall consist of:

- Up to five Non-Executive Members of the Board, including the Board Chair

Lorraine Moore, Chair

Hazel Smith, Vice Chair

Lynne Clow

Cathie Cowan

Steve Renwick

The Chair of the Committee will not be held by the Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Board will be expected to present the performance appraisal and recommended rating of the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and then withdraw from the Committee's pay award decision making process. This enables the Chair of the Board to be involved in any appeal made by the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive in relation to performance and/or pay.

An official from the Scottish Government Sponsor Team will attend meetings of the Committee as appropriate - e.g., appointments process and pay awards.

## **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair**

The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair shall be appointed at a full business meeting of the SCRA Board. The Chair of the Board will appoint a Vice Chair in addition to the Chair. The Chair will preside at every meeting of the Committee. The Vice Chair shall preside if the Chair is absent.

## **Attendance**

The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and Head of Human Resources shall normally attend meetings. The Committee can request the attendance of any officer of SCRA, e.g. Head of Finance & Resources. All Board Members shall have the right of attendance and have access to papers, except where the Committee resolves otherwise, e.g., papers containing confidential or person identifiable information.

## **Quorum**

No business shall be transacted unless a minimum of three Remuneration & Nominations Committee Members is present.

## **2. MEETINGS**

### **Frequency**

The Committee will meet at least twice annually. The meeting will be timed to align with the board planning cycle. The Committee will also convene on an ad hoc basis to deal with issues such as unanticipated Board member departures and changes to the operating environment, including proposed pay awards.

### **Agenda and Papers**

The agenda and papers will be sent out five days in advance of the meetings. All papers will clearly state the agenda reference, the author, the purpose of the paper together with the action the Committee is being asked to consider. The Chair of the Committee, Vice Chair and Committee Executive Management Team (EMT) Lead will be responsible for agreeing the agenda.

### **Minutes**

Formal Minutes will be kept of proceedings and submitted for approval at the next meeting of the Committee. In addition, a summary minute (to ensure person or staff specific discussions remain confidential) will be presented to the SCRA Board Meetings to ensure Board Members are aware of issues considered and decisions taken by respective Committees.

The draft Minute and summary minute will be cleared by the Chair of the Committee (Vice Chair in the absence of Chair) and nominated EMT Lead prior to distribution.

## Other

The Committee may

- co-opt additional members for a period not exceeding one year to provide specialist skills, knowledge, and experience, and
- procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the organisation, subject to budgets agreed by the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

### 3. REMIT

The Remuneration & Nominations Committee will oversee SCRA's all staff governance related matters including scheme of salaries, whilst ensuring arrangements for the remuneration and financial benefits of its staff are consistent with the recruitment of suitable personnel and the maintenance of a high level of motivation within the organisation. The work of the Committee will include:

#### Workforce and People Strategy

- monitoring the delivery of the People's Strategy and the culture where the highest standard of staff management is understood to be the responsibility of everyone working in SCRA
- monitoring the delivery of the staff survey action plan in collaboration with our unions and staff

#### Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- monitoring the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy aims and targets and supporting programme of work, including activity to reduce the Gender Pay Gap

#### Pay Negotiations including remuneration

- ensuring that the objectives above can be attained within any government strategy for public sector pay and that SCRA's negotiating strategy in relation to pay and conditions will be clearly agreed with the Remuneration Committee - this would ensure the Committee's formal role in approving overarching negotiating strategies at the outset of a pay round, and reducing the need for repeated returns to the Committee for minor adjustments.
- formulating proposals for the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive's salary progression and other aspects of his/her remuneration for recommendation to the Board and the Scottish Government
- advising the Chair/Board on pay policy uplift to Board Member' remuneration



## Staff Development & Sourcing External Advisers

- receiving, where appropriate, a report from the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive on staff appraisals and proposals for links with salary progression
- receiving reports from the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive on the Executive Team Development programme (to include an element of succession planning)
- receiving reports from the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive on staff relations/partnership
- making such recommendations as are necessary to the Board to recruit any specialist advisers who may be required to enable the Committee to meet the terms of its remit

## Board Development & Recruitment

- providing guidance and support when appropriate to the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive in relation to selection and appointment of Senior Team members
- reviewing and evaluating skills, knowledge and experience of the Board including the skills and experience required for all Board members
- developing and agreeing a Board Induction Programme with an annual review to ensure the programme remains fit for purpose
- identifying skills gaps and shortages and offer advice on background areas of potential applicants, looking wider than the children's hearings system and its associated networks, whilst considering the current operating environment - this will include:
  - identifying distinct gaps (skills and expertise) with an eye to future succession planning on the Board
  - ensuring that the Board does not recruit in the image of current board members, and
  - facilitating the establishment of a non-homogenous Board
- consulting and seeking advice on ways of attracting applicants, including advising on different methods and approaches to recruitment including the application process (and participation/involvement of children and young people in the process), information pack and interviews
- always adhering to the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments and policy and advice of the Public Appointments Commissioner's Office

#### **4. OTHER**

The Remuneration & Nominations Committee has a duty to review its own performance and effectiveness including terms of reference on an annual basis and the Chair will submit an Annual Report on the work of the Committee to the Board.

A standing agenda item on each committee meeting shall be the agreement of matters to both report and escalate to the Board at its next meeting.

## **Appendix 2 (e)**

### **Appeals Committee Terms of Reference**

#### **SCRA APPEALS COMMITTEE**

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

##### **OVERVIEW**

The purpose of the Appeals Committee is to hear appeals from SCRA staff in respect of any matters set out in SCRA's Manual of Personnel Policies and Procedures

#### **1. COMPOSITION**

##### **Membership**

The membership of this Committee will be determined by the nature of the appeal and shall consist of:

- three Non-Executive Members of the Board

##### **Appointment of Chair**

The appointment of the Chair of this Committee shall be at the discretion of the Board.

##### **Attendance**

The Chief Executive/Principal Reporter and Head of Human Resources shall normally attend the Committee as respondent and HR advisor to the Committee respectively at any appeal.

##### **Quorum**

No business shall be transacted unless a minimum of three Board Members are present.

#### **2. MEETINGS**

##### **Frequency**

The Committee will be serviced by the Governance Officer and the arrangements for convening the Committee are as set out in SCRA's Staff Handbook. The Committee will meet as required.

##### **Agenda and Papers**

The agenda and papers will be sent out in line with the SCRA Personnel Policies and Procedures.

## **Minutes**

Formal Minutes will be kept of proceedings and capture the Committee's substantive decision of the appeal.

## **3. REMIT**

The Committee shall be established to:

- hear appeals from SCRA staff in respect of any of the matters set out in SCRA's Manual of Personnel Policies & Procedures and in accordance with the arrangements set out therein
- come to a substantive decision on any appeal
- report the outcome to the Board at its next meeting following any appeal

## **Purpose**

Hear and decide staff appeals under SCRA's Personnel Policies & Procedures.

## **Composition**

Three Non-Executive Board Members appointed per appeal; Chair appointed at the Board's discretion; quorum of three.

## **Attendance & Meetings**

Convened as required; serviced by Governance Officer; Chief Executive and Head of HR attend as respondent and advisor.

## **Remit**

Conduct fair appeal hearings, reach substantive decisions and report outcomes to the Board at the next meeting.



## SCRA BOARD

25<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### Agenda number 12.2 Timetable of Board and Committee Meetings 2026

**Report Classification:** *Open*

**For:** *Approval*

**Non-Executive Sponsor:** *Cathie Cowan, Board Chair*

**Author:** *Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer*

#### Executive Summary

This report presents the proposed timetable for SCRA Board and Committee meetings for January to December 2026, including key governance sessions and two Board development days.

Approval of these dates will provide clarity for planning and ensure alignment with SCRA's strategic objectives.

#### Recommendation

The Board invited to:

- Approve the timetable of Board and Committee meetings for 2026.

#### Key Issues to be discussed/considered

- Alignment of meeting dates with SCRA's planning and performance cycles.
- Ensuring maximum stakeholder attendance and avoiding scheduling conflicts.
- Incorporation of two Board development days in April and October to support strategic reflection.

#### Implications:

##### Service

N/A

##### Financial

N/A

##### Workforce

N/A

##### Infrastructure including Digital

N/A

##### Information Governance

N/A

## **Risk Assessment/Management**

NA

### **Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

- Planning for the future by establishing a clear governance calendar.
- Valuing and developing our staff through dedicated development days.
- Maintaining effective governance and risk management via regular committee reviews.
- Delivering service improvement and sustainability through timely oversight.

### **Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process.

Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

### **Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Board Members

Executive Management Team

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Schedule of Board and Committee Meetings 2026



**Appendix 1****Schedule of Board and Committee Meetings 2026****Board Meetings (10:30–15:00)**

Meeting	Day	Date
Board Meeting	Wednesday	28 January 2026
Board Meeting	Wednesday	18 March 2026
Board Meeting	Wednesday	17 June 2026
Board Meeting	Wednesday	16 September 2026
Board Meeting	Wednesday	16 December 2026

**Board Development Days (10:30–15:00)**

Development Day	Day	Date
Board Development Day	Wednesday	22 April 2026
Board Development Day	Wednesday	21 October 2026

**Planning & Performance Committee (10:30–13:00)**

Committee Meeting	Day	Date
Planning & Performance Committee	Monday	09 February 2026
Planning & Performance Committee	Tuesday	11 May 2026
Planning & Performance Committee	Monday	10 August 2026
Planning & Performance Committee	Monday	09 November 2026

**Audit & Assurance Committee (10:30–13:00)**

Committee Meeting	Day	Date
Audit & Assurance Committee	Wednesday	18 February 2026
Audit & Assurance Committee	Wednesday	20 May 2026
Audit & Assurance Committee	Wednesday	19 August 2026
Audit & Assurance Committee	Wednesday	18 November 2026

**Remuneration & Nomination Committee (10:30–12:00)**

Committee Meeting	Day	Date
Remuneration & Nomination Committee	Wednesday	25 February 2026
Remuneration & Nomination Committee	Tuesday	26 May 2026
Remuneration & Nomination Committee	Monday	17 August 2026
Remuneration & Nomination Committee	Monday	16 November 2026

**SCRA Board**

25 September 2025

**Agenda Item 13.1 Strategic Risk Register****Report Classification:** Open**For:** Approval**Executive Sponsor:** Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources**Author:** Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

---

**Executive Summary**

In accordance with the Risk Management Policy, this is the Board's quarterly update on SCRA's Strategic Risk Register. The summary report is attached as Appendix 1.

**Recommendation**

The Board is invited to:

- Approve the Strategic Risk Register

**Key Issues to be discussed/considered**

Following review by risk owners, no risk scores are changing, controls are still deemed effective, and actions have been updated. For future Board sub-committee meetings, and with agreement from those sub-committee's chairs, the Head of Finance and Resources will suggest which strategic risks align to which Board sub-committees.

**Implications:****Service**

N/A

**Financial**

The addition of a strategic financial risk is itself some mitigation against the challenges of a lack of financial sustainability.

**Workforce**

N/A

**Infrastructure including Digital**

N/A

**Information Governance**

N/A

**Risk Assessment/Management**

N/A

**Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives**

Regular review of the Strategic Risk Register is a cornerstone of SCRA's risk management. This review mitigates against threats to achieving SCRA's corporate and business plan objectives, ensures strong corporate governance and oversight (and allows this to be evidenced and demonstrated to stakeholders), and supports effective use of constrained resources.

**Equality Declaration**

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process.

Further to evaluation it is noted: *(tick relevant assessment)*

Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

**Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation**

Executive Management Team members

Members of Audit and Assurance Committee

Members of Planning and Performance Committee

**Appendices**

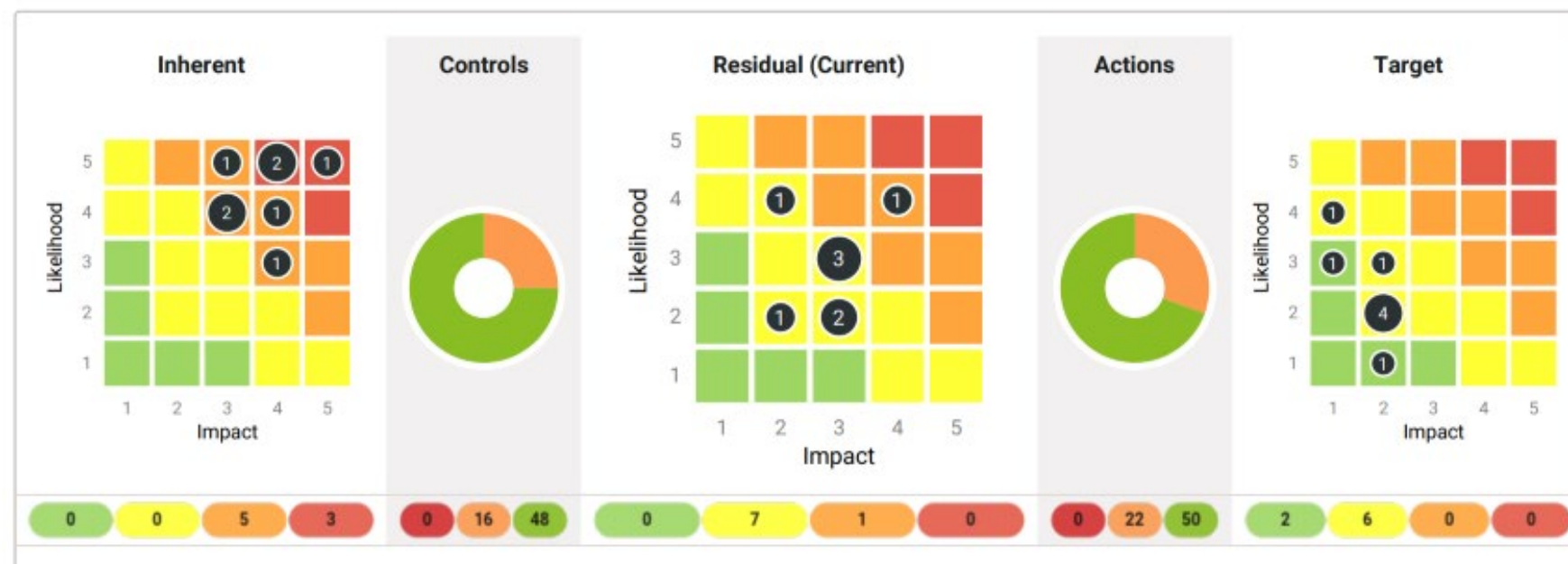
Appendix 1 – Strategic Risk Register: Risk Summary Report

## Appendix 1

### Risk Summary Report

**Risk Register:** Strategic Risk Register

**Risk Status:** New/Emerging, Open, Unassigned



Ref	Risk Category	Title	Risk Register	Risk Appetite	Inherent Risk Likelihood x Impact	Controls on Track	Residual Risk Likelihood x Impact	Movement in score	Actions on Track	Target Risk Likelihood x Impact
1	Strategic	IT Security measures are insufficient to prevent a successful cyber-attack on SCRA case information which results in loss of data which cannot be recovered.	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	5 x 4 20	1 Amber 6 Green	3 x 3 9	↔	1 Amber 10 Green	2 x 2 4
2	Strategic	The optimum model for CSAS ownership and accountability and a joint future partnership between SCRA and CHS is not adequately defined and agreed.	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	4 x 4 16	1 Amber 8 Green	2 x 3 6	↓ 3 x 3 = 9 19th Oct 2023	1 Amber 16 Green	2 x 2 4
3	Strategic	SCRA do not maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce which can meet current demands and future needs.	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	3 x 4 12	9 Green	2 x 3 6	↓ 3 x 3 = 9 4th Apr 2024	1 Amber 8 Green	2 x 2 4
153	Strategic	Inability to spend CCJA-preparation capital and revenue allocations due to lack of specificity of the necessary adaptations to facilities and systems for referral of 16 and 17 year olds, with the result that sub-optimal solutions reduce the efficiency of staff and the quality of service when the legislation is implemented	Strategic Risk Register	Open	5 x 4 20	1 Amber 8 Green	3 x 3 9	↓ 4 x 3 = 12 18th Oct 2023	1 Amber 11 Green	3 x 2 6
233	Strategic	Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 3 12	5 Amber 2 Green	3 x 3 9	⬆️ 10th Dec 2024	5 Amber	2 x 2 4
240	Strategic	High levels of uncertainty about the Hearings System which impacts our ability to plan, prepare and deliver change to meet our future needs	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	5 x 3 15	8 Amber 4 Green	4 x 2 8	⬆️ 10th Dec 2024	10 Amber	4 x 1 4
258	Reputation	Lack of progress/focus on environmental and sustainability plans/actions results in failure to meet stakeholders' expectations around reporting on and reducing SCRA's carbon footprint	Strategic Risk Register	Open	4 x 3 12	6 Green	2 x 2 4	⬆️ 2nd Jun 2025	1 Amber 4 Green	1 x 2 2
259	Financial	Scottish Government's published budget for SCRA for 2026-27 does not meet SCRA's needs, resulting in uncertainty over the extent to which inyear funding can support SCRA's delivery on its corporate and business plan objectives	Strategic Risk Register	Open	5 x 5 25	5 Green	4 x 4 16	⬆️ 2nd Jun 2025	2 Amber 1 Green	3 x 1 3