

**Agenda of SCRA Board Meeting, held on
Wednesday 28 January 2026, By MS TEAMS**

A G E N D A

**SCRA BOARD CHAIR
Cathie Cowan**

Item	Topic	Lead	Decision	Timings
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum			10:30
1.1	AOB			
2.	Declaration (s) of Interest (s)			
3.	Chair/Non-Executive Updates		For Information	10:35
4.	Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on 16 December 2025	Chair	For Approval	10:40
5.	Matters Arising from Minute Matters Arising from Action Log	Chair	For Assurance	10:45
6.	Workplan (Board)	Chair	For Noting	10:50
7.	Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Report			
7.1	PR/CE Report 2025 Staff Survey	PR/CE	For Assurance	10:55
8.	Performance			
8.1	Locality Performance Review Report	Senior Operational Managers	For Assurance	11:15
9.	Finance & Resources			
9.1	Budget Planning 2026/2027	Head of Finance & Resources	For Assurance	11:30
10.	Workforce			
10.1	Review of Children's Reporter Job Description and Person Specification – Verbal Update	Head of HR	For Noting	12:15
11.	Risk Management			
11.1	New Risks	Head of Finance & Resources	For Assurance	12:25
Close 1230				



Minute of SCRA Board Meeting, held on Wednesday 16 December 2025, at Bell Street, Glasgow

Present:

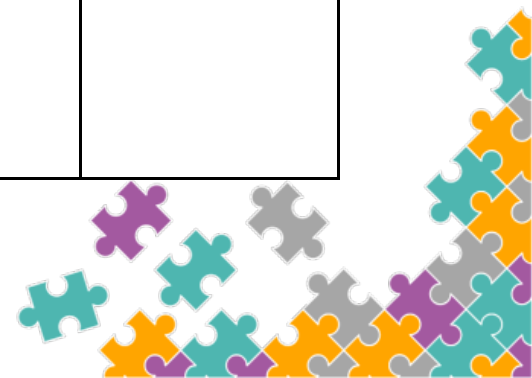
Cathie Cowan, Chair
 Steve Renwick, Vice Chair
 Kay Barton
 Lynne Clow
 Jim Edgar
 Lorraine Moore
 Ying Zhang

In Attendance:

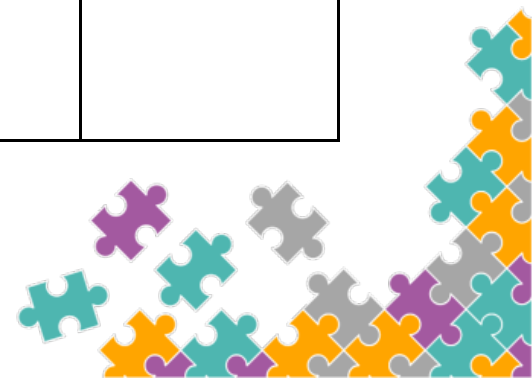
Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
 Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer - Minute
 Lisa Bennett, Head of Organisational Development and Strategy
 Douglas Cameron, Head of Digital
 Susan Deery, Head of Human Resources (by TEAMS)
 Alistair Hogg, Head of Practice and Policy
 Paul Mulvanny, Senior Operational Manager (SOM)
 Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources
 Monica Sweeney, UNISON Branch Secretary/Reporter
 Catherine Nixon, Research Manager, Item 10 (by TEAMS)
 Taiba Ali, Senior Policy Officer, Scottish Government
 Nick Rougvie, Children's Hearings Team Leader, Scottish Government

Item	Topic	Timescale	Owner
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum The Chair welcomed attendees present in person and online, noted apologies from Hazel Smith (Board Member), and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.		
1.1	AOB None		
2.	Declaration (s) of Interest (s) No new interests were declared.		
3.	Chair/Non-Executive Updates The Chair provided an overview of recent engagements with Scottish Government, noting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A briefing meeting with Sponsorship on 8 December, covering the 2026/27 budget, the legislative reform 		

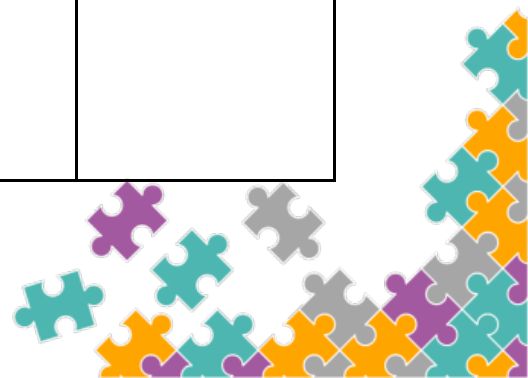
	<p>programme, and progress on Board Recruitment with appointment processes likely to run into Autumn-2026 due to national scheduling pressures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in the Diversity Strategy Refresh event on 3 December, led by the Ethical Standards Commissioner. The Chair highlighted the usefulness of the associated report and encouraged members to review its insights, given its relevance to equalities, governance, and public appointments. 		
4.	<p><i>Minute of the Board Development Day held on 04 November 2025</i></p> <p>Development Day minute and the change to summary note capturing actions for Board to consider was approved.</p>		
5.	<p><i>Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on 25 September 2025</i></p> <p>Minute approved as an accurate record which no amendments proposed.</p>		
6.	<p>Matters Arising from Minute Matters Arising from Action Log</p> <p>The Chair introduced the matters arising and reviewed the open actions with members. Proposals to close items that have been completed or superseded were accepted.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To close the action relating to a facilitated session on “creating good governance,” on the basis that this was substantively delivered through the recent Board Development Session and the follow-on governance work now planned. • The Board noted an upcoming meeting with the Scottish Government Remuneration Group, with a commitment to feedback outcomes to members once available. 		HoHR



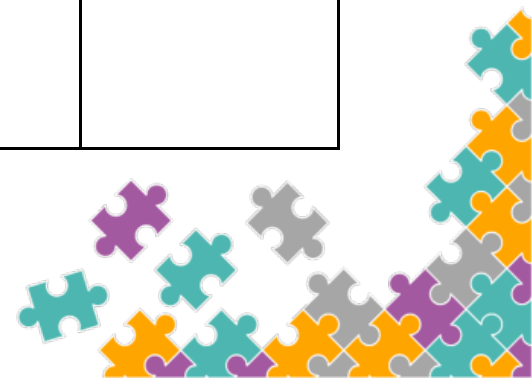
7.	Workplan (Board) The workplan was reviewed and confirmed to align with the December agenda and upcoming decision points.		
8.	Committee Minutes and Escalations		
8.1	Minute of Audit and Assurance Committee (AAC) held on 25 November 2025 The Committee Chair provided an update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audit reviews on environmental sustainability, procurement and payroll identified actions in hand with no material risks; this was seen as evidence of good operational control. Escalations highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory training: AAC stressed that essential mandatory training must be completed at 100%. EMT noted the current list may be too broad and committed to rationalise it, so priority areas are clearly delineated and measurable. Risk Policy: AAC noted the policy refresh and the need to ensure it reflects committee changes and current practice (see Item 13.2). Information governance / cyber: AAC requested a phishing/fraud update. EMT confirmed the Cyber Manager is preparing a paper for the next AAC. 		
8.2	Minute of Remuneration and Nominations Committee held on 04 December 2025 The Committee Chair provided an update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy oversight: The Committee will take expanded oversight of people policy areas (including Health & Safety oversight, refreshed Whistleblowing, and the Annual Workforce Report). These are to be readied by February for consideration 		



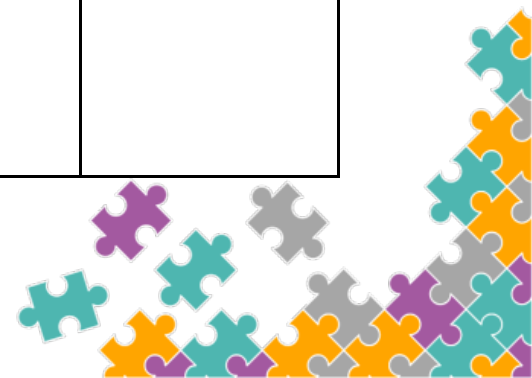
	<p>and escalated to the March Board as required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Reporter / Chief Executive (PR/CE) role: The job description has not been reviewed for some time. The Committee will complete a structured review alongside Scottish Government remuneration policy parameters, recognising the importance of clarity for accountability and succession planning. • Board Member recruitment: The timetable is dependent on Scottish Government scheduling; there may be slippage beyond original expectations. The Board Chair reaffirmed the Board's commitment to diversity of thought, and experience when recruiting and its significance for good governance. • Workforce risks: The Committee noted active management of pay-award expectations and general workforce communications, with UNISON involvement. Members recognised the sensitivity and asked for continued emphasis on consistent and timely messaging. 		
8.3	<p><i>Minute of Planning and Performance Committee (PPC) held on 08 December. 2025</i></p> <p>The Committee Chair provided an update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2025/26 Business Plan is on track overall, albeit within a context of external uncertainty (legislation timetables, partner capacity, and financial climate). PPC emphasised transparent assumptions and realistic planning while conditions remain fluid. • For 2026/27 Business Plan development, PPC advised maintaining core objectives, improving linkage to the Board's Corporate Objectives and Corporate Plan, and clarifying format for readability. Timeline agreed: PPC challenge in January; developmental circulation in February; PPC early March; Board sign-off in March. 		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Quality Assurance case assessment into joint reporting found variation in adherence to practice and marking on receipt; recommended improvement actions were viewed as practical and proportionate. • The Digital deep-dive displayed a well-sequenced programme spanning Business as Usual stability to more innovative interfaces for children, families, and partners. The “jargon buster” was praised and should be repeated within the annual digital report to preserve accessibility. • Programme management noted that family-centred scheduling requires a longer implementation timetable to accomplish safely and meaningfully; the extension was viewed as appropriate. 		
8.4	<p>Organisational Performance Escalation/Summary Report</p> <p>The PPC Chair introduced the escalation/summary report highlighting items for Board discussion. Issues arising included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational pressure in several areas, driven by long-term staff absence, increased caseload complexity, and social work capacity issues within partner agencies (particularly in Highland and other remote and rural areas). • Cyclical pressures where workload contributes to staff fatigue and absence, creating further strain. EMT emphasised this reflects whole-system fragility, with some local authorities reliant on agency staffing or struggling to meet statutory children’s services responsibilities. • Approach to cross-locality support: EMT confirmed support is mobilised wherever feasible, with geographic and workload factors limiting rapid redeployment. Locality Performance Reviews are framed around appreciative inquiry and co-designed 		



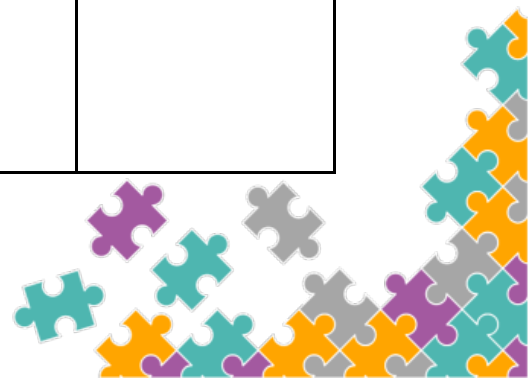
	<p>solutions, not comparison or punitive monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals: An increase in number and proportion upheld on procedural grounds was noted. EMT clarified most upheld appeals arise from insufficient reasoning by panel members rather than Reporter's practice, and overall volumes remain small. Variation may relate to rights-awareness, differing approaches across sheriffdoms and multi-child family cases; this will continue to be monitored. • Partner capacity issues influence SCRA performance targets. In some areas, high volumes of referrals from Police Scotland or reduced availability of social work for early intervention are placing additional pressure on Reporters. These concerns have been raised nationally and are informing decisions, including delays to elements of the Children's Care and Justice Act implementation. <p>The Board noted the report and confirmed adequate assurance on management of identified pressures.</p>		
9.	<p>PR/CE Report</p> <p>The Principal Reporter / Chief Executive (PR/CE) presented a detailed report. The report covered engagement with Scottish Government and external partners; governance, assurance, and internal improvement work; operational performance, workforce capacity, and local system pressures; the 2025 Staff Survey results and interpretation; and national developments on exploitation and children's rights.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased volatility across the children's services and justice landscape, including local authority social work capacity, implementation pressures linked to the Children's 		



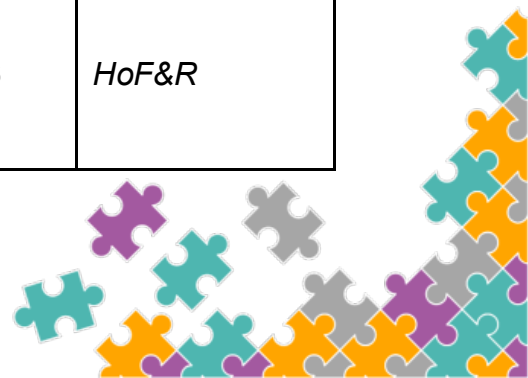
	<p>Care and Justice Act and whole-system fragility. Members welcomed early and constructive engagement with the Scottish Government.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term staff absences in several localities and interconnected pressures caused by partners' recruitment and retention challenges. Members emphasised the importance of using performance information in a supportive, non-punitive way; EMT provided assurance about the appreciative-inquiry model used in Locality Performance Reviews. • 2025 Staff Survey workload concerns: while morale, leadership confidence and organisational direction improved, workload-related scores dipped and are a significant risk. EMT will bring forward a detailed action plan to the Board in January. • Managing a vocal minority of staff sceptical or resistant to organisational change: Members noted the risk of corrosive negativity and encouraged continued engagement. EMT agreed to address this in the staff survey action plan. • National focus on child exploitation (sexual, criminal, and trafficking): Members supported the PR/CE's intention that SCRA remains trauma-informed and rights-based while contributing constructively to multi-agency work. • Emerging governance improvements: clearer risk-to-committee allocation and improved follow-up from the Board Development Session. Board Members reaffirmed their support for a more streamlined approach to development-day documentation (summary notes rather than full minutes). <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed Staff Survey Action Plan, emphasising workload, wellbeing, and approaches to engaging 	Jan 26	PR/CE
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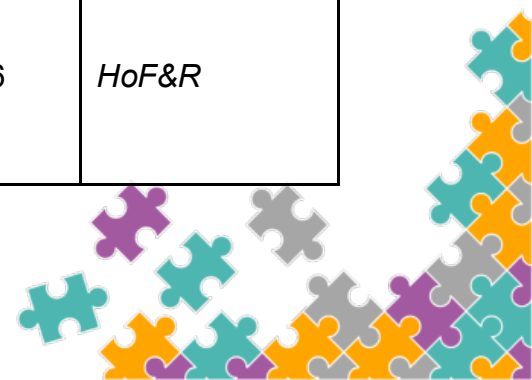
	<p>change-sceptical staff, to be presented at the next Board meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure actions from the Board Development Session flow into the Governance Improvement Report. <p>The Board noted the PR/CE report and confirmed assurance across the areas covered.</p>	Apr 26	Governance Officer
10.	<p>Research Programme</p> <p>The Research Manager provided an update on a productive year with strong cross-organisational integration. The team supported multiple internal workstreams (practice, policy, digital and programme governance) through evidence reviews, evaluation input, and training-material development. Three major research projects linked to legislative change were progressed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. serious harm caused by 12-15-year-olds (completed and now in the public domain); ii. needs and rights of those harmed by children (in final drafting); and iii. ethical, legal and rights implications of AI in the Children's Hearings System (in final drafting). <p>Targeted knowledge-exchange activity ensured findings supported practice and policy development.</p> <p>Planned work for 2026 includes evaluation of family-friendly scheduling, research into bias in decision-making, and a cross-agency study on exploitation of children (sexual, criminal, and trafficking).</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on contractual team arrangements sought with reassurance provided. • The value of targeted knowledge-exchange activity (e.g., high practitioner engagement at a Children Young Criminal Justice seminar) as evidence of the sector's 		



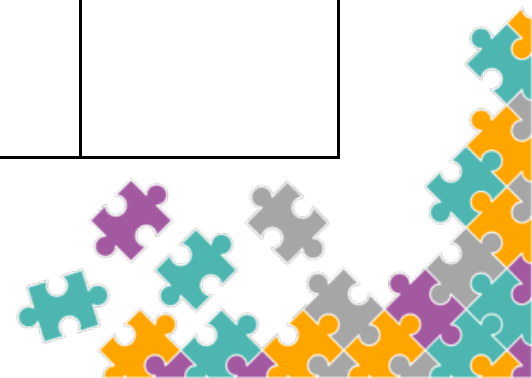
	<p>appetite for accessible, high-quality research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The clarity and ambition of the forward programme and the role of research in ensuring the organisation remains outward-looking and responsive to emerging risks and policy challenges. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Research Manager will develop a more structured knowledge exchange plan for wider dissemination of findings across the system. <p>The Board noted the update and confirmed assurance in the progress of the Research Programme.</p>	Dec 26	Research Manager
11.	Finance		
11.1	<p>Budget Monitoring Report</p> <p>The Head of Finance & Resources (HoF&R) provided an update on the in-year financial position. Board Members noted the organisation is managing within expected tolerances with no material overspends at this stage. Uncertainties linked to the Children's Care and Justice Act (CCJA) implementation timeline were discussed, noting that recruitment phasing may affect the accuracy of projected savings and future-year forecasting.</p> <p>Capital spend continues to carry volatility due to dependency on large projects and procurement timelines; while no immediate pressures were reported, this remains a recurring risk area. The organisation retains scope to manage minor variances through working capital and year-end discussions with the Scottish Government, including historical flexibility on modest carry-forwards. Overall, financial management remains robust and aligned with approved plans.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <p>To incorporate emerging CCJA-related recruitment and cost phasing into the next formal forecast.</p>	Mar 26	HoF&R



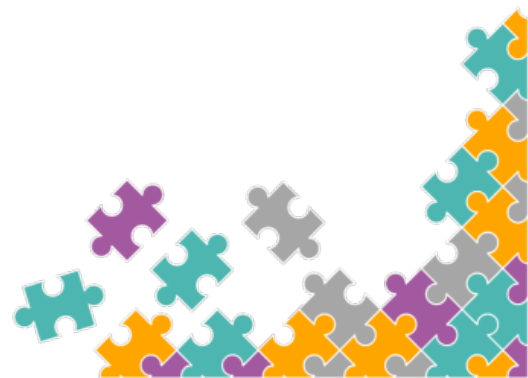
11.2	<p>Draft Budget</p> <p>The HoF&R presented the Draft Budget for 2026/27. Initial budget submissions total approximately £1m above the expected funding envelope, reflecting the normal early-stage gap before savings, phasing adjustments and programme commitments are applied.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Members discussed implications of an ongoing potential flat-cash settlement; and the gap based on a previously modelled requirement of £36.5m. The gap of around two-thirds of the budget would be unfunded at publication stage, resulting in a higher in-year pressure than in prior years. • The importance of presenting a realistic assessed need was noted, recognising the Board's accountability to support the delivery of SCRA's statutory duties and the evidence base behind headcount levels. • Wider political and fiscal uncertainty was highlighted, including the risk that longstanding reliance on post-publication budget adjustments may not continue indefinitely. • Board Members expressed concern with normalising a recurring funding gap and were clear that reductions affecting statutory service delivery or frontline workforce capacity would have material consequences. The next iteration should include scenario modelling illustrating consequences of alternative funding levels and the impact KPIs, workforce capacity and statutory compliance. • After much deliberations Board Members mandated the Chair to set out the Board's concern re ongoing flat cash in year settlements. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare scenario-based modelling for March Board, showing consequences 	Mar 26	HoF&R
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	<p>of lower funding levels and the rationale for the assessed-need figure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a Board-endorsed letter to the Sponsor Team, setting out concerns regarding sustainability and the recurring structural gap; share the draft with Board members in January. • Confirm any updates from the Scottish Government following publication of the national budget and incorporate these into the next budget iteration. 	<p>Jan 26</p> <p>Jan 26</p>	<p>CE/PR/HoF&R</p> <p>HoF&R</p>
12.	<p>Overview of Policies</p> <p>The Governance Officer presented the annual overview, summarising policy updates during 2025 and the forward plan for 2026. Significant progress was made in updating HR-related policies, all now supported by completed equality impact assessments. The new Family Expenses Policy was introduced earlier in the year. The annual review of the Risk Management Policy was completed (see Item 13.2). The revised Whistleblowing Policy will be considered through the Remuneration and Nominations Committee (consistent with the updated governance route) once that committee meets under its new scheduling arrangements. The Health & Safety Policy review, originally planned for year-end, has been deferred to January due to the timing of the Health & Safety Committee meeting.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the Overview of Policies report and the proposed forward plan for 2026. 		
	Risk		
13.1	<p>Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>The HoF&R introduced the Strategic Risk Register following EMT's full review. All strategic risks remain valid and existing controls are operating as intended. Minor updates will be made to reflect recent work and ensure alignment with committee-level risk management oversight.</p>		



	<p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the recommendation to close the Pay & Reward risk (current-year pay award settled). <p>The Board took assurance from the review of controls.</p>		
13.2	<p>Risk Policy Review</p> <p>The HoF&R introduced the refreshed Risk Management Policy, previously reviewed by EMT and the Audit & Assurance Committee. Minor amendments were highlighted, including updated governance diagrams and refreshed references to the Remuneration and Nominations Committee, with further adjustments to follow once the committee's new title is formally agreed.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the updated Risk Management Policy. 		
13.3	<p>New Risks</p> <p>Two potential emerging risks were considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the external political landscape (possible future changes in political direction affecting funding, policy stability, and the wider hearings system); and Principal Reporter job description / pay evaluation outcome to ensure ongoing (workforce stability). <p>In both cases, the Board agreed these should remain under observation only at this time and made no additions to the Strategic Risk Register.</p>		



Board Action Log as at January 2026

Meeting/Item	Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments	Status
Sep 25 Review of the Reporter Job Description – Update	In line with good practice proposed a review, by way of closure report incorporating any learning from this extensive engagement and evaluation process, reporting initially to the Programme Board.	Jun 26	SD		Not yet due
Sep 25 Financial Strategy	Clearer articulation of long-term funding requirements, stronger links to environmental commitments, and careful presentation of turnover assumptions in future versions.	Sep 26	RMack		Not yet due
Dec 25 – Matters Arising	Feedback outcomes of SG Remuneration Group meeting	Jan 26	SD	An update will be given to the Board at its January meeting	Suggest closed
Dec 25 – PR/CE Report	Staff Survey Action Plan focusing on workload and engagement	Jan 26	NH	An update will be given to the Board at its January meeting	Suggest closed
Dec 25 – PR/CE Report	Governance Improvement Report to integrate Dev Session actions	Apr 26	PA	Item will be tracked via the Board development action log	Not yet due
Dec 25 – Research Programme	Develop structured knowledge-exchange plan	Dec 26	Research Manager		Not yet due
Dec 25 – Budget Monitoring Report	Incorporate CCJA recruitment/cost phasing into next forecast	Mar 26	RMack		Not yet due
Dec 25 – Draft Budget	Scenario modelling of lower funding levels	Mar 26	RMack		Not yet due
Dec 25 – Draft Budget	Draft sustainability letter to Sponsor Team	Jan 26	NH/ RMack	Letter has been submitted. An update will be provided at the January Board meeting	Suggest closed
Dec 25 – Draft Budget	Incorporate national budget updates into next iteration	Jan 26	RMack	An update will be provided at the January Board meeting	Suggest closed

SCRA Board Annual Workplan - 2025/2026

Business Item (supporting the delivery of our corporate objectives and functions)	16 Dec 25	28 Jan 26	18 March 26	17 June 26	16 Sept 26
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for the future (Setting Strategic Direction) 					
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"> Investing in developing and maintaining effective governance systems (Managing Risk) 					
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"> Delivering Best Value using our resources (Holding to Account) 					
Budget Monitoring Report	✓		✓	✓	✓
Draft Budget	✓	✓	✓		

Business Item (supporting the delivery of our corporate objectives and functions)	16 Dec 25	28 Jan 26	18 March 26	17 June 26	16 Sept 26
Annual Report & Accounts					✓
Financial Strategy					✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Committing to delivering service improvement and sustainability (Holding to Account) 					
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"> Valuing & Developing our Staff (Influencing Culture) 					
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"> Working in Partnership (Engaging with Stakeholders) 					
Chief Executive's Report	✓	✓*	✓	✓	✓
Communication Plan				✓	

✓* Focus on SCRA Staff Survey

SCRA Board

25 September 2025

Agenda item 7.1- 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 2025 staff survey results, including a proposed action plan addressing the key results

Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

- Note the content of the report.
- Note the broadly positive results of the 2025 staff survey
- Approve the action plan for ongoing implementation on 2026

Key Issues to be Discussed/Considered

SCRA's 2025 staff survey results and action plan

Implications

- Service: None
- Financial: None
- Workforce: none
- 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.
- Research and Learning
- Children's Participation, Rights and Voice

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:

- Consultation and planning via the National Partnership Forum and UNISON representation.
- Work of the Health and Wellbeing Group
- Annual Staff Survey for 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Staff survey results

Appendix 1

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is SCRA's 15th staff survey since 2008. We take our annual survey very seriously and each year initiate an action plan which seeks to address the issues raised. In 2025 239 (2024 = 237) members of staff completed the survey. This is a 47% response rate, reasonably in line with recent years.

2. Our core indicators

- 2.1 Over the last 3 – 4 years the annual staff survey has focussed on a cluster of core indicators that have been given priority in our subsequent commitments to action. These are :

- Staff morale
- Pay and Reward
- Workload
- Managing change
- Leadership

- 2.2 The wider survey reflects a range of areas which are important to SCRA and its staff and include:-

- My Team and my Line Manager
- My health and wellbeing at work
- Organisational culture, equality, diversity and inclusion
- Experience of harassment, discrimination or victimisation
- Learning and professional development

- 2.3 Each year the survey is subject to review by both SCRA and UNISON and additional areas developed, methodology checked and wherever possible the survey is streamlined. Despite this the survey has maintained high levels of replicability and comparability year on year and is a considerable asset to the organisation. This process is supported by the Press and Communications Manager. Individual comments on key sections of the survey are encouraged but are entirely anonymous as is the whole survey. Analysis of data is undertaken separately and confidentially by the SCRA Data Manager and no SCRA managers have access to the source data in any way.

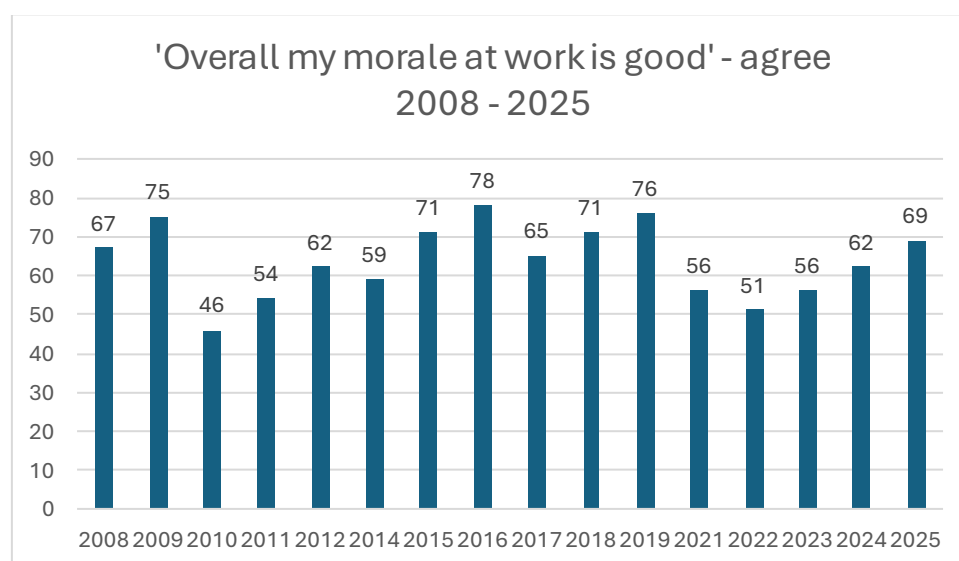
- 2.4 The remainder of this report will focus on the results for 2025 as well as wider trends and comparisons from previous years.

3. Staff Morale

- 3.1 Staff morale in SCRA reached its second lowest level in 2022 in the immediate aftermath of the global pandemic, following the introduction of our new case management system and at a time of significant internal and external change

facing both SCRA and the wider children's hearings system. In addition the high levels of inflation and relative pay restraint placed SCRA staff, alongside many others in the UK, into a cost of living crisis.

Table 1



- 3.2 SCRA has managed to see some recovery in staff morale and is an area where the organisation has focussed a lot of effort. Morale has many components and constantly moving parts and is experienced at both individual, team and organisational levels. In many ways it is a bell-weather measure of the wider health of the organisation. Stability, vision, understanding of direction, communication, relationships, support, professional satisfaction, career development, pay and personal wellbeing are all potential factors in what constitutes morale as well as some very specific issues at individual level.
- 3.3 SCRA has focussed on creating a positive organisational culture, a focus on wellbeing and managing workload as key areas where we have invested both time and resources. Since the relative low point of 2022 morale has increased overall by 18 percentage points (pp) which is very encouraging, although 31% of staff do not agree that morale is good in SCRA and this remains an area where we must work with a high level of co-ordination across the totality of our agreed actions for 2026.

Table 2

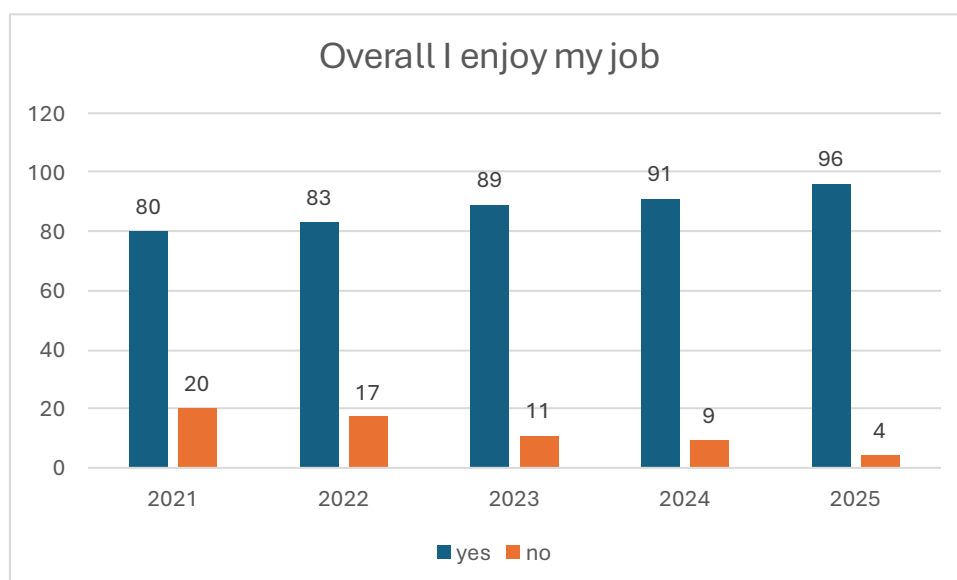
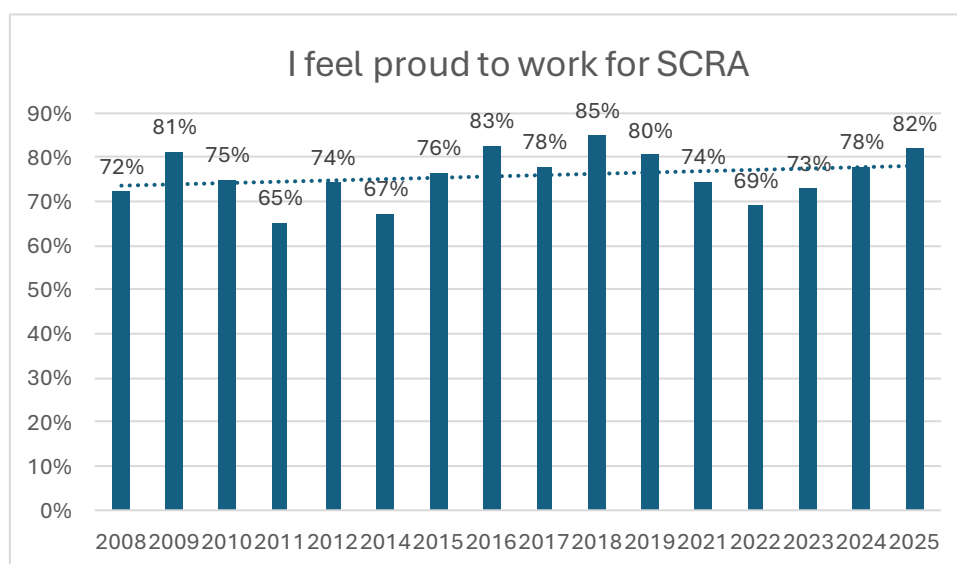


Table 3



4. Pay and Reward

- 4.1 Both UNISON and SCRA have worked hard year on year to negotiate annual pay awards at the upper level of what was allowable in relation to Ministerial pay policy, recognising the cost of living impacts on our staff as well as a sense of downward drift in pay and reward comparability with similar roles across the public sector. In September 2023 the Board approved a review of the Children's Reporter Job description and person specification as well as a benchmarking exercise to assess the degree of drift with comparable roles. Satisfaction with pay declined steeply immediately after the pandemic. The organisation has kept pay as a very prominent feature in our year on year response to staff survey results and there is evidence of recovery towards the highest point we have

ever achieved in 2016. A 2 year pay deal covering 2025 – 27 has added to this and between last years survey and now we have seen a 17 percentage point increase in reported satisfaction.

Table 4

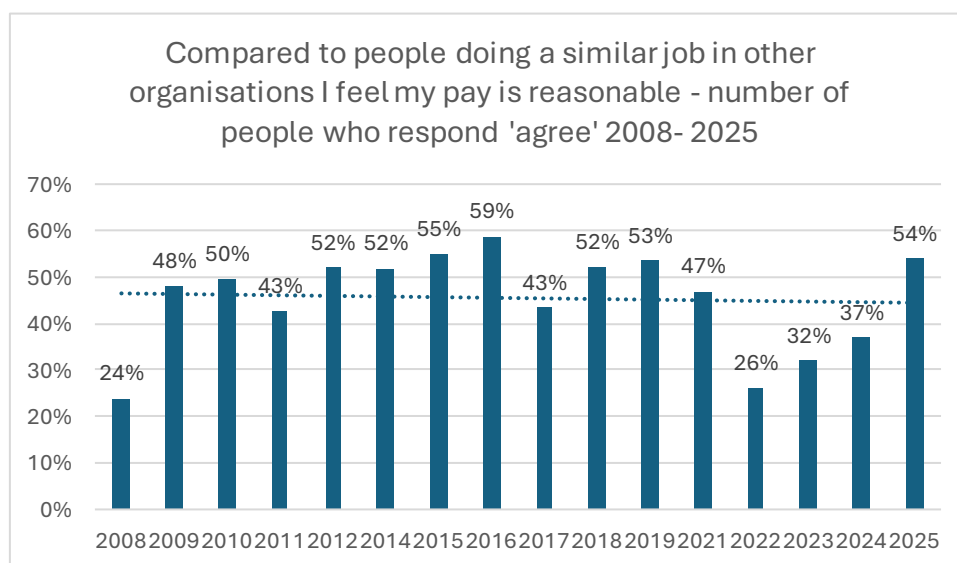
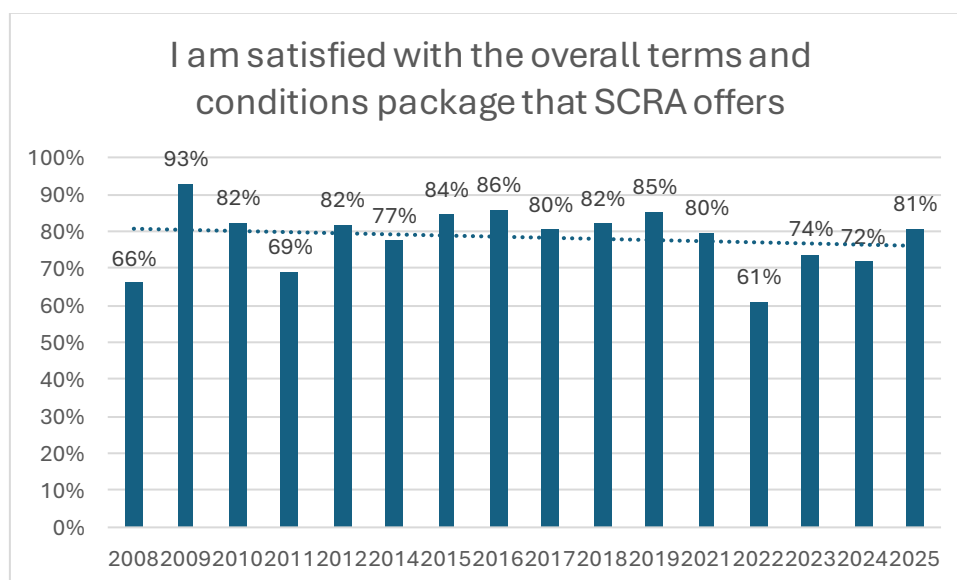


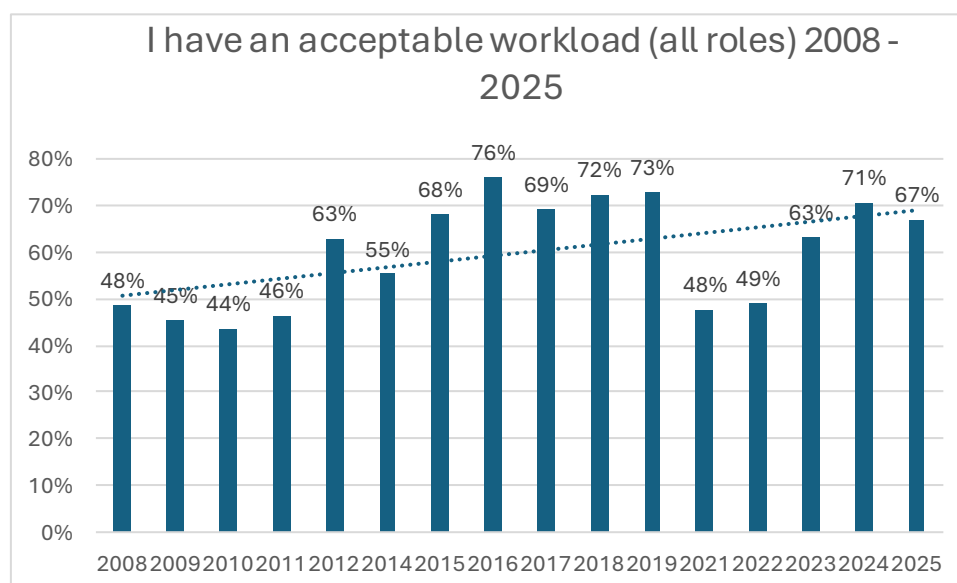
Table 5



5. Workload

- 5.1 There has been progress year on year since 2021/22 on workload and this has been reflected in the staff survey results since then. However in 2025 there has been a reduction in the number of staff who report that their workload is manageable (-4 pp). This in part is likely to reflect the high level of operational change that is happening in the organisation which we know is causing short term disruption in the way people work as new practices are tested and introduced and we are very mindful of this.

Table 6

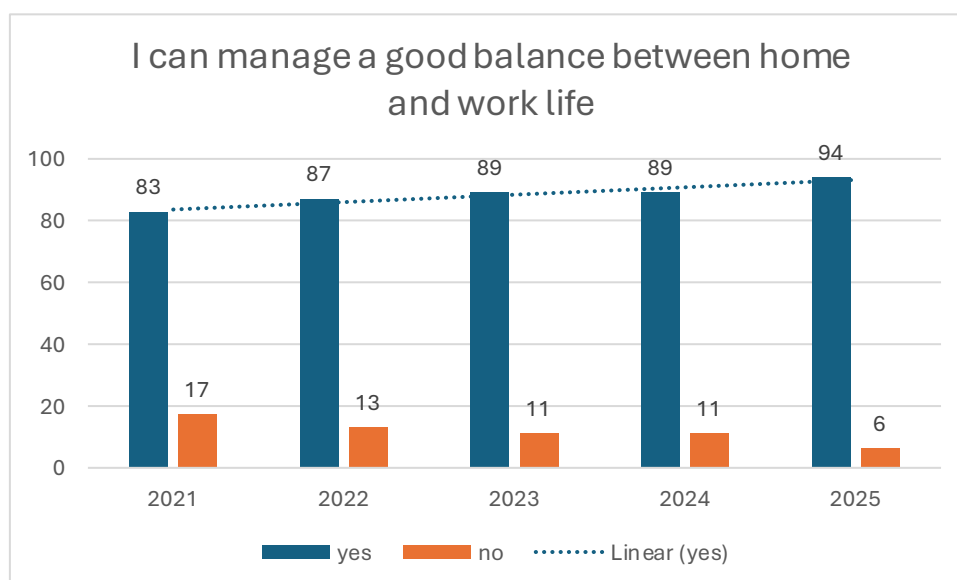


5.2 Individual comments in relation to workload emphasise the demand led nature of SCRA's work with many respondents describing significant spikes in workload, often driven by localised patterns of referrals, court and hearings activity. The most frequent comments related though to the impact of staff absence and other staffing difficulties across teams – pointing to a broader issue of resilience which impacts on teams and localities. This can be random and difficult to plan for – but nonetheless needs to be an area of further focus in 2026. Other comments related to concerns about increases in workload related to the Children's Care and Justice Act (CCJA) implementation, particularly on a sense of increased volumes and complexity of referrals of older children.

5.3 Elements of this work are now starting to emerge as we move to recruit new staff as part of CCJA preparations, including to establish national staffing support which will be flexible and deployed as individual locality resilience comes under pressure. We have improved the responsiveness of our operational data in order to try and anticipate and get ahead of these pressures on resilience and give us some opportunity to forward plan rather than react in the moment.

6. Working outwith office hours/work life balance

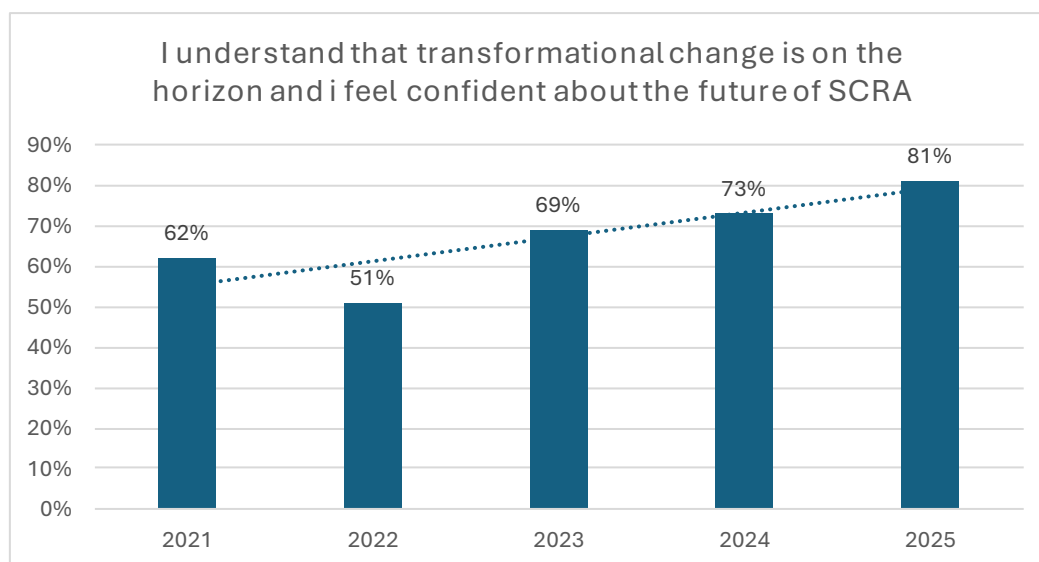
Table 7



- 6.1 We introduced this survey question shortly after the pandemic and, as with workload measures have seen progress over the last 5 years. Despite spikes in demand and operational and team resilience issues a large majority of staff feel able to maintain a good work life balance .

7. Managing change

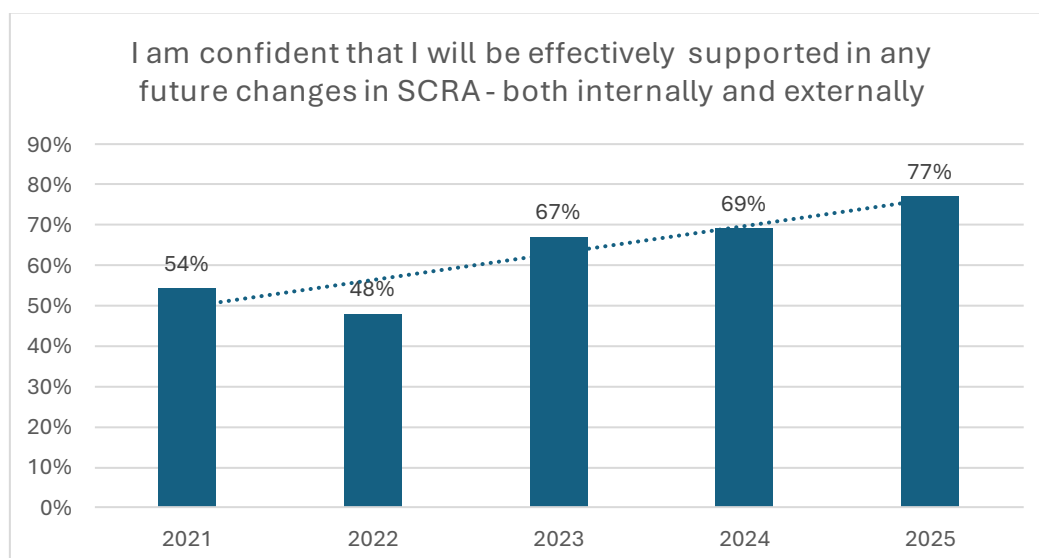
Table 8



- 7.1 This has been a major area of activity for SCRA. Since the publication of the Independent Care Review and the Promise; the incorporation of the UNCRC in Scotland; the subsequent build-up of momentum around legislative change as well as the strong internal programmes of work within SCRA transcending digital technologies; our work to become a trauma informed organisation; our ongoing improvement imperatives and Corporate Parenting work, its clear that

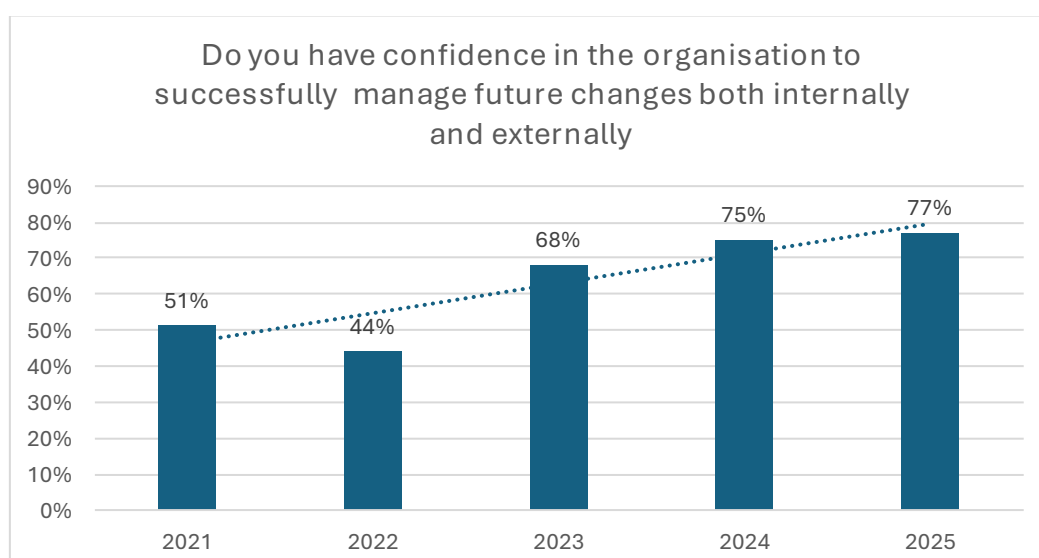
managing change effectively needs to be a major organisational priority. We established a programme team in 2020 – initially in order to create capacity and capability in order to Keep the Promise – but has now widened considerably in order to provide support and expertise in all aspects of change initiation, project planning, management and delivery. The programme team have undertaken extensive training and are now a specialised cadre within the service and can be deployed into an increasing number of arenas across SCRA to support change and improvement.

Table 9



7.2 We are seeing the benefits of this investment across the service. This year's staff survey shows further improvements in confidence and understanding about the nature of change in SCRA, how it impacts on individuals, their sense of being supported through change and their confidence in the organisation to effectively deliver change.

Table 10



7.3 From individual comments there remain some concern about SCRA's future role in the hearings system; whether any of the changes being planned will be truly transformational; worries that the current legislative proposals will add complexity and diminish the role of the Reporter. Some staff who made individual comments reported 'change fatigue' and a complex array of different changes being planned with a sense of inadequate local capacity to effectively deliver.

Table 11

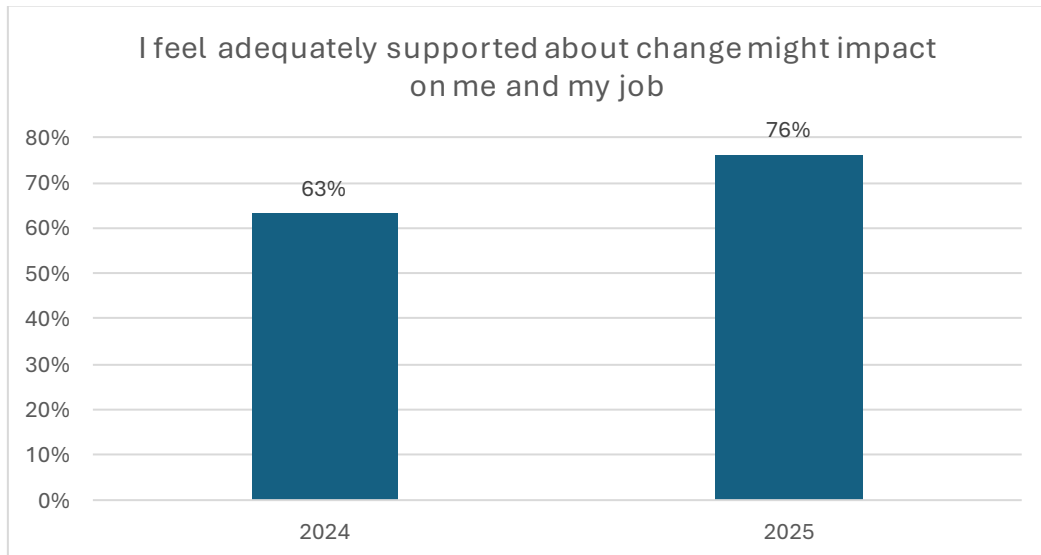
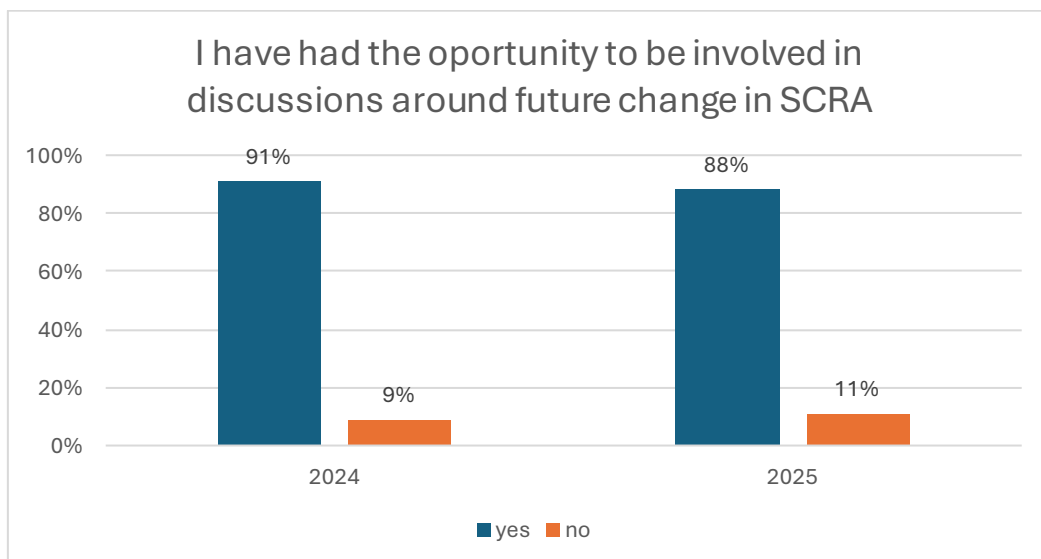


Table 12



8. Leadership in SCRA

- 8.1 The senior team have made a specific commitment to being more visible and available to the service as a whole and have taken EMT meetings to many teams and localities across the country with a good spread across Localities. Conversations have been open, informal and incredibly helpful and insightful and have enabled lines of communication on important areas of organisational to be shortened considerably.

Table 13

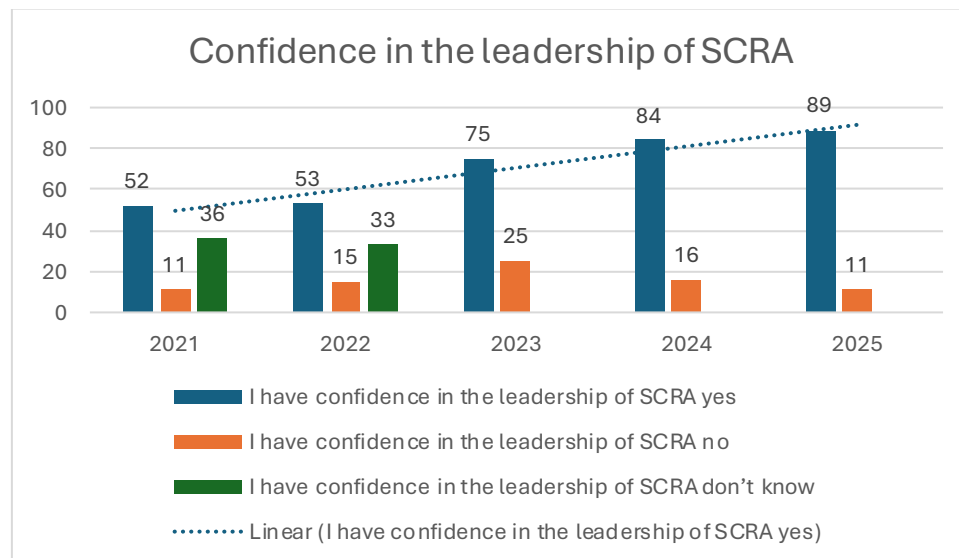


Table 14

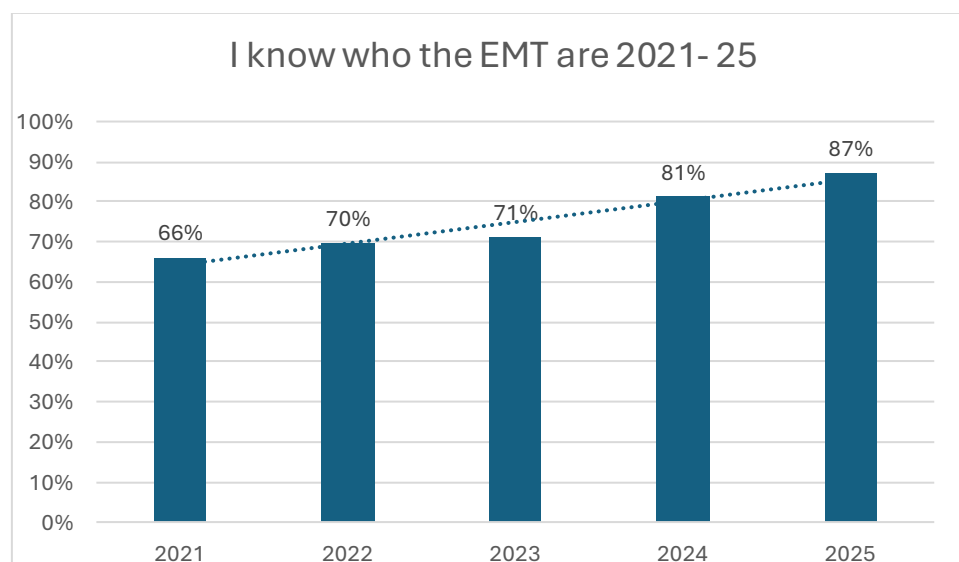


Table 15

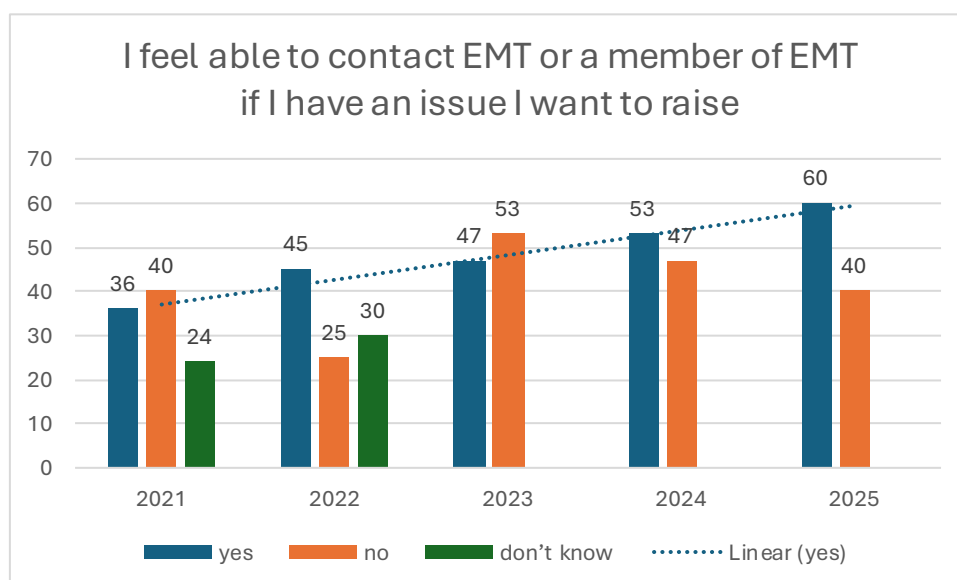
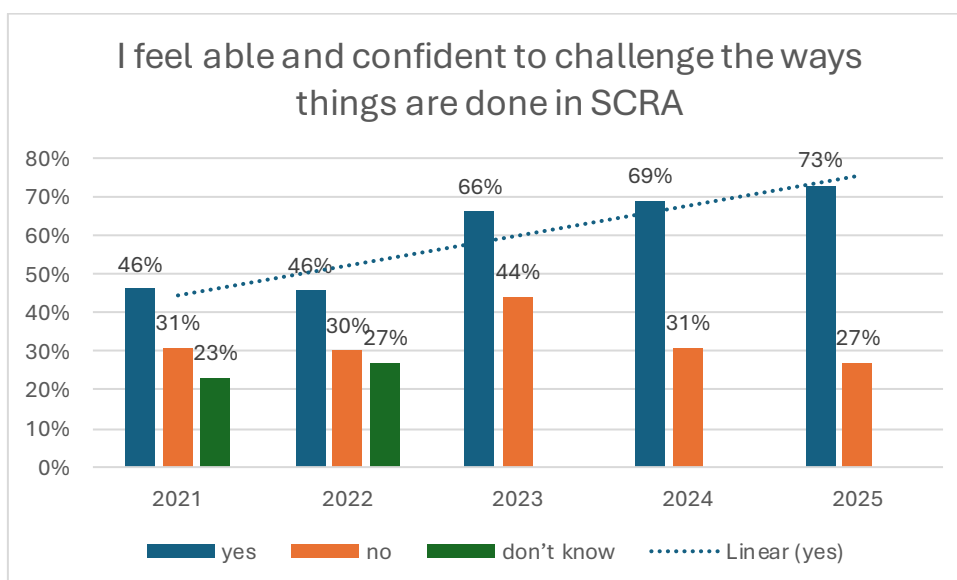


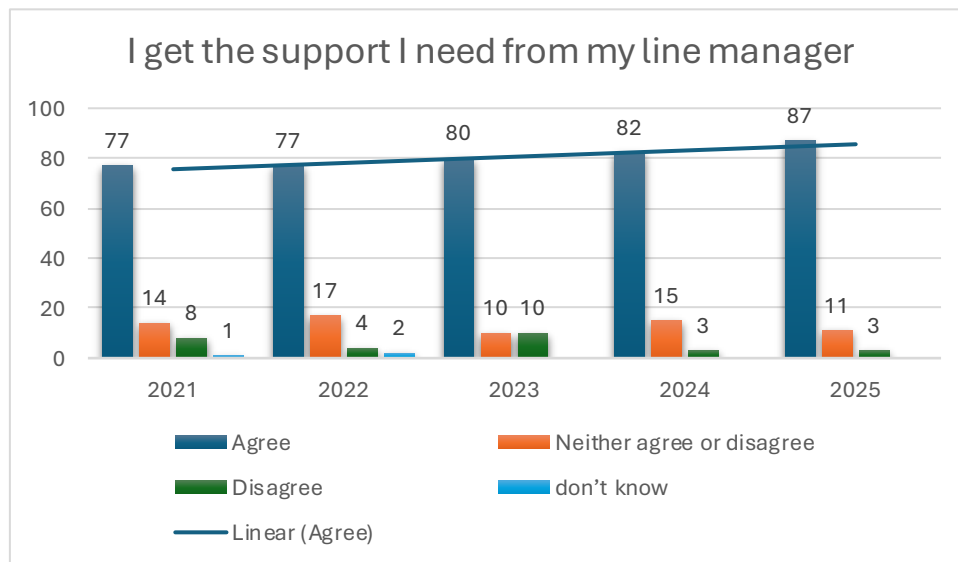
Table 16



9. My Team and my Line Manager

- 9.1 Positive, supportive, flexible, enabling relationships between staff and their line manager is central to the work of our organisation. Clarity about objectives, expectations and performance are key as is mutual respect, trust and understanding galvanised around common codes and standards of behaviour consistent with public sector values.

Table 17



9.2 Its clear that the vast majority of survey respondents get positive support from their line manager (T17), are supported to work in flexible and agile ways (T18) and work in largely supportive teams (T19).

Table 18

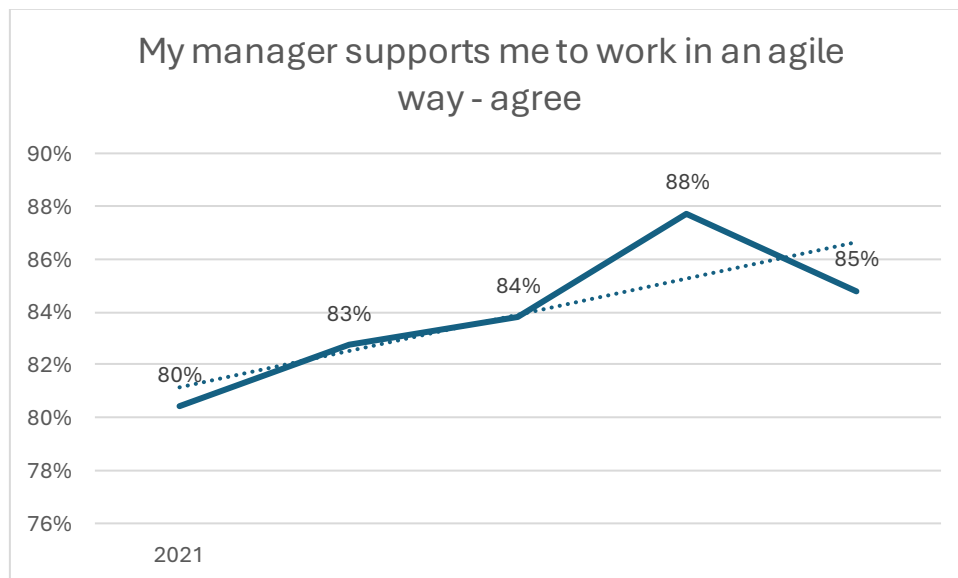
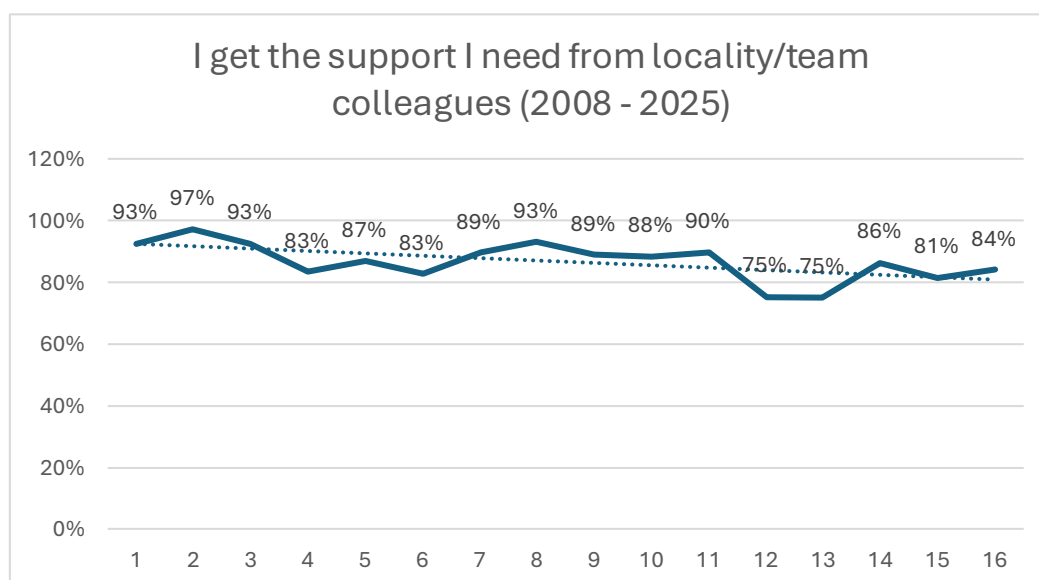


Table 19



9.3 There has been a slight dip in respondents who feel they work in a supportive/team or locality, although the figure remains very positive (84%, T19), A high number of individual comments mentioned the pressures of staff absence as an issue in their teams, having to cover for colleagues who were sick or absent from work for other reasons and a general lack of capacity and resilience in their team or locality. This also featured in some individual comments in relation to morale (T1).

Table 20

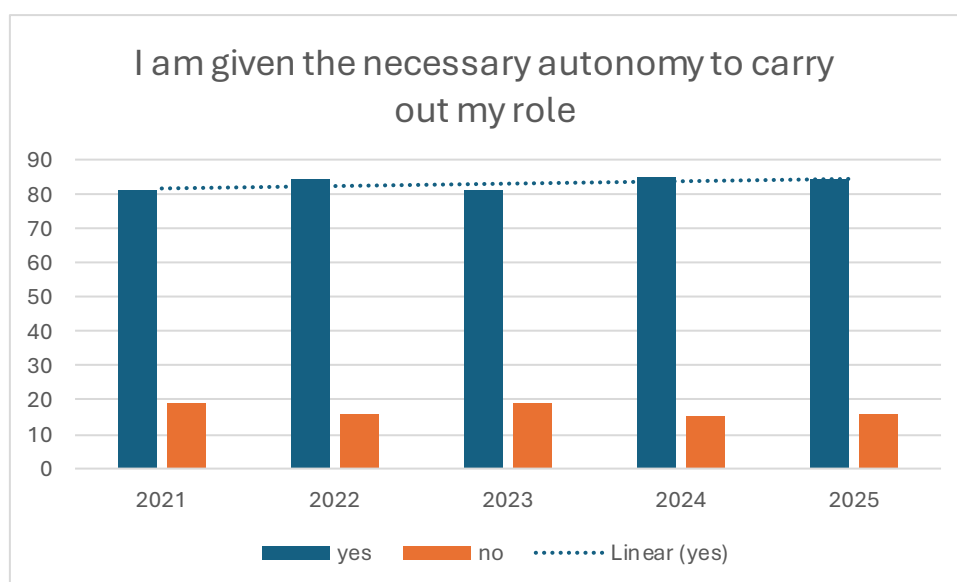
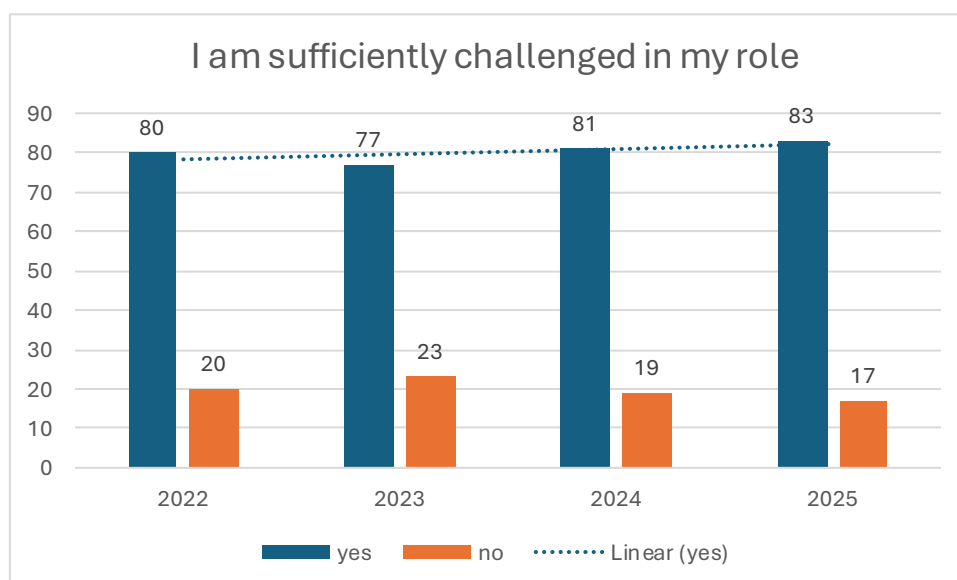


Table 21



9.4 Despite SCRA's long term commitment to an inclusive and consultative culture at national and local level there has been a decline in the overall sense of consultation and engagement. The steepest decline was during the pandemic arrangements which created a great shock for the organisation. We were very aware of decision making at times having been centralised and decisions 'pushed out' in a way that perhaps is not consistent with our overall ambition. Some recovery since 2022 is clearly underway – but it remains a concern that 40% of staff do not feel adequately consulted on changes across the organisation. There is no doubt the pace and scale of change happening in the wider hearings system and SCRA specifically may be contributing to at least a sense of lack of engagement, consultation and control. Improvements in how people feel change is being managed overall (T8-12) are increasing. Effective communication direct engagement and involvement in the process of planning and delivering change and further strengthening of our partnership work with UNISON are all key to making further progress here.

Table 22

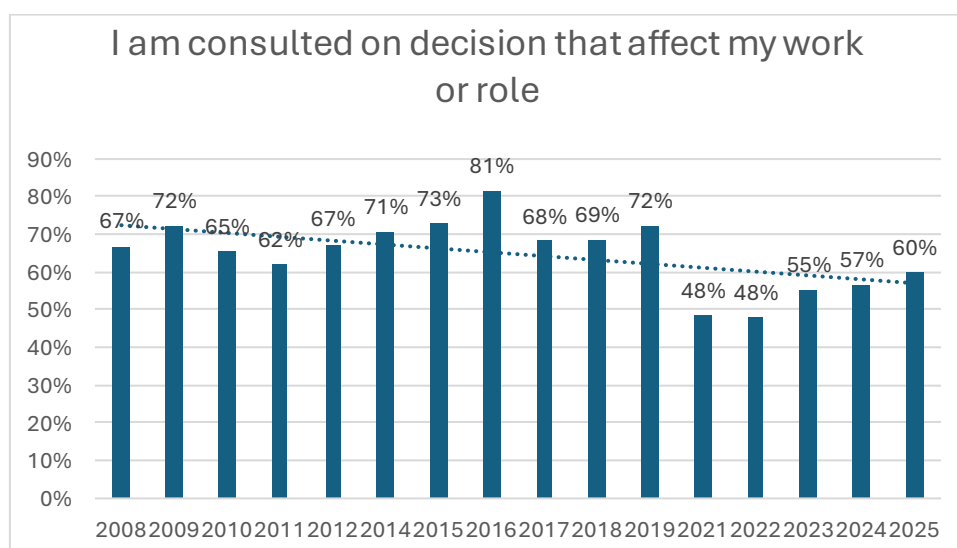
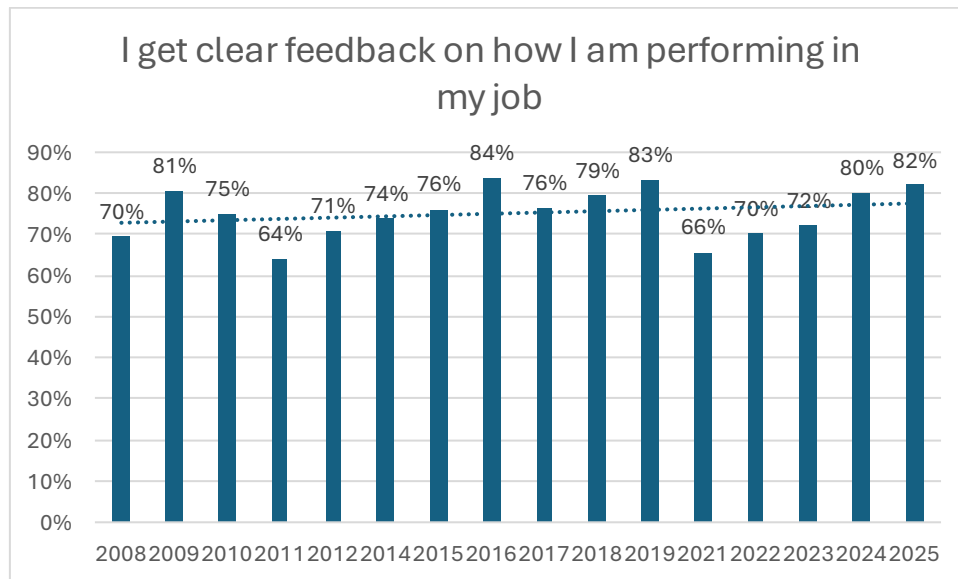


Table 23



10. My health and wellbeing at work

Table 24

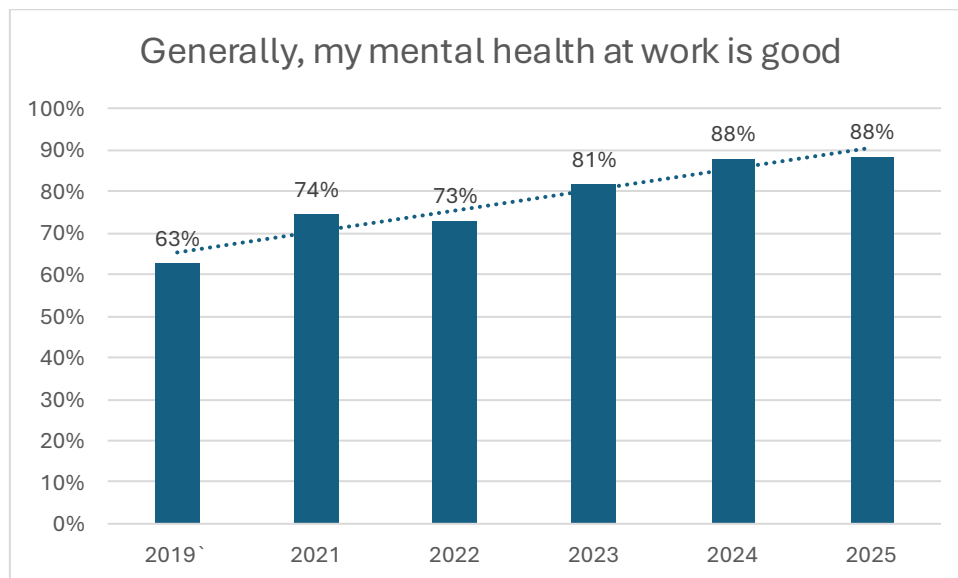
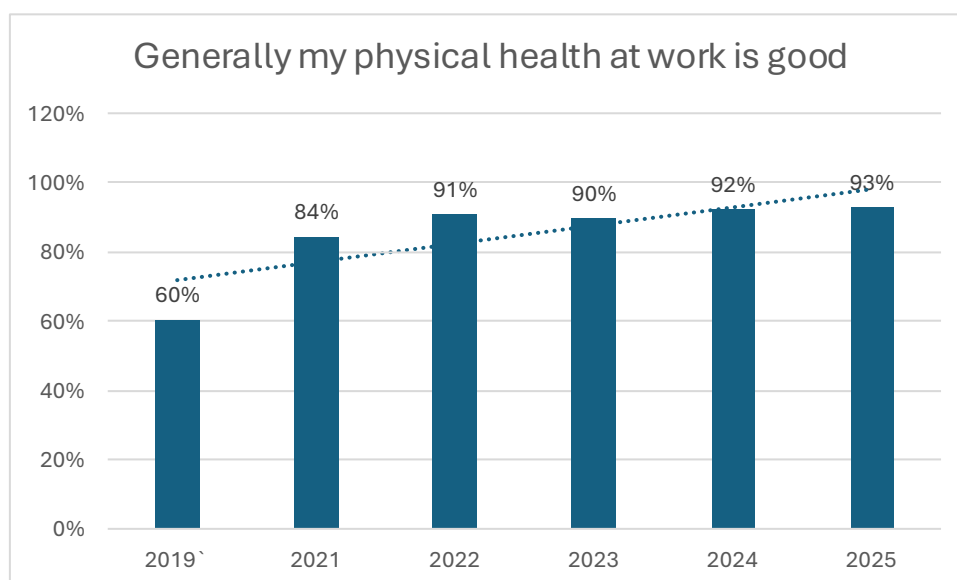


Table 25



- 10.1 The joint SCRA/UNISON Health and Wellbeing Group drives forward SCRA's long term programme of work in relation to employee and team wellbeing. This is now a well embedded programme of work across the whole organisation with Health and Wellbeing leads very active in every team. Individual comments are extremely supportive of this work and recognise the continued momentum. Some comments refer to the need to take a more individualised approach to wellbeing activities as opposed to the team based work which has been heavily promoted by the organisation. 185 people made overwhelmingly positive comments about the importance of 'connection' (with colleagues/line manager/teams) in our health and wellbeing strategy.

Table 26

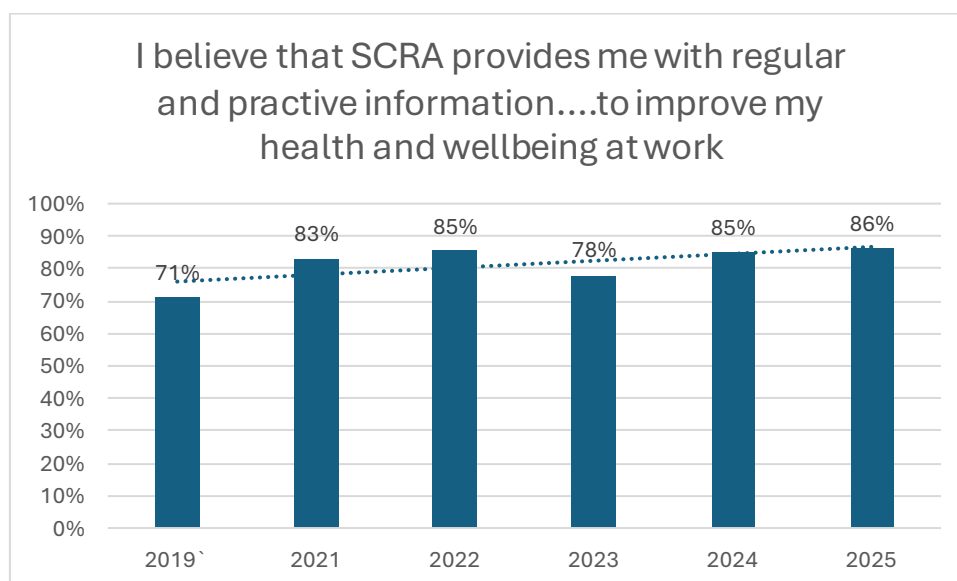
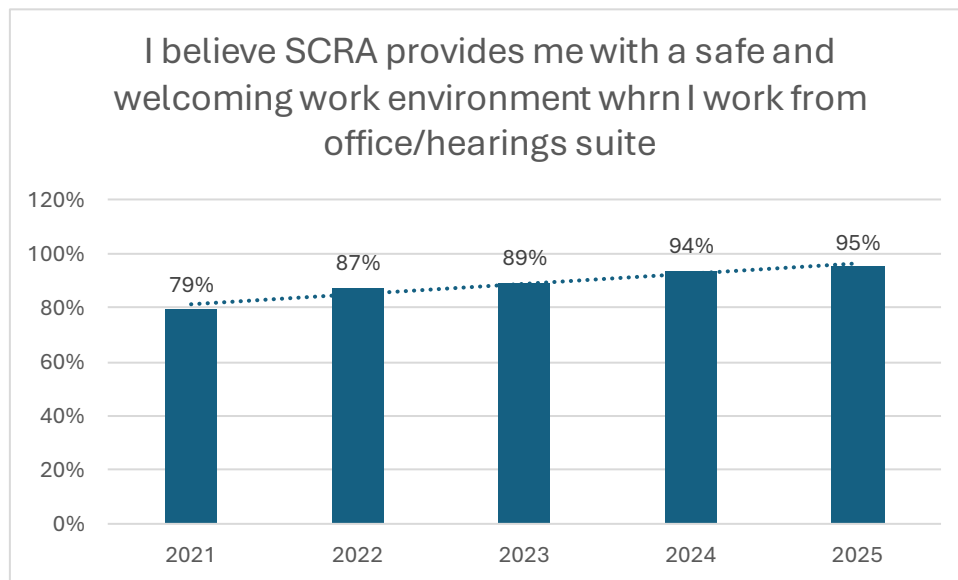


Table 27



11. Communications in SCRA

- 11.1 One to one discussions with line managers and team meetings are the cornerstone of the SCRA communications approach. The annual communications strategy which is approved by Board builds extensively on these building blocks using a wide variety of innovative methods and approaches.

Table 28

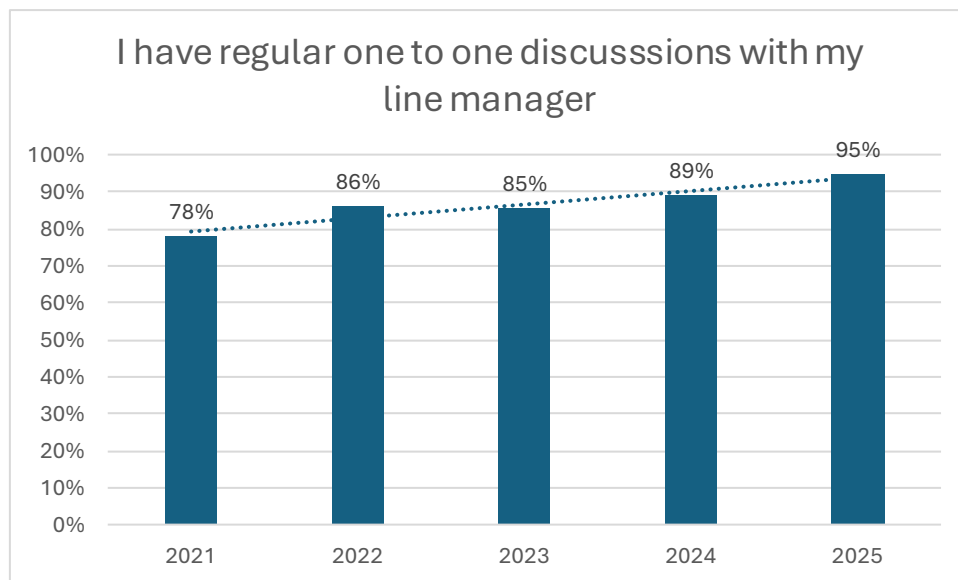


Table 29

If yes, do these discussions cover... (you can choose more than one option)

Answered: 223 Skipped: 16

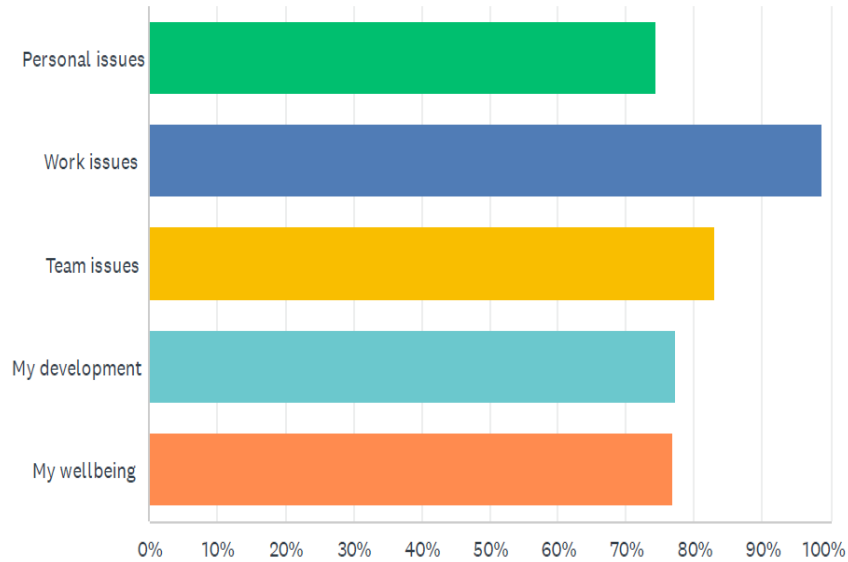


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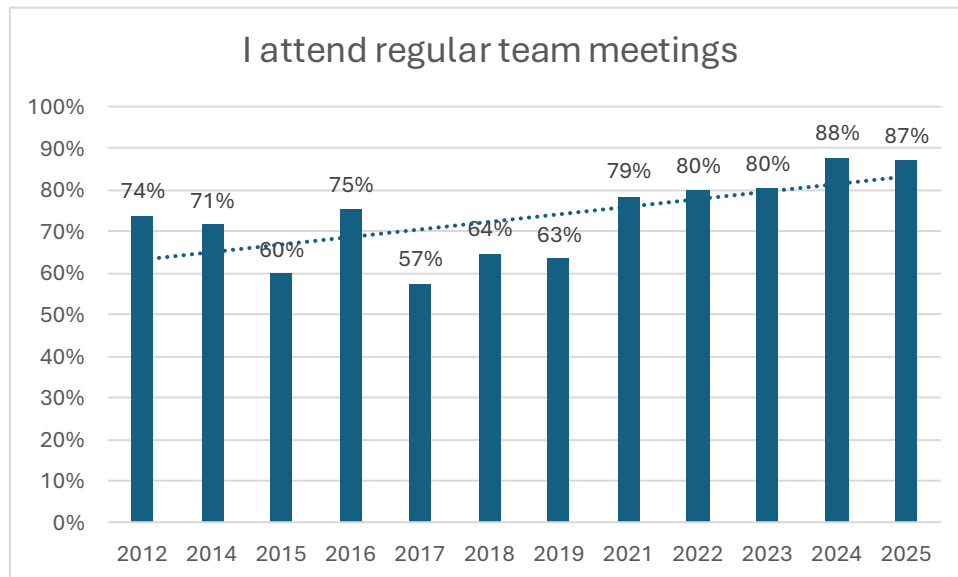
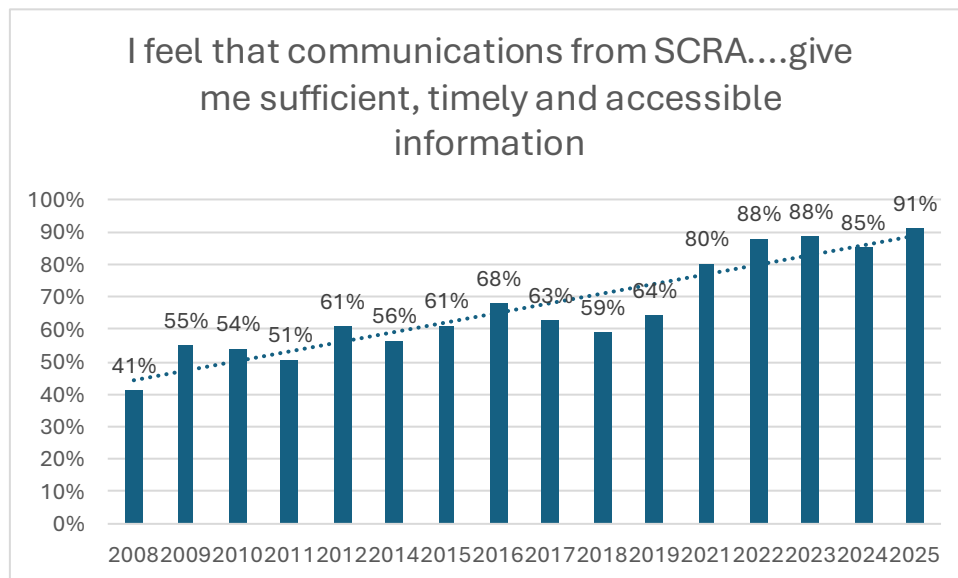
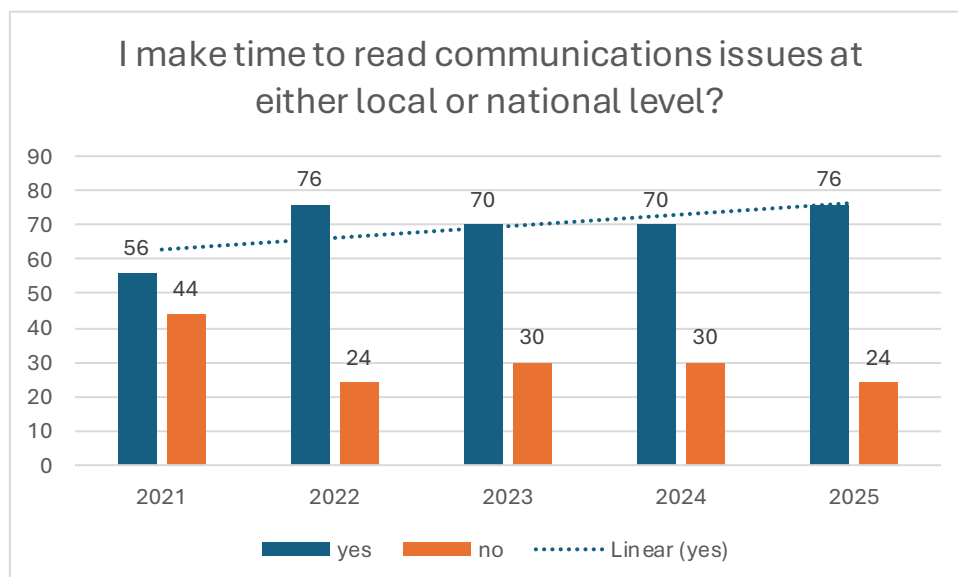


Table 31



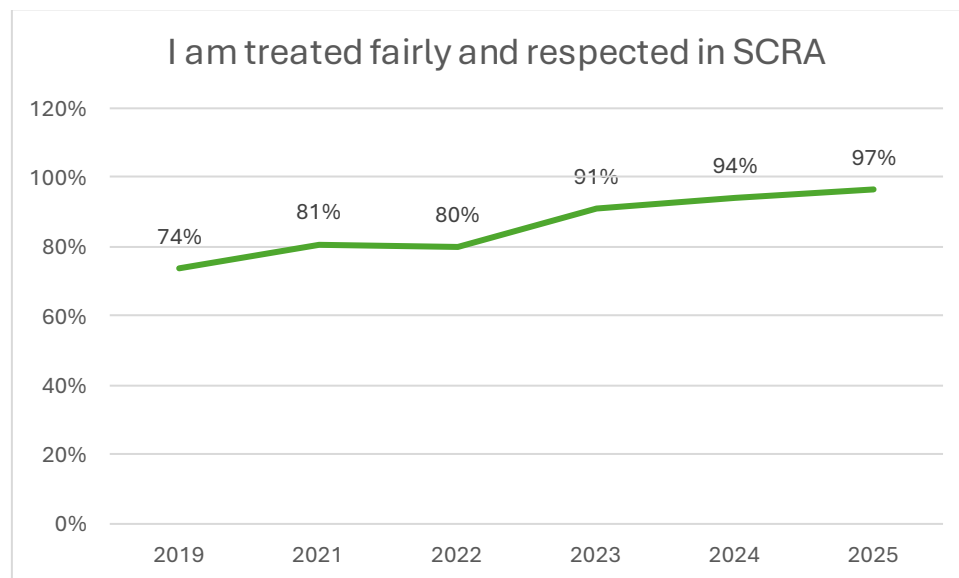
11.2 The recent upgrade of our intranet site (Connect) drew a lot of positive comments in the survey in terms of refreshed content, presentation and navigability. In addition the design and presentation of communications material in SCRA continues to reflect ever increasing skills and capabilities.

Table 32



12. Organisational culture, equality, diversity and inclusion

Table 33



- 12.1 The 2025 staff survey continues to show strong results in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, albeit that we recognise that our workforce represents predominant social characteristics of Scottish society. Nonetheless there appears to be a strong commitment to the values of equality, diversity and inclusion and the requirements placed on our staff group in this regard appear to be well understood. In 2025 we saw the introduction of significant new developments in equalities and diversity training and this will continue into 2026 with our planned mandatory anti-racist training, our continued work on LGBT awareness, support to women in SCRA around career development as well as independent external scrutiny on our gender pay gap.

Table 34

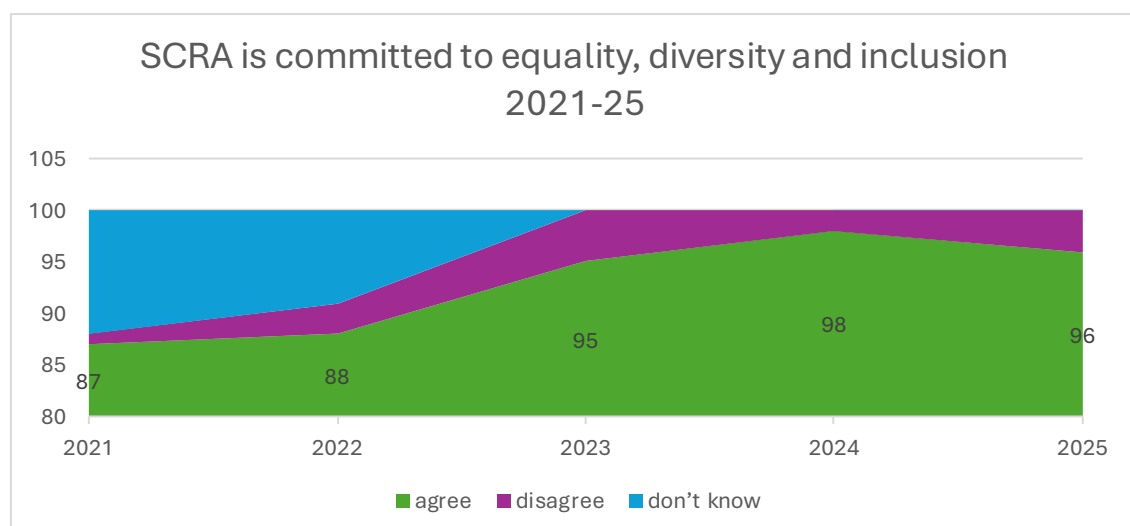


Table 35

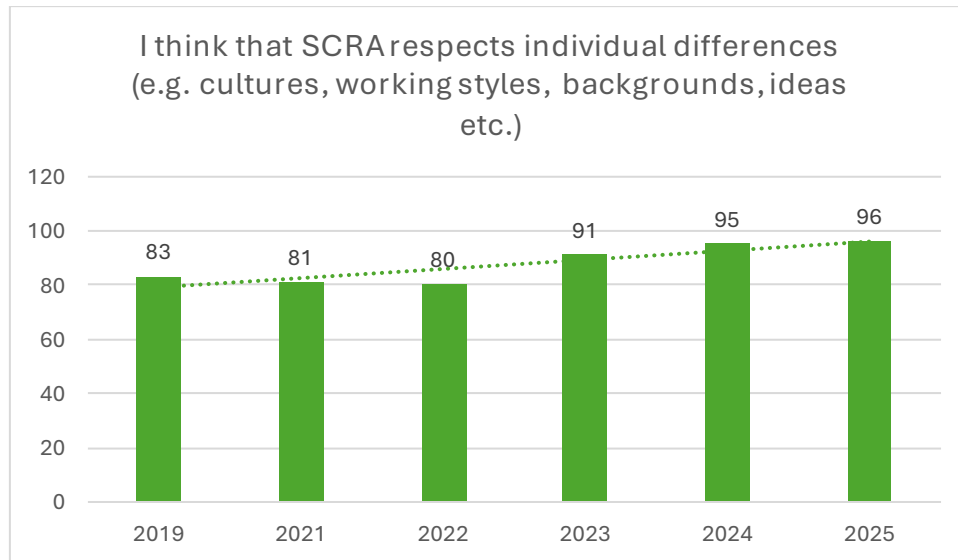


Table 36

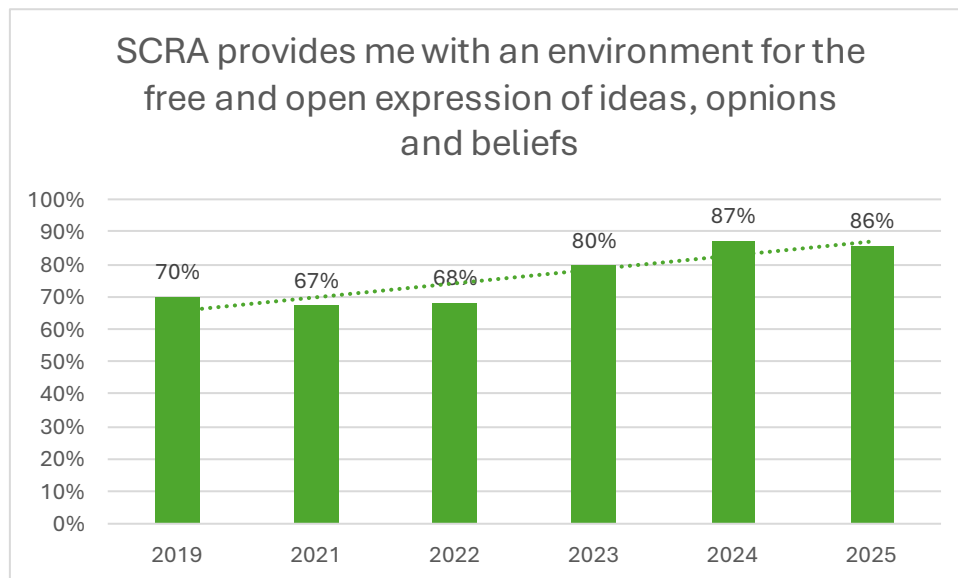


Table 37

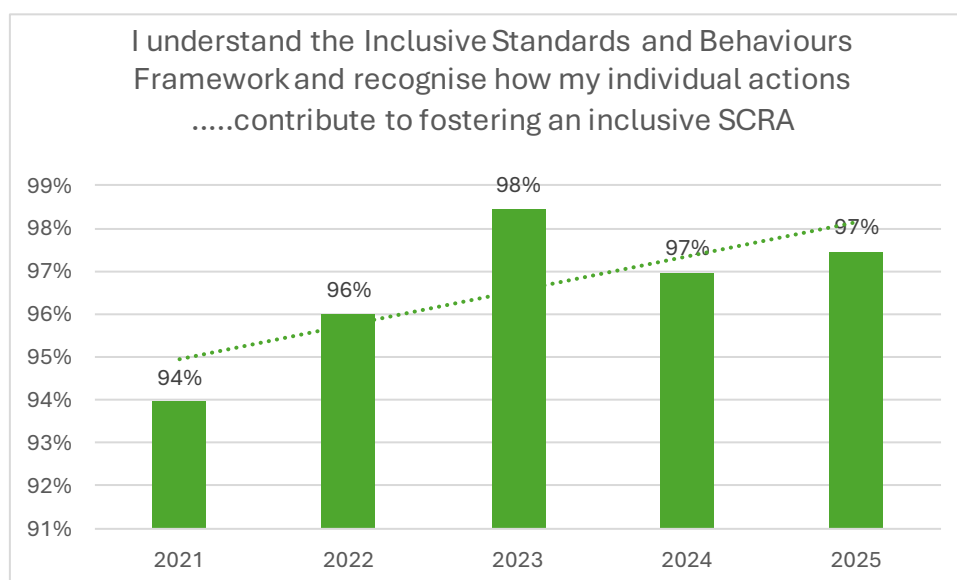
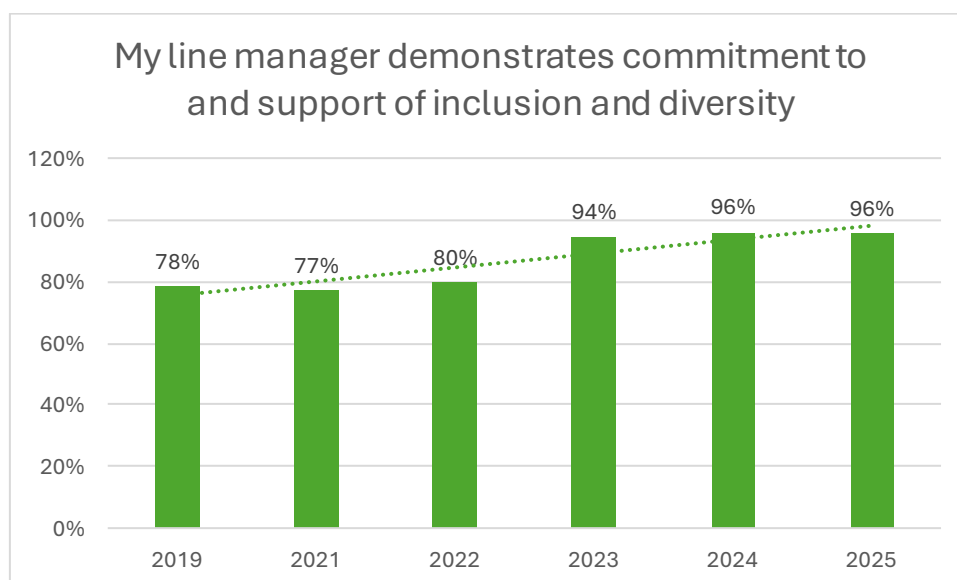


Table 38



- 12.2 2026 sees the relaunch of our leadership and management programme which is being delivered in part with an external partner . The programme is stratified to be relevant to both new and experienced managers as well as staff seeking a career in leadership and management and will build on the strong results across this survey on the importance and centrality of confident, well trained and supported managers and leaders in SCRA.

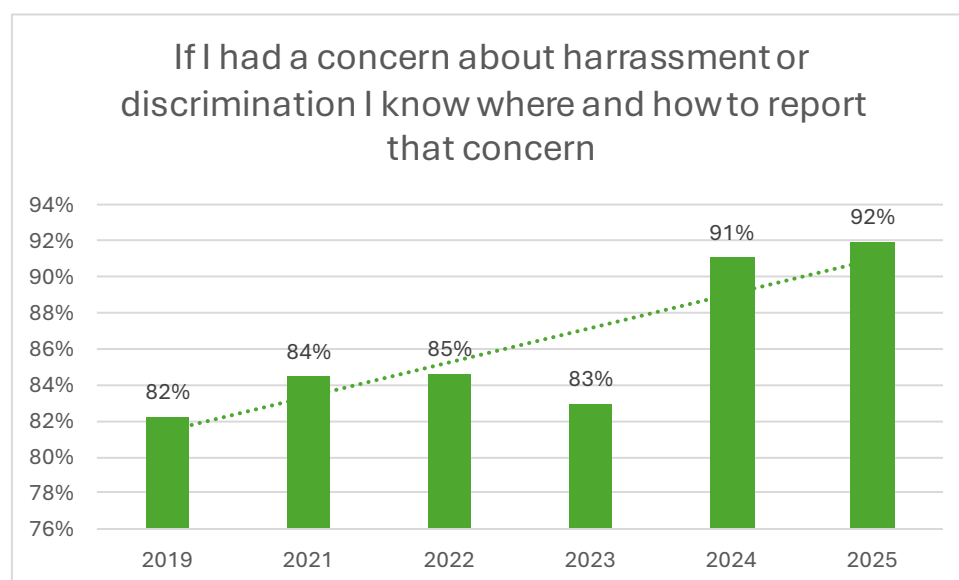
13. Experience of harassment, discrimination or victimisation

Table 39

In the past 12 months, have you witnessed harassment, discrimination or victimisation while working for SCRA?	12% (down 3pp)	88% (up 3pp)
If yes, was the perpetrator...	Count	%
Colleague	19 (24)	70% (73%)
Member of the public	5 (6)	19% (18%)
Professional	2 (2)	7% (6%)
Other (please specify)	5 (1)	19% (3%)
	Yes	No
If yes, did you report the harassment, discrimination or victimisation?	44% (down 7pp)	56% (up 7pp)
If you reported it, was it treated seriously?	91% (up 10pp)	9% (down 10pp)

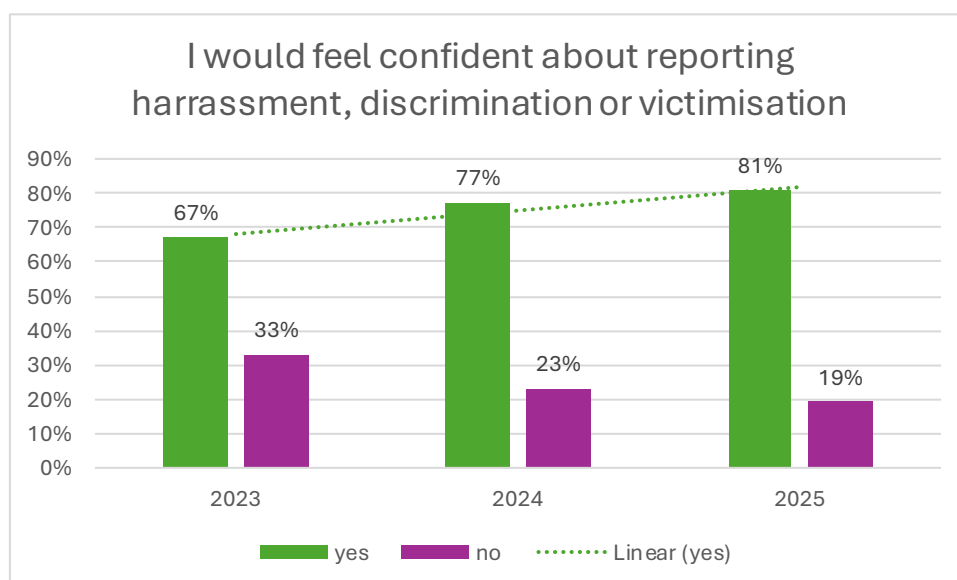
- 13.1 In the 2023 staff survey SCRA started collecting specific information regarding harassment and discrimination. This followed a review, reported to the Board on historic allegations which had led to criminal charges as well as ongoing discussions with UNISON. In 2025 12% (-3pp) of respondents reported having witnessed harassment, discrimination, or victimisation in the preceding 12 months¹. 92% (+1pp) of staff felt if they had a concern they would know how and where to report it, 81% (+4pp) would feel confident in doing so. Of those respondents who had witnessed these behaviours 44% reported it (-8pp) and 91% felt it had been treated seriously (+10pp).

Table 40



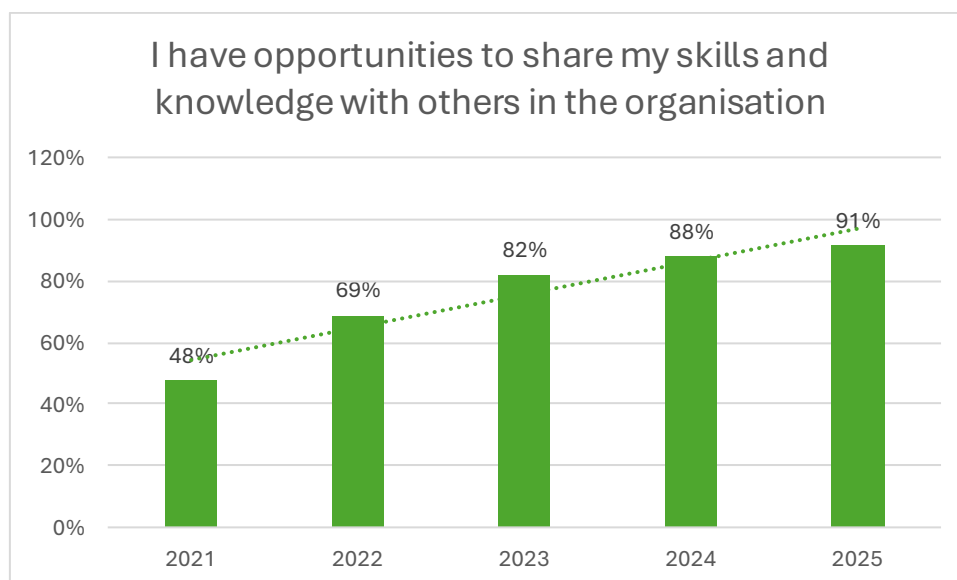
¹ This question was amended following staff feedback to include 'in the last 12 months...'

Table 41



14. Learning and professional development

Table 42



- 14.1 There has been a longstanding and impressive appetite for learning and development in SCRA. 91% of respondents felt the organisation supported individual learning and development goals an increase of +9pp since 2023. There were a number of barriers for some staff identified to taking up learning and development opportunities – such as workload and topic relevance – but the vast majority of respondents rated this area positively. SCRA’s capacity to deliver ongoing learning opportunities is an area that will require ongoing and future investment.

Table 43

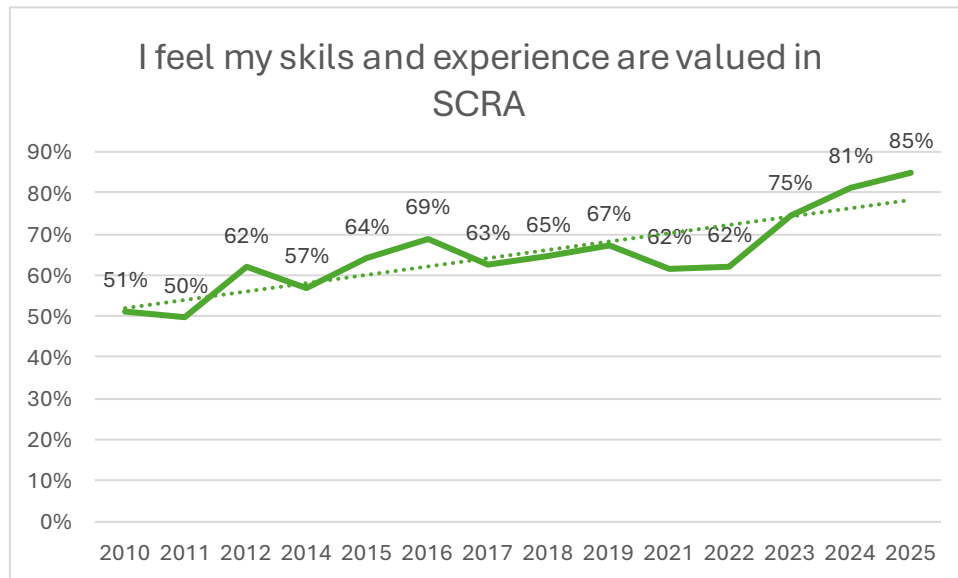


Table 44

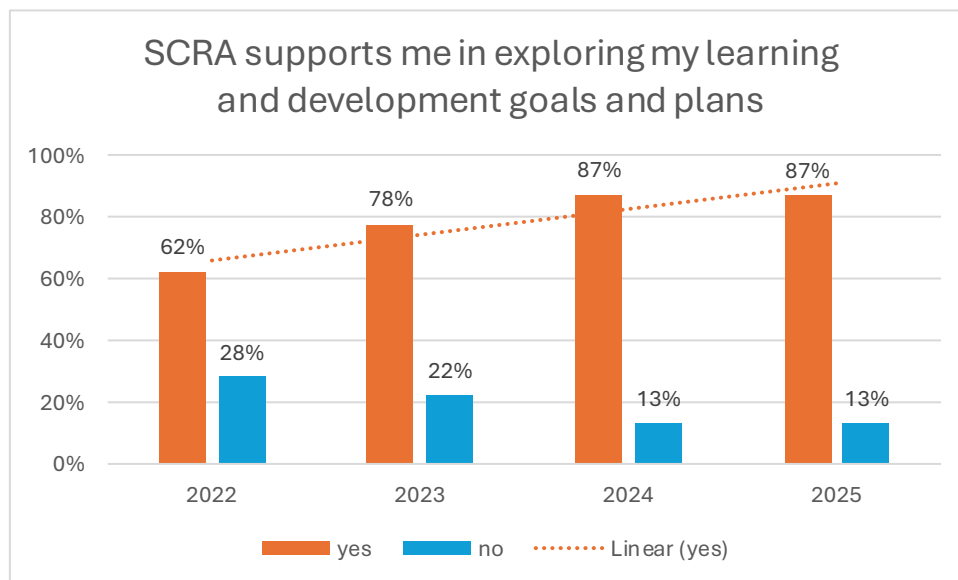
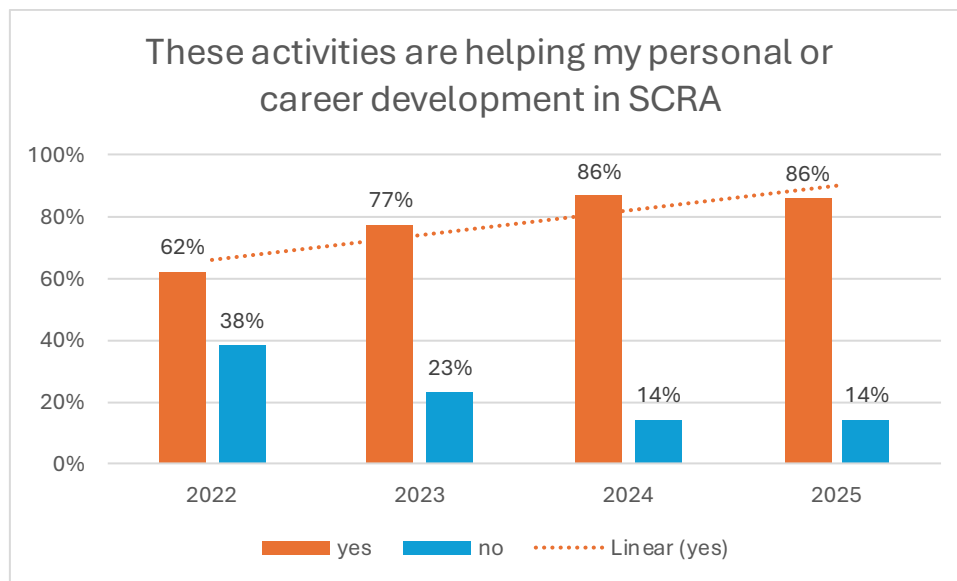


Table 45

Activities I have participated in the last 12 months include (you can choose all that apply)	Count (prior year)	% (prior year)
Webinars	149 (138)	63% (59%)
e-learning	222 (193)	94% (83%)
Team Brief virtual sessions	110 (102)	46% (44%)
Self directed learning	135 (114)	57% (49%)
Face to face training	185 (176)	78% (76%)
Groups or networks	120 (114)	51% (49%)
Shadowing or mentoring (within SCRA)	58 (54)	24% (23%)
External shadowing or mentoring	15 (6)	6% (3%)
Delivered training	103 (93)	43% (40%)
Not applicable (haven't participated in any)	2 (3)	1% (1%)

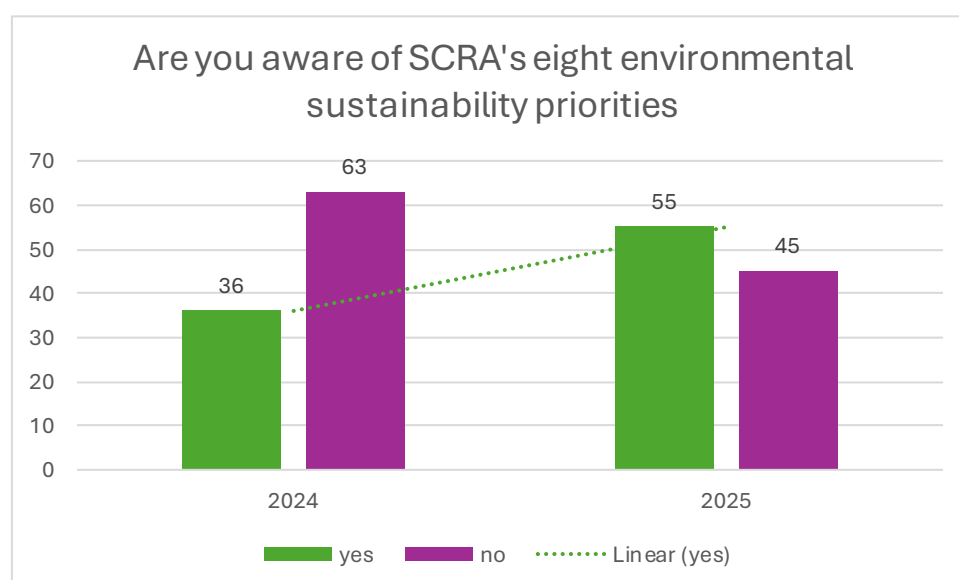
Table 46



15. Environmental sustainability

- 15.1 This measure was asked for by the SCRA Strategic Sustainability Group to assess to what extent our communications campaign in 2025 had shifted the dial on awareness of the organisations sustainability priorities – which it clearly has and these positive results will feed back into the groups work and also that of our team based Environmental Ambassadors.

Table 47



16. Summary and Next Steps

16.1 Our existing priorities which have been informed by the staff survey for the last 4 years are:-

- Improving staff morale – current measure 69% (+6pp)
- Working to improve pay and reward – current measure 54% (+17pp)
- Managing change effectively – current measure 77% (+2pp)
- Ensuring workload is manageable for all SCRA staff – current measure 67% (-4pp)
- Confidence in organisational leadership from EMT – current measure 89% (+5pp)

16.2 We have made in recent years progress at an organisational level on all of these priorities. The gap between different roles which was reported in the 2024 survey – has been narrowed, There remain localised issues which are being effectively picked up Locality and Head Office Management Teams, supported by Senior Operational Managers and others.

16.3 Our previous [action plan staff survey 2024](#) arising from the staff survey has had a positive impact. Some actions were time limited and now complete and others should be considered business as usual activities with ongoing impact and will deliver we believe to further incremental progress.

16.4 Key achievements from the 2024 staff survey include :-

- Negotiated and agreed a 2 year pay deal with UNISON 2025-27
- Full completion, approval and delivery of the role of the Reporter job description and person specification

- Secured and deployed new investment for SCRA to deliver the Children's Care and Justice Act
- Creating more job security in SCRA – with a clearer direction of travel, reduced sense of existential threat and reduction in temporary contracts
- Continued to build and communicate on SCRA's future Target operating model
- Delivered the first of our new transformed hearing centres in Glasgow and procured works to commence in Dundee
- Improved the visibility of EMT and increased direct engagement with staff
- Delivered and embedded our Change Management Strategy
- Sought external scrutiny and assurance on our programme and change work
- Agreed and revised Dignity at Work and Staff Code of Conduct with UNISON

16.5 New priorities for 2025 staff survey results being currently assessed and discussed (National Partnership Forum/Health and Wellbeing Group) include:-

- A continued focus on operational resilience and capacity. Embed new investment across Localities, deliver consistent ratio's and skills mix across teams and develop flexible operational resource for rapid deployment to teams undergoing high levels of demand or resource constraints
- Continued focus on our maximising attendance strategy and sustainably supporting staff back to work as soon as possible. Where there are ongoing issues of attendance or performance maximise support and more rapidly enable resolution.
- Deploy our enhance trauma support initiatives to staff who have encountered vicarious work related trauma and psychological/emotional distress – continue to develop the offering over 2026
- Continue to strengthen our partnership work with UNISON, early engagement and consultative approaches.

SCRA Board Meeting
28 January 2026

Locality Performance Review 2025

For: Noting

Report Classification: Not protectively marked.

Executive Sponsor: SOMs NW and EC

Author: SOM NW

Executive Summary : This report provides a summary of the reviews which were carried out with SCRA's operational teams in October and November 2025. The reviews focused on progress against Locality Plans, performance against KPIs and risk. Localities were asked to comment on key priorities for 2026/27.

Assurance is provided to the Board that a continuous service has been provided and progress has been made towards the objectives set down in the Locality Plans.

Recommendation : To note the outcome of the Locality Performance Reviews and the priorities for 2026/27.

Key issues to be discussed/considered

Implications:

Service

Note the implications for future service delivery of the development of a model which supports improved flexible deployment of resources.

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 : N/A

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.

Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation : All 9 Locality Management Teams and locality teams, Planning and Performance Network, Ross Mackenzie Head of Finance and Resources, Andrew MacDonald Planning and Performance Manager, Maggie McBurney Business Support Administrator.

Appendices

ZOHO summary

1. Introduction

The annual Locality Performance Reviews (LPRs) are part of the established cycle of review which covers all aspects of operations. This report sets out the approach to the LPRs and findings of the reviews which were carried out in October and November 2025.

2. Approach and focus

The LPRs are formally structured meetings between the SOMs and Locality Management Teams (LMTs). They cover review of progress against KPIs and the Locality Plan and consider risk. The approach is one of constructive challenge in which the SOMs seek assurance on progress and to identify how to further assist localities with significant challenges and with any objectives that are making slow progress. It is also a chance to re-assess the priorities within the locality plan and to adjust them to reflect changing circumstances. The SOMs benefit from closer consideration of the localities they don't have day to day involvement with. This can offer fresh insight and an opportunity for a different perspective.

LMTs were asked to focus on:

- Progress against Locality Plans – What are the Locality's key successes and what are the areas of challenge
- Performance against KPIs
- Risk
- Key priorities for 2026/27

Each LMT was provided with a Locality Performance Review pack which comprised:

- ZOHO update on progress against the Locality Plan
- Performance against KPIs in the year to date
- Risk register summary

The LPRs include staff engagement sessions with the operational teams which give all locality staff the opportunity to comment on progress against the Locality Plans.

In total, excluding prep time, the LPRs include about 14 hours of staff engagement and 20 hours of discussion with Locality Management Teams. The pay off for this significant investment of time is a deep dive across all 9 Locality teams which informs a detailed and well informed review of operations.

Together with the results of the Staff Survey, nationally and locally, the LPRs offer EMT and the Board a view of operational capacity, challenges and successes, directly from the operational teams and management teams. They are a key tool in informing priorities for the coming year.

3. Progress against Locality Plans

At Appendix 1, there is a ZOHO dashboard report which shows that good progress has been made by all 9 localities against planned activity at the 6 month point.

The 9 Locality Plans fold down the organisational priorities which are set by the Operational Plan for 2025/26 which links closely to the Business Plan. Each Locality Plan also includes priorities which are specific to the individual localities. This report focuses on the 9 priorities set out in the Operational Plan.

Best Experience (Care)

3.1 Legislative Change and our Practice: We will fully prepare for changes to practice, policy and legislation through deep analysis of impact and development of training, direction and support

Notwithstanding implementation of the Children's Care and Justice Act (CCJA) has been delayed until 2026/27, there has been significant inter agency activity in support of learning and development. Localities have rolling training programmes in place across the country to support provision of training to partners, and are engaging with partners who have provided inputs to SCRA staff, increasing the depth and breadth of understanding of different roles in the hearing system. There is value in continuing to develop these relationships and learning opportunities while the timing for implementation of CCJA is reset.

The impact of raising the age of referral is a regular feature of discussions with Reporters particularly in respect of court work. There is a concern that the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds in the Hearing System will lead to more complex proofs and a higher volume of court work. Teams are developing approaches to support Reporters preparing for proof and in court including the use of buddy systems, a team around the Reporter and witness statements. This will be an area for continued development in 2026/27.

Activity continues to support the development of Bairnshoose at local and national levels.

3.2 Our approach to Corporate Parenting will help us to Keep the Promise - rolling out improvements to support children, young people and families to feel informed, prepared and enabled to participate in the Hearings process

Localities continue to support the work of local Children's Hearings Improvement Partnerships (CHIPs) with partners and to promote them as the appropriate multi agency forums to support improvement work in the hearing system. Where there is no CHIP in place, discussions are ongoing to promote them.

This links to the work which has been done to develop and roll out Family Centred Scheduling which is covered at 3.8 below.

Clear Communications (Connect)

3.3 Communications: With children, young people and communication specialists, we will further develop, evaluate and implement the types of communications that people need and the information, tools and language that supports this

There has been a wide variety of activity so far. New hearing notification letters have been rolled out nationally and locality staff contributed to the design and testing of the new letters. Communi-crate and sensory toys are now available across our hearing rooms. A number of staff have been trained in British Sign Language. Teams were involved in pilots to test the use of text message reminders before hearings. In the context of trauma and neurodiversity, staff have received training on language and the impact of the words we use on children and families.

3.4 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.

The new audio visual equipment is now available in nearly all hearing centres. Roll out to all hearing centres will be completed soon. It is reliable, simple to use and provides a materially improved experience for everyone attending a hearing. Staff continue to feedback positively on the improved experience for users.

Magic Notes, an AI tool which supports the production of witness statements, has been rolled out nationally. It has been well received and the national evaluation rated it highly for speed, quality and user experience.

A new tool for redaction has been tested in Glasgow and further development is ongoing ahead of deprecation of the existing software. Further testing is underway in Dumfries and Dumbarton ahead of full roll out before the end of March.

There is a greater sense of digital confidence across the operational teams. Support from the OD Team is credited with this improvement together with input from the network of Digital Champions.

3.5 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.

Locality Managers are making full use of the enhanced management information which is available via CSAS and Power BI and are becoming increasingly adept in using data to monitor workload and performance.

Quality improvement work is data driven. All teams are using quality improvement methodology to drive improvements in performance and service delivery.

3.7 Our Environment: We will improve the look, feel and functionality of our Hearings centres whilst also tackling our overall environmental performance through our 8 key pillars for action in our sustainability strategy (Appendix 3). We will take an action against each of the pillars and we will have identified Environmental Ambassadors

Glasgow celebrated the opening of their new Hearing Centre in November. In addition to delivering a fresh, modern space for hearings in Glasgow, this work resulted in refreshed Hearing Centre Standards which raise the bar for future Hearing Centre provision. Work will now begin to ensure that customer care makes best use of the new space.

The organisation's Environmental Ambassadors are drawn from operational teams. Their numbers have increased in the course of the year and there is now coverage in all teams. They took part in a joint event with the Strategic Sustainability Group in October which contributed to the finalisation of the organisation's Bridge Plan. They have been instrumental in promoting the 8 Sustainability Pillars through the organisation-wide awareness raising campaign which has been led by the Communications Team.

Best Service (Protect)

3.8 In the second year of our plan, Programme Protect, we will take our findings and successes from year one and use them to support our delivery towards our Target Operating Model. This will involve making processes and ways of working smoother and more efficient for ourselves, our partners and those that depend on us.

Ayrshire and South East have led the work of the Combined Operational Test which tested the impact of a child friendly approach to scheduling hearings and provision of additional support to families together with witness liaison and the use of witness statements. This work has resulted in Family Centred Scheduling which is being rolled out nationally.

This year has seen a cultural shift around the development of the TOM. The teams most closely involved valued the collaborative approach and their ownership of the processes. All teams have an awareness of the direction of travel of the TOM and are aligning themselves with that ahead of further implementation. The LPR staff engagement sessions flagged up some pockets where there remains poor visibility and understanding of the TOM and these will be addressed with further engagement.

The cultural shift extends to the management of change and teams report feeling more confident approaching the implementation of change, assured that they will be supported and optimistic that change will be successful. Close collaboration between

the Change Team and LMTs in planning for change, taking into account of the local context, is welcome.

People who Care, Connect and Protect

3.9 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

There has been close to full completion of training for all staff in trauma informed practice and the training has been well received by those that have completed it. Work will continue to embed a trauma informed culture in SCRA and to ensure skilled practice in service delivery and development of the TOM.

3.10 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

Wellbeing is embedded in all operational teams. It is staff led and supported by LMTs with a specific budget to support the wide range of activity that teams undertake. The extent to which staff feel supported within and by their teams came across strongly in staff engagement.

SCRA continues to make a significant investment in learning and development. For those outside the central belt, the provision of training in their localities continues to be appreciated. The OD Team and the Change Team were praised for the work they have done working closely with teams to support learning and development and to prepare teams for change.

Resilience was raised in the context of court work, particularly in respect of whether Reporters feel competent and confident to take on complex proofs. This requires further consideration to ensure that Reporters are taking full advantage of the learning opportunities which are available to ensure competence and that they have the opportunities required to build confidence.

The impact of supporting a high number of Professional Development Award (PDA) candidates and the protected time they required to complete the qualification continues to have an impact on the overall resourcing of the teams affected. A review of the PDA following the review of the Reporter job description and person specification is welcome. The positive impact of new members of staff was noted, particularly in terms of their energy and enthusiasm, although some experience challenges in completing the PDA and experience drift in their progress.

3.10 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

Operational teams are continuing to embed SCRA's Inclusive Behaviour Standards by developing and adopting staff led Team Charters. A number of Neurodiversity Champions have been trained this year and work is ongoing to support the Anti-Racist work of the organisation.

Work to promote the recording of protected characteristics is being taken forward within the Programme. There was a delay in identification of a provider of mandatory EDI training but this is now in place and will be progressed in the second half of the year.

4. Performance

At the 6 month point, there is a marginal improvement in performance against the same point last year. Although amber, KPIs are not being met.

Performance measures	Target	2024/25	2025/26
The percentage of initial decisions on referrals made within 5 working days of receipt	86.0%		85.5% A
The percentage of decisions on referrals made within 50 working days of receipt	74.0%	71.4% A	73.1% A
The percentage of referrals over 100 working days	3.7%	4.2% A	4.3% A
The percentage of Hearings scheduled to take place within 20 working days	76.0%	66.9% A	72.7% A

As noted in previous years, the localities experiencing delay and challenges in meeting KPIs are the most impacted by staff absence.

Performance is also impacted by the capacity of partners in the hearing system, particularly social work teams. Particular challenges were noted in social work teams who are carrying significant staff vacancies, who are affected by high staff turnover and who have large numbers of new and inexperienced staff who have limited knowledge of the hearing system.

Work is underway with the Police on referrals but the position remains inconsistent and high levels of referrals from some Police Divisions put significant pressure on the receiving teams. Referrals from Police are high in those Divisions where there are challenges within social work teams. LRMs will continue working locally with partners to tackle referral patterns and delay. This also has national significance given the implementation of CCJA and system wide readiness for that.

Court capacity remains a challenge which can result in proof dates being scheduled well into the future. An inability to secure consecutive days in court makes preparation for and conclusion of proof proceedings additionally challenging. Work is underway to agree a National Court Practice note which it is hoped will improve the situation. Data from Glasgow, where the existing Practice Note has recently been refreshed, is positive. The approach taken to implementation of any Practice Note is essential to its success.

There is variation across the country in the number of children who are on CSOs. This can in part be explained by different levels of poverty/indicators of multiple deprivation but would benefit from a deeper dive to understand the length of time children are remaining on a CSO and the purpose of an order.

Teams have been successfully using Quality Improvement methodology to support improvements in performance, a number of which have been staff led. The successful approaches will be shared through the Planning and Performance Network and this approach will be continued next year.

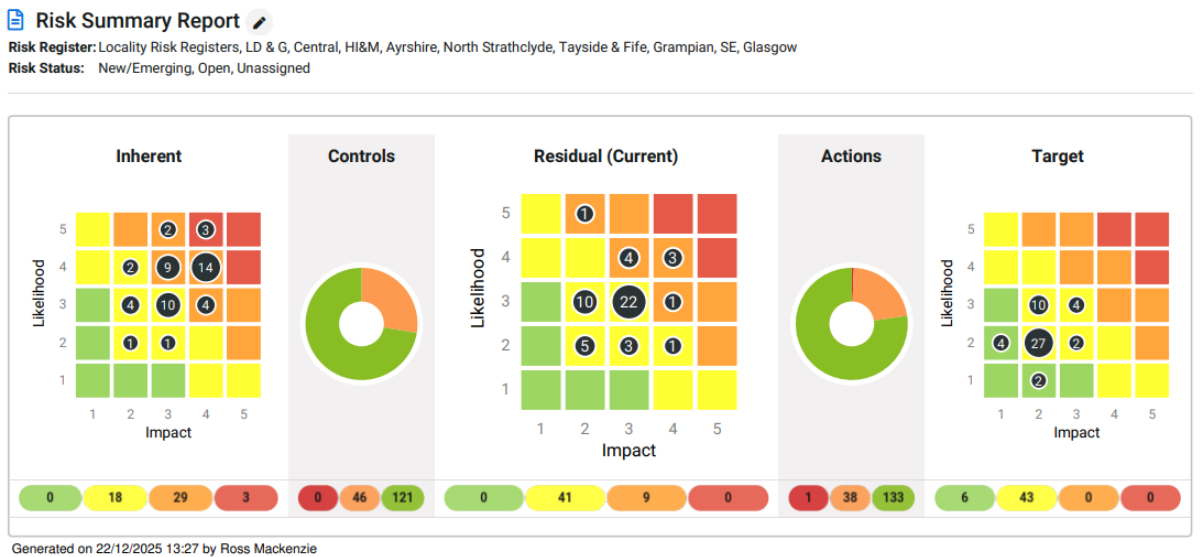
In teams which operated separately across different sites, there has been a noticeable improvement in collaboration and integration. This more resilient model has led to improvements in performance and supports staff wellbeing and morale.

The Board will have noted from the OPR that Highland, Moray and Eilean Siar locality are experiencing significant levels of staff absence which has impacted on decision making and the management of delay. This is in addition to high levels of referrals and vacancies within Social Work. Support is being provided from across the organisation to address these challenges.

5. Risk

The LPRs included a comprehensive review of Locality Risk Registers using the Decision Time risk management tool. For the purposes of this report, a summary is included which shows that Localities have identified and are managing 50 risks (51 in 2024), with 3 (3 in 2024) in the red zone (inherent) and 9 (8 in 2024) in the red/amber zones (residual).

The Head of Finance will continue to work with teams to develop their approach to risk management. The SOMs will undertake a full review of operational risk in January.



6. Priorities for 2026/27

LMTs were asked to identify their priorities for 2026/27. These themes will inform locality planning in the coming year:

- Resource capacity remains a key concern within teams. Long term sickness absence together with phased returns and staff who are unable to undertake all elements of the role were noted to have a significant impact on the overall level of resourcing available. This impacts performance, morale and an ability to absorb change while delivering business as usual. While continuing to support resilience in teams, there is an appetite amongst managers to more effectively manage poor performance and challenging behaviours in individuals for the benefit of the whole team.
- There is an acknowledged need within operational teams to be able to apply additional resources flexibly to bridge the gap in teams who are experiencing significant resource depletion. There is currently only very limited flexibly deployable resource which is not directly linked to individual operational teams. Operational teams do not carry excess capacity and have limited ability to provide support.
- The challenge is further exacerbated by the RBAC structure in CSAS. While this is an essential feature of the security structure of the case management system, operational managers report that the existing arrangements inhibit the flexible movement of work to staff in other business areas.
- While low, the impact of staff turnover cannot be ignored. Succession planning is important in the context of inducting and training new members of staff and supporting those reaching the end of their careers to transition into retirement. There will be further opportunities to identify and support those seeking leadership roles within the organisation.
- Given ongoing uncertainty and the need for continual cycles of change, keeping staff motivated and engaged will remain a challenge. Work will continue to support our ability to manage change, as individuals and within teams, and to continue to improve confidence in our adaptability and ability to successfully manage change.
- There will be a continuation of the consultative and collaborative approach of co-designing staff led solutions to future service delivery. This has been seen this year in the development of the Combined Operational Test which led to Family Centred Scheduling and will continue next year in, for example, the development of Customer Care Standards linked to the new Hearing Room Standards.
- Teams continue to strive for stretch targets in KPIs and improvements in service delivery. It is important to recognise that achievement of targets can be

impacted by factors beyond our control, not least staff absence. The SOMs will encourage a holistic approach to target setting which balances ambition with realism. It is important that teams are able to celebrate successes and do not feel constantly on the back foot because they are failing to meet targets which may be unattainable due to factors beyond our control. Quality Improvement methodology will continue to be used to support improvements in performance.

- The implementation of CCJA continues to roll on. There is concern about the impact of the raising of the age of referral on staff and service delivery. Some staff in locality teams report feeling insufficiently sighted on the work that is being done to prepare for this. That will be a focus in the coming 12 months together with work to improve competence and confidence in court and structural changes, such as the implementation of a national practice note, which will support the efficient and expeditious conduct of proofs.
- Work to roll out Family Centred Scheduling will conclude early in the next planning year. For those teams whose practice is furthest away from the model, support will continue to be provided to ensure the operational and cultural shift which is required to fully embrace a different way of working.
- Work will continue with staff and within operational teams to become a trauma informed and responsive organisation across workforce, policy and practice.

7. Next steps

From January 2026, LRMs will be involved in developing the Locality Plans for 2026/27. This will include the priorities identified above and actions from the Staff Survey.

Planning and performance are the domain of the Planning and Performance Network (PPN). It meets regularly and provides the forum for LRMs to come together to keep progress against locality plans under review. It also has an overview of locality risk and partnership registers.

8. Conclusion

The Locality Performance Reviews are an opportunity to recognise the progress that locality teams have made and to gather detailed feedback from the frontline to identify new and continuing challenges and to plan for the future.

The SOMs are able to assure the Board that the operational response has ensured that a continuous service has been provided and progress has been made towards the objectives set down in the Locality Plans.

9. Recommendation

1. To note the outcome of the Locality Performance Reviews and the priorities for 2026/27.

Appendix 1 ZOHO summary

Figure1: Combined Task Progress Status (as at 6 month point)

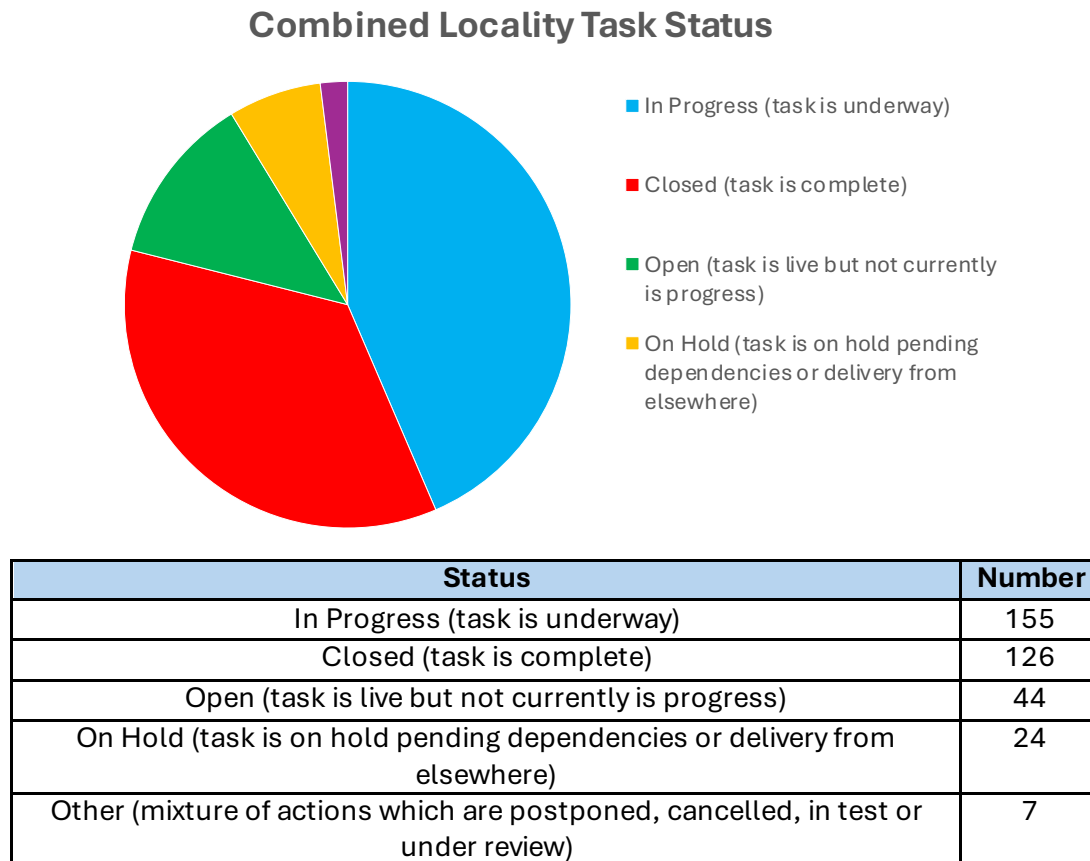


Figure 2: Ayrshire Progress

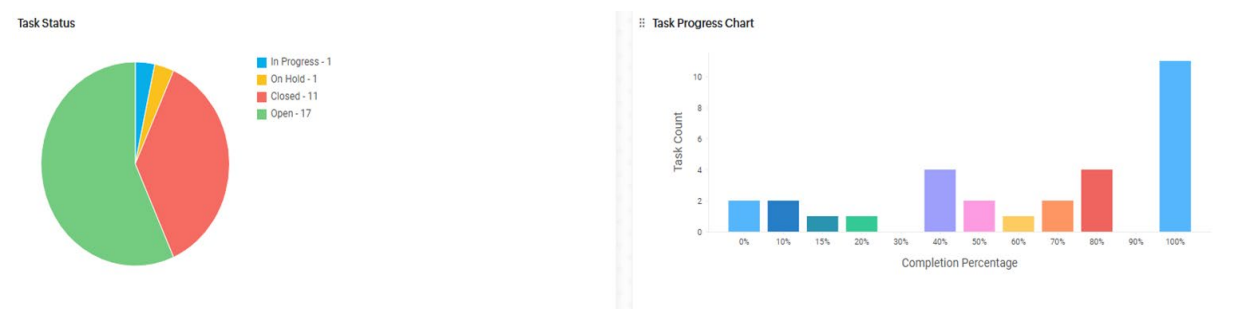


Figure 3: Central Progress



Figure 4: Glasgow Progress

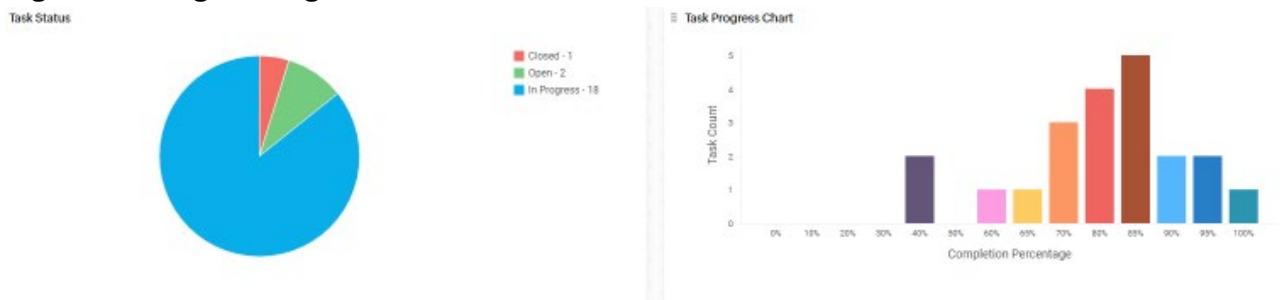


Figure 5: Grampian & North Isles Progress

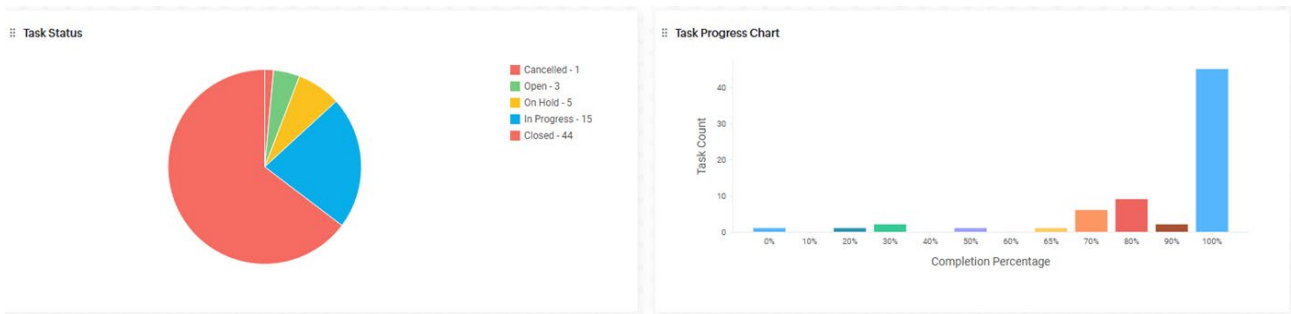


Figure 6: Highland, Moray and Eilean Sar Progress

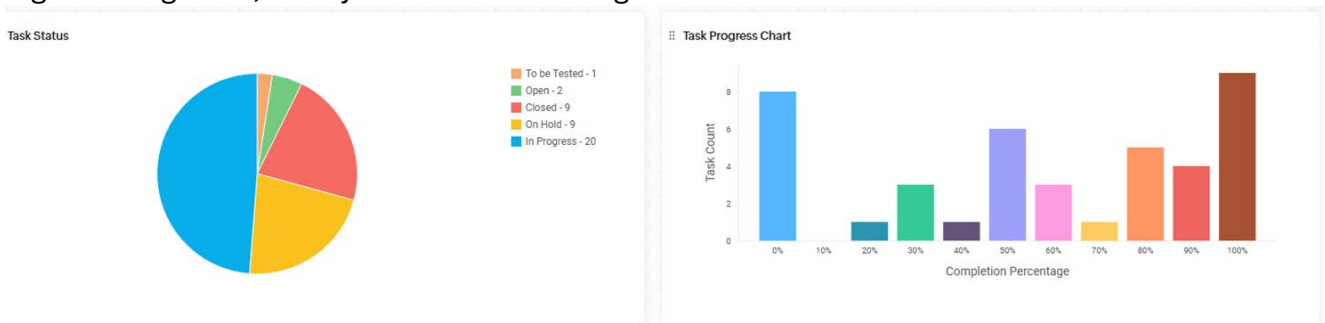


Figure 7: Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway

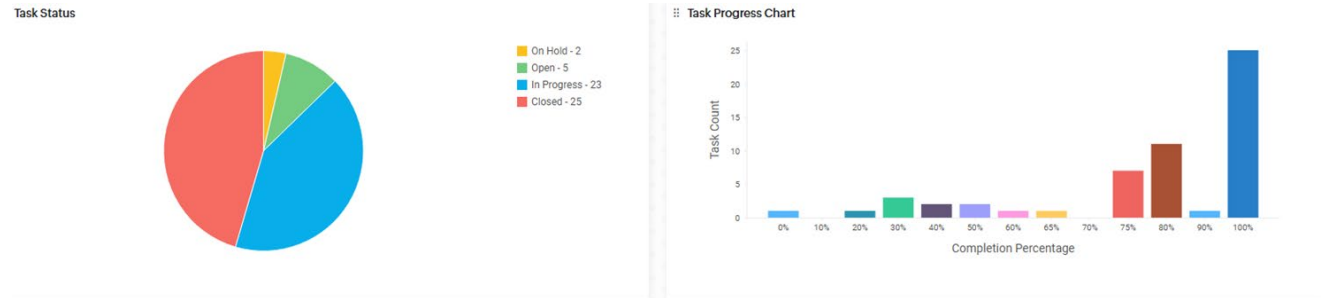


Figure 8: North Strathclyde Progress

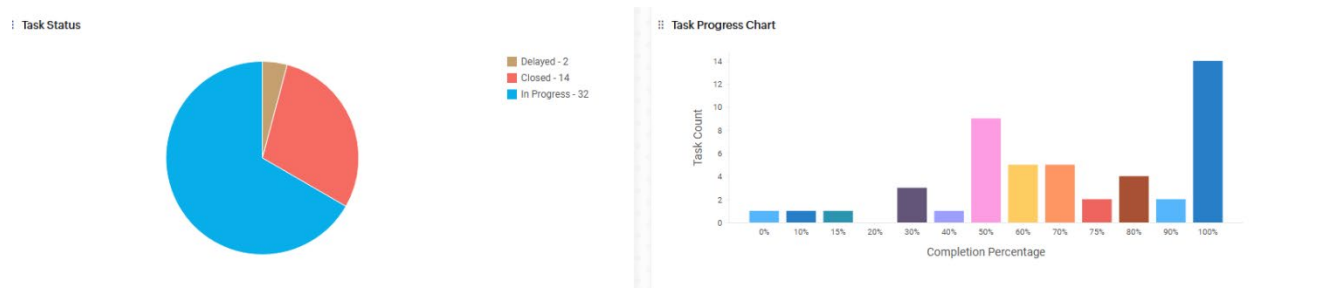


Figure 9: South East Progress

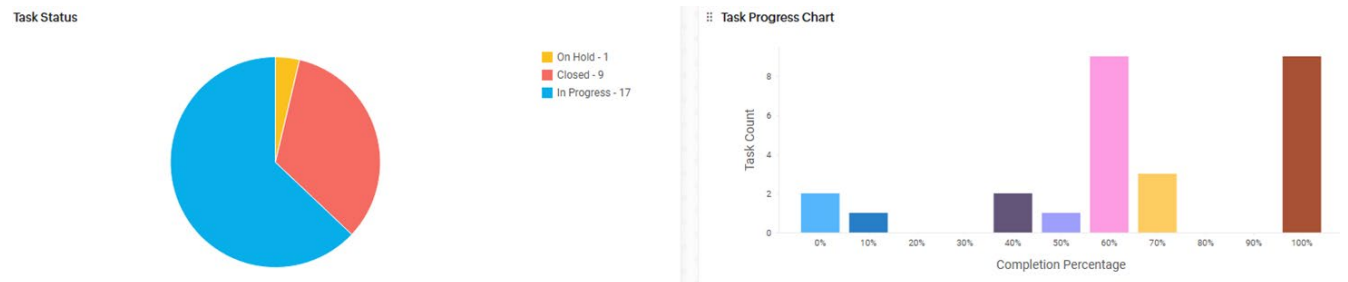


Figure 10: Tayside & Fife Progress

