

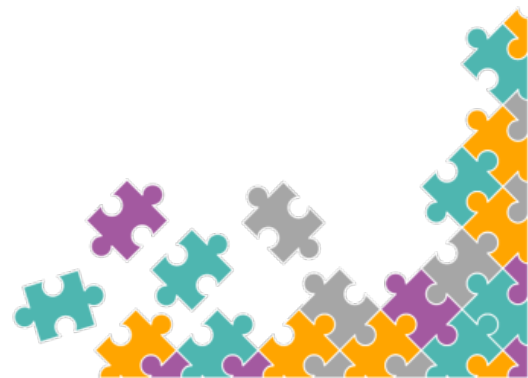
Agenda of SCRA Board Meeting, to be held on
Wednesday 18 March 2026, at Ochil House, Stirling

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	
4.	Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on 28 January 2026	Chair	For Approval	10:35
5.	Matters Arising from Minute Matters Arising from Action Log	Chair	For Assurance	10:40
6.	Workplan (Board)	Chair	For Noting	10:45
7.	Committee Minutes and Committee Chair Escalation			
7.1	Minute of Audit and Assurance Committee held on 18 February 2026	Committee Chair	For Noting	10:50
7.2	Minute of Workforce Governance Committee held on 25 February 2026	Committee Chair	For Noting	11:00
7.3	Minute of Planning and Performance Committee held on 23 February 2026 i. Organisational Planning Report	Committee Chair	For Noting	11:20
8.	Principal Reporter/Chief Executive Report			
8.1	PR/CE Report	PR/CE	For Assurance	11:30
9.	Finance & Resources			
9.1	Budget Monitoring Report	Head of Finance & Resources	For Assurance	11:50
9.2	Draft Budget	Head of Finance & Resources	For Approval	12:00
9.3	Sustainability Annual Report	Head of Finance & Resources	For Approval	12:20

<i>Item</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Timings</i>
10.	Workforce			
10.1	<i>Whistleblowing Policy and Annual Monitoring Report</i>	Head of HR	<i>For Approval</i>	<i>12:30</i>
10.2	<i>Health & Safety Annual Report</i>	Head of HR	<i>For Approval</i>	<i>12.40</i>
10.3	<i>Workforce Annual Report</i>	Head of HR	<i>For Approval</i>	<i>12.50</i>
11.	Strategy and Organisational Development			
11.1	<i>SCRA Draft Business Plan 2026-27</i>	Head of Strategy &OD	<i>For Approval</i>	<i>13.00</i>
12.	Risk Management			
12.1	<i>Strategic Risk Register</i>	Head of Finance & Resources	<i>For Assurance</i>	<i>13.10</i>
12.2	<i>New Risks</i>	Head of Finance & Resources	<i>For Assurance</i>	<i>13.20</i>
Close 13:25				



Minute of SCRA Board Meeting, held on Wednesday 28th of January 2026, by Teams

Present:

Cathie Cowan, Chair
 Steve Renwick, Vice Chair
 Kay Barton
 Lynne Clow
 Lorraine Moore
 Hazel Smith
 Ying Zhang

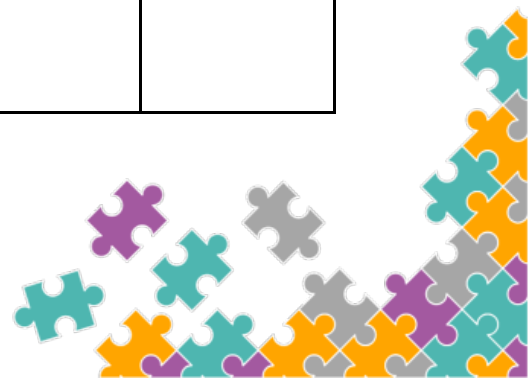
In Attendance:

Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
 Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer - Minute
 Douglas Cameron, Head of Digital
 Susan Deery, Head of Human Resources
 Helen Etchells, Senior Operational Manager
 Alistair Hogg, Head of Practice and Policy
 Paul Mulvanny, Senior Operational Manager (SOM)
 Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

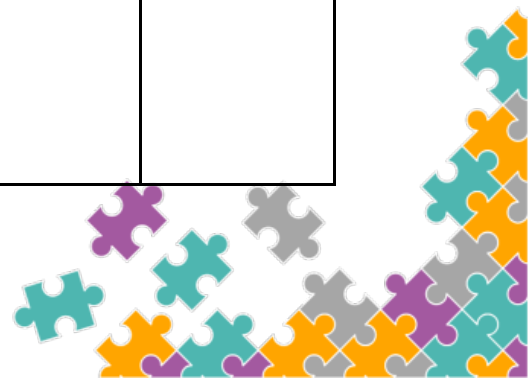
Stephen Edgar, Directorate Finance Manager, Scottish Government
 Nick Rougvie, Children's Hearings Team Leader, Scottish Government
 Andrew Watson, Director of Children and Families, Scottish Government

Item	Topic	Timescale	Owner
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum The Chair opened the meeting and confirmed a quorum was present. Apologies were received from Lisa Bennett, Head of Strategy and OD.		
1.1	AOB No additional items were raised.		
2.	Declarations of Interest No declarations were made.		
3.	Chair/Non-Executive Updates The Chair thanked the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive (PR/CE), Head of Finance and Resources, and Board Members for their contributions to the January letter to the Scottish		

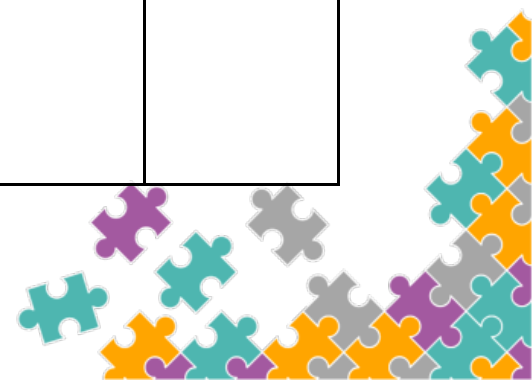
	Government, noting the constructive engagement since December and the value of a unified Board voice on finance and legislative delivery. This set the context for later agenda items on budget planning and the legislative landscape, including the scheduled discussion with Scottish Government officials during Item 9.1.		
4.	Minute of SCRA Board Meeting held on 16 December 2025 The Board approved the minute subject to two explicit amendments: • Add Hazel Smith's apologies for the 16 December 2025 meeting; and • Amend Item 8.3 to reflect PPC review of the business plan on 23 February (with internal scrutiny beforehand).	Immediate	PA
5.	Matters Arising from Minute Legislative landscape review (Professor Norrie). • The Board noted the Scottish Government's announcement of a 12-month, independent review of the legislative framework for children's care, led by Professor Kenneth Norrie in partnership with CELCIS. • The review aims to simplify and "declutter" the current landscape to deliver practical, tangible benefits for children, families, and the workforce, and was announced alongside the Government's response to the Stage 1 scrutiny of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill ("the Promise Bill"). • SCRA expects to engage fully; detailed scope/method and any implications for SCRA will become clearer as the review progresses. Research programme - dissemination and impact. • The PR/CE outlined how research outputs will be consistently published and actively disseminated (seminars /workshops; engagement with CHIPs/ YJIB /Government), with attention to tracking impact against recommendations. • Forthcoming outputs highlighted, included:		



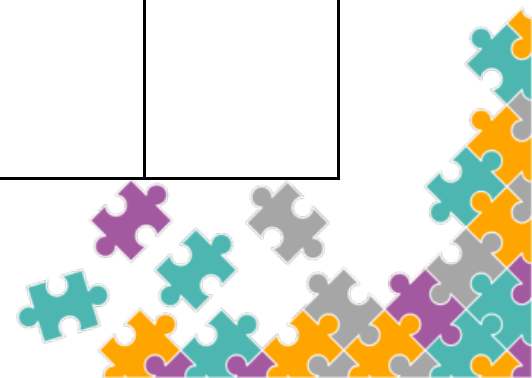
	○ Support and information for people harmed by children (planned February publication); and ○ Young people's views on the use of AI in SCRA's work, highlights of which are already being shared at specialist conferences and events. Matters Arising from Action Log The Board agreed to close four actions: • Staff Survey & 2025 Action Plan (results noted; plan approved); • Letter to Sponsorship (issued 14 Jan 2026); • Draft Budget (position noted; next steps confirmed); and • SG Remuneration Group update (Reporter JD/PS) - update received. For the Staff Survey item, the Board asked for regular progress updates via PR/CE reports; this will be tracked through routine reporting rather than as a separate open action in the log.		
6.	Workplan (Board) The workplan remains aligned to agenda sequencing and was noted without comment.		
7.	PR/CE Report, 2025 Staff Survey The PR/CE presented the results of SCRA's 15th staff survey, run each December and reported to the Board in January. The survey (co-developed with UNISON over time) remains substantial (70+ questions) yet comparable year-on-year and is treated as a cornerstone input to organisational planning and the annual action plan. Headlines: • Morale shows recovery from the 2022 low; 96% of staff report enjoying their job, though 31% still perceive morale as low. • Pride in SCRA and the wider Children's Hearings System remains strong. • A two-year pay deal runs to April 2027, supporting improved sentiment on pay & reward, while broader terms and conditions (leave/flexibility) remain positively viewed.		



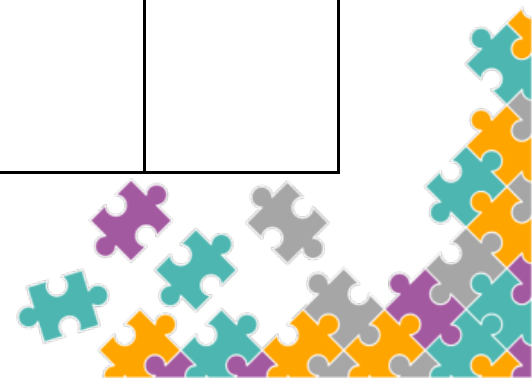
	• Workload pressures and resilience challenges persist, driven by demand spikes and staffing constraints. Confidence in change management continues to improve, though around 40% of staff do not feel adequately consulted - interpreted partly as a capacity/time issue for engaging with change, not solely a lack of opportunity. • Leadership visibility, health & wellbeing, EDI, and bystander training all show positive trajectories. <i>Issues arising during discussion:</i> • Non-core establishment / fixed-term contracts: The Vice Chair queried links between temporary staffing and morale. Management and UNISON described routine exercises to substantiate fixed-term roles, regular reviews across the year, and low turnover, noting this supports stability while recognising some individuals will naturally be on time-limited contracts. • Survey enhancements: Members proposed adding measures of motivation/aspiration/empowerment and using AI-assisted thematic analysis of qualitative comments in future cycles. Management agreed to consider these within the next survey design process. • Results by role/locality: Members asked for assurance that responses are analysed by role and locality and for a proportionality check of returns. Management confirmed locality/role cuts are produced, disparities have narrowed, and a proportionate response rate by role and team is part of this. • Local leadership of change: Members emphasised the role of locality managers in managing change, enhancing voice/engagement and countering negativity, alongside central change support. PR/CE and SOM's acknowledged this and referenced existing supports to LRMs. • External capacity impacts: The Chair highlighted court capacity and police referrals as key external drivers of workload and asked that practical		
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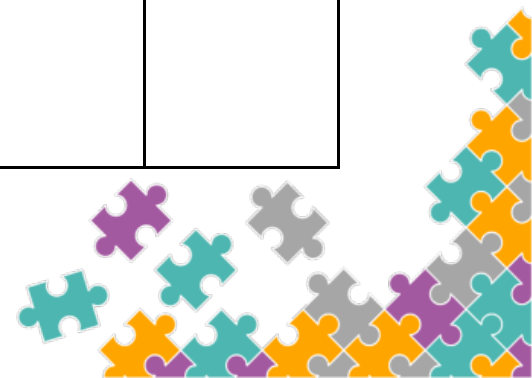
	mitigations (e.g., SCTS practice note/protocol rollout) be surfaced within planning/updates. Agreed: The 2025 Staff Survey results were noted, and the 2025 Action Plan was approved, with regular progress updates to the Board.		
8.	Locality Performance Review Report (LPR) Senior Operational Managers (SOMs) reported on mid-year LPRs across all nine localities. Highlights included improved digital tooling (including Magic Notes), growing environmental champion activity, and visible progress in embedding the Target Operating Model (TOM). Overall performance is flat year-on-year amid staffing absence, partner capacity constraints (police referrals; social work vacancies), and Court pressures. Issues arising during discussion: - Locality Reporter Managers (LRMs) sought confidence to address poor performance and long-term absence consistently in line with policy. The Head of HR confirmed the framework is in place, with additional professional HR resource approved to support complex cases. A joint May session for managers/HR/UNISON will use case studies to build confidence and clarify roles. - Members queried whether reviews should be less frequent. Management confirmed the annual LPR cycle is intentional as it aligns with the business planning cycle, complements routine locality management oversight, and provides whole-service visibility and accountability to staff. - SOMs described the TOM's journey from an initially "abstract" concept towards a tangible process of movement from the 'as-is' (current, inherited practice) to a shared, vision-driven 'to-be' — with progress dependent on time, patience, persistence, and consistency. - Members asked where Children's Hearings Improvement Partnerships		



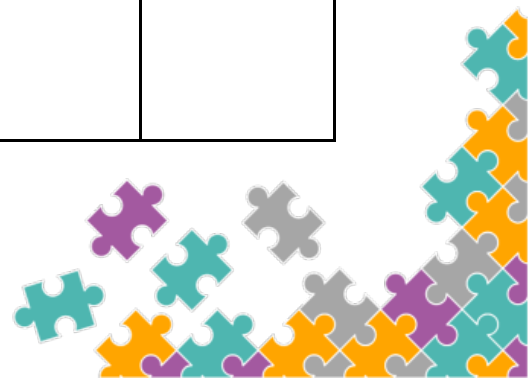
	(CHIPs) are in place and how they are benefitting practice. It was noted that all Local Authorities (LAs) host tripartite meetings (LA/SCRA/CHS), but some still need to progress to more strategic CHIPs; locality footprints can be out of sync. The PR/CE referenced audit work in the CEO report and plans to establish a “CHIPlot” in every area with LRMs, CHS and LA social work managers as key partners. • The Board were advised no operational risks required escalation; while inherent risks remain high in places, current controls/mitigations are holding and delays are actively managed. • The Board noted the Locality Performance Review report.		
9.	<i>Budget Planning 2026/2027</i> The Chair welcomed Scottish Government colleagues - Andrew Watson, Director of Children and Families, and Stephen Edgar (SE), Directorate Finance Manager to the Board and thanked Mr Watson for his response to her letter of 14 January 2026. By way of context, the Chair confirmed that, at the Board's December meeting, Members agreed she would write to the Director following the Board's significant concerns about the ongoing revenue gap. The Board did not take this decision lightly given its strong and collaborative relationship with the Sponsorship Team; however, Board Members had highlighted great uncertainty, exacerbated in three key areas: 1. Legislative funding gap: A growing, cumulative gap in funding to support legislative changes and assessed needs, including information shared with Sponsorship Team colleagues to inform the Financial Memorandum in support of the Care and Justice Act, which exercised the Committee overseeing the legislation in respect of both resources and capacity. 2. Elections and continuity: The forthcoming elections and the potential for a change to the political landscape, including the loss of our current Minister and the corporate memory that would accompany such a change. 3. Wider fiscal pressures: The broader financial situation and its impact on SCRA		



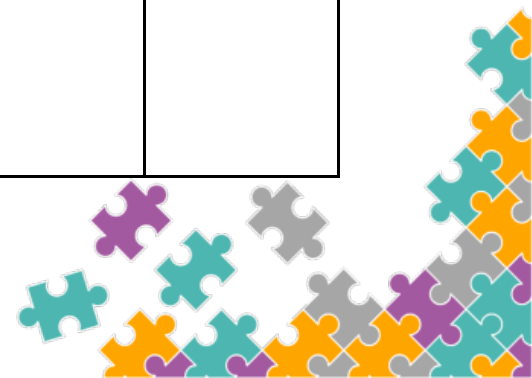
	as part of the Education and Justice portfolio, including pressures within each of these key areas. The Chair referred to her letter of 14 January to Mr Watson, highlighting concern about another flat-cash settlement and the significant risk this poses to delivering legislative changes approved by Parliament while maintaining SCRA's commitment to strong performance in support of our most vulnerable and at-risk children and families. The Chair added that the situation is not sustainable. The Chair acknowledged that Board Members would have their own questions but, in advance of these, invited Mr Watson to make opening remarks. Mr Watson acknowledged the challenging position and confirmed his support for a partnership approach. He agreed to issue a letter of comfort ahead of the March Board to assist SCRA fulfil its governance role in approving the 2026/2027 budget. Scottish Government colleagues also noted that, subject to Parliament approving the Promise Bill, delivery obligations would continue post-election and signalled early engagement with incoming ministers on a system-wide financial picture. The Head of Finance and Resources reported a current draft gap of £2.6m for 2026/27, significant fixed costs (~85–90%) limiting further efficiencies, potential capital rephasing, and an assumed establishment of 491 FTE. The Board's risk appetite on budget remains open in the present context. <i>Issues arising during discussion:</i> • The Vice Chair asked whether recurrent in-year support could be consolidated into the baseline (rather than repeated in-year movements). SE explained that while Autumn Budget Revision/Spring Budget Revision (ABR/SBR) are confined to the year in question, outturn learning informs future planning; SG shares the ambition for baseline adjustment over time.		
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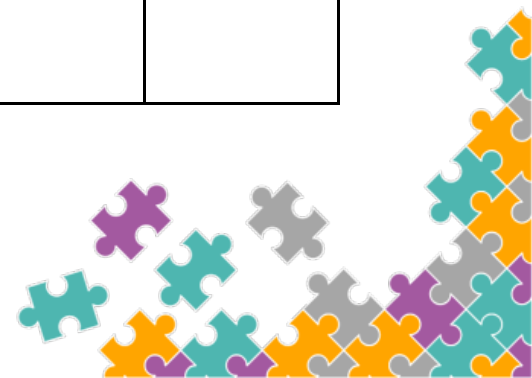
	- Board Members (Kay Barton; Hazel Smith) stressed the governance need for an explicit written acknowledgement of shared risk — including the practical risk that SCRA cannot make rapid in-year reductions given workforce cost rigidity. SG agreed to reflect this clearly in the letter of comfort. In summing up: the Chair thanked Government colleagues for joining and participating in the Board discussion. The Chair noted reassurance from the discussion and in particular that the Directorate, Portfolio and Corporate divisions have awareness and oversight of SCRA's ongoing financial gap and the impact of in-year settlements on the Board's governance role when approving the annual revenue budget. On the back of a productive conversation, the Chair made two 'asks' of Government colleagues: 1. Written assurance that both the Scottish Government and the Board of SCRA share the budgetary risk. 2. Agreement for the Sponsorship Team and PR/CE, with the EMT, to develop a medium-term financial plan to make progress on achieving a realistic budget baseline to resolve the financial gap. The Chair invited Board Members to add to her summing up. There were no additions and Mr Watson agreed and gave a commitment to support the 'asks' as presented.	March 26 June 26	AW/SE (SG) PR/CE&SG
10.	<i>Review of Children's Reporter Job Description and Person Specification</i> The Head of HR provided the following verbal update: - The Scottish Government Remuneration Group approved SCRA's business case on 19 December 2025. Management paused communications over the festive period, then issued a detailed January briefing to all staff including FAQs and worked examples. - Implementation is scheduled for the February 2026 payroll, with the new Children's Reporter grade backdated to 1		



	July and contract variation letters to be issued where reporters move grade. • Two open Teams briefings were held in January (c. 60 attendees across both) to explain the job evaluation (JE) outcome, matching approach and pay impacts; additional questions have been managed via the HR mailbox. Issues arising during discussion: • Queries concerned how individuals match onto the new grade and the sequencing/timing of reviews for other roles. The Head of HR confirmed matching follows established job evaluation rules and that communications included concrete examples. • UNISON asked that the Assistant Reporter role be prioritised for review. The Head of HR agreed to prioritise this in the upcoming programme of JD/PS reviews. • The Head of HR confirmed there was no material challenge to backdating to 1 July, as this aligns with SCRA's standard job evaluation practice and had been explained in the FAQs/briefings.		
11.	New Risks While no new strategic risks were identified, the PR/CE reported that Microsoft SharePoint deprecation will affect CSAS components used to produce Hearing Information Packs (HIPs), with consequential impacts on redaction and non-disclosure workflows. SCRA is working with Leidos on technical mitigations and will use the change to deliver planned operational improvements, including family-centred scheduling of HIPs and rollout of a new Automated Redaction Manager already tested in Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire with markedly improved speed and accuracy compared to the legacy tool. Staff briefings to Locality Reporter Managers are underway. While short-term operational "bumps" are possible during transition, this issue is not assessed as a strategic risk; testing and phased implementation are planned over the next 1–2 months.		



	Issues arising during discussion: • Background and impact: The PR/CE explained that CSAS is built on Microsoft products (SharePoint, Azure, Outlook). Microsoft's withdrawal of support for elements used in HIP generation requires SCRA to replace components and adjust linked processes (HIP preparation, redaction, and delivery of non-disclosure). These changes sit "at the heart" of service delivery and therefore will be managed carefully through joint work with Leidos and internal teams. • Opportunity to improve: The PR/CE emphasised treating the deprecation as an opportunity to bundle several planned upgrades — family-centred scheduling standards for HIPs and the new automated redaction tool, which has shown significant gains in speed and accuracy during locality testing into a single coordinated change programme. • Change approach and readiness: The Head of Digital noted that, because CSAS runs on evergreen Microsoft software, staff are accustomed to smaller, continuous changes; however, this is a larger, cascading change and will be delivered in synchrony across digital, information governance and operational teams. Briefings for Locality Reporter Managers have started to prepare the service and to manage expectations around minor disruption during rollout. • Risk position: The Board was advised that, with current mitigations and planned testing/phase-in, the issue is operationally significant but not strategic and will be monitored through PR/CE reporting. The Chair welcomed the cross-organisation coordination (including collaboration with CHS where relevant) and noted the assurance on risk status.		
	Date of the next Meeting Wednesday 18 March, Location Ochil House, Stirling		



Board Action Log as at June 2026

Meeting/Item	Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments	Status
Sep 25 Review of the Reporter Job Description – Update	In line with good practice develop a 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 – PR/CE Report	Governance Improvement Plan to integrate Dev Session actions	Apr 26 Jun 26	PA	Chair to present plan at June Bard meeting	Open
Dec 25 – Research Programme	Develop structured knowledge-exchange plan in relation to SCRA published research	Dec 26	Research Manager		Not yet due
Jan 26 – Budget Planning	Seek written assurance letter re shared risk from Scottish Government	Mar 26	RMack/NH/CC		Open
Jan 26 – Budget Planning	Develop medium-term financial plan in order to address/reduce ongoing deficit position	Jun 26	PR/CE & SG	Forecast due to be submitted to SG 18 March.	Not yet due
March 26 - Minute of Workforce Governance Committee held on 25 February 2026	Gender pay gap work to return to the June Board with findings and integration into the existing action plan.	Jun 26	SD	Report will be presented at the June Board meeting	Open
March 26 Sustainability Annual Report	- Consider the feasibility of differential mileage rates, within HMRC rules, to encourage lower emissions.	Jun 26	RMack/SD		Open

Commented [PA1]: Lisa, was this taken to the recent Programme Board? If not I can move the date to September

Commented [PA2]: Ross, can this be closed given assurance on shared risk at SG at March meeting or are we still chasing a letter?

Commented [PA3]: Neil, any update?

Commented [PA4]: Ross, any update?

Meeting/Item	Action	Timescale	Lead	Comments	Status
March 26 Whistleblowing Policy	- To update the controls section to reflect the policy's governance route through committees.	Jun 26	CMack	Controls section has been updated accordingly	Suggest closed
	To review the policy to determine whether it should include explicit reference to appropriate external bodies responsible for handling concerns relating to Board member conduct.	Jun 26	CMack	Policy updated to include explicit reference as indicated.	Suggest closed

SCRA Board Annual Workplan - 2026

Business Item (supporting the delivery of our corporate objectives and functions)	28 Jan 26	18 March 26	17 June 26	16 Sept 26	16 Dec 26
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					✓
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				✓	
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)	28 Jan 26	18 March 26	17 June 26	16 Sept 26	16 Dec 26
Annual Report & Accounts				✓	
Financial Strategy				✓	
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	✓				
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)	✓			✓	
Working in Partnership (Engaging with Stakeholders)					
Chief Executive's Report	✓*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communication Plan			✓		

✓* Focus on SCRA Staff Survey

Present:

Steve Renwick (Chair)
Lynne Clow (Vice Chair)

In Attendance:

Cathie Cowan (Board Chair)
Neil Hunter (Principal Reporter/Chief Executive)
Alistair Hogg (Head of Practice and Policy)
Ross Mackenzie (Head of Finance and Resources)
Paul Mulvanny (Senior Operational Manager)
Douglas Cameron (Head of Digital)
Pamela Armstrong (Governance Officer)

Internal Audit (BDO):

Gemma MacLeod

External Audit (Audit Scotland):

Sean Cowan

Minute:

Item	Topic	Timescale	Owner
1.	Welcome, Apologies and Confirmation of Quorum The Chair opened the meeting, confirmed that the Committee was quorate, and recorded apologies from Hazel Smith, Committee Member.		
2.	Declaration (s) of Interest (s) No declarations were made.		
3.	Minute of SCRA Audit and Assurance Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 25 November 2025 Minute of 25 November 2025 was approved.		
4.	Matters Arising from Minute of Tuesday 25 November 2025 Covered under action log item. Matters Arising from Action Log The Head of Finance and Resources reported: The annual internal audit plan item appears on the agenda for discussion and will cover the		

	request to include a financial systems review in 2026/27. • The update to the Risk Management Policy (para 9.10) has been completed and submitted to the Board in December, proposed to close. • The Strategic Risk Register was reviewed by the EMT in December; today's paper reflects those outputs and will also go to the Planning & Performance Committee and then the Board for further comment. • Annual Fraud Report follow-ups include prompt reporting to AAC of significant cases; a potential case would be covered later in the meeting. • Whistleblowing Policy: the revised Remuneration & Nominations Committee intends to review it before Board consideration and approval; suggested as closed in the log. • The Chair proposed closing Action 1 (annual audit plan linkage) because it is now embedded in business-as-usual through the paper later in the agenda; members were content to close items as recommended. Mandatory Training • The Head of Finance and Resources outlined the SCRA definition of "mandatory training", the 90% completion expectation, embedding requirements for new starters, and use of supervision and management processes where completion lags. • The Committee Vice Chair welcomed the tighter definition and periodic review, raised the Board's own mandatory/CPD training expectations (e.g., data protection, equality & diversity, cyber risk) and the burden of duplicative courses across public bodies. • The Board Chair proposed Board Members CPD be considered within the Board development day (April), so expectations and capture mechanisms are clear. The Chair asked for a baseline position for mandatory training completion to understand starting levels. The Head of Finance and Resources indicated Information Governance (IG) training completion is around 95–96% and undertook to gather metrics for other mandatory modules with the Head of HR for circulation.		
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	Agreed: - Action Log items closed/noted as recommended, including closing the audit-plan-related action. - To provide baseline and current mandatory training metrics (beyond IG) to the Committee. - Board Development Day (April) to include a session covering Board CPD/mandatory training.	Aug 26 April 26	RMack /SD PA/CC
5.	Workplan The Committee noted the workplan.		
6.	Internal Audit		
6.1	Annual Audit Plan Gemma MacLeod, BDO, presented the proposed internal audit plan for 2026/27, including provisional scopes, timings, and linkage to risks. One to-be-confirmed review pending EMT confirmation (FOI, Data Protection, or Complaints). Issues arising during discussion: - The PR/CE supported the plan and highlighted: - Fine-tuning around partnership engagement to distinguish clearly between partnership and operational delivery interactions at locality level. - The basket of compliance topics (FOI, Data Protection, Complaints) is all valuable; an external view on their maturity would be useful given prior investment. - Timing sensitivities for locality-focused work to ensure access to LMTs/staff. - Ongoing attention to financial controls and corporate governance themes, with the latter following on from the Board Effectiveness review on today's agenda. - The Committee Vice Chair asked about revisiting areas such as the budget gap and legislative change, given risk profile, and Board unease. The PR/CE noted the Care & Justice Act had a recent internal audit and suggested that if the Committee wished targeted assurance on the budget gap, External Audit (Audit Scotland) might be the more appropriate route. - The Board Chair referenced ongoing government stress-testing and opportunities to formalise risk-sharing aspects (considering wider system reviews) in the planned Sponsorship Team and EMT/ facilitated engagement session. The Chair proposed picking up going concern/budget gap		

	explicitly under the External Audit item. Members agreed. Agreed: To approve the internal audit plan pending EMT confirmation of the compliance audit item.	May 26	EMT
6.2	Board Effectiveness Gemma MacLeod, BDO, presented the findings from the Board Effectiveness assurance review, which drew on survey results, interviews and a sample of Board papers and minutes. She reported that substantial assurance was provided for both the design and operation of controls, with one low significance finding relating to stakeholder engagement. This recommendation focused on strengthening engagement with young people, increasing visibility in localities, and improving how stakeholder feedback is reflected in policy and practice reporting. Issues arising during discussion: - Members discussed the scope and value-adding nature of stakeholder engagement. The Board Chair stressed authenticity and proportionality and suggested reflecting regular executive policy-influence engagement (e.g., with SG) that may be under-reported. The Committee Vice Chair proposed refining the definition to focus on stakeholders that add value to the Board and SCRA, to keep activity proportionate and impactful. - The Committee noted the report.		
7.	External Audit		
7.1	Annual Audit Plan Sean Cowan, Audit Scotland, introduced the External Audit Annual Plan for 2025/26 and outlined the scope and approach to the audit, including the audit of the financial statements, regularity, performance report, governance statement and remuneration and staff report, together with wider-scope responsibilities. He confirmed that this was the fourth year of the five-year audit appointment. Sean set out the planned materiality levels and highlighted two significant risks: management override of controls and the implementation of the new general ledger system, noting the associated risks around data migration, system operation, and user familiarity. He summarised the planned procedures for addressing these risks and highlighted the audit timetable agreed with management, including		

	submission of draft accounts in June and reporting to the Committee in August. Sean also advised that the audit fee included a one-off additional element linked to the ledger transition. Issues arising during discussion: • The Chair thanked Audit Scotland for the update and sought clarification that the fee increase was a single-year adjustment, which Sean confirmed. • The Head of Finance and Resources provided an update on the implementation of the new general ledger system, confirming that the system remained on schedule for go-live within the next four to five weeks. Training for finance staff was ongoing, and legacy data would be available to support external audit sampling. The Head of Finance and Resources proposed scheduling a reserve Committee meeting date during the week commencing 24 August as a precaution should any audit delays arise. • The Committee Vice Chair queried the basis for the £35,000 reporting threshold and its proportionality for SCRA. Audit Scotland advised that the threshold derived from the overall materiality assessment and risk analysis, although qualitative factors could also require reporting of matters below the threshold, and that the figure would be reviewed when draft accounts were submitted. The PR/CE noted that management had been comfortable with the threshold in previous years and welcomed continued discussion between management and external audit. • Audit Scotland confirmed that External Audit would continue to report on financial management and financial sustainability, including the budget gap, as part of the wider-scope audit conclusions. • The Head of Finance and Resources updated the Committee on a suspected fraud case involving a staff member wrongly holding two remunerated posts in SCRA and CHS simultaneously identified during audit planning discussions. He advised that following investigation the matter was assessed to have been a naïve error, with no fraudulent intent. The member of staff concerned had resigned from SCRA. The Head of Finance and Resources confirmed that the matter had been reported to Audit Scotland in line		
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	with expectations and that internal processes had operated effectively. The Committee noted the external annual audit plan.		
8.	Corporate Reports		
8.1	Information Governance - 6 Monthly update report The Head of Practice and Policy introduced the six-monthly update on Information Governance activity, including breach-prevention training, updates to records management and safeguarder documentation, the review and redesign of non-disclosure processes, data breach trends, ICO reportable incidents, subject access and freedom of information requests, and ongoing operational assurance work. Issues arising during discussion: - The Committee Vice Chair asked whether SCRA receives internal subject access requests from staff. The Head of Practice and Policy confirmed that such requests are rare, with only one case in recent years. The Vice Chair also asked how the organisation considers the impact on children and families following non-disclosure breaches. The Head of Practice and Policy advised that every breach is subject to a full risk assessment, often conducted alongside social work partners, and confirmed that SCRA considers and acts on any practical steps required to support those affected. - The Chair welcomed the update and noted the importance of the improvements being made to redaction processes, particularly considering wider sector and public interest in the area. Agreed: - To approve the Information Governance - 6 Monthly update report.		
8.2	Strategic Risk Register The Head of Finance and Resources presented the outcome of EMT's recent review of the Strategic Risk Register, confirming that all seven active strategic risks had been reviewed. The update showed: - Current scoring for each strategic risk. - A summary of controls and actions, noting their green/amber/red status. - Oversight responsibility for each risk.		

	Digital Risk – Deep Dive The Committee received a detailed deep dive on Risk 1 – IT security measures relating to cyber-attack, including the full underlying controls, latest assurance assessments, and updates on actions. The paper set out the organisation’s current cyber-security posture, the status of controls, and contextual factors influencing risk scoring. Issues arising during discussion: • The Head of Finance and Resources highlighted the detailed control set and the rationale behind the amber-rated control, which reflected the external cyber-threat environment rather than any deficiency in internal controls. The Head of Digital expanded on this, explaining that cyber-threat levels remain high across the public sector and that SCRA maintains active monitoring of external developments. He advised that cyber-attack should be considered an eventual likelihood and emphasised the organisation’s priority on real-time alerting, monitoring, and response capability as SCRA becomes increasingly digital and more public-facing through its transformation programmes. He also noted ongoing and future investment in cyber-security measures. • The Committee Vice Chair asked for an overall assessment of the organisation’s live exposure to cyber risk. The Head of Digital confirmed that the likelihood of attempted cyber-attacks is high across the public sector and that SCRA must therefore plan on the basis that an attempt is inevitable. He reinforced that the objective is not to eliminate risk, but to ensure SCRA is equipped to respond effectively. Agreed: • To approve EMT’s recommended updates to the risk register and note the deep dive.		
9.	Standing Items		
9.1	Topical/Regulatory/Governance Issues No new issues reported.		
9.2	New Risks No new risks identified.		

9.3	Items for Escalation to the Board The Chair proposed escalating the Board Effectiveness Review to the full Board and the planned Board Development Day. No other items were identified.		
Close There being no further business, the Chair thanked members and attendees.			

Date of next meeting: Thursday 21 May 2026, Bell Street, Glasgow

Draft

Present:

Lorraine Moore (Committee Chair)
Steve Renwick (Committee Member)
Cathie Cowan (Board Chair)

Attending:

Susan Deery (Head of HR)
Pamela Armstrong (Governance Officer)
Cathy Mackinnon (HR Business Partner)
Sarah Wood (Inclusion and Diversity Manager)

	Title	Timescale	Owner
1.	AOB Committee Name The Committee confirmed its new title, Workforce Governance Committee, as the most accurate reflection of its remit across SCRA workforce matters (staff and governance interfaces). The change will be reflected in papers and escalations submitted to the Board.	March Board	PA
2.	Apologies Apologies were received from Hazel Smith (Vice Chair), Lynne Clow (Member), and Neil Hunter (Principal Reporter/Chief Executive).		
3.	Declarations of Interest None		
4.	Minute of the last meeting 4.1 Summary minute of the last meeting for submission to the Board - Approved 4.2 Matters Arising Implementation of the Children's Reporter job description and grading changes was confirmed as completed; one residual action is captured under the Workforce Report.		
5.	Workplan The Committee reviewed the February workplan (People Strategy, EDI monitoring, PR/CE pay assurance, Risk Register) and agreed it remained appropriate.		
6.	Draft 26/27 Workforce Report The draft report (final year of the 2024/27 People Strategy) was reviewed. Key points included sustained recruitment activity, reduced fixed-term contracts, low turnover, demographic risks		



	linked to an ageing workforce, and plans to strengthen supervision and wellbeing support. The Committee agreed to recommend the report to the Board for approval.	<i>March Board</i>	<i>SD</i>
7.	Health and Safety Annual Report The Committee noted incident levels and ongoing wellbeing initiatives and reinforced a zero-tolerance approach to violence and abuse. It was agreed the report should be submitted to the Board for approval.	<i>March Board</i>	<i>SD</i>
8.	Revised Whistleblowing Policy The revised policy reflects recent legislation and improvements to accessibility. The Committee requested final amendments (confidentiality wording, routes to raise concerns, scope clarity, alignment with related policies) before submission to the Board for approval.	<i>March Board</i>	CMack
9.	PR/CE Pay Award for noting The approved pay award (with Scottish Government confirmation) was noted. A future review of the role profile/ evaluation will be scheduled at an appropriate time.		SD
10.	Pay Gap Highlights The Committee noted forthcoming statutory publication and that SCRA's gender pay gap remains structurally driven; external experts will present to the Board later in the year.		
11.	Board Recruitment update Two vacancies are anticipated; national appointment timelines apply. Governance and quorum are being actively managed, and a Board development session will review skills requirements.		
12.	Head of Practice and Policy Recruitment for noting Recruitment is underway (advertised, closing date and interviews set) and aligns with the approach to externally advertise EMT roles.		
13.	Risk The Strategic Risk Register was noted. No new strategic risks were identified; governance pressures linked to Board vacancies continue to be monitored operationally.		
	Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 26 May 2026 at 10:30, by TEAMS		



Minute of SCRA Planning and Performance Committee, held on Monday 23 February 2026, at Bell Street, Glasgow

Present

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

In Attendance

Lisa Bennett, Head of Strategy and OD
 Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
 Donald Lamb, Data Manager
 Andrew MacDonald, Planning and Performance Manager
 Lindsay MacFadyen, Quality Assurance Manager
 Douglas Cameron, Head of Digital Operations and Development
 Ian Allen, Head of Property
 Pamela Armstrong, Governance Manager

	Item	Timescale	Owner
1.	Welcome and apologies The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed all attendees, and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Apologies were received from Lorraine Moore, Committee and Board Member.		
2.	Declaration (s) of Interest (s) No declaration of interests was noted.		
3.	Previous Minutes and Action Log Meeting held on Monday, 8 December 2025 Minute of 8 December 2025 was approved. The Committee reviewed the Action Log, noting the status of all outstanding actions and confirming progress since the previous meeting. No actions were flagged as overdue or requiring escalation. Issues Arising During Discussion • <i>Clarity on reporting routes:</i> Members discussed where certain actions should be monitored (e.g., whether via Programme updates, or Business Plan reporting) to ensure appropriate visibility and avoid duplication.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	<i>Closed and near closure items:</i> The Committee noted that several actions were now completed or nearing completion and could be closed in advance of the next meeting. No concerns were identified about pace or ownership. Agreed: - The Committee noted and approved the updated Action Log. - To incorporate minor updates discussed and ensure alignment with the updated workplan.	June 26	PA
4.	Matters Arising - Letters to children: The Committee noted that work on child friendly letters continues to align with the wider automation and communications improvement programme. Further updates will come through future programme reports. - Court related actions: Actions connected to court processes and the national practice note remain dependent on upcoming engagement with SCTS. This will be monitored and reported under relevant agenda items. - The Committee noted the Matters Arising update.		
5.	PPC Workplan The Committee reviewed the forward workplan to ensure upcoming reports and assurance items were appropriately scheduled for future meetings. The workplan sets out the sequencing of business plan reporting, programme assurance, risk reviews, and deep dive sessions. Issues Arising During Discussion <i>Alignment with business plan milestones:</i> The Committee agreed that workplan scheduling should align with business plan milestone timings, ensuring reports are brought when they provide meaningful assurance rather than simply following a fixed calendar. <i>Ensuring appropriate Committee coverage:</i> The discussion included consideration of what should come to PPC versus the Board, to avoid duplication and maintain clarity of oversight. PPC will focus on performance, planning, and programme delivery, with strategic decision making reserved for the Board.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	Agreed: - The Committee approved the updated workplan. - To update the workplan to reflect: - scheduling of sustainability and property reports; - alignment with business plan milestone timings.	June 26	PA
6.	OPR The Data Manager presented the Quarter 3 Organisational Performance Report (OPR), covering performance from 1 October to 31 December 2025. The Committee reviewed national and locality level data across the Care, Connect and Protect quadrants of the balanced scorecard. Overall performance remains broadly stable, with several areas showing improvement, while others continue to experience pressure. Issues Arising During Discussion <i>Upward trend in investigation times:</i> The Committee noted a continued increase in the time taken from referral to Hearing decision. The rise in Q3 was attributed mainly to a greater proportion of cases requiring to be established at court (87% of cases requiring establishment). <i>Non offence referral volatility:</i> Members discussed significant fluctuations in police non offence referrals, particularly in Highlands & Islands, Glasgow, Ayrshire, and North Strathclyde. This was noted as a longstanding issue linked to policing practice. Efforts continue in several localities to work with police on referral practices. Sharing comparative data should also help. Locality support from other teams has been deployed in Highlands due to volume pressures and high sickness absence. It was noted that preparations are in hand for more flexible support and easier transfer of work between localities. <i>Joint reports backlog:</i> A substantial rise in joint reports awaiting COPFS decisions was observed. Resource pressures at COPFS mean sustained high volumes are expected. <i>KPI performance:</i> Mixed but stable <i>Absence pressures:</i> Short-term absence met the 2% target nationally (1.7%), but long-term absence remains high at 5.1%, with Central locality over 10%.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	• <i>Financial outlook:</i> Revenue spend is underspent due to shifts in CCJA implementation timelines; capital spend is forecast red due to project slippage and additional funding received late in the year. SCRA will seek to retain unspent funds in reserves. • <i>Locality variations:</i> The Committee reflected on wide variation across localities, particularly regarding decision timeliness, scheduling, pressures arising from court work, absence, and referral rates. These differences continue to drive some of the national amber ratings. Local target setting reflects differing circumstances, but in all localities provides ambition to improve performance. • The Committee noted the report.		
7.	Business Plan		
7.1	Business Plan 2025/26 The Planning and Performance Manager presented the 2025/26 Business Plan progress update, covering performance across the plan's ten objectives. The report concluded that delivery is broadly on track, with key developments across legislative preparation, corporate parenting, communications, digital enablement, data and research, environmental work, Programme Protect, trauma-informed practice, development and wellbeing, and inclusion and diversity. No risks were flagged for escalation at this stage. Issues Arising During Discussion • <i>Automation (Objective 3):</i> Members sought clarity on the reference to automation. The Planning and Performance Manager explained that SCRA produces over half a million communications annually, and automation aims to reduce manual effort by generating letters directly from accurately recorded data. This relies on improved data quality and reduces unnecessary intervention by staff. • <i>Timelines and dependencies:</i> The Committee noted that Family Centred Scheduling (FCS) timelines had been amended to align with concurrent nondisclosure work. Similarly, some elements of legislation related preparation remain dependent on external timelines (e.g., CCJA implementation). • <i>Corporate Parenting tools (Communi-crate):</i> Members noted ongoing rollout of the		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	Communi-crate toolkit following successful testing, with all hearing centres due to receive kits by the end of December 2026. • <i>Digital work and partner collaboration:</i> The Committee acknowledged progress on discovery work for digital services, data exchange with partners, automation, and DESC testing, recognising that some activity may require longer-term development beyond the current business plan period. • <i>Wellbeing Strategy progress:</i> The Wellbeing Strategy is being finalised following external peer review and internal feedback, with publication expected in late February or early March. • <i>Inclusion and Diversity:</i> Members noted progress on anti-racism training, LGBT Charter commitments, and the gender pay gap work due for Board presentation in June. • The Committee noted the report.		
7.2	Business Plan 2026/27 – Draft The Planning and Performance Manager presented the draft Business Plan for 2026/27, the final year of the 2024–27 Corporate Plan. The plan sets out nine organisational objectives aligned to SCRA’s four strategic aims, and reflects consultation with EMT, functional leads, and UNISON. The draft has also been shared with the Scottish Government and localities to support operational planning. The final version will be more visual and accessible, developed with Communications. The plan incorporates the Target Operating Model (TOM) and a revised delivery framework to better show how teams and functions contribute to organisational goals. The business plan will accompany the forthcoming 2027–30 Corporate Plan development cycle. Issues Arising During Discussion • <i>Children and Young People’s Voice:</i> The Committee emphasised that the plan should more clearly show how children and young people’s input and feedback has shaped activities, given ongoing codesign work within Corporate Parenting, digital development, and family centred scheduling. Members stressed		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	compliance with Practice Direction 6 and looked for evidence of application of key messages from the harmful sexual behaviour training. The report found that the majority of decisions were assessed as justified and appropriate, while also identifying recurring areas for improvement, particularly regarding investigation sufficiency, specificity in information requests to social work, and quality of recording on CSAS. Issues Arising During Discussion • <i>Investigation sufficiency:</i> A significant proportion of reviewers' disagreement with reporter decisions stemmed from insufficient investigation or lack of challenge to inadequate social work assessments. This echoed broader concerns across previous QA exercises about variability in investigative depth. • <i>Specificity in report requests:</i> The Committee noted gaps in how Reporters request information from social work, with many requests lacking necessary detail on concerns or failing to specify when specialist risk assessment tools (e.g., AIM3) should be used despite this being a strong message in training and Practice Direction 6. • <i>Recording quality:</i> Members highlighted the need for improvement in what Reporters record on the CSAS investigation form, particularly around: ◦ describing the alleged behaviour, ◦ grading concern or gravity, ◦ referencing risk assessment frameworks, ◦ and articulating the rationale for decisions. This aligns with recurring themes from previous decision-making QA exercises. • <i>Use of training messages:</i> The Committee noted that although the harmful sexual behaviour training was well received, explicit references to training tools (e.g., Hackett continuum; Brook Traffic Light Tool) appeared infrequently in case recording. There was little difference between Reporters who had and had not attended the training in terms of recording quality, suggesting the need for reinforcement. • <i>Relevance for future QA work:</i> Members welcomed that a future case sampling exercise will examine reporter investigations and proportionality, as this has been identified as an area needing deeper insight.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	- The Committee noted the findings of the QA exercise. Agreed: - QA Manager / Practice Team to strengthen Action 3 in the QA Action Plan to reflect clear, targeted improvements in recording, including: - specificity in information requests, - referencing training messages where appropriate, - and clearer rationale for decision-making.	June 26	LMacF
8.2	Case Sampling 26/27 programme The Quality Assurance Manager presented the proposed national Quality Assurance case sampling programme for 2026/27, comprising four exercises covering: - Reporter applications to the sheriff for interim compulsory supervision orders (ICSOs). - Reporter decision making for children already subject to a CSO. - Analysis of statements of grounds as established at court, comparing them to the originally drafted version. - Examination of the reporter's investigation process, including proportionality in information requests. The proposal was developed following consultation with the Practice Network, Practice & Quality Network, and EMT, and includes topics considered but not selected. Issues Arising During Discussion - The Committee sought clarity on the relevance and volume of certain cases (e.g., ICSO numbers compared with CSOs), the QA Manager provided context on how frequently interim orders arise in practice. - Members discussed the value of examining Reporter decision making where children are already on CSOs, recognising that this area may become increasingly significant if future legislation grants Reporters new powers around initiating review hearings. - The Committee welcomed the inclusion of an exercise focused on proportionality of investigation, noting links to findings from the harmful sexual behaviour case sampling exercise		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	and the importance of requesting appropriate and necessary information from partners. - Topics that were considered but excluded (e.g., specific s.67(2)(f) grounds language, child facing letters, witness statement preparation) were reviewed, with the Committee satisfied with the rationale for not prioritising them this cycle. - The Committee noted and supported the proposed case sampling programme for 2026/27.		
9.	Sustainability Deep Dive The Planning and Performance Manager, supported by The Head of Property, presented the Sustainability Bridge Plan (2025–27), outlining SCRA’s phased approach to delivering its eight sustainability priorities. Phase 1 focuses on behavioural change, staff engagement, waste minimisation, travel, and improving data capture, while Phase 2 introduces more ambitious interventions and feeds into development of the 2027–2030 sustainability/NetZero plan. The plan is designed to work alongside the Property Strategy, recognising constraints in capital availability, estate configuration, and data quality. Issues Arising During Discussion - Capital limitations and resourcing pressures were highlighted. The Committee acknowledged that significant estate improvements (e.g., heating system electrification, smart technology) depend on future capital, which the organisation expects to be very constrained in 26/27 and subsequent years. - Estate constraints including limited shower facilities and restricted ability to alter leased buildings were noted as barriers to staff adopting sustainable travel choices. - Data gaps across commuting, waste, water use, and energy accuracy were recognised; the Committee accepted the use of trajectory based indicators until more robust baselines can be established. - Staff engagement was discussed, with members acknowledging progress via the Environmental Ambassadors network but recognising staff awareness levels remain uneven and require continued focus through Phase 1 activities.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	- Balancing sustainability with service delivery was raised particularly that some potential environmental improvements must be weighed carefully against operational needs and experience for children and families. - Opportunities for external partnership funding were explored but noted to be limited for SCRA as a statutory body; partnership based local environmental initiatives (e.g., greenspace projects) were considered more feasible. - The Committee also discussed the importance of ensuring sustainability work remains connected to board level strategic planning, including property decisions and future capital prioritisation. - The Committee noted the Sustainability Bridge Plan and its phased approach. - The Committee agreed key points should be reported to the Board, including capital constraints, data limitations, and the early stage nature of sustainability development. Actions - To consider how property and sustainability deliverables should be scheduled into the Committee's future workplan, using business plan milestones as the reference point.	June 26	LB
10.	Programme Update The Head of Strategy and OD provided a verbal update on current programme activity. - The rollout of family centred scheduling is progressing across localities and remains on track for completion by July. Work is also continuing on the non-disclosure system changes within the digital programme, which are being implemented in parallel with operational practice changes. - The Programme completed its third Gateway Assurance Review, receiving an amber/green rating, indicating a high level of confidence in the programme's ability to deliver. The review produced nine recommendations covering both change management and governance themes. These included the need to strengthen readiness assessments, define clearer closure criteria, introduce more consistent use of root cause analysis, and identify local champions to support		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	change adoption. Governance recommendations focused on enhancing the effectiveness of the Strategic Programmes Group, improving dependency and benefits mapping, and reviewing programme resourcing. An action plan has been developed, and most actions are due for completion by end March, with closure related actions scheduled through to September. Issues Arising During Discussion • Committee members noted the complexity and scale of the change portfolio currently underway and highlighted the importance of robust coordination across digital and operational workstreams. • The need for strengthened readiness assessments was discussed, with members emphasising the risk of inconsistent implementation if localities are not fully prepared ahead of rollout. Members also identified the importance of clearer closure criteria to ensure projects and phases conclude decisively and benefits are captured before new activity begins. • The Committee discussed the value of identifying local champions to support change within teams and improve local ownership. Further, members acknowledged the need to enhance programme governance, particularly around the Strategic Programmes Group, and welcomed plans to develop an organisation wide portfolio management approach. The timing and monitoring of actions arising from the Gateway Review were also noted as essential to maintaining programme momentum and assurance. • The Head of Strategy and OD confirmed that work is already underway to strengthen governance structures. Workshops have been held to review the Strategic Programmes Group's role and ways of working, and a full day portfolio management workshop will take place in March to support more coherent oversight of change activity across the organisation. • The Committee noted the update.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	Agreed: Programme Team to circulate the final Gateway Assurance Review documentation once approved.	June 26	LB
11.	External Environment The PR/CE provided an update on key developments in the external policy, legislative and system landscape, focusing on: - UNCRC implementation, particularly new police custody obligations for under-18s. - Capacity planning for the future Age of Referral (CCJA) changes, including active recruitment. - Progress and uncertainty around the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) Bill (CCCESP), with several amendments under negotiation. - Activity within the Hearings System Redesign Board, including an upcoming large-scale engagement session on redesign proposals. Issues Arising During Discussion <i>UNCRC – limited operational impact for SCRA:</i> Committee members noted that while Police Scotland faces significant new duties under UNCRC custody requirements, there will be minimal direct impact on SCRA because overnight custody leading to next day hearings is now extremely rare. <i>Recruitment ahead of CCJA implementation:</i> The Committee discussed the need to continue recruitment for Assistant Reporters, Senior Practitioners and Reporters, despite CCSD timelines slipping, to ensure future capacity is in place. <i>Pressures in the legislative process:</i> Members noted the volume of late amendments to the CCCESP Bill and the possibility that further changes could significantly affect timelines, workloads, and practice expectations. Areas of concern included: - the proposed three-month statutory limit for establishing grounds; - role expectations for Reporters in any single person hearing structure; - changes relating to infants; - the potential move toward opt-out advocacy.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	<i>Hearings redesign – lack of clarity on data workstream:</i> The Committee discussed the challenge of understanding what the redesign programme aims to achieve through its data workstream, with SCRA noting this as the least developed area and potentially one with significant operational implications. <i>Partnership dynamics:</i> Concerns were raised about the dependency on partners (e.g., Social Work, Police Scotland, SCTS) for successful implementation of system changes and legislative shifts. SCRA continues to play a leading role in engaging partners to ensure system readiness. - The Committee noted the update.		
12.	Risk Current Risks The Committee reviewed the subset of strategic risks that fall under PPC oversight. The PR/CE confirmed that these PPC linked risks remain stable, with positive movement in one area and no new concerns identified. The PPC relevant risks are: 1. Implementation of Children's Care & Justice reforms / CCJA related risk (practice and operational preparedness) <i>reported as improving.</i> 2. External Environment Risk (uncertainty caused by legislative change and Hearings System Redesign). 3. Sustainability/Environmental Planning Risk (connected to the Sustainability Bridge Plan and Property Strategy). Issues Arising During Discussion <i>Children's Care & Justice/CCJA related implementation risk:</i> The PR/CE advised this risk is moving downward in likelihood/impact due to significant preparatory work already undertaken. This risk will likely be proposed for closure soon, subject to confirmation once remaining preparations mature. <i>External Environment Risk (Legislation & System Redesign):</i> The Committee noted this risk remains stable but is expected to fluctuate as the CCCESP Bill progresses and as redesign proposals mature. Members recognised that		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	uncertainty remains around timescales, amendments, and cross system dependencies, and that PPC will need to keep this risk under regular review. • <i>Sustainability/Environmental Planning Risk:</i> Discussion linked this risk to Item 8 (Sustainability Deep Dive). The Committee noted that progress is constrained by capital availability, data gaps, and the early-stage nature of sustainability culture change. These constraints keep the risk level steady rather than declining. • The Committee noted the updates to PPC relevant risks. • The Committee supported EMT's direction of travel, including the likely closure of the CCJA implementation risk once readiness is fully evidenced. New Risks No new risks identified		
13.	Items for Escalation to the Board 1. Operational Performance (OPR) • Ongoing pressures from long-term absence impacting performance. • Locality issues highlighted: Highlands (high referrals; external social work capacity) and Central (staff mix/experience; LRM recruitment). • Police hub partnership progressing positively; further expansion planned within existing resources. • Continuing delays in court processes; key meeting with SCTS scheduled for March regarding national practice note. 2. Business Plan 2025/26 (Current Year) • Delivery on course across all objectives; milestones now clearly presented. • No concerns requiring escalation; Committee provides positive assurance. 3. Draft Business Plan 2026/27 • Draft structure supported; plan aligns with Board expectations for short, visual content. • Committee requested clearer signposting of children and young people's influence before Board approval.		

	Item	Timescale	Owner
	- Potential future need to revise KPIs once legislative and digital changes become clearer. 4. Sustainability – Bridge Plan - Organisation progressing through early-stage behaviour focused- sustainability work. - Capital constraints likely to limit the scale and pace of property-related sustainability improvements. - Committee endorses the phased and pragmatic approach; Board to note resource dependencies. 5. Programme Governance & Assurance - Programme achieved an amber/green assurance rating (high confidence). - Nine recommendations accepted: most actions due by end March, with closure actions to September. - Governance strengthening underway (dependency mapping, benefits mapping, clearer resourcing). 6. Committee's Overall Assurance View - Assurance provided across: performance, business planning, programme delivery, and sustainability, with recognition of external dependencies and evolving risks. - Issues requiring continued Board oversight: court delays, locality pressures, and legislative changes still in development.		
	Close The Chair brought the meeting to a close, thanking members for their contributions and constructive discussion throughout the session. The Committee confirmed that all items on the agenda had been covered and that there were no further matters to raise.		
	Date of the next meeting Monday 01 June 2026, 10:30-1pm at Bell Street, Glasgow		

SCRA Board

18 March 2026

Agenda item 8.1- Chief Executive's Report

Report Classification: *Open*

For: Information

Executive Sponsor: Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

Author: Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of general areas of activity across SCRA including joint work with UNISON, Scottish Government and other partners.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to:

- Note the content of the report.

Key Issues to be Discussed/Considered

- Progress of the current legislation before Parliament
- Work of the Hearings Redesign Board
- Publication of further innovative and ground breaking SCRA research

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:

bbbb

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Chief Executives Report

1. National Partnership Forum

- 1.1 The National Partnership Forum met on 24 February and had a really full agenda including a concluding discussion on the completion of the review of the Children's Reporter Job Description, an update on the 2025 staff survey and action plan, the forthcoming CSAS upgrades in relation to hearing information packs and non disclosure/redaction functions. We also discussed the prospective programme of job description reviews for locality vase posts as part of an ongoing programme of work over the next 3-4 years.
- 1.2 The NPF focussed substantively on the early progress of the joint work with Police Scotland on referrals, the incredibly successful, the recent launch of the SCRA interagency [learning hub](#) which has attracted a huge number of professionals to participate in online learning about the work of the Childrens Hearings System, an ambition of SCRA for some time. The Importance of the joint work with Police Scotland was recognised by the NPF as was the ongoing investment by the organisation in this work and the adaptive approach taken after initial phase and subsequent learning.
- 1.3 We had detailed updates in our usual standing items, with particular focus on the current bill going through parliament and the implications for SCRA duties and powers (as far as we know at this stage – see below for details)
- 1.4 Partnership between UNISON and SCRA has been strong and enduring. In recent times this has been hugely enabled and supported by the work and commitment of the UNISON Branch Secretary Monica Sweeney who is shortly due to step down from this role and will be retiring from SCRA in the summer after many years service to the Children's Hearings system. We owe a great debt to Monica for her incredible contribution to SCRA and its workforce. As Branch Secretary she has represented her members interests unwaveringly and has contributed to some really significant developments improvements within the organisation as well as contributing to the many governance and oversight structures to ensure that staff views are articulated and that we work to a strong ethos and culture of engagement and consultation. We wish Monica our genuine thanks and all the very best wishes in her new adventures

2. Scottish Government Liaison

- 2.1 Our regular accountability meeting took place on 2 March and focussed on the Childrens (Care, Care Experience and Service Planning) (Scotland) Bill – with extensive discussion on the wide array of amendments at stage 2 being considered by the Education, Children and Young People's Committee. SCRA has been keeping a careful watching brief on the amendments process and a helpful open dialogue with SG officials on Ministerial views and potential responses to amendments. Of particular note in relation to amendments to Chapter 3 of the Bill (Childrens Hearings) has included:-

- Introduction of the local availability of Family Group Decision Making as a consideration for the Reporter at the outset of assessment and investigation
- The Reporters potential future role on receipt of a referral in relation to communication with the child and family
- The changes to the how grounds hearings will function in the future and the potential for the Reporter, where grounds are clearly not accepted to refer directly to the Sheriff for proof.
- Timescale for the establishment of grounds and the role of the Sheriff in reviewing individual circumstances against this
- Provision of and future models of advocacy in the Childrens Hearings system

3. Strategic Partnerships

3.1 Youth Justice Improvement Board

3.1.1 SCRA are currently considering the [national consultation on the future of secure care](#). This is a high profile and major area of work and is in part a response to the [Reimagining Secure Care](#) work published by the Centre for Childrens Care and Justice (CYCJ)

3.1.2 SCRA leads a sub group of the YJIB looking at the availability of **data on children in conflict with the law** – specially at this stage the data held by Police Scotland. This has been time consuming and detailed work given the scale of potential information held by Police Scotland across numerous databases, the sensitivity of the information and the need for a detailed Information Sharing Agreement with partners. However after several years of work this now looks like a core minimum information set may shortly be routinely made available to partners to support needs assessment, local and national planning and proactive management of resources.

3.1.3 Movement Restriction Conditions guidance

3.1.4 Movement Restriction Conditions are an important disposal available to Children's Hearings (and to Sheriff's). The Care and Justice Act amends the criteria for an MRC

a) that the child's health, safety or development is at risk,
or (b) that the child is likely to cause physical or psychological harm to another person.

3.1.5 MRC's are also required to be assessed when a secure care accommodation is being considered. MRC's however remain broadly under utilised (an area that SCRA has previously researched in 2007) . New detailed refreshed guidance is being launched in 2026 to further promote the new criteria and to encourage decision makers to look again at MRC's as part of a wider continuum of restrictive interventions for children at risk of harm or who may pose a risk of harm to others. The historic issues of inconsistent availability of intensive support services to accompany an MRC continue to be the key inhibiting factor.

3.1.6 Standards for children in conflict with the law

3.1.7 The Whole System Approach group has recently agreed revisions to standards that were first launched in 2020/21 – but full and effective implementation was adversely impacted by the pandemic. The group have taken the opportunity to refresh the standards which cover the following 11 areas:

- Children's Rights and Participation
- Prevention and Early Intervention
- Children's Hearings System
- Alternatives to Prosecution
- Court and Judicial Proceedings
- Deprivation of liberty
- Assessing, reducing and managing the risk of harm
- Transitions
- Victims
- Criminally exploited children
- Improving Outcomes

3.1.8 The Standards for Children in Conflict with the Law will be launched at the annual National Youth Justice Conference in June.

4. Hearings System Redesign Board

4.1 The Hearings Redesign Board had its first engagement session in early March – around 60 people signed up for the session which focussed on:-

- [Redesign Board vision mission and purpose](#)
- [Current redesign workstreams](#)
 - Planning and preparing children and young people for hearings
 - Referrals
 - Culture of the Children's Hearings System
 - Data (although this wasn't presented on the day and is subject to further review and specification)
- [Future Redesign workstreams](#)
 - Meeting the needs of babies and infants
 - Language in the Hearings system
 - The path to 2030

5. SCRA research breaks new ground

5.1 SCRA is about to publish some groundbreaking research on the use of Artificial Intelligence in the Hearing system. Entitled – 'A Double Edged Sword– Potential Uses of AI in the Children's Hearings System' the work includes an extensive literature review of use of AI in care and welfare settings as well as wider sector, an assessment of the evidence on ethical, rights and equalities based issues as

well as extensive fieldwork involving 169 participants including 19 children and young people and 21 parents and carers. Recommendations include:

- Having clear limitations on aspects of use of AI
 - Ensuring co-production is designed in any future work involving AI
 - A commitment to transparency and openness in any use of AI and an absolute commitment to protecting rights and privacy
 - Proper planning, monitoring and ongoing impact assessment of any current and future use of AI
- 5.2 Its an incredibly powerful detailed and substantive piece of work and gives further credibility to our research team on its skill and persistence in the design, methodology, delivery of the fieldwork and success in recruiting children, young people and carers to participate in this work which will have a great impact. The report is undergoing some final checks and formatting and we hope to have it released before purdah. A programme of dissemination is planned and Board members will be invited to attend these supporting events and activities.

6. EMT sessions

- 6.1 EMT are back on the road after a short break over winter. We took the senior team meeting to Kilmarnock where some staff were able to join the meeting itself and others for lunch and an informal discussion areas of interest – in particular the staff survey results, organisational culture and the current CSAS software upgrades. As ever the team contributed really powerfully to EMT perspectives and gave us lots of food for thought. A really helpful and constructive session.

SCRA BOARD

18 March 2026



Item 9.1 Financial Forecast Outturn 2025/26

Report Classification: Open

For: Information

Executive Sponsor: Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

Author: Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of SCRA's financial position for financial year to 28 February 2026 and a forecast (based on January results) for the year ending 31 March 2026.

A revenue underspend of £0.9m is forecast, principally arising from an unused £1m provision for CCJA recruitment. This forecast is in line with previous forecasts reported to Board and SG, and was been factored into Spring Budget Revision (SBR) to ensure SCRA did not draw down resource in advance of need.

Capital spend was deliberately accelerated in 2025/26 in order to use the available resource, resulting in a modest forecast overspend. Around £0.14m of unspent additional in-year capital resource is forecast to be returned to SG.

Recommendation

The Board is invited to note the revenue and capital position for the year to February 2026 and forecasts based on January actuals.

Key Issues to be discussed/considered

Further detail on the year to date (YTD) position and forecast is contained in Appendix 1 but there are no concerns regarding funding availability, underspends, overspends, or achievability of SCRA's planning objectives. All variances are manageable within SCRA's cash management controls.

Implications:

Service

N/A

Financial

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

Workforce

N/A

Infrastructure including Digital

N/A

Information Governance

N/A

Risk Assessment/Management

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

Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives

Spend and forecasts, after allowing for later-than-planned implementation of key provisions of the Children (Care & Justice) Act, are broadly in line with the Board-approved budget which supported SCRA's corporate and strategic objectives.

Equality Declaration

The author can confirm that due regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and compliance with the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of SCRA's decision making process. Further to evaluation it is noted that this paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation

Budget holders

Executive Management Team members

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Background and further detail

1 Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Government (SG) allocated SCRA revenue funding of £24.318m for 2025/26 in its budget published on 4 December 2024. However, Deputy Directors of Children's Rights, Protection and Justice Brian Taylor and Ian Donaldson acknowledged in their budget allocation and monitoring (BAM) letter of 28 March 2025 to the Principal Reporter that "expenditure this financial year could be up to £34.92m". This effectively acknowledges an unfunded resource pressure of up to £10.6m and, given repeated assurances from the Director of Children and Families Andrew Watson to the Board, the Board approved a revenue budget of £34.92m on this basis in March 2025.
- 1.2 The revenue budget pressure was resolved, as in previous years, in two tranches: Autumn Budget Revision (ABR) in August 2025 (£5.287m) and Spring Budget Revision (SBR) in early 2026 (£4.3m). The remainder of the deficit, £1.0m, was not provided by SG, because it largely related to recruitment in advance of CCJA implementation. The modest CCJA recruitment that is taking place prior to 1 April 2026 has been funded within existing resources.
- 1.3 SG allocated £4.2m of capital funding to SCRA for 2025/26 and the Board subsequently approved a £4.2m capital budget in March 2025. SG indicated in October 2025 that additional capital cash of £0.487m was available, and SCRA has drawn down this resource. SG confirmed to SCRA in early March 2026 that all capital resource not used by 31 March 2026 is to be returned to SG rather than to be held in reserves.

2 Revenue

- 2.1 The table below summarises the position to February 2026 by expense head. Depreciation is a non-cash charge and is excluded from the expenditure tables throughout. Payments in respect of unfunded pensions are also excluded.

Previous Full Year Actual £000	Expense Head	Budget Year to Feb £000	Actual Year to Feb £000	Variance Year to Feb £000	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Forecast Variance £000	Forecast Variance %
24,655	Staff Costs	25,939	25,042	-897	28,298	27,112	-1,186	-4.2%
2,457	Property Costs	2,307	1,782	-525	2,517	2,363	-154	-6.1%
203	Travel Costs	171	156	-15	186	204	+18	9.7%
3,148	Other Operating Charges	2,883	2,799	-84	3,145	3,472	+327	10.4%
159	Capital Financing	150	169	+19	163	163	+0	0.0%
-244	Other Income	-237	-171	+66	-259	-162	+97	-37.5%
30,378	Sub-total	31,213	29,777	-1,436	34,050	33,152	-898	-2.6%
334	Lease payments	112	131	+19	675	675	+0	0.0%
-30,130	Grant In Aid	-32,010	-31,100	+910	-34,920	-33,905	+1,015	-2.9%
582	Net Total for SCRA	-685	-1,192	-507	-195	-78	+117	

- 2.2 Year to date revenue expenditure is £1.4m under budget. On staff, this is due to costs associated with Children (Care and Justice) Act (CCJA) implementation not being incurred; additional spend incurred due to a higher-than-budgeted pay award and higher-than-budgeted costs arising from the review of the Children's Reporter Job Description have been met from unbudgeted in-year vacancies. Property costs show a YTD underspend due to the timing of bills for repairs and maintenance, shared costs from landlords and a large electricity credit in respect of prior years. Any costs relating to 2025/26 which have not been paid by 31 March 2026 will be accrued.

- 2.3 The table below summarises the position to February 2026 by budget centre, excluding depreciation, lease payments and unfunded pensions. (Totals may differ from the table above due to rounding.) The forecast underspend within Practice and Policy relates to the aforementioned unspent £1.0m CCJA provision.

Previous Full Year Actual £000	Cost centre	Budget Year to Feb £000	Actual Year to Feb £000	Variance Year to Feb £000	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Forecast Variance £000	Forecast Variance %
250	Communications	277	229	-48	302	267	-35	-11.6%
11,577	East and Central Scotland Area	11,396	11,458	+62	12,431	12,513	+82	0.7%
264	Executive	251	243	-8	274	265	-9	-3.3%
8,431	North West Scotland Area	8,554	8,493	-61	9,332	9,329	-3	0.0%
1,777	Practice and Policy	2,528	1,600	-928	2,758	1,782	-976	-35.4%
8,079	Support Services	8,207	7,753	-454	8,953	8,998	+45	0.5%
30,378	Net Total for SCRA	31,213	29,776	-1,437	34,050	33,154	-896	-2.6%

- 2.4 The forecast spend by locality is detailed below. The gap between YTD variance and forecast year-end variance arises due to anticipated year-end accruals relating to goods and services received but not yet paid.

Locality	Variance Year to Feb £000	Forecast Variance to March £000	Variance %
East & Central Scotland Office	+21	+27	+3.5%
Tayside & Fife Locality	+51	+62	+1.9%
South East Locality	-29	-47	-1.3%
Central Locality	+20	+38	+1.0%
Lanarkshire/Dumfries & Galloway Locality	+4	-1	+0.1%
Ayrshire Locality	-4	+3	-0.2%
North West Area Office	+27	+33	+5.0%
Highland, Moray & Western Isles Locality	-78	-55	-5.2%
Grampian Locality	+26	+67	+1.7%
North Strathclyde Locality	+16	+62	+0.5%
Glasgow Locality	-51	-109	-1.8%
	+3	+80	+0.0%

- 2.5 Plans are progressing to recruit some operational posts in advance of CCJA, mainly Assistant Reporters and Senior Practitioners. The timing of future recruitment will be kept under review given the update from SG that the key provisions impacting SCRA workload volume (i.e. more referrals of 16- and 17-year-olds to the Reporter) will not come into force before March 2027. Work continues to stabilise teams, bringing in additional or transfers of resource where operationally justified, and to give certainty where possible to staff on fixed term contracts.
- 2.6 The forecast underspend of £898k above is expected to modestly increase towards the end of the year, in line with previous years' experience, notwithstanding the change in approach to budget management this year where budget holders are discouraged from making vacancy savings. This will close the £117k gap between funding and spend; however, SCRA has sufficient working capital resource to manage a gap of this size, should a further underspend not materialise.

3 Capital

- 3.1 Capital spend to February 2026 is £3.43m, being £1.48m within the Digital programme and £1.95m within the Property programme (principally Glasgow). The total forecast spend is £4.54m, a modest £0.34m over-budget in order to maximise the additional resource referenced in paragraph 1.3 above, but £0.14m under total available resource of £4.69m. This £0.14m is ready to be returned to SG. There is potential for slippage of spend into 2026/27: where this creates an additional 2026/27 budget pressure, this will be managed in-year in discussions with budget holders, EMT and SG.

SCRA BOARD

18 March 2026

Item 10.1, Whistleblowing Policy

Report Classification: *Open*

For: *Approval*

Executive Sponsor: *Susan Deery, Head of HR*

Author: *Catherine Mackinnon, HR Business Partner*

Executive Summary

This report presents a further update to SCRA Whistleblowing Policy (February 2026) for Board approval. The policy has undergone a general refresh to make it clearer, more accessible, and aligned with current legislation, including the Employment Rights Act 2025, which strengthens protections for workers reporting sexual harassment.

The revised policy supports SCRA's commitment to fostering an open, transparent organisational culture where concerns can be raised safely and appropriately. It also introduces a standalone summary for easier staff access.

Feedback from the February meeting incorporated.

Recommendation

The Board is invited to:

- *Approve the revised Whistleblowing Policy (February 2026).*
- *Note the strengthened legislative protections and clarity on protected disclosures.*
- *Support implementation through awareness-raising and communication to staff.*

Key Issues to be discussed/considered

- *Alignment with Employment Rights Act 2025, particularly with new protections for those reporting sexual harassment.*
- *Clarification of what constitutes whistleblowing and how concerns should be raised.*
- *Strengthened guidance for managers receiving concerns.*
- *Updated routes for escalation, including for concerns about the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive or Board Members.*
- *Emphasis on SCRA's commitment to a transparent culture consistent with its Vision and Values.*

Implications:

Service

The revised policy reinforces SCRA's organisational culture of openness, supporting safer reporting of wrongdoing including fraud, breaches of legal obligations, health & safety risks, environmental harm, and sexual harassment

Financial

No direct financial implications. Investigations may incur minimal staff time and resource requirements but can prevent significant organisational risk.

Workforce

The updated policy strengthens protections and reassurance for staff, supporting wellbeing and confidence in reporting concerns. It also provides clearer expectations for managers and reinforces access to the Employee Assistance Programme.

Infrastructure including Digital

N/A

Information Governance

The process requires confidential handling and secure management of whistleblowing records in line with GDPR and data protection requirements.

Risk Assessment/Management

- *Supports mitigation of organisational risks including legal compliance, fraud, unsafe practice, and reputational harm.*
- *Links to Strategic Risk Register regarding governance, culture, and compliance.*
- *Provides clear routes for escalation, investigation, and appeals ensuring appropriate risk controls.*

Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives

The revised policy aligns with SCRA's objectives, including:

- *Planning for the future – ensuring compliance with updated legislation.*
- *Valuing and developing our staff – ensuring safety, protection, and accessible guidance.*
- *Delivering service improvement and sustainability – promoting transparency and accountability.*
- *Investing in effective governance systems – supporting robust reporting and investigation processes.*
- *Working in partnership – clear links to external regulators where required.*

Equality Declaration

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

Further to evaluation it is noted: *(tick relevant assessment)*

Paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity

Screening completed - no discrimination noted

✓ Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) completed

Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation

Input was provided by Workforce Governance Committee, HR, the Head of Finance & Resources (as Designated Officer), and other EMT members. The revisions reflect legislative updates and internal policy alignment.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Whistleblowing Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

February 2026

To be reviewed February 2029

What is whistleblowing?

This is the term we use to describe when an employee passes on information relating to wrongdoing at work which falls out with the scope of other policies and procedures eg. [Grievance](#), [Dignity at Work](#), [Complaints Handling Procedure](#), etc. This will typically (but not always) be something witnessed at work.

What should I do if I suspect wrongdoing?

- Do** make an immediate note of your concerns
- Do** convey your suspicions to someone with the appropriate authority and experience
- Do** deal with the matter promptly
- Don't** be afraid of raising your concerns
- Don't** try to investigate the matter yourself
- Don't** discuss your suspicions other than with those with the proper authority
- Do** report all instances of fraud or bribery to the Head of Finance and Resources (if unavailable, the Head of Human Resources).

As a Manager, how should I respond to concerns raised to me?

- Do** be responsive to staff concerns
- Do** note details
- Do** deal with the matter promptly
- Do provide reassurance that the matter will be treated confidentially, wherever possible**
- Do** advise the appropriate person: Line Manager / Head of Finance and Resources
- Don't** ridicule suspicions raised by staff
- Don't** approach or accuse any individuals directly
- Don't** convey your suspicions to anyone other than those with the proper authority
- Don't** try to investigate the matter yourself, unless in an agreed official capacity

Who can help?

- Your line manager – in the first instance, and if you feel comfortable to raise with them
- [The Head of Finance and Resources](#) can provide appropriate advice and support to employees and managers involved in raising a whistleblowing concern.
- [HR team](#)
- [UNISON](#)
- Other members of [EMT](#)

Employee Assistance Programme

SCRA's EAP provides a free confidential telephone counselling and advice service to support the wellbeing of:

- staff raising a whistleblowing concern
- managers supporting someone who is raising a whistleblowing concern
- staff who are accused of wrongdoing under this policy.

Our EAP provider can be contacted 24 hours a day on freephone **0800 032 9849**.

EAP support may be helpful either before, during or after a concern has been raised.

Revision History

Handbook Version Number	Date	Change	Author
V1.0	1999	Approved by the Board	S Deery
V2.0	01/12/15	Updated in line with GDPR	P Stevenson
V3.0	01/12/21	General Update • Updated language • Further clarity on protected disclosures • Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment	S Deery
V4.0	February 2026	General update: • Reformat of policy to provide a more accessible style • Inclusion of changes aligned to Employment Rights Act 2025, specifically protection for claims of sexual harassment • Stand-alone summary for quick signposting and easy-to-read guidance	C MacKinnon

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Key Points

- The Whistleblowing Policy is designed to deal with concerns about issues which fall out with the scope of other SCRA policies and procedures (eg. [Grievance](#), [Dignity at Work](#), [Complaints Handling Procedure](#) etc). Refer to section 2.
- We appreciate that staff may worry that raising a complaint might have an impact on, for example, their relationships at work, ongoing employment, progression opportunities, etc. However, we wish to assure staff raising concerns via the Whistleblowing Policy that they will be protected from any form of victimisation or discrimination as a result of raising concerns. This includes if the concerns they raise are related to sexual harassment.
- Employees are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage. They can be raised orally or in writing.
- All concerns will be treated seriously and investigated in confidence as quickly as possible.
- We aim to reassure staff about disclosing their identity when raising a concern. However, we understand that there may be circumstances where they may not wish to do so. This policy also provides for concerns to be raised anonymously.

1. Context

- 1.1 SCRA is committed to creating a culture which is open, honest and transparent, in line with our [Vision and Values](#), and [Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework](#), as well as our commitments to our [Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy](#). A place where we all feel able to be ourselves, and speak up when we see or experience anything that doesn't feel right.
- 1.2 Whistleblowing is the term used when an employee passes on information concerning wrongdoing at work that affects others. It can also sometimes be referred to as making a "disclosure" or "blowing the whistle". The wrongdoing will typically (although not necessarily) be something witnessed at work.
- 1.3 Under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), workers are protected from detrimental treatment or victimisation from their employer if, in the public interest and with a reasonable belief, they blow the whistle on suspected or actual malpractice, risk, abuse or wrongdoing (refer to [section 2](#) for more details).
- 1.4 The Employment Rights Act 2025 further strengthens these protections particularly concerning sexual harassment.
- 1.5 The Whistleblowing Policy provides a safe, secure and straightforward way for SCRA staff to raise such concerns. It supports our [Values, Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework](#), and [Staff Code of Conduct](#), which explain SCRA's expectations for how we should all behave in the workplace, and when representing SCRA.
- 1.6 Any concerns raised will be treated confidentially. However, in certain situations, it may be necessary to disclose information to ensure appropriate action is taken.
- 1.7 SCRA will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of any member of staff who raises a serious concern via this policy, at any point during the process or throughout their employment with SCRA. This will be treated as gross misconduct, which will be dealt with under [SCRA's Disciplinary Procedure](#).

2. Protected Disclosures

- 2.1 The PIDA provides protection for whistleblowers where they reasonably suspect that wrongdoing in the workplace relating to one or more of the following has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur:
 - The commission of a criminal offence eg fraud, theft, bribery
 - A breach of legal obligations, eg. institutional failings in legal compliance
 - A miscarriage of justice
 - The endangerment of the health or safety of any individual eg poor / unsafe practices
 - Environmental damage
 - Sexual Harassment including serious systemic failures to prevent it
 - The deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

The wrongdoing does not need to be on the part of the employer – it can also relate to any third parties such as contractors to amount to a protected disclosure.

2.2 Routes for raising a concern and PIDA coverage

- Personal grievances are not covered by the PIDA, unless the case is in the public interest. Personal grievances should be raised under [SCRA's Grievance Policy](#)
- Concerns raised by members of the public will be dealt with under SCRA's Complaints Handling Procedure and are not covered under the PIDA
- Where there are internal concerns about an individual's competency or conduct in performing their duties, these should be raised to the individual or the individual's manager or the concerned employee's own manager in the first instance, if comfortable to do so. Consideration will then be given to whether it is appropriate to investigate such concerns under the Disciplinary, Grievance or Capability policies, rather than the Whistleblowing Policy. These concerns will not be covered under the PIDA.
- Concerns about a Reporter's professional practice should initially be raised in the same way as the previous bullet. A Reporter is defined as those staff to whom some of the Principal Reporter's functions are delegated: Assistant Reporter, Reporter, Trainee Reporter, Senior Practitioner, Locality Reporter Manager, Senior Operational Manager, Operational Development Manager, Practice Reporter, Practice Manager and the Head of Practice and Policy. Upon investigation, it may be deemed appropriate to consider under the Whistleblowing Policy, in which case it would become covered under the PIDA.
- The Whistleblowing Policy applies where a concern is that there may have been an institutional failing in legal compliance

2.3 A whistleblower will qualify for protection under the Act if the disclosure is made in good faith:

- To SCRA, following the procedure outlined; or to another person/organisation who is reasonably believed to be solely or mainly responsible for the failure in question.
- To a legal adviser in the course of obtaining legal advice.
- To a person or prescribed body, e.g. the Health and Safety Executive, Equalities and Human Rights Commission. It must be reasonably believed that the information, and any allegation in it, is substantially true and that it is reasonably believed to be a matter that falls within the description of matters for the prescribed body.

2.4 The Employment Rights Act 2025 explicitly states that disclosures related to sexual harassment are considered protected disclosures and therefore extends legal protections to workers reporting such issues.

2.5 If an employee chooses to approach the media with their concerns or posts them on social media, then in most cases they would lose their rights to protection. Only in exceptional circumstances can an employee go to the media, or disclose on social media, without losing their rights.

- They must reasonably believe that the information and any allegation contained in it are substantially true and they are not acting for personal gain.
- The employee reasonably believed that they would be victimised if they had made the disclosure to SCRA or to a prescribed person.

- They reasonably believed that disclosure to SCRA would result in the destruction or concealment of evidence.

2.6 Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

All whistleblowing complaints will be treated seriously.

Although it is extremely rare, an investigation may reveal that a complaint has been made maliciously - for example if the complaint was found to have been made in bad faith (that is, without an honest belief in its truth), if deliberately false allegations have been made or where there is a continued pattern of unfounded allegations being made by the same employee. If this happens, it may lead to disciplinary action being taken in line with the Disciplinary Procedure.

It must be stressed, however, that this should in no way deter genuine concerns of wrongdoing being raised as they will be dealt with seriously. Employees will not be subjected to disciplinary action or any other detriment if a complaint made in good faith is judged to be unfounded.

3 Procedure

- 3.1 An employee should normally raise concerns in the first instance with their line manager.

However, where this is not felt appropriate or after discussion with their line manager, the employee can approach, in confidence, the [Head of Finance and Resources](#) as the **Designated Officer** who has been entrusted by the Board with the duty of investigating staff concerns under the Whistleblowing Policy.

If the employee does not feel it appropriate to approach the Head of Finance and Resources or they are not available, the employee should consider approaching another member of the [Executive Management Team](#), or the HR team, who will proceed in accordance with this policy.

Section 4 outlines how to raise concerns about the **Principal Reporter/Chief Executive or Board Members**.

- 3.2 Employees are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage. They can be raised orally or in writing - confidentially, anonymously and without fear of reprisal.
- 3.3 The SCRA representative involved will ascertain whether the employee raising the concern is comfortable with their identity being disclosed and will reassure the employee about protection under PIDA.
- 3.4 The organisation will then arrange for a full investigation to be carried out (**refer to [Section 5](#)**) and will ensure this commences as quickly as possible. It should be noted that due to their nature, concerns raised through whistleblowing may require the involvement of those with specialist knowledge or consideration of a large amount of

material and therefore the investigation may take longer. The employee will be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, the final outcome.

- 3.5 We will treat all disclosures consistently, fairly and professionally, and maintain confidentiality wherever possible.
- 3.6 If employees need more information about the Whistleblowing Policy, they can contact the HR team confidentially via the [SCRA HR Helpdesk](#), or their [HR Business Partner](#). Emails can be marked confidential and for the attention of a specific person.
- 3.7 Employees can seek free confidential support and counselling from [SCRA's Employee Assistance](#) provider at any point in the process or seek support from [UNISON](#).

4 Concerns about the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive or Board Members

- 4.1 If the concern is about the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, this should be raised with the Board Chair, who will consider how the investigation should proceed and the route for any subsequent appeals.
- 4.2 Where the concern is about a Board Member, the individual should raise their concern directly with the Board Chair. Where the concern is about the Board Chair, then the individual should raise their concern via the Head of Human Resources who will make arrangements with the relevant Sponsor Team in the Scottish Government, as appropriate.
- 4.3 Where concerns relate to widespread fraud, the individual should raise their concern with the Board Chair.

5 The Investigation

- 5.1 Dependent on the nature and/or the seriousness of the concern/issue raised, the Head of Finance and Resources will appoint an appropriate manager/officer to conduct the investigation. A representative from the Human Resources Team will support the investigating officer. Neither should have previous knowledge of the concern raised. The investigation will be conducted in the strictest confidence in line with [SCRA's Investigation Guidelines](#). Should the Head of Finance and Resources be unavailable, a member of the EMT may act on their behalf.
- 5.2 The investigation will be conducted timeously, concluding with a recommendation on what action requires to be taken. Where feedback is delayed for any reason, the Head of Finance and Resources, or their proxy, will advise the employee of this.
- 5.3 If at any time throughout the investigation it becomes evident that formal disciplinary action may be a possible outcome, the investigation should be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the [Disciplinary Policy](#) and in line with the gravity of the offence. The investigation should be concluded as quickly as is reasonably possible. However, SCRA will allow for some flexibility in the timescales for completion given the possible complexity of the concerns raised. A date to conclude the investigation should be agreed at the outset and all parties concerned should be

advised of this in writing. Should it be thought necessary to suspend an employee during the course of an investigation, this action should be taken in line with [SCRA's Disciplinary Policy](#).

- 5.4 At all stages of the process any employee interviewed as part of the investigation will have the right to be accompanied by a colleague or [UNISON representative](#).

6 Possible Outcomes

- 6.1 If the investigation shows there are grounds for further action against individuals, the appropriate policies and procedures should be followed.
- 6.2 It may also be appropriate during the investigation to report concerns to external agencies e.g. Police, Health and Safety Executive and/or other public bodies. It may be necessary to suspend internal investigations until the outcome of any criminal proceedings are known.
- 6.3 Where the investigation concludes that false concerns were raised with malicious intent or for personal gain, this would constitute grounds for disciplinary action to be taken against the employee raising the concerns.
- 6.4 If the concerns are unfounded, the employee will receive feedback on the investigation and outcome.
- 6.5 A member of staff who raises concerns in good faith will not suffer adversely as a consequence of their actions, even if these concerns are unfounded. Mediation and dispute resolution to help rebuild trust and relationships may be considered.
- 6.6 The employee who raised the concerns has the right to appeal the outcome of the investigation. To appeal, the employee would need to expressly state that there was a serious flaw in the investigation or the outcome of the investigation and detail what that flaw is believed to be. Any appeal should be made to the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive within 10 working days of the written outcome of the investigation. The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive will arrange a hearing where the employee and the manager/officer who conducted the investigation will present their cases. The appointed Chair of the hearing will make a decision based on the information presented as to whether or not to uphold the appeal.

7 Feedback

- 7.1 Once the investigation has been completed, the employee who originally raised the concerns should receive feedback. This should include whether the original concerns were upheld, respecting the confidentiality of all parties.

- 7.2 Following the conclusion of the internal process, it is possible that an employee may continue to be concerned about an issue. If this is the case, there are a number of options open to them. Employees may:
- Report the matter via the Head of Human Resources who will make arrangements with the relevant Sponsor Team in the Scottish Government, as appropriate and in accordance with the Regulatory Framework for SCRA.
 - Report the matter to the appropriate professional or regulatory body.
 - Access voluntary agencies for advice.
- 7.3 Anonymous whistleblowers will not ordinarily be able to receive feedback and any action taken to look into a disclosure could be limited.
- 7.4 SCRA's Information Governance Manager (where appropriate) will:
- Record the number of whistleblowing disclosure they receive and their nature.
 - Maintain records of the data and content of feedback provided to whistleblowers
- 7.5 All records relating to a whistleblowing complaint will be confidential and proportionate, and held in accordance with GDPR / data protection requirements.

8 More Information

More information can be obtained from:

The Government: <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>

ACAS: <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1919>

UNISON: <https://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/knowledge/disputes-grievances/whistleblowing>

Appendix I – Record of Whistleblowing Concern

Name of employee / anonymous	Department
Name and contact details of Line Manager / person receiving initial details of concern:	
Description of concern	
Does the employee have any personal interest in the concern? (Yes / No) If 'Yes', does the concern warrant investigation through the Whistleblowing Policy or any other HR Policy?	
Initial action taken by Manager receiving initial details of concern	
Details of person responsible for fully investigating the concern	

Outcomes**Review**

Issue Resolved

Employee Treated Fairly / No Adverse Incidents

Confidentiality Maintained

Follow-Up Actions

Record retention plan and deletion date identified

Yes**No**

Organisational Lessons Learned (if any)

Reviewed by (name):

Signature:

Date:

Additional Comments:

SCRA BOARD

Date of Meeting 18 March 2026

Agenda number 10.2 Health and Safety Annual Report

Report Classification: *Open*

For: *Approval*

Executive Sponsor: Susan Deery Head of Human Resources

Author: Alison Melrose Health and Safety Adviser

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on health, safety and wellbeing activity across SCRA for 2025/26 including incidents, policy development and supports.

Recommendation

The Board is invited to

- note the Health and Safety activity in 2024/25 and planned activities for 2025/26.

Key Issues to be discussed/considered

Incident trends, violence/threats, policy updates, defibrillator procurement, Naloxone rollout, mental health first aid, wellbeing initiatives.

Implications:**Service**

N/A

Financial

Within approved budgets

Workforce

Health and safety responsibilities, training, wellbeing supports

Infrastructure including Digital

N/A

Information Governance

N/A

Risk Assessment/Management

Incident monitoring and reporting supports risk mitigation and aligns with strategic risk framework.

Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives

Supports safe working, wellbeing, compliance and service sustainability.

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

Workforce Governance Committee

Health and Safety Committee

1. Introduction

This Health and Safety Annual Report covers the period from 1 April 2025 – 12 January 2026. It provides an update to the Board on corporate health, safety and wellbeing policies and initiatives across SCRA. As with previous years, it should be acknowledged that Locality Staff lead their own wellbeing activities through established wellbeing groups, which deliver creative and welcome activities and supports that meet local wellbeing needs. Locality Support Managers undertake Locality health and safety checks within their locality including the monthly and annual office health and safety checks under the guidance and direction of the Health and Safety Adviser.

This report documents the number of accidents and incidents during the reporting period and provides a historical picture on the type of incidents that have occurred over the last 17 years.

2. Accident and Incident Reporting 2024/25

- 2.1 There have been a total of 16 incidents reported to the Health and Safety Adviser (Table 1) during the reporting period. None have required notification to the Health & Safety Executive under the RIDDOR Regulations.

Table 1 Breakdown of incidents since 1 April 2025 to 12 February 2026

Type of Incident	Number reported	Summary	Actions taken
Minor Injury	4	1. An employee was in the small hall leading to hearing room Contractor was hoovering and hall also had other people in the small space so tried to move past and caught foot on the cable of the hoover. Fell down very forcefully with knees taking the full impact. Helped back to workstation by another member of staff (April 2025 – Inverness) 2. Employee hit ankle on internal toilet door as it was not opening correctly. Small bruise on ankle sustained (May 2025 – Aberdeen) 3. Child was in the waiting room with parents at time of incident but was running around the room and fell. Bumped head off the edge of the table. (May 2025 – Alloa OHC). 4. Door into the reception pod jammed resulting in employee losing their	1. Requested photo taken for incident report. Property asked to remind contractor to keep walkways clear of debris / cables tidy during the refurbishment work 2. LSM was contacted to determine if First aid was not administered (Issue was reported to building manager highlighting the urgency for repair with the door open until the repair could be made (all staff alerted to the issue at the time and door mechanism fixed). 3. Check made with LSM to see if first aid was administered and location of the table Child was running fast round room under supervision of family members. Fall due to speed as did not trip over anything on the floor. No further action taken. 4. Issue raised again by LSM as had been raised

		footing and falling into the side of the cabinet near the door hitting leg in the process. (December 2025 – Aberdeen)	before with property (no details of timeframe provided) Email sent to Property on 31-12-25 to check repair had been logged and would be actioned.
Incident – Near Miss	1	1. Cleaner who provides the service for the building became stuck in the lift between floors. No injury or ill health but unable to reach the landlord or property department so fire service informed who were able to release her from the lift without harm (July 2025 – Stirling entrance)	Lift is serviced regularly. Informed property of the incident so they were aware and could check dates of last service. Landlord was informed and lift inspected by Otis - issue with a landing door/gate equipment. The equipment was adjusted and the unit returned to normal service so no further action required.
Ill Health	2	1. Grandmother complained of feeling unwell - choking sensation and pain on right side. SCRA staff offered to call ambulance but offer refused. Hearing halted twice to check on her condition. SCRA staff offered to pay for taxi to hospital but again refused. Grandmother agreed to go with mother to the hospital after hearing and left building (June 2025 – Falkirk OHC). 2. Mother attending location fainted during the hearing. Interpreter was beside the mother when she stood up, he was able to break her fall. Mother remained conscious, coming round quickly with no head injuries (July 2025 – Dundee).	1. Comprehensive report submitted by assistant reporter of the event. No further action required as person left building after saying they felt better and would attend hospital. No further action required. 2. A glass of water plus a sugary drink was provided and person taken to a ventilated space. Mother was accompanied by SW professional(s) when leaving the hearing centre to ensure she had recovered and was able to return home. No further action required
Physical Assaults	2	1. Child attending hearing became agitated and threw a fidget toy at social worker than left the room. Returned to room and attempted to hit social worker on the head (did not connect according to social worker). Hearing adjourned and social worker advised not to return to hearing for her own safety (June 2025 – Edinburgh) 2. Mother saw father of child outside waiting room and launched a physical attack	1. Advised that next hearing would be held virtually to reduce the risk of potential violence towards the social worker and note placed on young person's case files in relation to incident. 2. Advised to add note to children's case file re: future hearings and to raise request for police

		on him (shouting profanity, jumping on him and hitting his head). Mother then left office and proceeded to bang on window. Police called . Hearing proceeded without mother present (September 2025 – Bellshill OHC).	
Violence (non contact)	3	1. Child asked for their date of birth and reacted by throwing large wooden footstool and child's toy in direction of panel members (did not strike any of them). Child then verbally threatened to stab them before leaving the building. Building locked to prevent their re-entry so threw a plant pot at the door before leaving the vicinity of the building (June 2025 – Edinburgh) 2. During reading of grounds, mother became verbally abusive towards social worker. Hearing adjourned and mother then became verbally abusive towards receptionist and tried to access reception area through glass panel. 999 call made requesting assistance. 20 minutes later call handler phoned back to enquire if assistance still required (informed yes as aunt being verbally abusive towards receptionist). Family left before Police arrived (2.5 hours after the initial call to them) (August 2025 – Dumbarton) 3. Child (one of three) became agitated so father removed him from the building but became increasingly aggressive banging on windows / doors to be let back into the building. When this did not occur, smashed window of waiting room 1 resulting in those within building relocating elsewhere within building. Police called (initially 101 but then 999 call) as further	1. Note added to young person's file recommending that all future hearings be held virtually to reduce the risk of physical violence in the future. No further action taken. 2. Concern raised over length of time for Police Scotland to attend 999 call. Advised to raise with LRM and SOM (to be discussed locally with Police Scotland). 3. Police were called 3 times (one 101 call plus 2 999 calls). Police attended and arrested child who was charged with vandalism. Damage reported to Property but no one came out from facilities so local joiner contacted who boarded up windows and Property informed. Discussion on pre-planning of hearings / dynamic risk assessments as situations often very fluid so moving to a specific room / area (if on paper), might actually make the situation wors. Need to have the ability to adapt as incident is occurring. Reiterated the requirement to call police as a 999 call rather than 101 call if risk to those within building / child.

		vandalism to the building (door). (October 2025 – Dumfries)	
Verbal Abuse	2	1. Mother prior to hearing made threats towards Social Worker if child was removed. Reporter informed SW who was in a different waiting room (mother unaware of this). Social Worker (SW) informed and virtual link set up for the SW but not required as mother left the premises and did not attend hearing. (July 2025 – Paisley). 2. Mother attending with child at hearing were verbally abusive from arrival towards the receptionist and a social worker leaving the building (accused them of crashing car into her vehicle causing extensive damage). Continued to be verbally abusive towards panel members in the hearing room. Police contacted but did not attend after 1 hour. Mother asked to leave (which she eventually did) and Police called again to cancel attendance.	1. Discussion held with mother about the threat she had made and H&S of those within the hearing. SW informed but wasn't comfortable about attending hearing in person so virtual link set up so they could attend that way if required. Incident reported to LRM to consider police presence at future hearing and note added to file if in person hearing held rather than virtual hearing. 2. Requested note be added to CMS for future and recommended speaking to Police Scotland in relation to call out times given the call made was via 999.
Other	2	1. SCRA employee (Blue Badge holder) arrived at site and noted there was a vehicle parked in one of the disabled bays. The owner of the vehicle came over and asked if it alright to park there and was informed it was for blue badge holders only. His response was "I've been told by the buildings factor to park here as they're not real disabled bays, they're just pretend ones". This made employee upset and she posted on the Teams channel about the incident and whether anything could be done to educate the building factor so asked to submit and incident report. (April 2025 – Hamilton) 2. Decision of panel was to accommodate a child. At	1. Contacted property to inform of incident. While there is no legal requirement to provide a specific number of disabled parking bays, those that have been identified should be clearly marked and available for staff (or visitors) that require them and display clearly their blue badge – which employee had done. They are NOT "pretend" ones as the gentleman claims but a requirement under the Disability Act 2010 that requires businesses to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people and to provide them equal opportunities to access services, including parking. Requested strong reminder

		hearing end, the social worker and chair left the building leaving the child and mother in the waiting room (with social worker informing they needed to make a plan and that the receptionist should inform the mother when to leave). Recorded as Other as no violence / verbal abuse but safeguarding issue with regards to the child's safety as child should not have been left with mother. (April 2025 – Falkirk)	to the building factor to ensure nothing like this happens again and that the bays are only used for those who hold a blue badge and have a genuine disability (whether visible or hidden) and thus require closer access to the building as a result. SCRA Estates Manager contacted building manager who sent out letters to all contractors about these bays so it does not happen again. 2. Advised that Reporter should speak to social worker and inform this was not acceptable given decision of the panel and that they need to insure this does not happen again.
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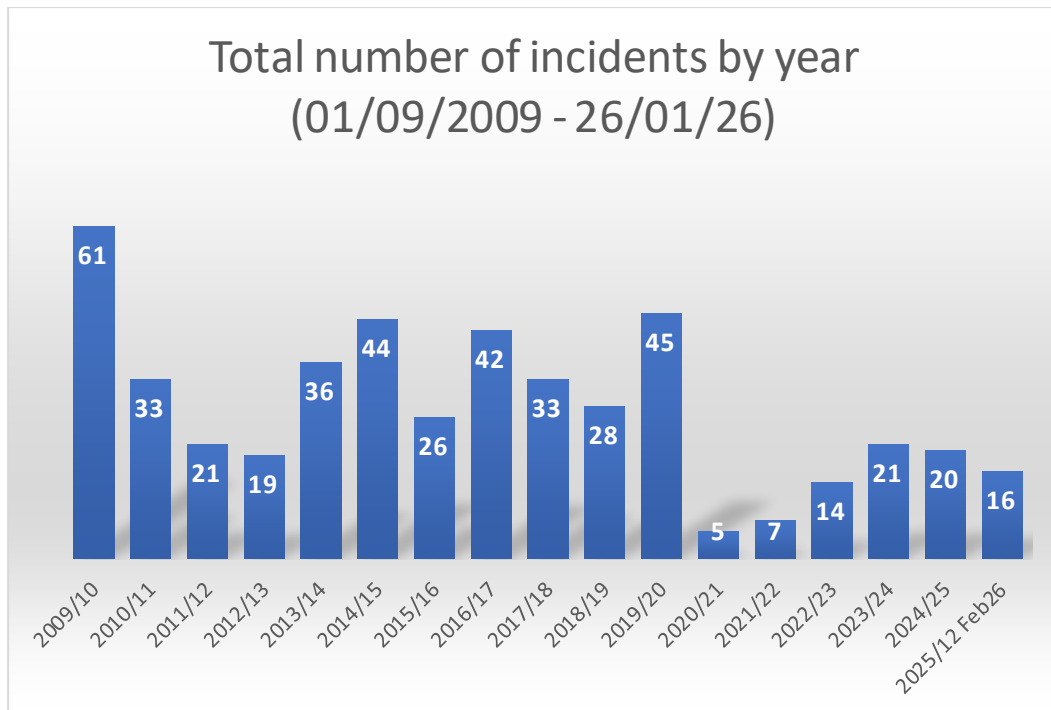
As with previous years, all incidents were managed appropriately by the staff on site. We continue to work in partnership with Unison to encourage staff to report verbal aggression (both in person and virtually). We continue to believe verbal aggression to be under-reported given there has been only one incident reported since April 2024 to date.

3. Historical Data (since 2009 to date)

3.1 Total number of incidents

Graph 1 below provides a breakdown of the number of incidents per year since 2009. In total there have been 471 incidents reported to the H&S Adviser within that time period.

Graph 1



Note - The Covid pandemic resulted in a significant drop in incident numbers from April 2020 to end of March 2022 (n=5 and 7 respectively for those years).

Incidents remain below pre-covid levels which is attributed to agile working (less staff in the office) and the continuation of virtual hearings – though in person hearings have increased since 2020/2021.

3.2 Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR)

The number of incidents reported to the HSE under RIDDOR remains the same with 16 over the last 17 years (last incident reported during 2019/2020 period).

3.3 Injuries, near misses and ill health

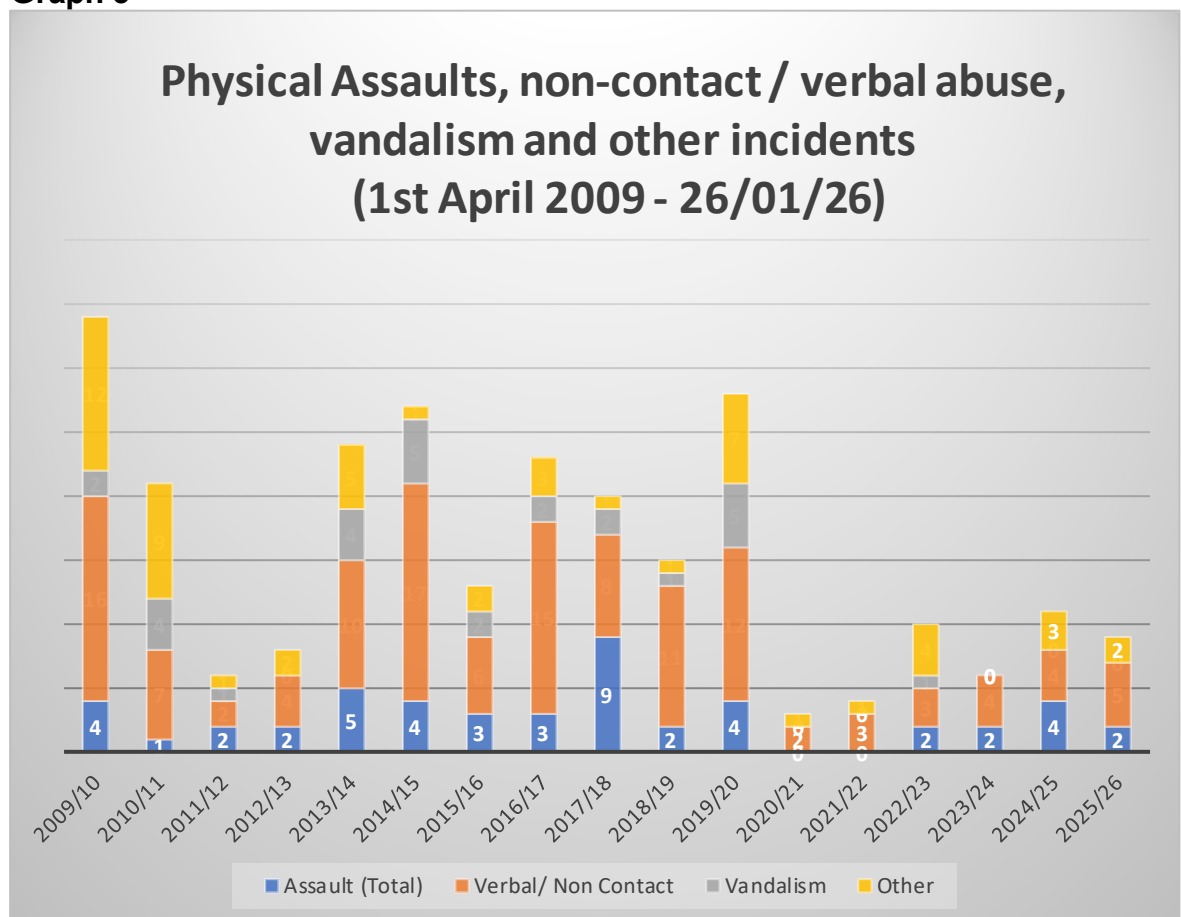
Since April 2009 until 24 February 2026 there have been a total of 88 injuries reported during the 17 year period. In addition, there have been 25 near misses. Near misses include incidents where there was the potential for injury but this did not occur but was reported to highlight an issue that required action.

There have been 52 incidents involving ill health (this includes both visitors and staff on the premises requiring medical attention after reporting they are feeling unwell).

3.4 Violence

Graph 2 looks in more detail at the number of incidents where violence (including actual assaults) as well as non-contact violence and verbal aggression has been experienced within SCRA premises.

Graph 3

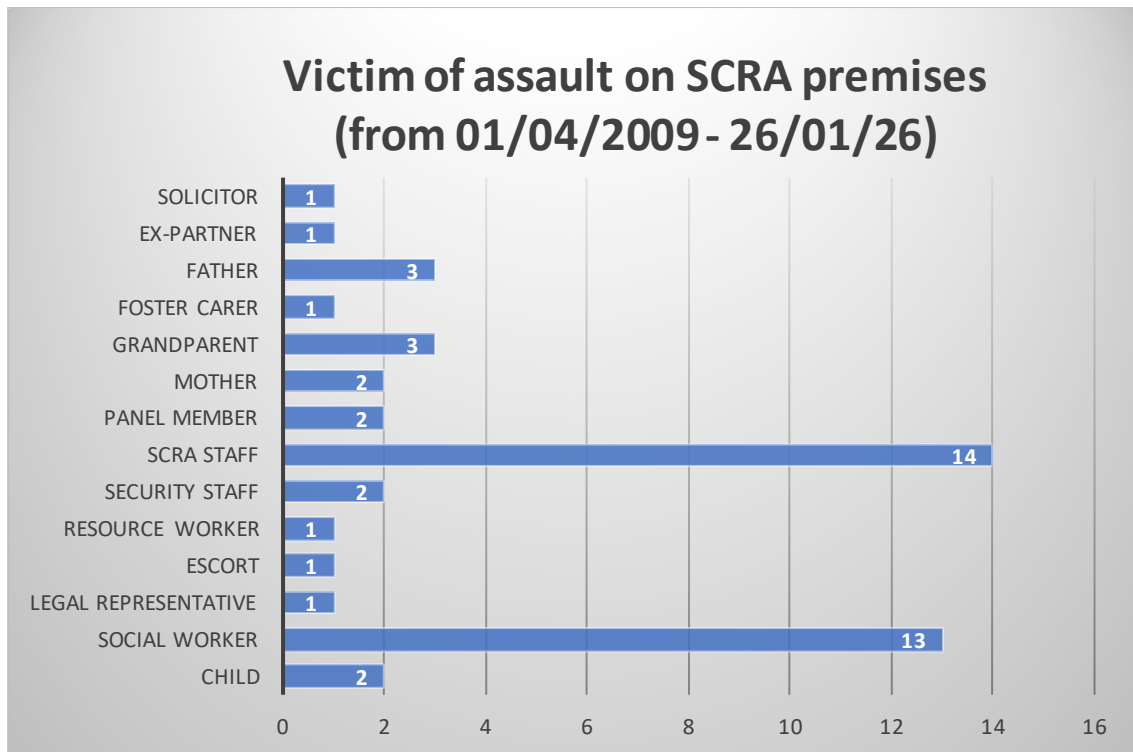


Since the 1 April 2009 until 12 February 2026 there have been a total of 49 physical assaults within SCRA premises. Just over a quarter of these assaults (n=14) were aimed primarily towards SCRA staff with the rest aimed towards others attending the hearing such as social workers or family members (n=35). As such, physical assaults on SCRA premises continue to remain low.

The financial year 2013/14 continues to be the year in which most physical assaults aimed towards SCRA staff (n=4) occurred.

Graph 4 indicates that SCRA staff have been the recipient of physical violence in 14 out of those incidents with social workers only just slightly behind this at 13 incidents.

Graph 4



The assailant of the physical assaults are mainly perpetrated by either the young person (n=21) or by the mother (n=21).

All SCRA staff are encouraged to complete the mandatory e-learning course on Conflict Handling. This course is a generic course which provides advice on how to deal with conflict situations. During 2025, SCRA piloted an external course on Conflict Handling which was delivered to Reporters and feedback sought. It was decided that this course did not meet the requirements requested so SCRA is currently in the process of developing an internal course that can be presented locally to SCRA staff by SCRA staff.

4. Policy Development

Since the last Board report (March 2025), the following 8 Health and Safety policies and Monthly checklist were reviewed and considered at the Health & Safety Committee meetings held in May 2025 and January 2026;

1. Naloxone Policy (new policy)
2. Lone Working Policy (minor alterations to text)
3. Asbestos Management Policy (no material changes)
4. Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Policy (minor alteration to text)
5. Display Screen Equipment Policy (change to layout of policy to include reference to working from home risk assessment)
6. First Aid Policy (included reference to Mental Health First Aiders within SCRA and updated e-learning training to mandatory for all staff to complete)
7. Sharps and Bodily Fluids Policy (to include reference to Naloxone Policy and change from FES to OCS)
8. Locality Manager Monthly Inspection Checklist (restructured form and included visual check of Defibrillator if on premises).

9. Health & Safety Policy Statement and Organisational Risk Assessment Schedule (added introduction paragraph, removed reference to FES and separated risk assessments into topics to make it easier for)

The [Health & Safety Policy Statement & Organisational Risk Assessment Schedule](#) provides a comprehensive breakdown of the risk assessments undertaken within the SCRA in relation to Health and Safety.

5. Health and Safety Related Supports

5.2 Naloxone Policy Update

External web based Naloxone training was offered to staff within the SCRA during 2025 following the introduction of the Naloxone Policy. Naloxone is a medicine used to temporarily reverse the effects of an opiate overdose. Opiates include drugs such as heroin and methadone and was approved for use in overdose situations by professionals and members of the public in Scotland.

6. Mental Wealth Group and Wellbeing Initiatives

6.1 Environmental Awareness

In February, staff were encouraged to focus on Food Waste as part of a year-long focus on environmental awareness raising. An article on Connect provided staff with 10 top tips on reducing food waste both within the home and workplace with additional links to resources staff could access on the topic and information on community fridges (where local food waste is reduced by collecting short dated, surplus food from supermarkets and local food businesses and redistributing within a community).

This was followed in March with a focus on Recycling within the office to coincide with Global Recycling Day on the 18th March 2025. Other events were held throughout the year including a focus on sustainable travel in June.

6.1 Big Team Challenge

SCRA's Big Team Challenge has become a popular highlight of the calendar year. The challenge commences during Mental Health Week which is held each year in May. Set by the Mental Health Foundation, the theme for 2025 was Community with a 6 week, 1167km (725miles) walk, wheel or cycle across Ireland.

In total 157 individuals participated in the 2025 (an increase of 12 from the previous year). A total of 44,935.0 kilometres (27,921.3 miles) were logged by staff which equated to 64,638,460 steps. In addition, 15 trees were planted by the Big Team Challenge organisers following their initiative to plant 1 tree for every 5 participants taking part in a challenge.

Following feedback received from staff, the 2026 Big Team Challenge will be over a greater distance to challenge those who managed to complete the 2025 challenge easily within the 6 weeks allocated.

6.2 October Wellbeing Month & Financial Wellbeing

During the month of October, The Mental Wealth Group again promoted a 31-day wellbeing calendar (similar to 2024 which had been received well by staff) and to coincide with Mental Health Day on the 10th October. The calendar included two awareness sessions on Power of Attorney and Guardianship orders which were delivered by the Office of the Public Guardian as well as articles on a number of topics such as men's mental health, staying well during winter and cycling to work.

During November financial wellbeing was considered with links to exclusive discounts through the [mylifestyle | Welcome](#) Portal with information documenting cashback sites and loyalty card schemes to help save employees money in the run up to Christmas.

7. Flu Vaccination Programme

SCRA offered the flu vaccination to staff for the ninth year running. As with 2024, the age of eligibility for obtaining the flu vaccination from the NHS was maintained at 65 meaning those over the age of 50 (without underlying health issues etc) were no longer eligible to receive the vaccine through their GP / at NHS vaccination centres.

In total 85 vouchers were procured in May 2025. This number was based on previous year uptake for the scheme plus 5 extra vouchers. Staff were then invited to request a voucher if required with a closure date of the end of June. The scheme closed earlier than usual for 2025 (November as opposed to January of the following year) at the request of The Scottish Government who were keen in encouraging people to obtain their vaccination early this year due to concerns over flu figures from Australia (which is used as a general indicator of whether the flu figures in the Northern Hemisphere will be above or below normal levels and Southern Hemisphere figures had been high for this season). Staff were also reminded about maintaining good hand hygiene on return to the office. For those staff unable to make appointments or use the voucher they were able to claim back any additional costs for procuring a flu voucher.

8. Recommendation

The Board is asked to note the health and safety update outlined in this report.

SCRA BOARD

Date of Meeting 18 March 2026

Agenda number 10.3 Annual Workforce Report

Report Classification: *Open*

For: *Approval*

Executive Sponsor: *Susan Deery, Head of HR*

Author: *Susan Deery, Head of HR*

Executive Summary

This Workforce Report for April 2025 to March 2026 provides a high-level overview of key workforce data and trends to inform planning.

Recommendation

The Board is invited to:

- Note workforce metrics for 2025/26
- Approve the workforce activity and plans for 2026/27

Key Issues to be discussed/considered

The 2026/27 Workforce Report aims to meet the third and final year of the 2024/27 People Strategy. The report provides detailed information on the demographics of the organisation, work delivered in 2025/26 and the plans for 2026/27.

The report is developed around the 4 key aims of the People Strategy of Recruitment and retention, development, engagement and supporting our workforce.

The report recognises good developments in each of these areas but also highlights some ongoing challenges, such as :-

- **Workforce demographics:** *An ageing workforce may create succession planning risks.*
- **Recruitment & retention:** *High recruitment activity, preparation for CCJA roles, and the need for ongoing attraction*
- **Job Review:** *Commitment to regular and planned job-evaluation of roles.*
- **Absence levels & wellbeing:** *Long-term absence remains above target impacting operational resilience.*
- **Operational change demands:** *Implementation of CCJA, Keeping the Promise, Family-Centred Scheduling, and Target Operating Model requires sustained staff support and capacity.*
- **Skills, learning & development needs:** *Strong demand for learning, management development roll-outs, and skills gap analysis following job role reviews.*

- **Equality, diversity & inclusion:** Continued work needed on attraction of under-represented groups, and delivering mandatory EDI and anti-racism training.
- **Workload & resilience pressures:** High demands on Locality Teams, and the impact of absence on workforce capacity.

Implications:

Service

Workforce activity and development support service quality and statutory delivery.

Financial

All workforce activity is being delivered within approved budgets, with no additional funding required.

Workforce

Workforce Planning is required to meet the third and final year of the agreed people strategy, which was developed through consultation with the workforce.

Infrastructure including Digital

No significant infrastructure or digital impacts. Positive developments through digital skills training and the upcoming e-recruitment system.

Information Governance

No specific IG implications. Routine GDPR and cyber-security training continues

Risk Assessment/Management

- Key risks relate to workforce capacity, including high long-term absence and ageing demographics all of which may affect operational performance.
- Organisational change programmes (e.g., Keeping the Promise, CCJA preparation) introduce additional performance and delivery risks that require careful management.
- Mitigation actions include enhanced wellbeing support, targeted recruitment, management development, strengthened workforce planning, and continued partnership with UNISON.
- Risks align with themes on the Strategic Risk Register, particularly workforce sustainability and organisational change readiness.

Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives

- *Planning for the Future:* Workforce analysis, succession planning, and preparations for the Children's Care and Justice Act (CCJA) directly support long-term organisational readiness.
- *Valuing and Developing Staff:* Extensive learning and development activity, management development programmes, wellbeing initiatives, and job evaluation work reflect a strong commitment to investing in people.
- *Service Improvement & Sustainability (Care, Connect, Protect):* Workforce strengthening, change-readiness, and improvement programmes (e.g., Keeping the Promise, Family-Centred Scheduling) contribute to sustainable service delivery and improved outcomes for children and families.

- *Best Value & Resource Use: Recruitment planning, managing temporary contracts, and maintaining activity within approved budgets demonstrate effective stewardship of resources.*
- *Partnership Working: Ongoing engagement with UNISON, Locality Teams, programme groups, and external partners (e.g., Close the Gap, Onvera) supports collaborative improvement and workforce sustainability.*
- *Governance & Risk Management: Workforce data analysis, demographic monitoring, absence management focus, and alignment to the Strategic Risk Register strengthen organisational governance and risk mitigation.*

Equality Declaration

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

Further to evaluation it is noted:

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) is in progress

Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation

- *Executive Management Team*
- *UNISON (via National Partnership Forum and HR Sub Group)*
- *Wider workforce involvement through surveys, Locality engagement, learning networks, and programme-related working groups (e.g., Change Team, Programme Team, Operational Development Team)*
- *Workforce Governance Committee*

Executive Summary

This Workforce Report for the period April 25 to March 26 provides a high-level overview of key workforce data and the relevant trends to inform SCRA's workforce planning priorities for 2026/27 as well as progressing the third and final year of the 2024/27 People Strategy.

In addition, this report provides an overview of initiatives and strategies that have been implemented to support SCRA's Workforce over the last year. The report is developed around the key aims of the People Strategy.

People Strategy Aims



We want SCRA to be a place where:-

- We recognise that SCRA's workforce is its greatest asset
- That work is rewarding and makes a difference
- That staff are ready and can respond to change and they know what that means in how they deliver their roles
- They are supported to develop themselves, enhance their skills and increase their knowledge
- SCRA and its workforce value diverse backgrounds, skills, and personalities
- That everyone is treated as an equal and with respect
- That SCRA's culture is flexible, responsive and promotes the wellbeing of its employees

The following table reflects 'at a glance' changes to the workforce over the reporting period 01 February 2025 to 31 January 2026. Gender Pay Gap reporting is for 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Headcount		500	↑	506
Full-time equivalent of staff in post		456.73	↓	451.69
Part-time Headcount	Male	8	=	8
	Female	170	↓	158
Female Headcount		457	↓	448
Under 25 Headcount		9	↑	11
Over 55 Headcount		149	↑	154
Absence	Short term	1.96%	↓	1.63%
	Long term	3.40%	↑	5.66%
Turnover		5%	↓	4.37%
Declared ethnicity %		2.2%	↓	1.98%
% in senior roles (EMT)	Females	38%	=	38%
	Global Majority	0%	=	0%
Gender Pay Gap %	Mean %	20.62%	↓	20.60%
	Median %	27.49%	=	27.49%

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Annual workforce report for 2025/26 provides the reader with an overview of our workforce and achievements for the year 2025/26. The report also outlines the aims of the third and final year of the 2024/27 People Strategy, which was developed in consultation with a broad section of the workforce. 2025/26 was a particularly busy year where we saw lots of the changes we have discussed in previous years come into focus and start to be implemented.
- 1.2 The 2025 staff survey shows ongoing improvements across areas such as staff morale, pay and reward, leadership and change management with 96% of survey respondents saying that they enjoy their job and that overall SCRA is good place to work. We will continue to improve on the key priorities of reward, workload and morale, by focusing on operational resilience and capacity, maximising attendance, trauma and psychological support and continuing to strengthen our partnership working with UNISON.
- 1.3 Preparing for operational and process changes has been a significant factor throughout 2025, with pilots and tests being undertaken in how SCRA Keeps the Promise and our approach to Family Centred Scheduling – with the improvements for the child and the family at the centre of our decision making - as well as significant improvements in our non-disclosure and Hearings Information Packs. Led by the Programme, Change, Digital and Operational Development Teams real progress has been made in terms of change management, support and engagement in SCRA's improvement journey towards a target operating model.
- 1.4 SCRA continues to prepare for the implementation of CCJA, through a planned programme of recruitment for additional Assistant Reporters, Reporters and Senior Practitioners to meet anticipated workload levels. The Practice and HR Teams have also seen some additional capacity increases to meet increased workforce requirements such as learning, support and performance management.
- 1.5 SCRA concluded the review of the Children's Reporter Job Description/Person Specification and job evaluation in December 2025 and implemented the subsequent pay and grading outcomes in early 2026. This comprehensive and inclusive review has seen an increase of 6% in pay for SCRA's core statutory role with similar increases for other grades impacted by the new Children's Reporter Grade. Whilst this has been a positive outcome for the core role it has brought into focus the need to develop a rolling plan of review for other operational roles across SCRA. This programme will commence in 2026 and will be progressed in partnership with UNISON.
- 1.5 The 2025 staff survey again saw positive results in staff acknowledging the investment in their learning and development, their wellbeing and how they feel they are valued and respected as individuals within the organisation. We continue to invest in the necessary professional and wellbeing aspect of staff growth and development. The aim of the People Strategy and the intention of this workforce plan is that overall SCRA's people are skilled and confident,

have access to good learning and development, are resilient and that they know that their wellbeing is important.

- 1.5 Whilst SCRA is clear in its workforce ambitions, as outlined in the People Strategy, this workforce plan has to be flexible and responsive to any challenges which arise. Therefore the activity planned for 2026/27 and noted in this paper may be subject to some change as we progress throughout the year. Therefore the plan itself will be reviewed regularly, in partnership, to ensure its continued fit with the business, purpose and objectives of other supporting strategies.

DRAFT

2. Recruiting and Retaining Our People

- 2.1 During the period 01 February 2025 to 31 January 2026 there have been 65 recruitment campaigns (86 posts) of which 34 were advertised internally and the remaining 31 vacancies advertised externally. This is a slight increase from the previous year of 59 internal adverts leading to 30 external recruitment adverts. Table 1 provides a further update on the status of the recruitment campaigns.

Table 1

Vacancy	Campaigns	No of posts
Vacancies successfully recruited	58	74
Vacancies on hold	1	1
Vacancies still to be concluded	6	11
Total of all vacancy types	65	86

Table 2 reflects the reason for the requests to recruit

Table 2

Vacancy Type	Total	% of vacancies
Backfill	43	66.15%
New Post	22	33.85%
Total	65	100.00%

The requirement for new posts was due to the requirement for additional capacity and resource and the CCJA funding exercise

- 2.2 In January 2026, there were **46.84 fte employees** working on fixed term contracts with end dates ranging from March 2026 to January 2028. This is a decrease of 22.06 fte from the same time in 2025 and equates to around **10% of all employment contracts in SCRA**. This is made up of true temporary contract staff as well as permanent staff who have temporary secondments/additional hours/promotional opportunities across the organisation. The number of true temporary employees (i.e. with no substantive role in SCRA) is **23.31 fte (5%)**, again a reduction in the number of temporary positions. SCRA regularly reviews the fixed term position to reduce the number of temporary contracts where it can, taking some managed risks in doing so, so that it can provide stability and reassurance to its workforce. However, as an organisation we feel it is reasonable to manage with a level of true fixed term contracts at around 5% - 6% to cover business as usual requirements.
- 2.3 Turnover for the 12 month period from 31/01/25 is **4.37%** which is a reduction of 0.63% from the previous year. Turnover can often bring a healthy refresh of skills and experience to an organisation. SCRA's low turnover rate though could suggest high employee satisfaction, strong retention strategies, a stable and experienced workforce and a positive work culture, which aligns with the positive indicators in the 2025 staff survey. Analysis of leavers and their reasons for leaving are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Reason	Total	Female	Male	% of leavers
Resignation/New Job	13	12	1	59.09%
Retirement	7	6	1	31.82%
Ill Health Retirement	1	1	0	4.55%
End of Fixed Term	1	0	1	4.55%
Total	22	19	3	100.00%

Further analysis showed that

- 10 leavers were aged 55 or over, 7 of which retired and 3 resigned.
- The average age of a leaver was 46.95 years.
- 86% of leavers were female and 14% were male.
- 72% of leavers were from Locality Teams
- The average length of service of leavers was just over 11 years.

- 2.4 SCRA has a long history of supporting staff to work flexibly, and there are an extensive range of opportunities including full-time, part-time, job share, term-time, compressed hours and secondments available to staff. Levels of **part-time working have reduced from 35.6% to 32.8%** of all staff, of which **95.2%** of those working part-time are female. For noting, part-time working has decreased by 10% since 2020 – without fuller analysis it is thought that this reduction is the result of consolidating a number of low hours roles into full time working. Whilst SCRA remains committed to promoting and offering flexible working patterns, it is cognisant of the impact that this can have on perpetuating a predominantly female workforce.
- 2.5 **88.5% of SCRA employees are female and 11.5% are male** – which is a slight decrease from 12% in the male workforce since 2024/25. The vast majority of support roles are undertaken by female employees, which in itself has a significant impact on SCRA's reported gender pay gap.
- 2.6 The average **length of service is 13.5 years** which is an increase of 1.9 years from 2024/25. 150 employees (29.6%) of the workforce have over 20 years' service, of which 9.7% (49 employees) have 30+ years' service. This organisational composition provides a wealth of available experience.
- 2.7 The average age of staff is 46.6 years of age which is similar to last year. However, **45.3% (229 headcount) of staff are currently over the age of 50, with 13% (66 headcount) being over the age of 60**. The length of service and age profile of the workforce remains as a risk in terms of succession planning and the potential loss of skills and experience.

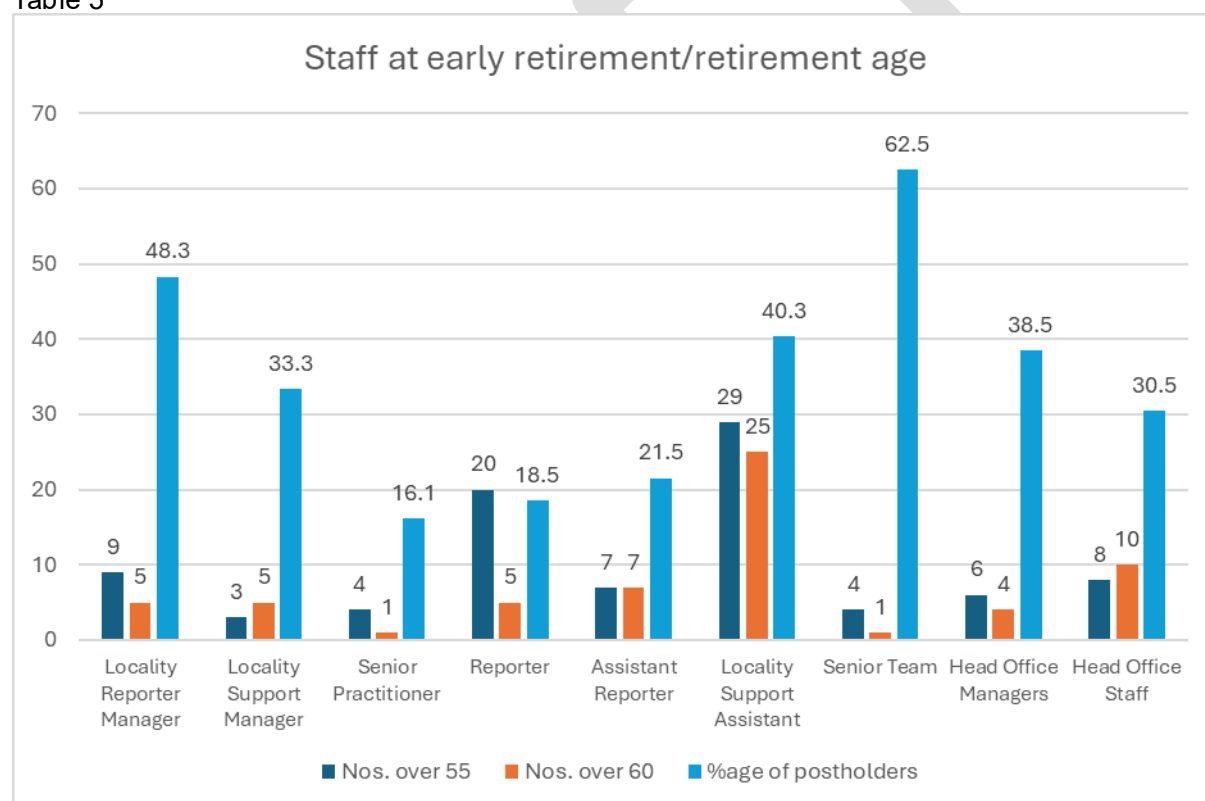
Table 4 reflects the age range and gender of SCRA employees

Table 4

Age range	Total	Female	Male	% of staff
16-24	11	9	2	2.17%
25-34	79	69	10	15.61%
35-44	121	114	7	23.91%
45-54	141	128	13	27.87%
55-64	140	114	26	27.67%
65+	14	14	0	2.77%
Total	506	448	58	100.00%

2.8 Table 5 analyses this information further to look at staff who are currently at early retirement age of 55 and above (currently around 30% of the workforce). This data will be considered as part of our succession and workforce planning in terms of recruitment plans and impact on roles/localities.

Table 5



2.9 It is important that SCRA understands its workforce demographics for a number of reasons. To take positive action to make progress in ensuring SCRA reflects the population of Scotland – one of its equalities outcomes; to develop appropriate policies and interventions that would meet the needs of its workforce in terms of demonstrating it values its staff and to ensure that the wellbeing of its workforce is a primary factor in any decision making. In January 2026, our workforce comprised as follows:

- **Disability:** We are a “Disability Confident” employer with 4.7% of our staff having declared a disability although we believe the actual figure covered by the Equality Act 2010 will be higher. There was a slight decrease on reporting in this characteristic from 2024/25. We retained our Disability Confident Employer status. The HR Team and SCRA’s Occupational Health providers work closely with managers and staff to identify any reasonable adjustments that could be implemented to provide the appropriate support for each individual at work. Table 6 records the reporting rate of staff members recording their disability on the e-hr system.

Table 6

Category	Total	% of headcount
Disabled	24	4.74%
Not Disabled	149	29.45%
Did not provide	328	64.82%
Prefer not to say	5	0.99%
Total	506	100.00%

- **Ethnic Origin:** SCRA’s ethnicity data shows the majority of staff are white 62.8% (a decrease of 1.4% from 2025), with 2% (a decrease of 0.2%) recording Global Majority status. 35.2% of staff have chosen not to declare their ethnicity.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** The majority of our staff are married/in a civil partnership/living with a partner/are widowers/in relationships at 49.8% (an increase of 7.6% from 2024/25) with 17.4% being single or divorced and 32.8% of staff choosing not to declare or recording ‘other’.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** 3.2% of staff were on maternity/adoption leave. For many years now, we have had 100% of staff returning to work following adoption/maternity/ paternity leave.
- **Religion and Belief:** The majority of SCRA staff – 68% (down 1.8%) have not disclosed their religion or belief, whilst 32% have stated that they have a religion or belief.
- **Sexual Orientation:** In terms of sexual orientation: 64.6% (up 0.2%) of staff have chosen not to declare or prefer not to say, 33% (up 0.2%) are heterosexual and 2.4% (down 0.4%) are LGBT.
- **Gender Reassignment:** No staff have advised of their transition or intent to transition their gender.
- **Care Experienced:** SCRA recognises care experience as a 10th protected characteristic, and 0.8% of staff (an increase of 0.2%) have indicated that they are care experienced.

2.10 Table 7 below details the agreed core establishment at February 2026 and shows a comparison with previous years for information: -

Table 7

Role	2025/25	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Locality Support Administrator	117.57	122.91	128.8	130.64
Locality Support Manager	19.15	20.51	20.01	19.75
Assistant Reporter	55.19	50.9	37.44	35.55
Reporter	118.14	115.44	111.51	112.49
Senior Practitioner	21.3	21.6	20.6	20.1
Locality Reporter Manager	21.8	20.7	20.5	20.5
Business Team	3	3	2	2
Operational Development Team	8	2	2	
Area Assistant	0	0	0	0.8
EMT (including PR/CE)	8	8	8	8
Head Office roles (management)	71.99 (21.87)	68.34 (24.67)	67.02 (25.1)	61.54 (20.8)
Total	444.14	432.4	417.88	411.37

2.11 The core establishment has increased by 11.74 FTE over the past 12 months through reshaping and restructure. A number of temporary roles were converted to core establishment to reduce the number of fixed term contracts and stabilise localities throughout the year. The core establishment is further supported by one Modern Apprentice (a further one is currently being recruited) and a number of other non-core established roles. SCRA are also hosting the Our Hearings Our Voice Board which comprises two core established posts.

2.12 Management roles make up 16% of all posts across the organisation (a decrease of 1.3% from last year).

2.13 Head Office represents 18% of the establishment – a slight increase from 17.6% in the previous year – a number of seconded roles are recorded as Head Office roles but are located in Police Hubs or other secondments. A significant percentage of Head Office roles are front facing business partners who support statutory requirements such as production of accounts, property provision and procurement, HR Business Partners or transactional staff for example payroll and digital systems management.

2.14 SCRA did not offer any voluntary exit packages to staff throughout 2025/26

2.15 ***What did SCRA do in 2025/26 to recruit and retain people***

- We concluded the review of the Children's Reporter job description and person specification by undertaking independent job evaluation of the role, benchmarking that evaluation against our own pay and grading structure and across the pay policy environment and subsequently implemented the outcome. This saw a 6% increase at the maximum of the new grade of Children's Reporter which reflects the value of the role and will help to attract and retain high quality professional staff. We also implemented changes to others grades within the structure as a result of the new grade, again seeing significant increases in maximum salaries.
- Further to the conclusion of the Children's Reporter job description, the HR Team have been working with Locality Reporter Managers (LRMs) on developing a values based recruitment approach to support selection decisions that capture the skills, experience and values that a postholder is required to undertake their role. Consultation with LRMs continues and we expect to include multi-selection processes which assess the values and competencies for the role. This will be expanded to other roles in due course.
- SCRA has engaged Onvera (previously enei) to support an audit and review of SCRA's current recruitment attraction strategies. The project is considering many areas of recruitment and selection from SCRA's recruitment website to our advert design and placement as well as advice around our values based approach to recruitment. They have engaged with a number of staff from across the organisation as part of this project with the aim of developing a more progressive approach to recruitment and selection that support SCRA's aim of increasing applications from under-represented groups such as the global majority, male applicants and applicants with a disability.
- SCRA agreed a two year pay offer for staff which provides assurance and stability in the pay and reward structure until March 2027. As part of this pay offer we improved some areas of terms and conditions like maternity and adoption pay and paternity leave and pay.
- SCRA engaged with the expert body, Close the Gap, to audit our Gender Pay Gap. Whilst our pay gap remains high across the public sector, Close the Gap understood the context of the demographics of our workforce and have provided some assurances and recommendations for SCRA to consider in its action planning. Close the Gap will meet with SCRA's Board to report its findings on the gender pay gap.
- SCRA recruited additional Assistant Reporters and Senior Practitioners as part of its preparations for the implementation of CCJA, which we now know will come into force in early 2027.
- SCRA continued to have a focus on consolidating as many fixed term contractual arrangements as it can within the current core establishment, providing as much reassurance and stability to staff and teams as possible. In support of this, the Senior Operational Managers have developed a resourcing model that assesses workload against capacity, which has resulted in a Reporter to LRM to Senior Practitioner to Assistant Reporter ratio that enables more robust Locality workforce planning.
- SCRA continues to support staff to apply for internal and external secondments, which gives real opportunities to develop skills and experiences that they can share and utilise on their return to their substantive roles.

2.16 ***What will SCRA do in 2026/27 to recruit and retain people***

- SCRA will continue its recruitment for additional CCJA workforce. It is anticipated that an additional eleven Children's Reporters will be recruited throughout 2026 in preparation for the implementation of CCJA. Whilst SCRA have forecast the additional workforce required, this will be the subject of further review in future years as we realise the impact of CCJA on our workload.
- SCRA will consider and implement the recommendations from the audit of recruitment attraction practices. Additionally, the launch of SCRA's internally developed e-recruitment process has been slightly delayed due to the availability of resources. However, the internal pilots of the first stages of workflow have now completed and a phased launch of functionality will begin over the next few months. This will provide internal and external applicants for vacancies with a digital approach to submitting applications and will enable managers a more streamlined, real time approach to recruiting to vacancies.
- SCRA has committed to undertake regular review of job descriptions in line with good practice. In terms of Locality roles, we will undertake a review of the Assistant Reporter job description in 2026/27, with future plans to review the Locality Support Manager job description potentially commencing in early 2027 (timelines to be finalised). Other Locality roles will be planned for future years. This will be internally managed and evaluated in line with normal practices. Singleton Head Office roles will be continued to be planned for review on a manager led basis.
- The Programme, Change and Digital Teams are currently developing the project improvement plan as we progress towards the Target Operating Model in 2030. SCRA recognises that any pilots and tests as part of these improvement programmes may require the development of new roles or the review of current roles, which may require SCRA to shape accordingly with the evidenced outcomes of those reviews. The workforce plan remains flexible to work alongside the Programme Team in these developments as required.
- There are no voluntary exit schemes planned for 2026/27 given current staff growth. However, SCRA remain flexible in the consideration of voluntary exit opportunities for staff if required. Where there would be a need, any scheme would likely be targeted at specific roles or areas of the business and would only be progressed in consultation with UNISON. The overall focus, however, is to retain a skilled workforce to be able to plan and prioritise the programme work, implementation of Children's Care and Justice Act as well as meeting the outcomes of the 2026/27 business plan.
- The HR Team will develop a Locality/Team Management dashboard on workforce demographics to support local workforce and succession planning including discussions in supervision about future career or retirement options, in line with SCRA policies.
- SCRA will consider how it plans for changes to the PVG disclosure scheme. Currently staff have a lifetime membership of the scheme – this will change to 5 years membership and require resubmission of PVG application at that point. SCRA will work with Disclosure Scotland on how we phase this change in.

1. Developing our People

- 3.1 At the end of Q3 in 2025/26, staff attended 2013 learning events which equates to 4 events per employee. At this stage of the year, with Q4 still to be recorded, SCRA has already met its annual learning event KPI and is confident of again exceeding that. A learning event is where an individual employee attends a learning opportunity such as face to face training, webinar, elearning etc..
- 3.2 Table 8 shows the annual comparison of the number of learning events completed and the average number of events per employee. It is anticipated that the number of average events per employee is likely to exceed 5 by the end of March 2026.

Table 8

Date period	Learning Events	Events per employee
2022/23	2095	4.4
2023/24	2377	4.9
2024/25	2917	6.0
Q3 2025/26	2013	4.0

Table 9 details the top 5 areas of training provided in Q3

Table 9

Type of Training	% of Learning Events
GDPR	23.17%
Trauma Training	20.99%
Health & Safety	18.32%
Practice	8.61%
Equalities, Inclusion & Diversity	8.56%
Grand Total	79.65%

GDPR refresher training took place in Q3 which was mandatory for all staff. New courses offered in Q3 include Communicating in Challenging Situations and the new mandatory EDI eLearning for all staff.

- 3.3 87% of respondents to the 2025 staff survey agreed that SCRA supports them in exploring their learning and development goals and plans. A similar percentage agreed that these learning opportunities are helping staff with their personal and/or career development. Whilst there is a wealth of local learning, SCRA's 2024/27 Learning Plan was developed by the Learning Network, which comprises of staff from across the organisation who have some involvement in the identification and delivery of learning. The staff survey results indicates that over 86% of staff feel that the organisations learning plans are meeting their needs. Additionally, the staff survey asked what learning would be important to staff and responses will be themed and considered throughout the year to be added to the learning plan.

3.4 ***What did SCRA do in 2025/26 to develop the workforce***

- SCRA refreshed the 2024/27 Learning Plan for the final 18 months of the Plan and this was launched to staff in November 2025. This plan was developed and is owned by SCRA's Learning Network and which includes (not inclusive)
 - Trauma training
 - Equalities and Diversity
 - Practice Training (see Practice Training Calendar [Practice Training calendar](#))
 - Information Governance
 - Operational Development and Digital Skills
 - Management Development
 - Quality Improvement
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Induction
 - General and Further Education Training
- SCRA exceeded its Learning Events KPI – current KPI is 4 learning events per year per employee. At the end of Q3 in 2025/26 SCRA had achieved this figure and is on track to exceed this.
- GDPR, Trauma, Health and Safety, Practice and EDI (Bystander and Mandatory EDI Awareness) training were the top training provisions in 2025.
- SCRA continue to support some staff to undertake further education qualifications to support career development
- The Learning Network developed criteria for classifying and monitoring Mandatory Training
- The Operational Development Team continued to provide a comprehensive digital skills training offering to support the increased confidence in digital capabilities across the workforce. Additionally, the OD Team included some questions in the 2025 staff survey to assess the growing confidence in CSAS users – this showed that in general between 80% and 97% of survey respondents were confident/very confident in using SCRA systems.
- A learning programme was developed and agreed for Locality Support Staff. This includes a broad range of learning from digital, shadowing, Keeping the Promise and Practice training to having conversations in complex situations and good customer service. This is being owned by the Locality Support Manager network and will be delivered over the next two years.
- We launched our refreshed approach to SCRA's management development programme across three Levels, all of which include some level of coaching and mentoring. The first cohort of Level 3 – senior/strategic leadership commenced in January 2026 and we anticipate that initial feedback will amend the approach further to fully bespoke the learning to SCRA.
- A train the trainer course for the Practice Team and Senior Practitioners was delivered to support the ongoing provision of training across SCRA. Further opportunities to engage in this learning will be delivered in 2025/26.
- The Senior Team continue to pilot a 360° feedback framework, the purpose of which is to support personal development planning. The feedback from this process will remain confidential to the postholder and their line manager. The pilot will be assessed in advance of considering further roll-out to all managers in SCRA in future years.

3.6 ***What will SCRA do in 2026/27 to develop the workforce***

- The Learning Plan for 2026/27 will be delivered
- We will offer management development opportunities at all 3 Levels e.g.
Level 1 – aimed at new and prospective managers and is intended to provide managers and prospective managers with an introduction to management,
Level 2 – aimed at current experienced managers to provide more in depth training to further develop their leadership skills and **Level 3** – aimed at all current managers to develop their skills in areas aligned to the transformation change programme and other strategic programmes/leadership
- SCRA will relaunch its shadowing and mentoring scheme, looking at provision of training for mentors and developing a matching process.
- Further provision of a coaching learning programme for Senior Practitioners and Managers to underpin support and performance development in Localities.
- We will better communicate opportunities for further education so that staff can fully consider undertaken additional/new qualifications that may help career progression.
- The Learning Network will respond to any learning and development requirements arising from the project and programme work to support staff undertaking new or revised tasks and functions.
- Following the conclusion of the review of the Reporter job description and person specification, a skills gap analysis will be undertaken in conjunction with managers and postholders and the necessary learning opportunities development/provided either locally or nationally.
- SCRA will continue to develop and expand on the suite of EDI related training and awareness sessions with a particular focus in 2026/27 on mandatory anti-racism training.
- We will continue to develop our elearning platform to ensure that it is accessible and meets our needs.
- We will work with key external partners to enhance SCRA's learning offering by sharing learning across partners

2. Engaging our People

- 4.1 Engagement has taken many forms throughout 25/26 and we can see from the 2025 staff survey results that 88% of survey respondents say that they have had the opportunity(ies) to be involved in discussions around the future change in SCRA and 91% of respondents found the communications from SCRA provide sufficient, timely and accessible information. However, this figure drops to 60% when staff say that they have been consulted on decisions that affect their work/role. So continuing to ensure that engagement is a key aspect of our approach is important so that all staff feel informed about what is happening across the organisation, planned and current change and how they can get involved. SCRA's Communication Team has a multi-faceted approach to communication and engagement, and alongside our well established Development and Supervision Framework, is the cornerstone to our engagement strategies.
- 4.2 The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive's Team Brief sessions enable staff to hear directly from the PR/CE on current and relevant developments across the organisation. These are well attended and offer all staff the opportunity to engage with the PR/CE and members of the Senior Team on matters that are important to them and SCRA.
- 4.3 SCRA's Change Team works very closely with the Programme Team and have set fortnightly calls with managers across the organisation which is an open forum to provide organisational and Locality updates on change and other activity. This information sharing is vital to increasing awareness, engagement in developments and the opportunities to plan with the right teams/staff at the right time. Engaging with staff during organisational changes is essential to maintaining trust, morale, and productivity.
- 2.4 Partnership working is strong across SCRA and is the root of SCRA's approach to organisation development, consultation and collective bargaining processes. SCRA continues to encourage staff to join the SCRA UNISON branch so that they can feel the benefits of this strong partnership and have their voices represented at the most strategic levels. As part of the partnership agreement, the National Partnership Forum meets quarterly, chaired jointly by the Principal Reporter and UNISON Branch Secretary. There are a number of sub-groups – the Health and Wellbeing and Staff Survey Group, the Inclusion and Development Steering Group and the HR Sub Group.

4.5 ***What did SCRA do in 2025/26 to engage the workforce***

- The Programme, Change and Operational Development Teams have worked closely with Localities as they pilot and test Child Family Scheduling and Keeping the Promise Standards. This engagement at national and local level has included process development, skills enhancement, feedback, learning and ultimately continuous improvement.
- A working group was implemented to review current non-disclosure and Hearings Information Pack processes and is now ready to go live following a pilot in the Glasgow Locality.
- The Change Team implemented fortnightly meetings with all managers to discuss all aspects of change and planned activity.
- The National Partnership Forum between SCRA and UNISON meet quarterly and have found meeting face to face supports its commitment to maintaining and improving partnership working. The agendas focus on all aspects of operations and staff issues to ensure that staff feel listened to, engaged, informed, empowered and that their views and voices are key to embedding sustainable change towards improving our services to children, young people and their families.
- The Principal Reporter held regular team brief sessions that all staff could attend to hear directly from the PR about relevant updates but to also give staff a space with the Principal Reporter to raise any issues that they feel necessary directly with members of the Senior Team.
- The Senior Team continued to hold their meetings in Locality spaces and welcomed members of staff into the meetings so that the senior team business was transparent aiming to break down any perceived barriers to access to the Senior Team. After the meetings, the senior team spent some time in the Locality with staff listening to what was challenging for staff at that time but also sharing plans and information about what was happening across the organisation. The staff survey shows that 87% of staff know who the Senior Team is with 89% confident in the leadership of the organisation. These results are up 6% and 5% respectively as a result of this activity.
- Management networks met regularly, including Locality Reporter Manager and Locality Support Manager networks. The agendas were developed from input from managers and generally focussed on organisational strategy, change management, communications, and opportunities to engage in skills development in areas like trauma skills. They were also a space to network with colleagues from across the organisation.
- SCRA ran its 17th all staff survey. The feedback from the staff survey has been analysed in some depth by the Principal Reporter and communicated to the Board and to staff. Whilst the results were very positive, the staff survey action plan will continue to focus on workload, reward and morale in 2026.
- The HR Sub Group reviewed the following SCRA policies :- Disciplinary, Grievance and Investigation Guidelines, Whistleblowing, Dignity at Work and Staff Code of Conduct, Retirement, Subsistence, Maternity, Adoption and Paternity and Long Service Awards.

4.6 ***What will SCRA do in 2026/27 to engage the workforce***

- Whilst there are no specific engagement actions detailed for 2026/27, SCRA believes that its approach to engagement is improving and in some areas constitute good practice. This is well detailed within SCRA's Communication Strategy.
- The Staff Event will be held on 8 October 2026. This event brings together staff from across the organisation to hear about the impact they are having on the Children's Hearing Environment, planned change and initiatives and to hear from some really exciting speakers who can support how we work together and for children and their families.
- SCRA will continue to fully support and promote the National Partnership Agreement and will welcome a newly elected Branch Secretary in 2026. It is anticipated that the close working relationship will continue to benefit the workforce.
- Management networks have already been planned for 2026 and one theme for managers will be on how UNISON and HR can support them to deliver their roles, with a particular focus on performance, absence and holding challenging conversations. The networks are also important to give managers the necessary space for networking, learning together and information sharing.
- The (18th) 2026 staff survey will be progressed
- We will also undertake a culture pulse test (to be designed) to ensure that there are no unintended consequences on our culture as a result of our continuous improvement approach. We will be able to benchmark the results of that pulse test against the culture audit that was undertaken in 2022 and take the necessary action to focus on any anomalies.
- The Senior Team will continue to schedule a series of planned meetings in Localities at a time that fits with the work of that particular Locality.
- SCRA will continue to expect regular team and individual supervision meetings with staff so that the flow of communication and engagement opportunities is available across the whole organisation. Managers will also be encouraged to feed up information gathered locally from these meetings.
- The HR Sub Group has planned to review the Flexi Hours Scheme and Flexible Working Policy as they align with the Agile Working Policy to ensure that they all work in alignment and support operational service delivery whilst giving appropriate flexible working arrangements for staff. The HR Sub will also be open to reviewing other policies throughout the year as issues arise and to meet legislative changes.
- We will engage with the workforce in planning and developing for the 2027/30 People Strategy and what that might look like and seek to achieve.

5. Supporting our People

- 5.1 SCRA is absolutely committed to supporting its people in the workplace. The approach is wide and varied and encompasses areas like ensuring that inclusion and diversity is a key aspect of our wellbeing strategy (96% of staff survey respondents agreed that SCRA is committed to equalities, diversity and inclusion), that our work in progressing good physical and mental health at work and supporting the local and national wellbeing groups (86% of staff survey respondents agreed that SCRA provides them with regular, useful and proactive information/opportunities to improve/maintain their health and wellbeing at work), as well as ensuring that SCRA's policies and terms and conditions are of high quality and provide clear guidance and support to staff at work and ensuring that they achieve a quality work life balance.
- 5.2 Short term sickness absence for 2025 (as at 5 February 2026) was **1.63%** (down 0.33% from 2024), meeting our 2% target. Long term absence is less predictable and our absence rate of **5.66%** (up 2.26% from 2024) which is well above our target of 2%. Whilst all long term absence is managed with the HR Team supporting line managers, this level of ongoing absence is now proving challenging on available resources and having an impact on staff who have to cover the work left by those on long term absence. We have heard this clearly in the staff survey. We will review our approach to managing absence in 2025/26 to provide assurances to all staff, aiming for those staff who are absent to return to work as quickly as possible.
- 5.3 This absence rate is the equivalent of **16.2 days per employee**, which has increased from 2024 by 4.3 days. This is above the CIPD's¹ reported absence rate for public sector employers at 13.3 days per employee. Please note that the CIPD are noting an increase in average sickness absence days by over 3 days. It is acknowledged, however, that SCRA remains above the national average.
- 5.4 The highest recorded reason in 2025 at **37%** of all absence was attributed to psychological absences, which include stress symptoms, anxiety, depression, bereavement etc. This is an increase of 11% from 2024. The highest proportion of psychological absences are in the Reporter, Senior Practitioner and Assistant Reporter roles. It should be noted that the next largest reason for absence was cold, flu and stomach related absences at 20%.
- 5.5 Whilst the sickness absence rates are a measure of mental and physical health amongst the workforce, SCRA's staff survey suggests that **88%** and **93%** of respondents state that their mental and physical health respectively are good. However it is clear that SCRA needs to focus on sustaining staff at work and continue to promote the mental and physical health supports that SCRA has in place including access to trauma support services, cognitive behavioural and other therapies, counselling and our extensive cohort of internally trained mental health first aiders.

¹ CIPD Health and Wellbeing at work Report 2025

5.6 ***What did SCRA do in 2025/26 to support the workforce***

- The HR Team supported Localities to develop local charters in support of the Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework (ISBF) which provide clear expectations of how they can expect to behave and be treated whilst at work and/or on SCRA events.
- In support of the ISBF and the revised Dignity at Work Policy, mandatory Active Bystander Training was offered to managers (options of face to face or virtual training) to provide the skills and confidence to raise any issues that they may witness that makes them or others feel uncomfortable. We will offer further virtual bystander training for all staff and those who were not able to attend these sessions.
- SCRA's Wellbeing Strategy was developed and consulted on through the Health and Wellbeing and HR Sub Groups and clearly outlines SCRA's broad wellbeing offering to staff. This is key underpin of SCRA's culture given the importance we place on staff's wellbeing. This will be formally launched in March.
- In 2025/26 SCRA paused the programme of self-assessment for psychological support which had been soft launched as a pilot, based on the feedback we have received from the pilot and UNISON. We believe there is more that we could offer staff and will undertake a fuller analysis of what we want to deliver in this important aspect of support. Whilst that work is ongoing, we will continue to offer occupational health, vicarious trauma support, EAP and bespoke EAP and 'one off incident support', group support for work that may have a psychological impact as launched to complement SCRA's approach to trauma informed staff. This work will continue into 2026/27 but in the meantime there are many other supports we can access as required.
- The HR Team engaged with an external provider to develop Phase 2 of SCRA's resilience framework. This will be completed in 2025/26 and rolled out in 2026/27.
- The Mental Wealth Group organised and ran the Big Team Challenge which was again supported by SCRA and which invites teams of SCRA colleagues to virtually walk across Ireland over the course of 6 weeks. Around 150 staff took part. This is an extremely popular activity that promotes team work, getting outside in the fresh air, exercise and a healthy bit of competition.
- The Mental Wealth Group organised a daily calendar of events for the whole of October prioritising mental health in the workplace and supporting Mental Health Day. Topics covered were varied and included digital detox, webinars on Power of Attorney and Wills, nature's therapy, walking, good nourishment and the impact on wellbeing, neurodiversity awareness, happiness, reading and recharging, yoga, unity in diversity, men's health and mental health, baby loss and staying well during the winter to name some of the events. Feedback was good and we anticipate a similar approach in 2026.
- Additionally, the Mental Wealth Group promoted Time to Talk day in February 2026, which is a national campaign to help to break down stigma relating to mental health challenges. This year it was about making our spaces stigma free and encouraging people to talk openly about mental health.
- The Race Equality Group continued to support the Black and Asian Workers network, which is led by an external lead who is a specialist in this field.

- SCRA ran another equalities monitoring exercise to improve the data collection of our current workforce so that we are better informed on organisational needs.
- SCRA offered a free flu vaccination to staff for the ninth year
- We were able to improve a number of benefits for staff which was formally launched in February 2026. This include discounted gym memberships, Dental Insurance, free mortgage advice that have rolling programme of webinars on remortgaging or first time buyers and access to a free meeting with a qualified mortgage adviser, as well as digital recognition cards that staff can send to each to show their appreciation.
- SCRA has completed it reaccreditation programme for the LGBT Youth Scotland Charter which sends a positive message that SCRA is a champion of LGBT inclusion and where employees and children, young people and their families can feel safe, supported and included. We anticipate successful reaccreditation by end March 2026.

5.7 *What will SCRA do in 2026/27 to support the workforce*

- SCRA's Resilience framework will be launched in two tranches, firstly to managers then to all staff with all learning and support being delivered by end 2026/27. This will provide staff with the tools and skills to feel confident, supported and resilient at work.
- Absence management will be a significant focus for the HR Team and all managers throughout 2026/27. We are very conscious of the impact our high long term absence rate is having on staff and operational capacity and will work directly with managers in seeking to reduce this, through good and timely conversations, OH input, clearer expectations on attendance at work whilst continuing to support staff who are struggling with the health, either physical or mental.
- SCRA will implement mandatory anti-racism training for all staff and will monitor completion rates in line with the agreed mandatory training criteria.
- SCRA will review its mandatory health and safety training for all staff in a bid to streamline the necessary learning and recommunicate the recommendations to all staff.
- The Mental Wealth Group have planned an annual programme of events throughout the year and include areas like financial wellbeing webinars, stress awareness month, another Big Walk Challenge, Mental Health Awareness week, Menopause Awareness Day and World Suicide Prevention Day amongst other topics.
- We will launch an e-vehicle salary sacrifice scheme which will be open to all staff (subject to criteria such as contract of longer than 6 months and for the period of the agreement, as well as salary levels) that will enable staff to lease an electric vehicle at a reduced cost due to salary sacrifice. This supports SCRA's sustainability programme and meets ongoing requests from staff.
- SCRA will communicate the benefits of appreciation. A guidance framework has been developed and whilst not mandatory, SCRA is keen to build on the good staff supports that already in place to include meaningful and consistently applied appreciation. We recognise that there are lots of good practices around the organisation already but gentle communication reminders will hopefully

embed appreciation within our culture. SCRA will start to plan for an annual employee appreciation day on 6 March each year.

- SCRA will develop the current Wellness Action Plans into a broader Employee Passport. This will still include the opportunity to record and discuss with line managers, what makes work good for staff in challenging times, but will also enable staff with disabilities to record their agreed reasonable adjustments that they have in the workplace so that they do not have to re-tell their circumstances to any new line managers as when that occurs. It will also provide a platform for discussing other supports that may assist a carer with maximising their own health and wellbeing balancing work and care.
- A managers cancer toolkit will also be developed so that managers feel better equipped to support staff diagnosed with cancer
- Legislative changes such as Day 1 rights for Paternity and Parental leave as well as statutory sick pay will be applied from the April 2026.
- A fourth cohort of Mental Health First Aiders will be offered training and support
- A second cohort of Mindfulness Champions will be offered training and support.

6. Conclusions for our People

6.1 SCRA clearly recognises that in order to achieve its outcomes as outlined in the 2025/26 Business Plan and the second year of its People Strategy, it is important that SCRA invests in the workforce. There is a strong focus in this report on continuing the growth in the learning culture and upskilling of the workforce, focusing on the wellbeing of staff, increasing the diversity of the workforce and continuing with strong partnership working and regular opportunities to engage.

6.2 The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Good Work Index 2025² notes that they believe that good work

- is fairly rewarded and gives people the means to securely make a living
- allows for work–life balance
- gives opportunities to develop, and ideally a sense of fulfilment
- provides a supportive environment with constructive relationships
- gives employees the voice and choice they need to shape their working lives
- is physically and mentally healthy for people and accessible for all

SCRA believes that this workforce plan aims to achieve these descriptors of good work.

² CIPD Good Work Index 2025

SCRA BOARD

18 March 2026

Item 12.1: Strategic Risk Register

Report Classification: Open

For: Approval

Executive Sponsor: Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

Author: Ross Mackenzie, Head of Finance and Resources

Executive Summary

SCRA's strategic risk register is a key planning and governance control that is regularly reviewed and updated by those charged with responsibilities for service delivery in SCRA. In accordance with the Risk Management Policy, this paper is the Board's quarterly update on the Register, which has recently been reviewed by Board subcommittees. Updates there agreed are now captured in the Register.

Recommendation

Board members are invited to approve the Strategic Risk Register.

Key Issues to be discussed/considered

- Risk #2 (the optimum model for CSAS ownership and accountability and a joint future partnership between SCRA and CHS is not adequately defined and agreed) has been reworded to focus solely on joint future partnership, with the Joint Investment Profile being a key mitigation,
- Risk #3 (failure to maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce) has been closed and superseded with a new risk #281, that "SCRA is unable to flexibly and quickly deploy resources to where they need to be to deliver a national service, locally".
- Risk #240 (uncertainty about the Hearings System impacts SCRA's ability to plan, prepare and deliver change to meet future needs) has been reframed to specifically cover only the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) Bill (also known as The Promise Bill, or CCCESP), and no longer covers the risk of being unable to deliver change.

There are no other proposed changes to existing risks or scores. The percentage of controls rated green rather than amber has dropped from 86% (51 out of 59) to 78% (47 out of 60). The percentage of actions rated green rather than amber has increased marginally from 80% (60 out of 75) to 81% (63 out of 78). As before, no controls or actions are rated red.

Implications:**Service**

Risk #281 better defines and addresses the risk around workload, and should lead to an improvement in service delivery.

Financial

No direct financial implications. Risk #259 continues to address the ongoing structural budget deficit.

Workforce

No direct workforce implications although various risks in the Register relate to workforce.

Infrastructure including Digital

No direct infrastructure/digital implications although various risks in the Register relate to infrastructure and digital.

Information Governance

N/A

Risk Assessment/Management

Regular review and updating of the Strategic Risk Register is essential to mitigating the risks SCRA faces and demonstrating that those charged with responsibilities (as detailed in the Risk Management Policy) are fulfilling the requirements of their role.

Relevance to Corporate/Strategic Objectives

The Strategic Risk Register supports the Corporate Plan objectives by mitigating risks to programmes and service delivery, and by supporting our staff.

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 that this paper is not relevant to Equality & Diversity.

Involvement, Engagement and/or Consultation

EMT members and other owners of controls or actions (including function managers and the Digital Security and Governance Manager) have input into the register.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Strategic Risk Register (summary)

Appendix 1: Strategic Risk Register (summary)



Ref	Risk Category	Title	Risk Register	Risk Appetite	Inherent Risk Likelihood x Impact	Controls on Track	Residual Risk Likelihood x Impact	Movement in score	Actions on Track	Target Risk Likelihood x Impact
1	Strategic	[AAC] IT Security measures are insufficient to prevent a successful cyber-attack on SCRA case information which results in loss of data which cannot be recovered.	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	5 x 4  20	 1 Amber  6 Green	3 x 3  9	↔	 1 Amber  12 Green	2 x 2  4
2	Strategic	[AAC] Joint future partnership between SCRA and CHS regards CSAS is not adequately defined and agreed.	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	4 x 4  16	 1 Amber  8 Green	2 x 3  6	 3 x 3 = 9 19th Oct 2023	 18 Green	2 x 2  4
153	Strategic	[PPC] Inability to spend CCJA-preparation capital and revenue allocations due to lack of specificity of the necessary adaptations to facilities and systems for referral of 16 and 17 year olds, with the result that sub-optimal solutions reduce the efficiency of staff and the quality of service when the legislation is implemented	Strategic Risk Register	Open	5 x 4  20	 9 Green	3 x 3  9	 4 x 3 = 12 18th Oct 2023	 13 Green	3 x 2  6
240	Strategic	[PPC] Uncertainty about the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) Bill impacts our ability to plan and prepare adequately to meet our future needs	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	5 x 3  15	 6 Amber  6 Green	4 x 2  8	 10th Dec 2024	 8 Amber  3 Green	4 x 1  4
258	Reputation	[PPC] Lack of progress/focus on environmental and sustainability plans/actions within 2024-2027 (Corporate Plan period) results in failure to meet stakeholders' expectations around reporting on and reducing SCRA's carbon footprint	Strategic Risk Register	Open	4 x 3  12	 8 Green	2 x 2  4	 2nd Jun 2025	 2 Amber  8 Green	1 x 2  2
259	Financial	[AAC] Scottish Government's published budget for SCRA for 2026-27 does not meet SCRA's needs, resulting in uncertainty over the extent to which in-year funding can support SCRA's delivery on its corporate and business plan objectives	Strategic Risk Register	Open	5 x 5  25	 5 Green	4 x 4  16	 2nd Jun 2025	 1 Amber  4 Green	3 x 1  3
281	Operational	[WGC] SCRA is unable to flexibly and quickly deploy resources to where they are required in order to deliver a national service, locally	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	3 x 3  9	 5 Amber  5 Green	2 x 3  6	 5th Mar 2026	 3 Amber  5 Green	2 x 2  4