

AGENDA

	Item	Purpose	Papers	Owner
1.	Apologies			
2.	Any Other Business			
3.	Minute of the Last Meeting	Approval	Attached	NH
4.	Matters Arising			
5.	Draft Business Plan 2026/27	Review	Attached	AMacD
6.	Room Booking System	Approval	Attached	RMack
7.	Head of Practice recruitment plan (a) Job Description (b) Range of duties	Discussion	Attached	NH
8.	Case Sampling Programme	Approval	Attached	LB
9.	Board/Committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January Board - Reflections • February AAC – Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agenda ○ Board Effectiveness Audit ○ IG Report • February PPC – Planning • February RNC – Planning • March Board – Planning • April Board Development Day – Planning 		Attached Attached Attached	
Standing Items				
10.	Finance and Resource a) General Update	Update	Verbal	RMack
11.	Information Governance a) General Update	Update	Verbal	AH
12.	Practice and Policy a) General Update	Update	Verbal	AH
13.	Digital Programme	Update	Verbal	DC
14.	Programme Board	Update	Verbal	LB
15.	New Risks	Discussion		
16.	Forward Plan a) Health & Wellbeing Group – 10/02 b) Challenge & Review – 12/02 c) Programme Board - 17/02 d) AAC – 18/02 e) Accountability Meeting – 18/02	Info		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) SCTS/SCRA - joint work on children's proof proceedings – 19/02 g) YJB Data Sub Group – 19/02 h) PPC – 23/02 i) AI Workshop 2 – 23/02 j) National Partnership Forum – 24/02 k) Redesign Board Stakeholder Engagement Session – 25/02 l) CHIP Engagement Session – 25/02 m) Implementation group leads meeting – 26/02 n) Digital CAB – 02/03 o) Police custody pre-meet – 03/03 			
	<p>Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 04 March 2026, Ochil House, Stirling</p>			

Present

Neil Hunter (NH)	Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
Helen Etchells (HE)	Senior Operational Manager (North)
Ross Mackenzie (RMackK)	Head of Finance & Resources
Douglas Cameron (DC)	Head of Digital
Lisa Bennett (LB)	Head of Strategy & OD
Paul Mulvanny (PM)	Senior Operational Manager (East & Central)
Alistair Hogg (AH)	Head of Practice & Policy
Susan Deery (SD)	Head of HR
Pamela Armstrong (PA)	Governance Officer, Minute

	Item	Timescale	Owner
1.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>None</p>		
2.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Business Case</p> <p>HE introduced the business case to accelerate early implementation activity for the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act (CCJA) by establishing a small, centrally supported cohort of 3–4 additional reporters who can be flexibly deployed across localities.</p> <p>This national resource would provide immediate resilience in pressure-point areas and ensure SCRA has a trained group of reporters ready ahead of the significant demand expected as CCJA operational changes come into force in late 2026.</p> <p>To support recruitment, induction, and deployment, the proposal included creating a 0.5 FTE temporary LRM role for around six months, filled through a flexible retirement opportunity. HE advised that the individual identified has substantial experience, is well-placed to lead this preparatory work, and is seeking a phased retirement that aligns neatly with organisational need.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMT responded positively, noting the proposal was low-risk, cost-effective, and strategically aligned with CCJA timelines and SCRA's wider resilience priorities. Members highlighted that the arrangement would help reduce churn, support consistent induction standards, and free existing LRMs to focus on preparing their own teams for the legislative changes. 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SD confirmed that UNISON had been consulted and that backfilling the Highland LRM post would proceed as normal. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the business case in full, recognising that forthcoming LRM turnover and programme demands further strengthen the rationale. The additional reporters will now be recruited as a nationally deployable resource, and induction planning will begin immediately <p>Children's Reporter Job Description EMT reviewed staff communications on the review of the Reporters job description outcome and agreed inclusive circulation to relevant management groups. Two open staff sessions will support questions/feedback. A regular cycle of job-description reviews aligned to pay policy was reaffirmed.</p>		
3.	<p>Minute of the Last Meeting Agreed as an accurate record.</p>		
4.	<p>Matters Arising Mandatory Training EMT will clarify what counts as mandatory training and align reporting also distinguishing <i>highly recommended</i> and <i>elective</i> learning.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short paper to Audit & Assurance Committee on mandatory-completion thresholds. 	Feb 26	SD
5.	<p>HR Team Structure SD introduced a detailed business case proposing enhancements to the HR team structure, aimed at strengthening capacity across Learning & Development, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), business partnering, and operational HR support.</p> <p>SD highlighted that the current HR team delivers an exceptionally broad portfolio—spanning transactional HR, recruitment, employee relations, policy development, organisational change, wellbeing, EDI, and complex project support—but is operating at full stretch, limiting the organisation's ability to progress priority work at the pace required. To address this, the proposal restructures the team so that the current EDI Manager takes on a central leadership role for Learning & Development, supported by a new EDI Officer and 0.5 FTE HR Assistant, enabling proper</p>		

	<p>coordination of the organisational learning calendar, mandatory training oversight, and the Learning Network. The proposal also includes an additional HR Business Partner, 0.5 HR Officer, and an uplift of 0.2 FTE to make the Payroll Officer full-time, improving resilience, succession planning and the team's ability to undertake deeper, earlier intervention on absence and performance.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMT expressed strong support for the proposal, noting that it is proportionate, well-justified, and strategically aligned with organisational priorities—especially in light of the Staff Survey themes around resilience, attendance, and performance management. • Members emphasised that SCRA's HR capacity is light relative to comparable bodies, and that the proposed additions would significantly enhance the organisation's ability to support frontline managers, deliver culture and capability goals from the Target Operating Model, and meet increasing expectations in areas such as EDI and workforce development. • EMT agreed that several posts could be time-limited until 2027 to test longer-term need, while others—particularly the EDI Officer, HR Assistant and Payroll uplift—should be permanent. <p>Agreed:</p> <p>The proposed team structure was formally approved, with implementation to begin immediately and benchmarking data to be refreshed and held for future reference.</p>		
6	<p>Learning KPI's</p> <p>SD introduced the mid-year update on Learning KPIs, noting that SCRA remains on track to meet all annual targets. SD highlighted that training activity continues at strong levels, with trauma-informed practice still the most frequently completed programme—though this will naturally taper as the organisation approaches full completion of the current trauma cycle.</p> <p>The centralised learning dataset, now well-established, provides a much clearer picture of</p>		

	<p>learning trends across the organisation and enables EMT to identify areas where uptake appears unusually low or high. Initial analysis suggests that some variance—such as particularly low figures in LDG—may relate to recording gaps or induction patterns, reinforcing the need to pair KPI data with operational context.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas for improvement were noted, including the under-recording of GDPR/IG training, which was delivered via direct links rather than iTrent bookings and will therefore be corrected in the next reporting cycle. EMT recognised that Personal Development Plans (PDPs) remain a developmental priority, with current system limitations making it difficult for staff to log objectives and learning in a consistent way; the ongoing audit of development supervision will help identify improvements. • EMT also agreed on the need to review the volume and relevance of mandatory Health & Safety modules, aiming to streamline content and reduce “mandatory fatigue.” Plans are underway to explore consolidating all learning records—including PDPs—into a single, more user-friendly platform. • EMT welcomed the update and endorsed the proposed areas of focus for the next reporting period. 		
7.	<p>Financial Systems Business Case</p> <p>The EMT formally noted its prior offline approval of the financial systems business case, which authorises SCRA’s move from the current platform to Sage. RMack confirmed that early engagement with the supplier has already begun, with configuration sessions underway and a planned mid-March go-live date. The switch to Sage delivers significant benefits, most notably £150k in lifetime savings and approximately £85k in in-year revenue savings, offering a strong example of SCRA delivering public-sector-reform efficiencies without compromising capability.</p> <p>RMack also noted that the transition is timely, as the existing system has become increasingly expensive and less fit-for-purpose. By contrast, Sage will give Finance the improved functionality and stability needed to manage year-end processes, budgeting, and forecasting more effectively.</p> <p>Agreed:</p>	Attached	RMack

	The item was formally recorded as approved for governance completeness.		
8.	January Board Meeting EMT reviewed draft papers for the upcoming Board meeting.		
9.	<p>Finance and Resource EMT discussed the financial position following the announcement of a flat-cash Scottish Government settlement, noting that while disappointing, it aligns with assumptions already built into SCRA's five-year financial forecast. RMack confirmed that the 2025/26 year-end projection remains stable, with revenue and capital plans broadly on track and major pressures—such as pay uplifts, CCJA preparation costs, and system investments—already incorporated into the forecast. He highlighted the complexity of this year's financial management, particularly the Scottish Government's provision of additional capital that may ultimately support revenue pressures, requiring careful audit-safe handling and close dialogue with Government colleagues.</p> <p>Looking ahead to Challenge & Review, EMT agreed the focus will be on how best to allocate the expected £36.5m envelope rather than identifying cuts. RMack outlined planned scenario planning for the Board, including a contrast option showing the risks of pausing business development work versus maintaining the planned trajectory that supports CCJA implementation and Promise-aligned improvements.</p> <p>EMT also noted the importance of coordinating HR, programme and financial planning so that resourcing proposals—particularly those approved earlier in the meeting—are fully aligned. Board papers will reflect this stable but tightly-managed position, with Andrew SG colleagues attending the January Board to reinforce Government context and expectations</p>		
10.	<p>Information Governance</p> <p>a) General Update AH provided a general update on Information Governance, noting that day-to-day IG operations remain stable and well-managed, with no emerging systemic issues to highlight. AH reported that the team continues to maintain strong oversight of compliance activity, including mandatory training follow-ups, return-from-absence checks, and early intervention on any developing risks.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMT reaffirmed the importance of maintaining high completion rates for IG training, particularly given the ongoing scrutiny from the ICO. It was noted that IG remains one of the most closely monitored areas of compliance, with the team achieving near-total sweep-up of staff returning from leave and monitoring localities where refresher training is due. <p>b) Breach Reports EMT noted the September, October and November Breach reports.</p>		
11.	<p>Practice and Policy</p> <p>AH provided an update on the Children’s Hearings (Promise) Bill as it progressed through its Stage 1 debate in Parliament. AH reported that the Scottish Government’s official response largely maintains its original policy position, signalling that several high-profile proposals raised during committee scrutiny will not be taken forward at this stage. Government confirmed it does not intend to introduce opt-out advocacy for all children or mandate automatic legal representation for every child with offence grounds—positions that align with SCRA’s concerns about proportionality and potential unintended consequences.</p> <p>The Government’s response also made helpful reference to SCRA-led improvement work—such as referrals, learning leads, and family-centred scheduling—to demonstrate that many system improvements are already being delivered without requiring legislative change.</p> <p>Looking ahead to Stage 2, EMT noted that amendments are expected on areas including kinship care, continuing care, and FGDM, though Government language suggested some may be deferred to “future legislative opportunities,” signalling limited appetite for significant changes within the current Bill.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AH and NH highlighted the value of recent political engagement, including a constructive meeting with MSP Jeremy Balfour, which allowed SCRA to set out practical implications of potential amendments. EMT agreed that as the Bill moves into later stages, SCRA will need to scope operational and financial impacts of any confirmed changes—especially where they may affect grounds, attendance expectations, or the interface with court—and 		

	<p>ensure alignment with the Bill's Financial Memorandum as discussions with Government continue.</p>		
<p>12.</p>	<p>Digital Programme DC provided an update on Digital Programme progress, noting that recent assurance discussions had provided a comprehensive view of the programme's major strands, particularly the upcoming non-disclosure/redaction user-interface improvements and the move to a single-person check, both of which will deliver greater consistency, quality and safety in decision-making.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NH emphasised the importance of establishing a strong, positive narrative around these changes so staff understand their purpose, benefits and alignment with wider improvement work. There was broad recognition that, although some changes will be challenging for teams, the overall package represents a meaningful simplification and modernisation of practice workflows. • DC and RMack also highlighted the significant capital pressures generated by Microsoft's deprecation of key components that underpin system integrations. This has required substantial additional investment to ensure CSAS remains functional and supported. While the overall capital outlook appears manageable, careful coordination is required in the coming months, including distinguishing essential from elective spend, maintaining full transparency for audit, and ensuring alignment with joint SCRA–CHS investment commitments—especially given leadership changes within CHS. DC confirmed he will also provide targeted strategic support to CHS during this transition to protect shared delivery outcomes. 		
<p>13.</p>	<p>Programme Board LB provided the following verbal update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Programme Board will hold a full-day workshop next week to reset programme governance and delivery in the final quarter of the year. • The morning session will focus on strengthening governance, clarifying decision-making routes, escalation pathways, and accountabilities across Strategic Programmes, the Planning & Performance 		

	<p>Committee and the Board. This work will also embed the findings of the recent Assurance Review and reinforce consistent joint-governance arrangements with CHS, particularly important during CHS leadership transitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The afternoon will address resourcing and delivery, mapping capacity for Q4, accommodating upcoming staff movements, and confirming the planned CHS secondment to maintain joint investment progress. It will also align programme milestones with critical Digital Programme changes—such as the upcoming non-disclosure/redaction improvements and single-person check—and review capital commitments (distinguishing essential from elective spend). The workshop is expected to produce a revised governance model, a 12-week integrated delivery plan, an updated risk-dependency view, and a communications plan that clearly explains the operational benefits of upcoming changes. 		
14.	<p>New Risks No new strategic risks were added.</p> <p>Risk owners to continue updates in Decision Time in advance of the Board</p>		
15.	<p>Forward Plan The forward plan was reviewed.</p>		
	<p>Date of Next Meeting Wednesday 04 February 2026, Location TBC</p>		