



JOB DESCRIPTION



www.scra.gov.uk

ROLE - HEAD OF PRACTICE AND POLICY

Reports to:

Principal Reporter / Chief Executive

Management responsibility:

Practice Manager; Information Governance Manager; Research Manager; Policy & Public Affairs Manager; Accreditation Manager, Victim Information Manager, Our Hearings, Our Voice Project Lead.

Place of work:

Regular presence in an SCRA office is required, with travel to other offices, national meetings and external forums as needed. SCRA operates an agile working policy which enables working from home subject to operational need.

Organisational Context

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is an independent statutory body central to the Children's Hearings System. Alongside partners, we focus on children most at risk, and we act to protect and uphold their welfare and their rights. The decisions made within the Children's Hearings System carry significant and lasting impact, and SCRA therefore has a responsibility to ensure practice, policy and service delivery are lawful, proportionate, traumainformed and rightsrespecting.

The Head of Practice and Policy provides leadership across the organisation, ensuring national consistency, highquality practice, and strong strategic influence. The role supports the Principal Reporter, senior leaders and the wider service to maintain excellence throughout the Children's Hearings System.

Role Purpose

The Head of Practice and Policy leads the development, implementation and continuous improvement of national practice and policy across SCRA. The role ensures SCRA's work is aligned to organisational objectives and supports effective, consistent frontline delivery that leads to positive outcomes for children and families.

The post holder shapes SCRA's national policy position, ensures highquality professional practice, leads on national standards, oversees information risk, and ensures that practice and policy remain responsive to the needs of children, families and partners.

Role Summary

The Head of Practice and Policy is a senior leader within SCRA with responsibility for shaping and embedding best practice, directing strategic policy work, and safeguarding the quality, consistency and legality of frontline decision making. The role requires a high level of expertise in children's law, child development, the Children's Hearings System, and the wider operating environment. It also requires the ability to operate with vision, strategic insight and professional authority across complex and sensitive matters affecting children and families.

The post holder works collaboratively with senior leaders, partner agencies and national forums. They ensure that SCRA's practice and policy frameworks support fair process, uphold children's rights, and enable highquality decision making within a challenging and evolving landscape.

Key Responsibilities and Core Actions

The areas below are interconnected. The Head of Practice and Policy provides strategic and operational leadership across all functions.

Strategic Leadership and Direction

- Provide organisational leadership and authoritative direction on practice and policy across SCRA.
 - Contribute to the development of corporate strategy as a member of the senior management team.
 - Lead national practice and policy priorities to ensure SCRA fulfils its statutory responsibilities and promotes national children's rights and wellbeing agendas.
 - Effective management and planning of finance, resources and budget within the Practice and Policy portfolio.
 - Ensure that Equalities and ECHR principles are embedded across practice and policy.
 - Act as Deputy Principal Reporter, and support and advise the Principal Reporter in his functions.
 - Provide advice and help to shape responses to media or political enquiries.
-

Practice Framework and Professional Standards

- Develop, implement and maintain SCRA's national practice framework, policies, guidance and tools.
 - Promote best practice by ensuring frontline staff have clear, accessible resources that support highquality decision making.
 - Lead the Practice Team and the Accreditation Manager to ensure the Reporter workforce has the necessary professional skills and development to deliver excellent services to children and families.
 - Monitor and review practice standards to ensure consistency, legality and effectiveness, and in particular ensure the Professional Development Award in Reporter Practice maintains high quality and is delivered in the best way to Reporters and Assistant Reporters.
 - Support the Victim Information Team to provide information to people who have been harmed by children, and to ensure the service meets legal requirements and is trauma sensitive.
-

Information Governance and Risk

- Act as SCRA's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), providing leadership and assurance on information risk management.
 - Ensure robust processes are in place to safeguard sensitive information and support secure, compliant practice across the organisation.
 - Ensure that Freedom of Information requests, Subject Access Requests, and Disclosure requests are fully and timeously responded to.
 - Ensure that SCRA operates a model complaints handling system, and responds fully and timeously to complaints. Also that the organisation learns from complaints.
-

National Policy Influence and Representation

- Lead SCRA's engagement with national policy developments including youth justice, child protection, children's services planning and reform of the Children's Hearings System.
 - Shape and articulate SCRA's policy position to ensure children's rights and welfare remain central.
 - Provide clear leadership and cross organisational coordination of SCRA responses to national consultations, parliamentary committees and parliamentary questions.
 - Represent SCRA policy positions in public settings including with Scottish Government officials, delivery partners and Scottish Parliament Committees.
 - Represent the Principal Reporter, SCRA and the Children's Hearings System at a wide range of national forums, ensuring effective external relationships and strong public confidence.
 - Support the SCRA research team to provide high quality research that can shape and improve the Children's Hearings System, and contribute to the wider agenda for improving the welfare of children in Scotland.
-

Complex Casework and Legal Responsibilities

- Provide expert advice and support on difficult, sensitive or highprofile cases.
 - Support the Practice Team manager to oversee appeals, complex legal matters and interpretation of case law to ensure lawful and effective practice.
 - Maintain professional frameworks that support decision making by Children's Reporters, including the scheme of delegation.
-

Collaboration and Partnership Working

- Build and maintain strong, strategic working relationships with partners across Scotland.
- Promote highquality interagency collaboration to achieve better outcomes for children and families.
- Actively promote inclusion, integration of services, and national consistency.
- Ensure that the voice of children is central to shaping policy and practice, and in particular support the project lead for Our Hearings, Our Voice.

Qualifications, Training, Knowledge and Skills

Essential

- Degree in social work, law, education or a relevant discipline
- Experienced manager with a relevant management qualification
- Experience as a Reporter, or equivalent relevant experience
- Comprehensive knowledge of child development, legislation, case law and the operating environment of the Children's Hearings System
- Expertise in complex case practice, court work and professional judgement
- Knowledge of Information Governance, including GDPR requirements, FOI Act, Subject Access Requests, and Disclosure requests.
- Strategic thinking, analytical ability and problemsolving skills
- Excellent people management, partnership working and communication skills
- Ability to manage competing priorities and complex organisational demands
- High emotional intelligence and resilience
- Ability to translate strategy into operational delivery
- Strong digital competence

Working Relationships

Internal: The Board, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, Executive Management Team, Locality Reporter Managers, Head Office managers, locality teams and the wider workforce.

External: Scottish Government, national partners, external agencies, media and publicfacing organisations.

Principal Challenge

Ensuring that SCRA's culture, systems and professional practice consistently support highquality decision making and the needs of children, families and frontline services, while also shaping national policy and maintaining organisational credibility at a national level.