

SCRA Board Meeting

Agenda

Wednesday 19th June 2024 at 10:30am
Boardroom, Ochil House, Stirling

	Item	Papers	Purpose		Lead
1.1	AOB				
1.2	Apologies				
2.	Declarations of Interest			All	
3.	Board Member Updates			Board Members	
4.	Minutes/Committees				
4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Minute of the meeting held on 20th March Board Board Workplan Matters Arising 	Attached Attached	Approval Noting	Chair of Board	
4.2	Audit & Risk Committee			Chair of Audit and Risk Committee	
4.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Minute of Meeting held on 23rd May 	Attached	Noting		JE
4.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report 	Attached	Approval		JE
5	Accountable Officer				
5.1	Chief Executive's Report		Noting	Principal Reporter/Chief Executive	NH
	Reports				
6.	Organisational Performance Report & introduction to official statistics		Approval	Head of Strategy and OD	LB
7.	SCRA Programme Update Report		Noting	Head of Strategy and OD	LB
8.	2023/24 Draft Budget Outturn		Approval	Head of Finance and Resources	RMack
9.	Property Strategy		Approval	Head of Finance and Resources	RMack
10.	Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report		Noting	Head of HR	SD
11.	Communications Plan - Update		Noting	Communications Manager	MMcI
12.	Annual Complaints Report		Noting	Head of Practice and Policy	AH
13.	Influencing Report 01 June 2023 to 01 June 2024		Noting	Head of Practice and Policy	AH
14.	Risk			Head of Finance and Resources	
14.1	Strategic & Operational Risk Registers		Approval		RMack
14.2	New Risks				
	Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 18th September 2024, by TEAMS				





Present:

Michelle Miller (Chair)
Jim Edgar
Martin Toye
Kay Barton
Suzie Vestri
Hazel Smith
Ying Zhang
Lorraine Moore
Becca Fairless

In Attendance:

Neil Hunter (Principal Reporter/Chief Executive),
Alistair Hogg (Head of Practice and Policy),
Ed Morrison (Head of Finance & Resources),
Ross Mackenzie (Finance Manager)
Susan Deery (Head of Human Resources),
Lisa Bennett (Head of Strategy & OD),
Paul Mulvanny (Senior Operational Manager, East and Central Scotland)
Ian Donaldson (Deputy Director, Children's Rights, Protection and Justice, Scottish Government) Item 6
Andrew Watson (Director for Children and Families, Scottish Government) Item 6,
Nick Rougvie (Sponsor Team Leader, Scottish Government) Item 6
Donald Lamb (Data Manager) Item 8
Pamela Armstrong (Governance Officer)

		Timescale	Action
1.1	AOB None		
2.	Apologies Helen Etchells (Senior Operational Manager, North and West Scotland) Monica Sweeny (UNISON Branch Secretary)		
3.	Declarations of Interest None		
4.	Minutes/Committees		
4.1	Minute of meeting held on 34 January 2023 Agreed as accurate.		
4.2	Board Action log and Work plan The action log and work plan were reviewed.		

		Timescale	Action
4.3	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>All matters arising are covered within the agenda.</p>		
4.4	<p>Minute the Audit & Risk Committee held on Thursday 28 February 2024</p> <p>Jim Edgar, Committee Chair, updated the Board in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Governance Update • Quality Assurance & Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reporter decision making for children referred to the Reporter for offence referrals. ○ Case sampling programme 2024-25 • Risk Management Policy • External Audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ External Audit Annual Plan 2023-24 ○ General Update • Internal Audit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workforce Planning ○ Corporate Governance ○ Progress Report 2023-24 ○ Annual Audit Plan 2024-25 • Pensions Update 		
Reports			
5.	<p>Chief Executive's Report</p> <p>The Principal Reporter/Chief Executive spoke to the update report which detailed a wide range of activity across the organisation.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <p>Updates were given in the following areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Partnership • Staff Survey 2023 • Managers Event • Reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) • Scottish Government Liaison • Race Equality programme. • Spotlight – Operational Development Team <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members thanked the PR/CE for a detailed report, reflective of the work done by SCRA. 		
6.	<p>Draft Budget 2024/25</p> <p>The PR/CE and Finance Manager introduced the report which is seeking approval of the draft 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets, the staffing establishment, the delegation of the minor works capital budget to the Executive</p>		

		Timescale	Action
	<p>Management Team (EMT) and approval of the 2023/24 Efficiency Plan.</p> <p>Ian Donaldson, Deputy Director Children’s Rights, Protection and Justice, and Andrew Watson, Director for Children and Families participated in the follow-on discussion.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report provides updates in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Budget 2023/24 ○ Draft Budget 2023/24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revenue ▪ Staff Costs ▪ Non-Staff Costs ▪ Income ▪ Challenge & Review ▪ Capital ○ Efficiency Plan ○ Financial Plan • At this stage it is assumed SCRA will receive standstill funding of £24.318m, working capital funding for rents of £0.842m plus budget pressures funding of £7.69m, totalling £32.85m. The Board and senior management are working with Sponsor Team to ensure sufficient assurance is contained in the March 2024 Grant in Aid letter to allow a revenue budget of £32.85m to be approved. • The continuing one-year nature of funding settlements and the increasing revenue budget gap creates risks in setting the revenue budget for 2025/26 due to the uncertainty of funding in future years. An updated five-year Financial Plan will be presented to the Board in September 2024. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenges faced by SCRA are not unique, there is a basic level of challenge across the public sector around the 2024/25 budget position and an expectation that bodies will look to find efficiencies and cost savings. • Ministers and wider SG recognise the scale of the fiscal challenge and there is a commitment from Scottish Government to work over the course of the year to address that, as has been done in previous years. • There is a renewed commitment from all parties within Scottish Government to look at that and how to 		

		Timescale	Action
	<p>move the budget process onto a more sustainable multiyear position.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the draft 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets, on the basis that the budget challenge is a shared risk with SG and the assurances provided regarding the Grant in Aid letter. To approve the staffing establishment To approve the delegation of the minor works capital budget to the Executive Management Team (EMT) To approve the 2024/25 Efficiency Plan. 		
7.	<p>Budget Monitoring Report</p> <p>The Finance Manager introduced the report which provides a summary of SCRA's financial position for the year to February 2024 and forecast (based on January's results) for the full year 2023/24.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Scottish Government (SG) allocated revenue funding of £25.16m for 2023/24, with agreement that up to £5.889m further resource may be required, bringing the total to £31.049m in line with the revenue budget approved by the Board in March 2023. In agreement with the Board in December 2023 the total revenue funding to be drawn down this year was reduced to £30.331m. SG provided additional resources of £2.75m at the Autumn Budget Review and the balance of funding of £2.421m was provided at the Spring Budget Review. The overall accruals based net revenue forecast underspend is £730k, after reducing funding of £718k in December. In agreement with SG SCRA has drawn down £30.331m which on current forecasts will result in a carry forward underspend which will be reviewed with SG as part of the year end process. A carry forward of £288k will be required to complete 2023/24 projects in 2024/25. 		
8.	<p>OPR</p> <p>The Data Manager introduced the Third Quarter Organisational Performance Report 2023/24: (1 October to 31 December 2023).</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This report uses a balanced scorecard approach 		

		Timescale	Action
	<p>which attributes measures within the organisation into four quadrants; three aligned to the aims within our business plan: Care, Connect, and Protect and another quadrant around recovery or exceptions. This provides a concise report which enables a fuller focus on the key areas of performance throughout SCRA. Continuing feedback from the Board will be used to inform future development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets are once again applied to operational indicators (decision making, referrals over 100 working days and Hearing scheduling) having been previously removed due to the recovery work required post-pandemic. • As part of the locality planning for 2023/24, operational targets have been re-introduced. These targets have been set by localities and are then profiled to provide an overall national target which SCRA will work to in 2023/24. • In Q2 we reported on an increasing trend in Children with Child Protection Orders. This trend has ceased but Lanarkshire D&G are still showing an increasing trend so this will continue to be monitored. • Short term absence has remained within the target with seven localities and Head office within the 2% target. Long term absence has improved by 1pp which is a significant improvement but remains a challenge with only four localities meeting the 2% target in the quarter. • Revenue spends are currently forecast to be outside of the 1% target. Senior managers have continued to identify opportunities for redeploying underspends in-year to support the delivery of corporate priorities however a slightly lower funding need for 2023/24 is being confirmed to Scottish Government this month. The Glenrothes works project is underway however the final (and main) phase of the project will not complete until early 2024/25, this is the primary reason for the capital underspend in 2023/24. The other financial targets around revenue savings and efficiency savings are on forecast to be on target. • The Business Plan section has been updated to include progress to the end of February. Of the 27 objectives, 13 are now complete with others remaining on track and none highlighting a risk to non-delivery. 		

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	<p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases over 100 days was discussed. The Board were advised those cases are reviewed on a regular basis with a system in place to make sure that they are being actively being monitored. • The Operational Development Team are conducting a routine branch analysis in terms of how hearings are scheduled across all nine localities. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the Q3 Organisational Performance Report 2023/24, covering the period 1 October to 31 December 2023. 		
9.	<p>Corporate Plan 2024/27 The Head of Strategy & OD introduced the plan which also provides the Board with the final version of the Business Plan 2024/25.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every three years SCRA develops and publishes a refreshed Corporate Plan. This sets the organisational direction for the period and is supported by three Business Plans laying out in greater detail how this will be achieved. • In December 2023, a paper was presented to the Board outlining the sequence of steps, with indicative timescales, alongside a skeleton draft of the Corporate Plan. This followed some virtual engagement with the Board on early thinking. In January, the Board were presented with a draft Corporate and Business Plan for consideration and comment. • The Corporate Plan has now been reviewed by Scottish Government. Comments were received but none that changed the substance of the report, only improvements/corrections in technicalities around legislation etc - all were considered. • All activity to meet the objectives contained within the Business Plan will be within the programme plans/internal strategies and coordinated on Zoho – our Planning tool. • The Business Plan is currently with Scottish Government for comment. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving forward, further consideration will be given to the use of language and jargon within the report. 		

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	<p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the Corporate Plan 2024-27 to be submitted for Ministerial approval. • To approve the Business Plan 2024/25 to be submitted for Ministerial noting. 		
10.	<p>Programmes Update</p> <p>The Head of Strategy & OD introduced the report, providing an update on the Programme Management work – its governance arrangements, the progress against plans and on our approach to change and transition.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and Oversight <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Approvals and Reporting ○ Programme Framework Review • Programme Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme Protect ○ Care Programme ○ Hearings for Children ○ Keeping the Promise Improvement work • Change Readiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Change and Transition Planning ○ Communication ○ Learning and Development <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving forward overall progress against objectives will be shown within the Business Plan with links to further detail. • The review of statutory roles and functions between SCRA and CHS is an ongoing discussion between the Principal Reporter, National Convenor and SG Sponsor Team. SCRA are not seeking any amendment to PR/CEO functions, however we require to have an open discussion about an evidence base that would suggest what needs to be changed. In the event high level principled changes to functions are agreed, a collaborative redesign process will follow. 		
11.	<p>Annual Workforce Planning Report</p> <p>The Head of HR introduced the Annual Workforce report, providing a high-level overview of key workforce data and the relevant trends to inform SCRA’s workforce planning priorities for 2024/25 as well as the development of the new three-year People Strategy 2024/27.</p>		

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	<p>In addition, this report provides an overview of initiatives and strategies that have been put in place to support our people over the last year. The format follows the employee lifecycle as outlined in our 2020/24 People Strategy</p> <p>Noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Retention • Reward • Workload • Health and Wellbeing • Learning and Development • Engagement • The Year Ahead <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession plans are in place, with work continuing the underpinning detail, informing career pathways. This work is starting with Support staff and Assistant Reporters. LRM's are offered the Professional Managers Development Programme. The Trainee Reporter role is also offered. We are starting to build up different ways of getting into different levels of the organisation. • The review of the Role of the Reporter is still in the planning stage. The process it is about recognising the work Reporters do and being recognised as part of the Hearings for Children report and CCJB. • Work has been done with Managers on how to manage absence in terms of how to recognise some of the signs of stress. HR Business Partners work closely with Managers and where there's any indication at all of staff struggling, Managers are quick in raising that and offering psychological support. Staff are given access to a self-assessment, which is then assessed by professionals, whilst they're still at work, allowing for supports to be put in place. • On the issue of intersectionality, age, gender, menopause, etc, there is undoubtedly a link. When we've had significant cancer related illnesses over the years, particularly focused on female cancer related illnesses there are long term impacts absence rates. 		
12.	<p>People Strategy 2024- 2027</p> <p>The Head of HR introduced the report, describing how SCRA will support and develop the workforce over the next three years to deliver our vision, our values of Care, Connect and Protect and our strategic objectives as outlined</p>		

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	<p>in the 2024- 2027 Corporate Plan. SCRA has four strategic aims for the next three years.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Strategy Aims • People Strategy • High level Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recruit and retain our People. ○ Developing our People ○ Engaging our People ○ Supporting our People <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions are ongoing with the SCRA leadership team, which is made up of Locality Reporter Manager, Locality Support Managers and Head Office Managers, working alongside the EMT. They are part the change strategy, the communication strategy, and the leadership of this of this organisation. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the People Strategy for 2024-2027 to support SCRA's Corporate Plan. 		
13.	<p>Environmental Annual Report</p> <p>The Head of Finance introduced the report, providing the Board with an update on recent progress and set out the key points contained within our annual Climate Change report to Scottish Government.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public bodies in Scotland have a mandatory requirement to fulfil specific environmental duties as a part of their functions. • The Board approved an initial 3-year target in 2021 for reducing our overall reported emissions by between 10% and 20%. • Our current Corporate Plan (2020-24) references Climate Change and Sustainability as a part of our strategic aims and our organisational values and behaviours. These strategic aims and values commit SCRA to delivering our services in a way that minimises our impact on the environment and they will be developed further as a part of our new Corporate Plan. • The Scottish Government set the target of achieving Net Zero by 2045 and all public bodies are required 		

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	<p>to work towards this target. SCRA has committed to achieve Net Zero by 2045 and has set new targets for reducing its emissions. Regarding our use of property, an earlier target of 2038 has been set for all public sector buildings to have zero direct (scope 1) emissions i.e. no longer heated using fossil fuel burning systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Strategic Sustainability and Environmental Ambassadors groups have a role to play influencing plans, policies, and behaviours to keep the focus on achieving our net zero objective. As Business and Locality plans are updated there will be an increasing emphasis on how we all contribute to this objective. • Moving to net zero direct emissions and meeting our targets will be key considerations for our next Property Strategy. Work is being undertaken with Mott MacDonald to audit our owned buildings and prepare recommendations for improving the energy efficiency of our buildings to work towards these targets. Further information will be provided in the next Property Strategy update for the Board. • Whilst progress towards meeting our net zero target continues, our overall GHG emissions increased by 5.5% compared to last year due to changes to how working from home emissions is calculated. There is a risk of our overall emissions continuing to increase, particularly as currently “out of boundary” emissions are added over time. • As more Scope 3 emissions are brought into our reporting boundary, the challenge of achieving Net Zero will go beyond the buildings we use and will affect the services we deliver and the resources we use/procure to deliver those services. The legislative and policy position from Scottish Government envisages transformational change to deliver Net Zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. It will be necessary to incorporate our Net Zero obligations into business planning and our future operating model. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCRA buildings have zero direct emissions. They are no longer heated using fuel burning system and now heated by electricity which is a positive. The cost of electricity is much higher than gas meaning we will see a related revenue cost. • While we can't control the infrastructure that sits behind, we can control consumption within our buildings and that's been the focus of the 		

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	<p>Ambassadors Group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target setting is a challenge. The definitions of what we are supposed to count seem to be changing around us. We are clear that making that progress over a period takes us far enough towards the overall target. The baseline is going to keep changing, emissions are going to go up as we start to count the scope 3 emissions. We will continue to try and impact on the emissions within our supply chains. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve a new 3-year target of reducing our GHG emissions by between 10% and 20% from the 2022/23 figure. 		
14.	<p>Health & Safety Annual Report</p> <p>The Head of HR introduced the report which covers the period from 1st April 2023 – 4th March 2024. It provides an update to the Board on Health and Safety across SCRA, including reporting on the number of incidents during that time. It provides updates on policy developments and wellbeing initiatives that have occurred within that timeframe.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <p>The report covers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accident and Incident Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historical Data Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) Injuries, near misses and ill health Violence Policy Development Locality Support Manager Refresher Training Mental Health & Wellbeing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Wellbeing ADHD & Dyslexia Mental Health Week, Big Team Challenge and Time to Talk Day Menopause Awareness Flu Vaccination <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board thanked the Health and Safety Officer for the comprehensive report. 		

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15.	<p>Review of Risk Policy</p> <p>The Head of Finance introduced the report, recommending the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve proposed changes to the Risk Management Policy. <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main terms of the policy document remain unchanged since December 2023 and only one change for approval, a new section on Effectiveness. • The effectiveness of the Risk Management Policy will be reviewed and monitored based on the following measures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the extent to which SCRA is successful year on year in achieving its business objectives. ○ the incidents of risks which have not been recognised and documented within the Risk Management structures; or which have been inappropriately rated within the structures. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve proposed changes to the attached Risk Management Policy. 		
16.	<p>New Risks</p> <p>None</p>		
	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <p>Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 19th June 2024</p>		

Board Action Log as at June 2024

Meeting/ Item	Action	Timescale	Owner	Comments	Status
Jan 24 Overview of Policies Annual Report	To include in the report if impact assessments have been completed against individual policies.	Dec 24	PA		Not yet due

SCRA Board Meeting Workplan June 2024

Business Item	Wed 20/03/24	Wed 19/06/24	Wed 18/09/24	Wed 18/12/24	TBC
Strategic/Corporate					
Policy & Influencing Report		✓			
Research Programme				✓	
Risk Register		✓	✓	✓	
Governance					
Audit Committee Minutes	✓	✓		✓	
Committee Annual Reports		✓			
Remuneration & Nominations Committee Minutes				✓	
SCRA Standing Orders Review (Next due March 2025)			✓		
Finance					
Budget Monitoring Report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Draft Budget	✓		✓	✓	
Annual Report & Accounts					
Financial Strategy			✓		
Planning			✓		✓
Draft Corporate, Corporate Parenting & Business Plan	✓ (BP)			✓	
Draft Annual Report					
Annual Workforce Planning Report	✓				
Communications Plan		✓	✓		
Performance					
Organisational Performance Report	✓	✓		✓	
Operational			✓		
Locality Performance Reviews				✓	
Chief Executive's Report	✓	✓		✓	
Complaints Review		✓			
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report		✓			
Environmental Annual Report	✓				✓
Overview of Policies Annual Report			✓	✓	
Health & Safety Annual Report	✓				
Procurement Report			✓		

Business Item	Wed 20/03/24	Wed 19/06/24	Wed 18/09/24	Wed 18/12/24	TBC
Property Strategy		✓			
Keeping the Promise update	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staff Survey	✓				
Role of the Reporter (TBC)					
Agile Policy (Next review Sep 2024)			✓		
SCRA Framework Document (next review 2024)			✓		
SCRA Whistleblowing Policy (next review Dec 2024)				✓	



Present:

Jim Edgar (Chair)
Kay Barton,
Martin Toye
Ying Zhang

In Attendance:

Neil Hunter – Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
Ross Mackenzie, Interim Head of Finance & Resources,
Lisa Bennett, Head of Strategy/OD
Helen Etchells, Senior Operational Manager
Lindsay MacFadyen – Quality Assurance Manager (Item 7)
Pamela Armstrong, Governance Officer – Minutes

Internal Auditors – BDO

Claire Robertson

External Auditors – Audit Scotland

Laura Nelson
Sean Cowan

	Item	Timescale	Action
1.	AOB There was no other business.		
2.	Apologies Asif Haseeb		
3.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.		
4.	Minute of Previous Meeting: 28th February 2024 The minute was agreed as an accurate record, subject to the discussed updates to be provided by the Chair. Action Log & Work plan The action log and work plan were reviewed and approved by the Committee, subject to confirmation of the November 24 date.	ASAP ASAP	PA PA
5.	Matters Arising Covered within the agenda.		
6.	Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report 2023-24 The Committee Chair introduced the annual report.		

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	<p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this report is to provide evidence to the Board as to how the SCRA Audit & Risk Committee has fulfilled its remit, and how effectively it has discharged its responsibilities. It also supports preparation of the annual Governance Statement. • Context of the Audit and Risk Committee • Assurance • Impact • Audit & Risk Committee Self-Assessment • Plans for 2024/25 <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report for 2023/24 for submission to the Board, subject to the following amendment, Annual Accounts 21/22 update” should read “2022/23. 		
7.	Quality Assurance and Performance		
7.1	<p>Appeals not opposed by Reporter. The Quality Assurance Manager introduced the quality assurance report on The Reporter’s Decision Not to Oppose an Appeal.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This exercise was undertaken as part of the Quality Assurance Work Programme approved by the Audit and Risk Committee in February 2024. • The focus of the exercise was to assess the appropriateness of the Reporter’s decision not to oppose an appeal against the decision of a Children’s Hearing. • The context and data for this exercise itself provides assurance, in that for the period 2022/23, under 2% of the appealable decisions made by children’s hearings were appealed against, and for over half of the appeals in that period, the decision of the hearing was upheld. The data for October 2023 to March 2024 demonstrates that in almost 70% of appeals against the decision of a children’s hearing, the Reporter was satisfied that the decision of the hearing was supportable and opposed the appeal. • Further assurance is provided from the core finding of the exercise, namely that for 17 out of the 20 cases in the sample (85%), the reviewer was satisfied that the decision not to oppose the appeal 		

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	<p>was the correct one, and in addition, agreed with the reasons why the Reporter came to that conclusion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some assurance can be taken from the finding that reviewers were able to review written information provided to the court in 80% of the cases. However, there is some room for improvement in these communications making it clear what the basis is for not opposing the appeal. 75% of those 16 cases made this clear, albeit the Reporter would have the opportunity in court to clarify this. • Practice Direction states that written answers should be provided in appeals where practicable and does not distinguish between opposed and unopposed appeals. Only 6 of the cases in the sample (30%) lodged written answers, although another form of communication with the court was provided in a further 10 cases. • There is room for improvement in the wording used for the disposal requested by the Reporter, however where this was not in line with legislation or Practice Direction, no confusion or unintended outcomes appear to have been caused. • The recording on CSAS of the reason for not opposing the appeal (including who was consulted) is still relatively new, and one part of quite a complicated process for recording the outcome of the appeal. A reminder to Reporters of the expectations for this recording may be helpful. • There may be a need for guidance about when it is appropriate to include a Reporter's note in hearing papers following a successful appeal, and of what such a note should contain. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learning from these exercises is progressed through practice sessions and updates to practice direction. • There was no detriment to children in the 3 cases where the reviewer considered the Reporter should have opposed the appeal. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the management action plan 		
7.2	<p>Progress report The Quality Assurance Manager introduced the case sampling progress report. The purpose of this report is to:</p>		

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the Audit and Risk Committee with an update on the progress of actions arising from the Quality Assurance Case Sampling Programme. • Provide an update on the progress and detail of the current case sampling programme. <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Quality Assurance Case Sampling Programme comprises a quarterly exercise on an area of casework practice and process, and compliance with the relevant Practice Direction and legislation. The topics and scope of the exercises are developed by the Practice and Quality Network, in conjunction with the Executive Management Team, and the programme is presented to the Audit and Risk Committee every February for approval. • The February 2024 Audit & Risk Committee approved a programme of exercises. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for deciding any topic involves EMT, consultation with the Programme Managers and considers what's in the corporate plan for this year. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the proposed status of the actions on the tracker. • To approve the proposed amended timings for the 3rd exercise of the Programme. 		
8.	External Audit		
8.1	<p>Annual Accounts 2023-24</p> <p>The Interim Head of Finance and Resources introduced the report, recommending the Committee approve the accounting policies for use in the accounts for the year ending 31 March 2024, to inform Audit and Risk Committee members of the key steps in the preparation of the 2023/24 Annual Accounts, to give Committee members the opportunity to review the draft Governance Statement for inclusion in the 2023/24 Annual Accounts, and to approve a proposed change in SCRA's capitalisation threshold to be effective from 1 April 2024.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting Policies, • Key steps in the preparation of the Annual Accounts • 2023/24 Issues • Governance Statement 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed change to capitalisation threshold from 2024/25 <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting policy on leases refers to operating leases and finance leases, the terminology needs to be updated. References to SGED/Scottish Government Education Department throughout accounts need to be replaced with SGESD/Scottish Government Education and Skills Department. Governance Statement needs to replace the first mention of SPFM with “Scottish Public Finance Manual (SPFM) Consider including more in the Governance Statement on Programme Governance arrangements <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve SCRA’s accounting policies for adoption in preparation of the 2023/24 financial statements, subject to the proposed amendments. To approve the Accountable Officer’s draft Governance Statement for inclusion in the 2023/24 Annual Accounts, subject to the proposed amendments To approve the proposed change in SCRA’s capitalisation threshold, effective 1 April 2024. 	<p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p>	<p>RMack</p> <p>RMack</p>
8.2	<p>Section 22 reports The Interim Head of Finance and Resources introduced the review of Audit Scotland “section 22” reports 2023/24.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Section 22” reports are prepared by the Auditor General if any specific concerns or issues have been raised in the audit of one of the public bodies for which they are responsible. At ARC’s request, SCRA management has reviewed recent section 22 reports to confirm SCRA is aware and managing similar risks appropriately. This report looks at the key messages of each of the four recently issued section 22 reports, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Government Consolidated Accounts The 2022/23 audit of NHS Forth Valley The 2022/23 audit of the Scottish Prison Service 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The 2022/23 audit of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee Chair commented that it is helpful to know what is happening elsewhere, both positive and negative and what the challenges are in terms of the financial position in Scotland. 		
8.3	<p>Briefing Paper Sean Cowan, Audit Scotland, introduced the Briefing Paper.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This paper provides the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) Audit and Risk Committee with an update on the progress of the external audit and, at relevant points during the year, introduces key outputs such as the annual audit plan and annual audit report. The report also highlights aspects of Audit Scotland’s wider work that is likely to be of interest to the Committee, including, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2023/24 Audit Updates ○ Technical Bulletins ○ Audit Scotland recent publications. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was discussion around the 2022/23 submission required by SCRA for the HM treasury Whole of government accounts (WGA), which has not yet been submitted. SCRA are currently in discussion with the SG and HM Treasury regarding this. If a submission is not made SCRA will be recorded in the 2022/23 WGA return for Scotland as ‘no data provided’ and this will be reported to the National Audit Office (NAO). The Interim Head of Finance and Resources provided the following response. Where gross assets or gross liabilities or turnover are over £30 million, organisations are required to participate in the whole of government accounts. Information required from the statutory accounts and Ledger is submitted via an online portal. There is an issue around the deadlines for submission and communication around this between Scottish and UK Government. The return for 2022/23 will not be submitted as the deadline for submission has passed. This was communicated to Scottish Government in advance 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<p>but not to SCRA directly. The 2024 return is planned for and SCRA will be compliant.</p> <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee Chair to write to the SG Sponsor Team regarding concerns around the process for submissions required by SCRA for the HM treasury Whole of government accounts (WGA). 	July 24	Chair
9.	Internal Audit		
9.1	<p>Locality Quality Improvement</p> <p>Claire Robertson, BDO, introduced the Locality Quality Improvement report.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In accordance with the 2023-24 Internal Audit Plan, it was agreed that Internal Audit would undertake a review of the quality improvement arrangements specific to Localities in place at the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA). SCRA has nine Localities, supported by a Head Office. In 2023, all Locality Managers partook in a two-day quality improvement course which was delivered internally by the Business Integration Manager. The aim of the course was to introduce the Quality Improvement Methodology for use within SCRA; Localities were asked to utilise the Quality Improvement Methodology to deliver a quality improvement project which would be included in their annual Locality Plan. Some of the Locality Managers were also in the process of completing an external quality improvement qualification the Scottish Improvement Leaders Programme (ScIL). SCRA are in the process of drafting a Quality Improvement and Change Strategy. During the review, BDO considered the application of the Quality Improvement Methodology by a sample of five Localities: Central, Grampian, Ayrshire, North Strathclyde, and Lanarkshire/Dumfries and Galloway. The purpose of this review is to provide assurance over the design and operational effectiveness of the arrangements in place surrounding Locality based quality improvement in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification Evaluation Monitoring 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reporting ○ Lessons Learned • During testing BDO identified four findings; three of which are rated as medium significance and one as low significance. • Whilst all Localities had applied the Quality Improvement methodology shared at the recent Workshops, it was found that there was a lack of consistency in the approaches taken to action planning and reporting. There was also not a formalised approach towards identifying and communicating lessons learned. • SCRA are in the process of creating a Quality Improvement and Change Strategy which will provide an opportunity to formalise and clarify the above arrangements. • BDO can provide moderate assurance over the design and operational effectiveness of the quality improvement arrangements applied to Localities. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of quality improvement measures were considered locally and how does that compare to the project and program management information that the Committee and Board have been getting about some of the recent developments? The Head of Strategy and Organisational Development provided the following response. The Business Integration Manager is currently developing training with Managers around quality improvement, which will then support the programme work. A programme was rolled out last year, taking each locality through quality improvement training. As part of that, they were asked to identify an area in their own locality that they wished to apply the methodology to. Areas identified included decision making within 50 working days and hearings scheduled within 20 working days. The next stage is asking all the localities to be focusing on the KPIs and how that work related to the programme work, where quality improvement methodology will also be applied. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the Locality Quality Improvement report. 		
9.2	Financial Planning		

Item	Timescale	Action
<p>Claire Robertson, BDO, introduced the Internal Audit Financial Planning Report.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In accordance with the 2023-24 Internal Audit Plan, it was agreed that Internal Audit would undertake a review of the financial planning arrangements at the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA). • Financial planning is important to organisations to ensure they have the funds available to achieve their strategic objectives. • Given the current economic uncertainty, balancing the budget is becoming increasingly difficult. Funding from the Scottish Government is not known past the one-year funding allocation, and it hasn’t been increasing in line with inflation. Added to this is the current cost of living crisis, costs are increasing more and as a result staff’s salary expectations have increased too. SCRA needs to meticulously plan the budget to meet strategic objectives. • SCRA prepares a budget and a financial strategy on an annual basis, and these are presented to the Board for approval. • The purpose of this review was to provide assurance over the design and operational effectiveness of the key financial planning controls in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Planning ○ Review ○ Assumptions ○ Scenario Planning & Sensitivity Analysis ○ Budget Monitoring ○ Action • The controls surrounding financial planning are well designed and operating effectively. • There are clear timescales and guidance on the budget preparation, and appropriate reviews and approvals required. There is regular monitoring of the budgets, including quarterly reporting to the Board, and monthly monitoring by the budget holders with support from Business Improvement Managers. • BDO can provide Substantial assurance over both the design and operational effectiveness of financial planning controls in place. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p>		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee were encouraged by the substantial assurance given and passed on their thanks to the Finance Team. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the Financial Planning Internal Audit Report. 		
9.3	<p>Internal Audit Follow Up Report Claire Robertson, BDO, introduced the follow up report.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the provision of continual assurance over the design and effectiveness of controls, and closure on control gaps, BDO have undertaken a review to assess the degree of implementation of the recommendations made in prior years in accordance with the Annual Internal Audit Plan. In accordance with the 2023-24 Internal Audit Plan, BDO have considered the implementation status of all recommendations raised from the work conducted by Internal Audit which were due to be implemented by March 2024 and identified those not due for implementation. This resulted in a total of twenty-two recommendations to be followed up. The recommendations relate to eight audit areas. Management's Internal Audit recommendation progress was reviewed to establish the degree of implementation achieved. Where it was confirmed that the recommendation had been implemented, evidence was sought, and testing was undertaken to verify the ongoing operation of the recommended controls. Where Management's response in the Internal Audit report differed from the original recommendation, the agreed management actions were evaluated. Of the twenty-two recommendations followed up in April 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 (41%) are fully implemented 6 (27%) remain in the process of being implemented 0 (0%) were not yet implemented 0 (0%) could not be evaluated as evidence is required to be provided to internal audit to verify the status of the recommendation. 0 (0%) was superseded 7 (32%) were not due for implementation The results above highlight that Management have made satisfactory progress in completing the recommendations. Continued work is needed by management to ensure Internal Audit recommendations are completed on time to 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<p>strengthen the overall internal control framework across the organisation.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee Chair noted there are a small number of recommendations not implemented from 2021/22. While the status of these recommendations is discussed regularly by the Executive Management Team, can more rigors be applied to this. BDO responded that when you look at the detail of the outstanding recommendations, most of each recommendation has been implemented, with once piece of the puzzle to be verified to formally close the recommendation. So even for those where they're still in progress, BDO are comfortable that they are progressing rather than stalled. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the internal audit follow up report. To provide an interim follow up report on the status of outstanding 2021/22 recommendations to the August Committee. 		
9.4	<p>Annual Report 2023-24 Claire Robertson, BDO, introduced the 2023-25 Internal Audit Annual Report.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2023-24 BDO LLP has reviewed and evaluated SCRA's processes in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Management Framework Corporate Governance Financial Planning Workforce Planning Partnership Engagement Locality Review – Quality Improvement Follow up. Details of the completed internal audit reviews have been reported to the Audit Committee throughout the year and have been discussed at length with consideration and scrutiny of management responses and timescales proposed. Based on the reviews undertaken during the period, and in the context of materiality, in all the assurance audits performed, the risk management activities and controls in the areas examined were found to be suitably designed to achieve the specific risk management, control and governance 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<p>arrangements. Based on verification reviews and sample testing, the risk management, control, value for money and governance arrangements in these areas were operating with sufficient effectiveness to provide reasonable, but not absolute assurance that the related risk management, control, and governance objectives were achieved for the period under review.</p> <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the challenging environment, the high number of reviews providing moderate or substantial assurance is seen as encouraging by the Committee. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To approve the Annual Report 2023-24 		
10.	<p>Strategic and Operational Risk Register The Interim Head of Finance and Resources introduced the latest version of the strategic and operational risk report.</p> <p>Noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following a light touch review, SCRA's revised Risk Management Policy was approved by the Board at its meeting in December 2023. The Board has responsibility for the system of internal control and risk management within SCRA. The Board charges the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) with overseeing the operation of the system of internal control and with ensuring robust risk management arrangements within SCRA, including reviewing the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers six-monthly. The Strategic and Operational Risk Registers are kept under review by the Executive Management Team (EMT) and the Locality Risk Registers are kept under review by Locality Management Teams (LMTs) and the Planning and Performance Network (PPN). The risks across both registers focus on the ongoing challenges in the delivery of a safe and effective service with the focus on capacity, resources, and information governance. In this context it is important the Audit & Risk Committee and the Board keep risk appetite under review. <p>Issues arising during discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the last six months there has been a reduction of residual risk scores across both the 		

	Item	Timescale	Action
	<p>strategic and operational risk registers due to some shifting of the operational environment and implementation of controls and other management actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The digital evidence capability is no longer considered a CCJB dependent project and will be mainstreamed regardless of the CCJB timetable. • Potential new risks because of the ongoing work around Hearings for Children, will continue to be monitored along with any operational risk that may be identified because of the implementation of the Target Operating Model (TOM) <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To approve the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers. 		
Standing Items			
11.	<p>Topical/Regulatory Issues/Governance Issues None</p>		
12.	<p>New Risks None</p>		
	<p>Date of Next Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 22nd August 2024, Bell Street, Glasgow 		

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report for 2023/24

Accountable Board Member: James Edgar
Audit & Risk Committee Chair

Date: 19 June 2024

Report Author: Acting Head of Finance & Resources

Recommendation:

1. To approve the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report for 2023/24

Reason for Report:	For approval
Resource Implications:	Not applicable
Strategy:	Not applicable
Equalities Duties:	Equalities Impact Assessment Not Required
Document Classification:	Not protectively marked

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide evidence to the Board as to how the SCRA Audit & Risk Committee has fulfilled its remit, and how effectively it has discharged its responsibilities. It also supports preparation of the annual Governance Statement.

2. Context of the Audit and Risk Committee

- 2.1 The Audit & Risk Committee's Terms of Reference are attached at Appendix 1. These were reviewed in June 2022.
- 2.2 The Board appoints non-executive Board members to the Audit & Risk Committee. The Audit & Risk Committee's membership for 2023/24 was as follows:
- James Edgar, Chair
 - Martin Toye
 - Kay Barton
 - Ying Zhang (from November 2023)

Where appropriate, the Committee augments the skills and experience of its members by seeking advice from Internal and External Auditors, and Executive Management Team.

- 2.3 The meetings of the Committee are attended by the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, the Head of Finance & Resources and the Internal and External Auditors. Additionally, other members of the Executive Management Team attend on a regular basis with input from other officers as appropriate. The Finance Manager took minutes for the November 2023 meeting. All other meetings were minuted by the Governance Officer.
- 2.4 The Committee met four times in 2023/24: May 2023, August 2023, November 2023 and February 2024 and provided significant support to the Board and senior management in ensuring controls operated effectively.
- 2.5 The agenda for each Committee meeting is drafted by the Head of Finance & Resources and approved by the Audit & Risk Committee Chair. In addition a pre-agenda briefing (if required) is made available to the Audit & Risk Chair and involves the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive and Head of Finance & Resources. An overview of the 2023/24 meeting agendas is attached at Appendix 2. Appendix 3 shows delivery against planned outputs for the year.

3. Assurance

- 3.1 The Audit & Risk Committee gains assurance from the reports submitted by the two audit leads and from the management response to audit recommendations and in person at Committee meetings. The audit plans, developed using SCRA's current strategic objectives and a risk based approach to identification of priority areas for audit review, between them cover a wide range of operational, financial and governance systems. Over and above this the Audit & Risk Committee approves each year a programme of Quality Assurance Audits which are undertaken by SCRA's Quality Assurance Manager. The Quality Assurance programme focusses on issues related to SCRA's compliance with its statutory duties (usually described via Practice Direction from the Principal Reporter) and other practice or organisational guidance and direction. The themes of Quality Assurance are advised by SCRA's Practice and Quality Network. The findings from each audit are linked to corresponding management responses for approval by the Committee.
- 3.2 The focus of financial reporting in the year was the presentation of the 2022/23 Annual Accounts and the External Auditor's report in August 2023. The financial accounts reported that SCRA's net expenditure of £34,852k exceeded revenue Grant in Aid of £28,468k by £6,384k. This position reflects inclusion of non-cash items such as depreciation (£2,391k), International Accounting Standards (IAS) adjustment to pension scheme contributions (£4,440k) and pension scheme finance cost (£1,110k). The Auditor expressed an unqualified opinion on the 2022/23 financial statements.
- 3.3 SCRA's General Fund remains in deficit, £19,932k at 31 March 2023. SCRA has received letters from Scottish Government to address any concerns around its continued operation as a going concern, the latest in April 2023.
- 3.4 In the year to 31 March 2023 the Management Accounts showed SCRA operated within its approved budget, incurring revenue expenditure (excluding depreciation and unfunded pensions, but net of other income) of £27,204k. This was £896k less than the approved revenue budget but, when excluding the impact of the introduction of a new accounting standard under which rental payments are split between lease liability repayment and interest, this underspend falls to £125k (0.44%).
- 3.5 Capital spend of £1,741k was £209k less than available Grant in Aid of £1,950k. SCRA is discussing with Scottish Government the prospect of the revenue and capital underspends being carried forward to support the 2024/25 budget plans and reducing the 2024/25 budget deficit.
- 3.6 The external and internal auditors have delivered to plans and timelines throughout 2023/24. There has been co-operation between both sets of auditors and between the auditors and SCRA staff, and this has been acknowledged by auditors in audit reports and at Audit & Risk Committee itself. Having assessed the Internal Audit function the external auditors were able to place reliance on the work of the internal auditors in a number of areas. Management has agreed with all audit recommendations identified in 2023/24. Progress against delivery of these recommendations is reported annually to the Committee by Internal Audit progress reports.

- 3.7 Risk management is a key priority for the Board, alongside performance and financial management. The Audit & Risk Committee oversees, on behalf of the Board, the risk management process through co-ordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Risk Management Policy. This includes reviewing Strategic and Operational Risk Registers every six months and as necessary, reviewing the work undertaken on identified high risk areas and the action plans to mitigate the effects of such risks. Risk is a standing item at Board, Committee and Management Team (including Locality Management) meetings.
- 3.8 SCRA's Risk Management Policy was reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee at its meeting in November 2023 and subsequently approved by the Board. The Board has responsibility for the system of internal control and risk management within SCRA. The Risk Management Policy will next be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee in 2024/25 with any changes taken to the March 2025 Board for approval.
- 3.9 SCRA's risk management tool, Decision Time, is in widespread use across the organisation's national and local management teams, and its reporting outputs frequently form a central part of risk reporting to Board, ARC and Locality Management Teams.
- 3.10 The Planning and Performance Network (PPN) oversees Locality risk management. The network is chaired by the Senior Operational Manager and co-ordinates the operational and locality approach to risk, including the development and maintenance of risks (linked and aligned to locality plans).
- 3.11 The PPN's role also includes:
- identifying and sharing good practice;
 - assessing whether risks are being adequately managed within agreed appetites and tolerances across SCRA; and
 - ensuring that each business area and locality is regularly carrying out risk identification and assessment exercises to ensure that risk registers are accurate and up-to-date.

4. Impact

- 4.1 Throughout the year as well as the routine business for the Audit & Risk Committee there was a continuing focus on information governance.
- 4.2 Feedback from the Executive Management Team is that it welcomes the rigour of the Audit & Risk Committee's scrutiny and advice which has maintained an appropriate balance between scrutiny and support.

4.3 The Audit & Risk Committee has achieved the following during 2023/24:

- Tracking and influencing progress on non-disclosure and case information breaches.
- Scrutinising the organisation's risk profile, providing input and scrutiny on its application, review of SCRA's risk management approach to embed risk management arrangements at locality level and detailed scrutiny of the Risk Management Policy.
- Approving and overseeing Internal and External Audit programme plans.
- Providing scrutiny to SCRA Senior Managers on implementation of Internal and External Audit recommendations across the year.
- Approving SCRA's Quality Assurance programme and subsequent monitoring of follow-up actions.
- Assessing the work of the Audit & Risk Committee against relevant standards as developed by Audit Scotland and aligning practice as required.
- Receiving and responding to reports in relation to progress and risks in relation to the SCRA Pension Fund (Falkirk LGPS).

Overseeing the finalisation and submission of the accounting policies, the accounts, including the process for review of the accounts and governance statement prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and the management's letter of representation to the external auditors" and also "recommending for approval the annual accounts to the Board

5. **Audit & Risk Committee Self-Assessment**

- 5.1 In August 2023, the Audit & Risk Committee undertook its annual self-assessment exercise. Individual assessments informed the Committee's discussion, following which it was agreed that the Committee's approach was compliant.
- 5.2 Audit & Risk Committee members will undertake its next annual self-assessment exercise in August 2024.

6. **Plans for 2024/25**

- 6.1 The Audit & Risk Committee will meet in May 2024, August 2024, November 2024 and February 2025. The focus of the meetings will be as follows:

May 2024

Internal Audit - Annual Report 2023/24
 Internal Audit – Locality Quality Improvement
 Internal Audit – Financial Planning
 Internal Audit – Follow Up
 External Audit – Annual Accounts 2023/24, including Accounting Policies and Governance Statement
 External Audit – General Updates
 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2023/24
 Case Sampling Reviews – per Annual Plan
 Case Sampling Programme Update
 Review of recent Audit Scotland section 22 reports
 Strategic & Operational Risk Registers
 Review of standing items including topical/regulatory/governance issues.

August 2024

External Audit Annual Report and Opinion on the Annual Accounts Annual Accounts 2023/24
 External Audit – General Updates
 Internal Audit Reviews (per Annual Plan)
 Case Sampling Reviews – per Annual Plan
 Annual Report on Joint Inspections of Children’s Services
 Pensions Update
 SCRA’s Annual Report
 Information Governance
 Review of standing items including topical/regulatory/governance issues.
 Audit & Risk Committee Self-Assessment
 Private Meetings with Internal and External Auditors (Audit & Risk Committee Members only)

November 2024

External Audit – General Updates
 Internal Audit Reviews (per Annual Plan)
 Case Sampling Reviews – per Annual Plan
 Strategic & Operational Risk Registers
 Annual Fraud Report
 Review of standing items including topical/regulatory/governance issues.

February 2025

Information Governance
 Internal Audit – Annual Plan 2025/26
 Internal Audit Reviews (per Annual Plan)
 External Audit – General Updates
 External Audit – Annual Audit Plan 2024/25
 Case Sampling Programme 2025/26
 Case Sampling Reviews – per Annual Plan
 Risk Management Policy review
 Pensions Update
 Review of standing items including topical/regulatory/governance issues.

- 6.2 Regular Progress Reports will be presented throughout the year by the Internal and External Auditors. Regular reports on Information Governance, Quality Assurance & Performance and Audit Recommendations will be presented to the Audit & Risk Committee.

- 6.3 To ensure that the Audit & Risk Committee has a mechanism to keep it aware of topical, legal and regulatory issues, the External Auditors will continue to provide a regular update report detailing issues relevant to SCRA.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 To approve the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report for 2023/24.

APPENDIX 1**SCRA Audit & Risk Committee – Terms of Reference**

The Board has established an Audit Committee as a Committee of the Board to support them in their responsibilities for issues of risk, control and governance and associated assurance through a process of constructive challenge.

Constitution

1. The Audit Committee shall consist of four members of the Board, with the Chair of the Board and the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive as *ex officio* members.
2. The Chair of the Committee will be at the discretion of the Board and membership of the Committee will be reviewed as required by the Board from time to time.
3. The quorum required to be present at any meeting of the Committee shall comprise no fewer than two members.
4. The Internal Auditor and External Auditor will attend meetings of the Committee at the request of the Chair and other officers as appropriate. The Committee will from time to time meet with the Internal Auditor and External Auditor in private.
5. The Committee will report to the Board on its deliberations and will take any directions from the Board on any course of action which it should take, either generally or on any specific matter. A copy of the Minutes will normally form the basis of the Report.
6. The Committee will review its own effectiveness and provide an overview report to the Board annually on the Committee's work and key considerations.
7. The Audit Committee may
 - (i) co-opt additional members for a period not exceeding a year to provide specialist skills, knowledge and experience, and
 - (ii) procure specialist ad-hoc advice at the expense of the organisation, subject to budgets agreed by the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

The Remit

To promote and demonstrate high standards of corporate governance, by:

- Helping the Board address the key risks facing the SCRA in carrying out its statutory functions and working towards its strategic objectives;
- Providing assurances relating to:
 - corporate governance requirements for the organisation
 - strategic processes for risk, control and governance
 - the Governance statement
 - the effectiveness of the internal control environment
- Based on a needs assessment, agreeing a regular and responsive programme of audit on the management and control of work within the Administration and receiving reports on that audit;
- Deciding on the most efficient and effective means of carrying out the agreed programme of audit;
- Reporting on the planned activity and results of both internal and external audit, and on the adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's management letter/report,
- Overseeing the finalisation and submission of the accounting policies, the accounts, including the process for review of the accounts and governance statement prior to submission for audit, levels of error identified, and the management's letter of representation to the external auditors
- Alerting the Board and, where necessary, Scottish Ministers to factors which might affect the ability of the Administration to carry out its statutory functions and achieve its strategic objectives.
- Consider any proposals for tendering for internal services or for the purchase of non-audit services from contractors who provide audit services.
- Overseeing and alerting the Board, where appropriate, on anti-fraud policies, whistle-blowing processes, and arrangements for special investigations

Appendix 2

Agenda items in 2023/24

Lead	May 2023	August 2023	November 2023	February 2024
External Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annual Audit Plan 22/23 ➤ General Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 2022/23 Annual Audit Report, Covering Letter, proposed Independent Auditor's Report and ISA 580 Letter of Representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General update on current issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annual Audit Plan 23/24 ➤ General Update Briefing Paper
Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quality Management ➤ Recommendations Follow Up Review ➤ Annual Report 22/23 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annual Plan 23/24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Project Management Framework ➤ Progress Report 23/24 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Workforce Planning ➤ Partnership Engagement ➤ Corporate Governance ➤ Progress Report 23/24 ➤ Annual Audit Plan 24/25
Head of Finance & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annual Accounts 21/22 update ➤ Strategic and Operational Risk Registers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pensions Update ➤ Draft 2022/23 Annual Accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of Risk Management Policy ➤ Strategic and Operational Risk Registers ➤ Annual Fraud Report ➤ Pensions Update 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Risk Management Policy ➤ Pensions Update
Head of Strategy & OD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Case sampling exercise on signed witness statements ➤ Data quality update ➤ Progress report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reporter drafting of the statement of grounds under s.67(2)(m) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 ➤ Case Sampling Programme 23/24 Update ➤ Annual Report 2021/22 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Case sampling: Report on preparation for proof ➤ Case sampling progress report ➤ Annual Report on Joint Inspections of Children's Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Reporter decision making for children referred to the Reporter for offence referrals ➤ 24/25 Case Sampling Programme

Lead	May 2023	August 2023	November 2023	February 2024
Head of Practice & Policy		➤ Information Governance Six-monthly Report		➤ Information Governance Six-monthly Report
Principal Reporter/Chief Executive	➤ CSAS Benefits Realisation			
Audit & Risk Committee Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 22/23 ➤ Review of Topical, Regulatory & Governance Issues ➤ New risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of Topical, Regulatory & Governance Issues ➤ New risks ➤ Private Meetings with Internal/External Auditors (committee members only) ➤ Committee Self Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of Topical, Regulatory, & Governance Issues ➤ New risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review of Topical, Regulatory & Governance Issues ➤ New risks

Delivery of 2023/24 Audit plans

APPENDIX 3

Report Type	Date Delivered
Quality Assurance Planned Outputs	
Annual Progress Report	Aug 23
Annual Report on Joint Inspections of Children's Services	Aug 23
Outcomes of Case Sampling	May, Aug, Nov 23 & Feb 24
Internal Audit Planned Outputs	
Quality Management	May 23
Annual Report	May 23
Project Management Framework	Nov 23
Workforce Planning	Feb 24
Partnership Engagement	Feb 24
Corporate Governance	Feb 24
Progress Report	May, Nov 23 & Feb 24
External Audit Planned Outputs	
Progress Reports/General Updates	May, Nov 23 & Feb 24
Report to those Charged with Governance on the 2022/23 Accounts and Management Representation Letter	Aug 23
Annual Plan 23/24	Feb 24



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
 ADMINISTRATION

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Chief Executives Report

Accountable Director: Neil Hunter **Date:** 19 June 2024

Recommendation:

1. To note the Chief Executives Report

Reason for Report	At Board request
Resource Implications	None
Strategy	Not applicable
Equalities Duties	<p>Indicate whether an Equalities and Human Rights Impact assessment (HRIA) is required and has been completed. Describe in the body of the report any issues/findings/adjustments that have been made.</p> <p>Equalities Impact Assessment Required/Completed</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p>
Consultation	<p>Issues/action points:- Executive Management Team</p>
Document Classification	Open

1. Staff Partnership

1.1 The National Partnership Forum met earlier in June and focussed on the following key areas:-

- Review of the Role of the Reporter (see para 6 below)
- Breach Reporting

1.2 In addition we had our regular review of standing items including:-

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Health and Wellbeing
- Finance
- Programme Board update – with an input from the SCRA Programme Manager
- The detailed work of the SCRA/UNISON HR sub group which manages areas of policy development between SCRA and UNISON

1.3 The issue of Breach Reporting relates to the inclusion of staff names in our standard breach reporting template. At the moment names of staff are not routinely recorded or stored. Both the SCRA Audit and Risk Committee and the Information Commissioners Office have expressed a concern about this being a gap in SCRA's otherwise comprehensive procedures.

1.4 Whilst SCRA is absolutely committed to our reporting procedures being focussed on route cause analysis, review, learning and improvement (about practice, processes, procedures, knowledge, skills and training) and this will continue to be the case in our work, UNISON have raised legitimate concerns about the purpose of the additional data collection, how it will be used, stored and to ensure that there are no unintended consequences of this additional data collection. We are presently involved in detailed discussions about how we can move these issues on to the satisfaction of the organisation, the trade union and the wider staff group and ensure the strengthening of our position on the positive underpinning principles of our work on organisational learning, improvement and continued progress on reducing data breaches across SCRA.

2. Scottish Government Liaison

2.1 We met with our Sponsor Team at the beginning of June. Our regular areas of review and discussion took place on the following areas:

- Operational resilience
- Organisational Performance
- Practice, Legislation and Policy – including noting an ongoing and complex judicial review concerning relevant person status
- Finance – noting the Boards approval of the 2024/25 budget and the in year processes that will support this

- Risk Management – Board members will wish to note that the previously agreed joint risk register between SG and SCRA is now in operation and will be reviewed at our Sponsor/Body Accountability sessions.
- Hearings for Children (HfC) Joint Redesign Board – with a focus on the forthcoming SG public consultation on the Ministerial response to the HfC recommendations

3. Staff Survey 2023 – progress against action plan

- 3.1 Issue 87 of the regular Team Brief was issued at the beginning of the month. You can find a copy of the latest Team Brief [here](#). As usual the Team Brief was followed up by the offer to meet the PR/CE direct on 3 video calls – to discuss the Brief or any other wider issues affecting SCRA staff.
- 3.2 The 2023 Staff Survey results were reported to the Board in January 2024 and a full action plan was approved in March 2024. The staff survey belongs to the joint SCRA/UNISON Health and Wellbeing Group (HWG). The 2023 survey results were generally very strong and showed a number of areas of real positive progress and/or maintenance in the most difficult of circumstances financially (and therefore operationally) for SCRA. However 4 key issues of priority focus arising from the 2023 staff survey were agreed by the group as:
- Staff pay and reward
 - Morale in the workforce
 - Workload
 - Managing Change
- 3.3 I reported progress on the staff survey action plan to the HWBG at its May meeting and the most recent action plan status is available [here](#). In summary the action plan has made decent progress and is increasingly helping shape, align and influence new pre-existing core programmes of work such as pay, reward and the review of the role of the Childrens Reporter, our digital strategy, the delivery of the Target Operating Model for the organisation, the health and wellbeing of our workforce and the revised approach in SCRA to managing change.

4. Strategic Partnerships

- 4.1 It's been an immensely busy period for the strategic partnerships that SCRA is involved in and supports. A detailed overview of SCRA's work on policy, positioning and influencing is provided by the Policy and Public Affairs Manager at agenda item 13.

4.2 Youth Justice Improvement Board (YJIB)

- 4.2.1 YJIB is moving closer to finalising a new Vision and Action Plan for Children in Conflict with the Law. Key themes are:

- An integrated ‘whole system approach’ to children and young people in conflict with the law
- Support for victims and those who have been harmed
- Prevention, early intervention and support
- Delivery and governance
- UNCRC and the active realisation of children’s rights
- A trauma informed and competent workforce with the necessary skills, confidence and competencies

4.2.2 SCRA is a key partner in delivering the Youth Justice Vision for Scotland and continue to play an important role in a range of local and national groups to focus on delivery and in so doing work closely with other key agencies and professionals such as COPFS, Police Scotland, SCTS, Local Authority Education and Social Work and the NHS.

4.2.3 Full delivery of the Children’s (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 (Royal Assent having been given on 4 June 2024). For SCRA this means a significant change in our legislative duties and powers, not least of which is the authority of the Principal Reporter to investigate referrals of any child age 16 & 17, replacing the very restrictive current arrangements. In addition stage 3 of the Act’s progress through Parliament allowed for various amendments across the Act – but specifically for SCRA the Principal Reporters power to provide an extended range of information to people who have been harmed by the conduct of a child in order to as well as update on Reporter and Hearing processes, will also now be included to assist and facilitate safety planning and promote opportunities for support for Victims. SCRA welcomes this clarification on our power and duties as well as the appropriate concern for balance between the need to support those who have been harmed with the rights to privacy, protection and support for children.

4.2.4 SCRA has undertaken a detailed assessment of our need for investment in order to meet the legislative changes. These assessed needs for year 1 implementation of the legislation have been incorporated into SCRA’s budget for 2024/25. We are working with Scottish Government officials to understand the timetable for implementation of the various aspects and will draw down the necessary resources as the year progresses and the delivery arrangements become clear.

4.3 Childrens Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP)

4.3.1 Whilst CHIP has not met in this cycle there has been a number of hugely significant launches of work which has been undertaken on behalf of the Partnership, not least the Language Leaders programme, which SCRA, alongside Our Hearings Our Voice, CHS, Social Work Scotland and other partners have been involved in. The principal aims of the Language Leaders

programme is to ensure that deeply embedded practice and cultural change will take place across the Hearings System and that:-

- Language will be based on strengths – reports should not be written about the avoidance of problems ('no issues')
- Easy read reports and letters will become standard good practice
- Reports will be owned by the writer and the person(s) being written about
- Children will have some control over what is discussed in their Hearing
- Language will include the child's wishes
- Reports will capture the young person's own chronology
- The 'right' language will be continuously evaluated
- Irrelevant background information will be removed from reports
- Young people will not have to repeat their stories and experiences to advocacy workers, just because they are independent
- Young people will be able to choose how they want to express their views
- Terms will be changed so no-one shortens them or uses acronyms
- Good examples of language used effectively will be raised and shared widely
- Jargon will no longer be used
- Report and letter authors will write to the child (the whole child)
- Authors and speakers in the Hearings System will understand the power of language

5. Our Hearing Our Voice launch Articulate Animation

5.1 SCRA is very proud of our relationship with OHOV and we were all blown away with the power and the clarity which sit behind the recent launch of their [Articulate Animation](#) video. Articulate Animation is a challenge to all of us to think really clearly about the language and the approach we use with children and young people in all of their dealings with the children's hearings process. It's based on real life experience and profound insight and reminds us of the 4 key principles being developed as part of the Language Leaders programme across all key agencies involved in Children's Hearings:-

- Personalised
- Involved
- Non stigmatising
- Balance

5.2 SCRA are working on a delivery plan for this and other aspects of the wider [SCRA Language Guide](#) which is going to be one of the next important steps for the organisation to take in Keeping the Promise.

6. Review of the Role of the Childrens Reporter

6.1 We have commenced work on the much-awaited Review of the Role of the Children's Reporter. The origins of this work is:-

- The changing nature and expectation of the Reporters work in the context of changing policy (Keeping The Promise/Hearings for Children) and legislation (Care and Justice Act)
 - An identifiable gap and drift between pay and reward of Childrens Reporter and those of a suite of comparable public sector roles (Procurators Fiscal/Local Authority Social Workers/Scottish Government Legal Division etc.). This was identified by a benchmarking exercise agreed by SCRA and UNISON as part of the 2023-25 pay agreement.
- 6.2 The reality that we have not reviewed the job description and person specification of the Childrens Reporter for approaching 15 years – so in any event it does not adequately reflect the contemporary reality, challenges, complexities, skills and core duties of the role.. The key challenge for SCRA now is to assess and build the case for change and investment in both our core statutory role and those which sits in immediate proximity to it.
- 6.3 So far we have drafted the terms of the review, identified the objectives and indicative timelines, put in place a Project Manager to help co-ordinate the range of activities we want to see happen – by way of engagement and involvement of staff – principally Reporters – but also all SCRA staff in voicing views about the 2 core products we want to deliver – a revised job description which more accurately reflects the work of Children's Reporters and a person specification which reflects the skills and qualities needed for this critical role.
- 6.4 The professional insights and wisdom of SCRA staff will help us get the content of these outputs right. What flows from these 2 very concrete and deliverable pieces of work is an opportunity to remeasure the value of this role against new demands and expectations and to build the business case for further investment. The launch of the review will take place on 19th June. The programme of work which will follow will be:
- June – launch of the Review
 - July – Reporter survey
 - August – online webinars
 - Sept – Nov – Team based sessions and workshops
 - Nov – Feb – analysis of fieldwork phase
 - March 2025 – report to Programme Board on conclusion of this phase
- 6.5 An oversight group will be established on behalf of the Principal Reporter whose statutory duties form the basis of the work and how it is described in the job description and person specification. Reporting to the Board on progress will be the responsibility of the Principal Reporter/Chief Executive in his dual role incorporating Accountable Officer.
- 7. Public Finance and Public Service Reform**
- 7.1 The Minister for Public Finance and Public Service Reform wrote to Chief Executives and Chairs of Public Bodies on 31 May. [The letter](#) does not require any immediate action or response

– rather it sets out the new Ministers thinking and priorities on a number of areas which are of real relevance to SCRA:

- Effective spend across public bodies
- Implementation of digital public services, use of digital technologies and shared infrastructure
- Delivering best practice in continuous improvement
- Improving productivity across public services

7.2 In addition the Minister sets out in the letter areas where he wishes to have further dialogue and exploration – such as in ensuring public bodies have sufficient ambition, are working in clusters (and presumably partnerships), are sharing experience and expertise, how we are overcoming obstacles and barriers and how we seek opportunities to influence the reform agenda.

7.3 SCRA has sought to position ourselves and the wider Hearing System well in relation to public service reform, efficiency and productivity. We see the current policy and legislative programme as the cornerstone of our public service reform work – individually within the Programme Board’s work and collectively through Keeping the Promise through the work of the Hearings System Joint Redesign Board. We have a clear series of projects which, at their core aim to deliver efficiency, effectiveness and improved quality, reduce transactions and recycle time back to front line practitioners. We have and will continue to invest in digital technologies – we share a common digital platform with Childrens Hearings Scotland (CHS) and will seek through a further planned phase of digital strategy for the Hearing system to extend automated sharing of data with local authorities and justice partners (by investing in digital evidence sharing capabilities [DESC] with Police, Crown and Courts) and by working to achieve better public facing digital capabilities, mindful of SCRA’s recent ground breaking work on [digital exclusion](#). We are actively exploring the use of new technologies in our work and one of only a handful of public bodies with AI use cases registered with Scottish Government.

7.4 SCRA has invested in the Scottish Improvement Model – training all of our managers in foundation level Quality Improvement and advancing a programme of work with a sub set of managers to attain Scottish Improvement Leader (ScIL) status. The organisation has a strong focus on performance at both national and local level a comprehensive quality assurance programme, external and internal audit programme which give us a real verified focus on best value, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness.



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

Programmes Update

Head of Service: Lisa Bennett, Head of Strategy/OD

Date: 19th June 2024

Report Author: Lisa Bennett

Recommendation:

- To note the progress and planning of the programme work within SCRA**

Reason for Report: For Noting

Resource Implications: In line with plans

Strategy/Service Plan Implications: Approved Corporate Plan / Business Plan delivery

Consultation: KTP Programme Manager

EHRIA Duties: Impact assessments are undertaken at individual project level

Document Classification: Not protectively marked

1	Introduction
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the Programme Management work – its governance arrangements, the progress against plans and on our approach to change and transition.
2	Governance and Oversight
2.1	Approvals and Reporting
2.2	Reporting for Programme Board is focussed on exception and high level objectives and programme approvals with everything else managed within programme meetings and, if required, Strategic Programmes Group aligned to set tolerances.
2.3	Programme Board (PB) met in May and noted highlight reports from the programmes Care and Protect and received a verbal update from Connect Programme – Connect are currently working to develop a full strategy and related plans and a full day Strategic Board is planned to look at this.
2.4	The Target Operating Model (TOM) ‘plan on a page’ (Appendix A) was presented to the PB for noting alongside the highlight report specifically for this piece of work. Plans are in place for the development of the TOM with full engagement going into the next phase.
2.5	The PB approved the final report from the Gateway review (assurance exercise on the Development of the TOM) and the draft action plan. (Appendix B and Appendix C)
2.6	The project charter to take forward the work around Role of the Reporter was also brought to PB for review.
2.7	Strategic Programme’s group have been focussed on Stakeholder mapping, engagement and communication. Work was presented to PB for discussion around planned approach.

2.8	Gateway Review
2.9	As noted in the March update, SCRA have sought an external review team to assess the work to date to put in place a Target Operating Model in SCRA.
2.10	This Gateway review is seen as Gate Zero, or Readiness Review and is there to consider the set-up, plans, engagement, scope etc of the work and assess whether the programme is likely to proceed to successful delivery or not. It is seen as the start of an ongoing relationship and check in which we are very much in favour of.
2.11	The review took place over the course of three full days – the review team interviewing a range of people involved from Neil Hunter as Accountable Officer through to Project Managers tasked with delivery through to Unison Branch secretary.
2.12	It was important for the reviewers to have as many different angles and perspectives as possible to allow them to triangulate what they were hearing and apply what they are hearing to the information provided and assess assurance, identify risks or issues and consider the best recommendations to support ongoing progress.
2.13	The outcome of the review was Green Amber which we were happy with – this gave us reassurance as well as opportunities for learning and further work. The set of recommendations were all accepted and reflected much of what we had highlighted for next steps and were looking for some external validation/guidance – which we got.
2.14	It was a fairly intense experience – the preparation for this as well as the review itself and the team did a fantastic job of having everything fully in place to enable a smoothly executed three days – and the reviewers noted and thanked the team for this.
2.15	The full review and action plan can be seen at Appendix B and Appendix C .

3	Programme Updates	
	3.1	Programme Protect
	3.2	Following on from the March update on the Target operating Model, all next steps have continued.
	3.3	The programme team has met a couple of times as all day workshops to go through the end to end process of what development will look like, what is required at each iterations, what projects/tests are required to inform each, where the gaps are etc.
	3.4	The bespoke training with Elite took place with the full team plus SROs, this was very well received, in much the same way that the review did, this provided the team with an assurance that we were looking at the right things, taking the right approach etc but helped to cement things for the team.
	3.5	We have approached Scottish Government programme team again – who put us on the reviewers in the first place, to establish and ongoing relationship, and to link us up with others that have gone through similar work which has been very positive.
	3.6	Two staff webinars are planned to take place on 11 th June and 18 th June to present our ‘workings’ in the development of the Target Operating Model – this webinar will break down for everyone, what a TOM is, why we are doing it – what has and will influence it, what approach we are taking etc. There will be lots of opportunity for questions/observations. The session will be recorded to those unable to make it and a Q&A prepared to support understanding.
	3.7	We have a series of more detailed locality engagement scheduled as a follow up to the introductory webinars in August-September.
	3.8	Work has been ongoing with Unison throughout the programme to ensure full transparency and support our change approach.
	3.9	The TOM is emerging as the position on the Hearings for Children recommendations is clarified over time, and through the progress of the internal projects we have initiated– we know where we are, we know the vision that we are working to however what that looks like in practice will be determined through engagement, testing and good evidence.
	3.10	There will undoubtedly be some changes to the way we work or who does things – or even what they do. For example, one of the areas of consultation by Scottish Government on Hearings for Children is looking at the role of the Reporter pre-birth – this, if agreed, would be a change. Another, would be to look at how we schedule hearings – promoting the child friendly approach – and who is best equipped to carry out this key part of the service.

	<p>3.11 As a result it is important that we continue to work closely with all staff, Unison and HR to ensure that any change going forward would be in line with our Vision and undertaken in the appropriate way and that we have a robust and supporting Change Strategy in place.</p> <p>3.12 The work considering the role of the Reporter (see CEO report, agenda item 5) has been lined up with the programme to ensure that there is full read across.</p> <p>3.13 Care Programme</p> <p>3.14 Internal improvement projects continue in localities and evaluations are taking place appropriately to determine whether tests require to change, stops, or continue – and if so, how do they feed the work around the TOM.</p> <p>Launch!</p> <p>3.15 Language Leaders, with young experts - Our Hearings Our Voice launched their Articulate Animation in May supported by CHS and SCRA launching internal language guides.</p> <p>3.16 They had a premiere at the CCS in Glasgow – a private screening where we got to hear from the young people directly and get an insight into the full design process that became the animation below.</p> <p>3.17 The young people took full direction – from script writing through to voice over – a day in the edit house working directly with the animators and sound technicians.</p> <p>3.18 This is an incredible piece of work and demonstrates a fantastic, collaborative and young person led project that is set to have a wide reach and impact.</p> <div data-bbox="355 1449 1307 1980" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>Link to Animation - Launch of Articulate Animation - Our Hearings, Our Voice (ohov.co.uk)</p>
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		<p>Spoken word - Achilles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF2giM71xkg Ash: https://youtu.be/174dyWueREk</p> <p>Language Guides from SCRA and CHS: Launch of Articulate Animation - SCRA Film and guides launched to improve language in hearings (chscotland.gov.uk)</p> <p>3.19 Hearings Re-Design.</p> <p>3.20 The Hearings Re-design Board has now met for a third time and are beginning to find firm footing in the planning of the approach to taking forward the reform agenda.</p> <p>3.21 COSLA and Social Work Scotland were able to provide their full response to the Hearings for Children recommendations and Government response, which will allow for fuller, more robust conversations within the group around priorities.</p> <p>3.22 The response from Social Work Scotland, supported by COSLA can be found here.</p> <p>3.23 The multi-agency planning group continues to meet and have been tasked currently with putting forward a set of priorities from each organisation to support the prioritisation exercise.</p> <p>The group meets again in June to take forward this work.</p>
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4	Change Readiness	
	4.1	Change and Transition Planning
	4.2	Our Change, transition and delivery strategy is now in development. We have in place a new project manager – previously seconded into Scottish Government to work on the CCJB who is back with us and leading on this activity.
	4.3	A full day session is planned for June 18 th – with the SROs, Programme Manager, Project Manager and Unison to consider the proposed approach and develop further.
	4.4	Bespoke training has been developed with Elite to look at Change Management – focussed on change models, understanding individual capacity for, and response to, change, organisational readiness, preparedness and potential resistance, communication planning and strategy to really support the approach and ensure everyone has the skills and knowledge needed. This training will cover all project managers, supports and Unison representative.
	4.5	Communication
	4.6	As we are now learning – good change relies heavily on good communication, and that is an area that we are working to get right – varying the type of communication – from webinars, to summary sheets, to local visits.
	4.7	One area that we are looking to improve on is how we close the loop – how we get feedback about what is working, how the communications are being received – are they being received? Do the managers have enough information and confidence to answer questions etc.
	4.8	Part of the change course that we are undertaking will cover this area and give us some practical supports and guidance to take forward.
	4.9	The most recent communication can be seen at Appendix D .

5	Recommendation	
	5.1	To note the progress and planning of the programme work within SCRA

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Inclusion & Diversity – Annual Report

Accountable Director: Head of Human Resources **Date:** 19 June 2024

Author: Inclusion and Diversity Manager

Recommendations:

- a) To consider the Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report and associated programme of work.
- b) To note the publication of SCRA's Equalities Mainstreaming Report 2024 in line with The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 as amended.
- c) To note updates on key inclusion and diversity activity.

Reason for Report: Board consideration

Resource Implications: Within approved budgets

Strategy: Within approved plans

Consultation: To be noted at Inclusion & Diversity Steering Group

Equalities Duties: Equalities Impact Assessment not required

Document Classification: Not protectively marked

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Legislative Duties
3. Key Activity 2023-2024
4. Equality Outcomes 2024-2027
5. Proposed Inclusion and Diversity Priorities 2024-2025
6. Conclusion and Recommendations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates the Board on SCRA's Inclusion and Diversity programme of work since June 2023.
- 1.2 SCRA is required under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to:-
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 1.3 In addition to this general duty, SCRA is required by the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, as amended to:
- Report on progress on mainstreaming the general duty
 - Publish equality outcomes and report on progress in achieving these
 - Assess and review policies and practices
 - Gather and use employee information
 - Publish gender, race and disability pay gap information
 - Publish statements on equal pay
 - Consider award criteria in relation to public procurement
 - Publish in an accessible manner
 - Publish proposals of how the above will be met
 - Report on the gender balance of the Board
- 1.4 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was previously integrated within SCRA's holistic Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting (RICP) Strategy, this recognises the intrinsic link between human rights, equalities and inclusion and SCRA's statutory corporate parenting duties and the importance of the inclusion and diversity work to SCRA's commitment to Keeping The Promise. SCRA's Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group takes a strategic overview of this work.

Commented [SW1]: I think this strategy was 2021-2023 so where does this fall now and how does it link into the new Corporate Plan 2024-2027?

2. Legislative Duties

- 2.1 SCRA published its [Mainstreaming Report for 23-24](#) on 31st March 2024, a copy of which can be found in the link. The Mainstreaming Report not only sets out how we are meeting, and will continue to meet, both our general and specific duties it provides an update on our achievements and progress in relation to the equality, diversity and inclusion part of our Rights, Inclusion & Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021- 2024 and highlights how we continue to embed equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.
- 2.2 The Mainstreaming Report also included details of our progress in relation to our Equality Outcomes 2021-2024;-

- Children, young people and their families are treated fairly and with dignity and respect. They understand and are able to access our services in ways that suit their individual needs.
 - Our staff will continue to treat all children, young people and their families with dignity and respect.
 - Our services will be procured, designed, shaped and delivered to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.
- We will build an inclusive culture which values and develops our people, providing them with the tools and support they need to be skilled, confident, valued respected and cared for to maximise their potential.
 - Our leaders will foster a culture where our people feel included, valued, respected and cared for.
 - Our staff will feel supported, respected and cared for.
- We will actively tackle under-representation and create a workforce that better reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.
 - We will make our workforce more diverse through our recruitment and selection processes.

The Report also set out our new Equality Outcomes for 2024-2027, which will be discussed later in this report.

- 2.3 As per the Inclusion and Diversity Board Report 2022-23, compliance with the Equality Act 2010, and specifically our Public Sector Specific Duties, has continued to be a significant focus. This is also essential if SCRA is to meaningfully embed and mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in everything we do.
- 2.4 Essential to compliance is getting impact assessments right – both in terms of when they are conducted but also in terms of proportionality. During 2022-23 we developed and refined SCRA's Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment approach (EHRIA), listening to user feedback to create a five-tier approach to EHRIA's. The intention of this approach was to ensure proportionality and a process which was user-friendly. To promote awareness and understanding of importance of impact assessment, we also developed two information and training videos that are available on Connect to support staff in the completion of these, alongside all of the EHRIA materials.
- 2.5 Whilst we have continued to receive high quality completed EHRIA's the feedback we have received recently is that whilst the intention of the five-tier approach was to create a user-friendly, proportionate process this has not been entirely achieved and the five-tier process has perhaps over-complicated things and led to some confusion amongst staff. It is therefore proposed to review the current process over the next year and look for ways to simplify and streamline the process, therefore increasing compliance rates.

- 2.6 We will also review the current training provided and investigate if further mandatory EHRIA e-learning, focussing initially on managers as well as specific teams (e.g. Digital, Practice, Property) whose work brings about the most change to policy, process or practice would be of benefit.
- 2.7 The impact assessment process continues to be resource intensive, however, is a statutory responsibility for Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) compliance. We will continue our work to raise awareness and proactively manage impact assessments and associated organisational risk throughout 24-25.
- 2.8 Our [Employee Information Report](#) and [Pay Gap Report](#) were all completed and published on the SCRA website by their respective deadlines. SCRA must also report on the gender representation of its Board every 2 years, our report as of 31 March 2023 is available [here](#) and our Equal Pay Statement from March 2022 can be found [here](#).
- 2.9 What the above legislative reports show is that SCRA continues to have an above average gender pay gap, with a Mean of 22.6% and a Median of 29.7%. This is caused by a high percentage of overall female staff (circa 89%), with a disproportionate volume of men in senior/management roles and women in lower graded roles. Close the Gap¹ have been approached to ascertain what support they could provide in addressing the prolonged and persistent pay gap within SCRA. The Women in Leadership Network will also be reinvigorated during 2024-2025. In addition, there will be a review of recruitment processes to ascertain what may be done to increase the wider workforce diversity i.e. those with ethnic minority and disability status. The Employee Information Report also clearly demonstrates that there is a lack of disclosure of protected characteristics on the HR system iTrent, this issue will feature throughout this report and although efforts have been made to increase disclosure continued efforts are required to increase these completion rates.

Commented [SW2]: Link needed

3. Key Activity 2023-2024

- 3.1 A strong strategic approach to inclusion and diversity is required to fully embed and mainstream equality, diversity, and inclusion. We have embedded EDI in SCRA's corporate planning process to further mainstream EDI through everything we do – whether it be national or local, strategic or operational – and all locality plans had specific EDI actions.
- 3.2 We have continued to focus on embedding and mainstreaming equality, diversity, and inclusion in localities. This has been done through identifying an EDI Lead in every locality, in addition to our cohort of Inclusion Ambassadors. To support this group of geographically diverse colleagues, we created a Locality EDI Lead Network. This Network is hosted on MS Teams and enables all Locality EDI Leads to share questions, good practice, ideas and get peer support or advice and guidance from SCRA's Inclusion & Diversity Manager, as well as being a mechanism to promote inclusion and diversity opportunities and training.

¹ [Close the Gap](#) is Scotland's expert policy advocacy organisation working on women's labour market participation.

3.3 The Network ensures that strategic national inclusion and diversity priorities are communicated and discussed within Localities, but that Localities can identify areas of local inclusion and diversity work to 'feed up' into the national programme. This top down, bottom-up approach to inclusion and diversity ensures that strategic priorities and local needs remain at the forefront of our inclusion and diversity work, in effect providing a feedback loop from Localities to ensure our inclusion and diversity work is needs-based.

3.4 Throughout 22-24, we developed SCRA's new **Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework (ISBF)**. These sit alongside our Management Standards and other existing policies, such as SCRA's Code of Conduct and Dignity at Work Policy to better illustrate and describe the values and behaviours we expect all our colleagues to uphold and demonstrate at work. The Standards & Framework outline how we can all, through our behaviours, language, attitudes, and approaches, contribute to an inclusive SCRA which recognises the value of diversity and is consistent with SCRA's core corporate values. The six over-arching inclusive principles to inclusive standards and behaviours are:

- Working together – we will form effective, inclusive, psychologically safe, kind and respectful partnerships and relationships with people, internally and externally, from a range of diverse backgrounds, sharing information, best practice, resources and support;
- Communicating & influencing – we communicate purpose and direction with clarity, integrity and enthusiasm while respecting the varied needs, beliefs and opinions of others;
- Developing self & others – we focus on continuous learning and development for ourselves, for others and for the organisation;
- Changing & improving – we will seek out opportunities to create effective change and harness innovation and creativity to ensure continuous improvement through our ways of working, including how we seek and provide feedback;
- Leadership & decision-making – we engage inclusively and supportively with others in delivering a shared vision by valuing our differences, ensuring fairness and opportunity for all. We use evidence and knowledge to support accurate, reliable and expert decision-making and the provision of advice carefully, ensuring we consider alternative options, implications and risks; and,
- Delivering a quality customer focussed service – we deliver our services for our people and the children and families with whom we work with professional excellence, expertise and efficiency, taking account of the diverse needs of everyone we work with. We provide exceptional and inclusive customer service internally and externally, with our partners as well as children and families.

3.5 To date around 85% of staff have undertaken ISBF training, with 46 managers then undertaking subsequent manager training at a recent national managers event in May 2024. Plans are in place to ensure the remaining members of staff are trained in 2024 and an implementation plan for training new staff on the ISBF will take place during 2024-2025.

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- 3.6 At the managers event discussion centred on how best to embed the ISBF into localities and HR and the Inclusion & Diversity Manager will continue to support locality managers in achieving this.
- 3.7 Further implementation of the Inclusive Standards & Behaviours Framework will continue throughout 24-25 and will inform our review of recruitment, supervision, succession planning and talent management and learning and development.
- 3.8 To ensure our EDI activity and programme of work is evidence and needs-based, we have been focussing on improving our collecting and recording of equality data. Recording and monitoring equality data is important, not just for data's sake, but to aid organisational and corporate planning and meet our legislative duties. Equality data helps us to better understand the needs of the people we work with and for and provides us with an evidence-base for implementing and measuring change and improvement. Without it, we would not know how or where to target our action and resource. As a public sector organisation we have a finite budget, and robust equality data helps us to spend that budget in the most fair and impactful way.
- 3.9 Previously we have focussed on improving our workforce equality data, and we now turn to improving the equality data we hold on children on CSAS. Improving the equality data of children on CSAS has been and will continue to be a focus, and now forms part of our Equality Outcomes 2024-2027, as this will help us identify operational and service delivery areas requiring improvement based on need and evidence. We will also continue our annual Equalities Employee Monitoring Campaign to encourage our workforce to complete their equalities data in iTRENT, as again a more accurate and complete data picture of our workforce will allow for better workforce planning.
- 3.10 SCRA's **Race & Ethnicity Group**, led by Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, continues to proactively develop its aims and reach. In February 2024, SCRA held its first development session on what it means for SCRA to become an anti-racist organisation. This session started a three year programme of work in this area and focused on;
- understanding the nature and origins of racism in society
 - challenging racism – within and out with work
 - baselining where SCRA is now
 - establishing anti-racist practice in SCRA
 - how racism and discrimination can affect our work with children – the nature of conscious and unconscious discrimination and bias
 - recruitment and retention and developing our workforce
 - promoting inclusive language and culture
- 3.11 As a result of this event a further meeting has been held to look at the potential of establishing a 'safe space/lived experience' employee group, the purpose and structure of this group is yet to be fully established.
- 3.12 Our Race Equality Action Plan, currently under development, will include an ambitious multi-year approach to improving our understanding of potential racial

inequality in our service delivery and decision-making, taking a mixed method approach. This Action Plan will be developed over the course of 2024-2025.

- 3.13 As at 31st January 2024, 62.2% of our employees reported their ethnicity as white², 2.5% as from another ethnic background³ and 35.3% chose not to disclose their ethnicity. In 2011, the Census showed that around 8.2% of the Scottish population were of a minority ethnic background – the 2022 Census results on ethnic group were published in May 2024, shortly before this report was finalised, and whilst the results are yet to be fully digested the ethnic minority status is now 12.9%, a substantial increase from 2011. However, it should be noted that amongst those with an ethnic minority status within the Census are a number of minority white categories which, when adjusted to match our own reporting categories, suggest a non-white ethnic background status of around 8.29%. This still suggests an under-representation of ethnic minority/non-white status staff within our workforce. We have used the Scottish Government's Minority Ethnic Recruitment Toolkit to review our recruitment processes and identified areas of improvement from this benchmarking exercise. Improving the diversity of our workforce will remain a continued focus.
- 3.14 We do not have reliable enough data to understand the ethnic diversity of the children we work with, however, we are committed to improving our recording of children's ethnicity, as we are with all their equality data. Improving our data is the start of this work and we will, as the data improves, conduct case-sampling exercises and research projects to explore whether there is racial inequality in our decision-making, particularly in relation to the Reporter decision-making.
- 3.15 SCRA's **Disability Group** continues to be motivated and enthusiastic with promoting disability inclusion. The group have recently launched the [SCRA British Sign Language \(BSL\) Action Plan 2024-2029](#), which supports the BSL National Plan 2023-2029. SCRA continues to be an active member of the BSL Justice Advisory Group, working closely with other justice partners in order to deliver the long-term goal for the justice sector that "BSL users will have fair and equal access to the civil, criminal and juvenile justice systems in Scotland". We also continue to engage with British Deaf Action (BDA), who have provided us with positive feedback on our work so far to improve accessibility for BSL users, particularly on our website and we are currently working with BDA to create a number of additional video's for the [BSL section of the SCRA website](#). Our Deaf Awareness e-learning is fully embedded into our learning platform and we continue to offer BSL taster sessions to staff. We plan on continuing delivering this twice a year, subject to approval.
- 3.16 Since June 2022 the group has also had a significant focus on neurodiversity and neuroinclusion. The **Neurodiversity Champions Network** is now well established, the Champions help raise awareness of neurodiversity within the organisation through providing training and awareness raising to staff. It also provides advice and guidance to colleagues who are supporting people who are neurodivergent to attend Hearings, court and participate in the Hearings process

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² This includes white British, white English, white Irish, white Northern Irish, white Scottish, white Welsh and any other white background.

³ This includes Chinese, Pakistani, any Asian background, any other mixed background and 'other'.

more generally. Focus will now be on supporting Champions to deliver training and awareness raising in the remaining localities who have yet to have the introductory session and on rolling out sessions on specific topics as directed by locality feedback. Alongside the Participation Officer, the group have been instrumental in the return of sensory toolkits to localities, we want to ensure the Champions, as far as possible, feel a sense of ownership over these and the takeaway items we offer for children and young people.

- 3.17 The Disability group have concluded at the end of the Autism Alert Card Pilot, following anecdotal feedback, that we should expand the Autism Alert Card to other neurodivergent conditions. We have developed a 'Hearing Passport' prototype with young people from our Hearings, Our Voice and will include an action to pilot this in 2024-2025. Further to this there are some actions which are outstanding and will be rolled over to the 2024-2025 plan, particularly the development of a Neurodiversity Toolkit.
- 3.18 Cancer is, unfortunately, not uncommon amongst SCRA's workforce and will affect many of us either directly, or by supporting a family member, friend or colleague. The Disability Group have now collated and launched materials for our Cancer in the Workplace Toolkit on the Disability Sub-Group page on Connect, which we will continue to update with relevant information.
- 3.19 As at 31st January 2024 5.4% of the workforce had declared a disability, this is significantly below the population demographic of around 22% in Scotland. Although there has been a small annual increase in the workforce with a disclosed disability, from 4.6% in 2021 to 5.4% in 2024, progress is slow. We will look to continue to increase the workforce diversity through recruitment and the encouragement of disclosure within the HR system amongst staff, including those with a disability status, in the forthcoming year.
- 3.20 We do not currently have complete data on how many children we work with have a disability status. Work will be undertaken this year to improve the categorisation, accuracy and completeness of the recording of children's protected characteristic data.
- 3.21 Whilst SCRA is not a named public body in respect of the **Fairer Scotland Duty**, we have, for some time now, committed to the Duty. The Fairer Scotland Duty is included in our holistic Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment process, alongside consideration of Island and remote communities impact. SCRA continues to offer virtual, as well as hybrid, Children's Hearings, in addition to traditional face-to-face Hearings and our approach is constantly being refined as we learn. In keeping with this more flexible approach to Hearings provision, we are able to provide a range of options for Hearings attendance to best suit individual children and family's needs, for example, where they live rurally to attend Hearings virtually, or for a child to attend a Hearing from school if they do not have the technology to do so from home. As part of our quality improvement and Keeping The Promise work, SCRA has five Child Friendly Scheduling projects which aim to seek the views of children in terms of the scheduling and delivery of their Hearings (e.g. what time they would like their Hearing to be, what day of the week they would prefer, how they would like to attend – virtually or in-

person – and how they would like to give their views during the Hearing). This work will continue into 2024 and beyond, alongside our focus on digital improvements and the use of digital technologies, where appropriate.

- 3.22 SCRA undertook specific research into digital exclusion so that we can fully understand the impact on children and families from and we have included in our Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 a specific outcome around poverty and digital inclusion to ensure this remains a strategic priority in the EDI work in SCRA, particularly in relation to age, disability and sex in recognition that there are differences in digital knowledge, experience and skill across those specific protected characteristics.
- 3.23 To further embed our commitment to the Duty, we have a Fairer Scotland Group, which includes a member of SCRA's Executive Management Team. The group have focussed this year on determining what, in terms of socio-economic deprivation, SCRA should focus on. To this end, the Group is currently developing an Action Plan to: better understand these needs through mapping exercises; better equip our people to be aware of what supports are available for families and the impact that poverty has on their lives in relation to Reporter decision-making through training and awareness raising; and some direct supports we may be able to provide (e.g. signposting to Food Banks and other supports, the provision of free wipes and nappies in our Hearing Centres, the piloting of Shannon's Box for children being placed in care away from home).
- 3.24 We are currently actively recruiting to our previously energetic and enthusiastic **LGBT Group**, re-energising this group will be a focus for this year and an initial meeting has already taken place with new members. SCRA achieved the LGBT Youth Charter Foundation Award in 2019 which expired at the end of 2023. The LGBT Group have made the decision that they will take the required steps to regain accreditation at Foundation Level, this is a significant commitment and will be a priority for this group during 24-25. As part of Pride Month in June 2024 a Pride Picnic is to be held on Wednesday 26th June at SCRA Head Office with a guest speaker from Our Hearings, Our Voice. A number of other events are also happening across SCRA localities, including a picnic at Glasgow Green on the 12th June. In addition to this a number of short Pronoun Awareness sessions will be held online for staff throughout the month.
- 3.25 Gender reassignment, gender identity and transgender issues continue to be an area of significant political and public focus and interest. It is also an increasingly arising issue in SCRA, particularly in how we should best support a trans or non-binary child or young person. Therefore, we will continue to focus activity on transgender and non-binary matters during 24-25, including reviewing our guidance for staff.
- 3.26 As at 31st January 2024, we have no employees who reported that they are transgender, in comparison to approx. 0.4% of the Scottish population. However, 0.4% preferred not to say and 76% did not disclose this information on our HR system and as such, there could be some SCRA employees who do not identify as the sex they were assigned at birth and do not want to disclose this.

- 3.27 We do not currently have data on how many children we work with who may be transgender, although we have notes on hundreds of children's files/records that suggest they may be transgender (e.g. a note to use a different name or different pronouns than those aligned to their sex assigned at birth). As already mentioned, work will be undertaken this year to improve the categorisation, accuracy and completeness of the recording of children's protected characteristic data.
- 3.28 SCRA has, for some time now, had a significant focus on **mental health and well-being**. This includes becoming a trauma informed organisation through our Trauma Training Programme which we continue to provide through working with our colleagues in NHS Education Scotland (NES). SCRA is committed to Trauma Informed Practice and better understanding and appreciating the impact Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) on the children, young people and families we work with. We also recognise that any of us could go through a period where we struggle with our physical and emotional health. By choosing to be open about mental health, we are encouraging our people to become part of a movement that's changing the conversation around mental health to ensure that no one is made to feel isolated or alone for experiencing mental ill-health.
- 3.29 Our **Trauma Training Programme**, which is aligned to the National Trauma Training Framework, has been delivered at all SCRA localities and has four elements:-
- Locality and Head Office based Secondary Trauma Sessions;
 - Trauma informed e-learning (provided by NHS Education Scotland);
 - Trauma skilled training course (provided by NHS Education Scotland); and,
 - Train the Trainer Programme (provided by NHS Education Scotland).
- 3.30 Further training will be rolled out across SCRA, based on a plan developed by our internal trainers.
- 3.31 To further enable us to support as many of our colleagues as possible, in partnership with UNISON, we have also trained Mental Health First Aiders, spread across SCRA. We are committed to training even more Mental Health First Aiders in 2024-2025.
- 3.32 SCRA has an active Mental Wealth Group that continues to promote mental health awareness and is working towards ensuring SCRA meets the Mental Health at Work Standards. As a result of national policy and legislative changes there is, and will remain for some time, significant change in SCRA and the wider policy and political landscape in which we work. Change is often uncomfortable for people and can impact their well-being and so we remain committed to ensuring the emotional well-being of all our colleagues to support them through this period of change and recovery. The Mental Wealth group has led on a number of initiatives to support the wellbeing of staff including; celebrating and highlighting Mental Health Awareness Week with another Big Team Challenge, launching a Right to Disconnect Policy and promoting World Menopause Day and holding a Menopause Stall at the Staff Event in September.

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- 3.33 As has been mentioned multiple times during this report there is a need to improve the accuracy and recording of children's protected characteristic data on our case management system (CSAS) to ensure we provide a needs-based sensitive service that respects their rights. As part of the Scottish Improvement Leaders Programme (ScIL) a pilot quality improvement project was undertaken in North Ayrshire. The project identified potential ways to ensure the accurate recording of equality data and how SCRA could better encourage partnership organisations to provide accurate data. The next steps for this work are to scale this up to the whole of the Ayrshire Locality, with specific focus on locality partnership working with SCRA's partner agencies.
- 3.34 Strategically work needs to be undertaken with partner agencies at national level to ensure all partner organisations understand the need for SCRA to be provided with accurate equality data for children – this work needs to be undertaken by the Executive Management Team and Senior Operational Managers.
- 3.35 In June 2023 we participated in the **Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion** (enei's) annual Talent Inclusion & Diversity Evaluation (TIDE) benchmarking exercise – an exercise that focussed solely on the prior 12 months activity. TIDE is enei's self-assessment and benchmarking tool which measures an organisation's approach and progress on diversity and inclusion over the following areas: workforce; strategy and planning; leadership and accountability; recruitment and attraction; training and development; other employment practices; communication and engagement; and procurement. TIDE enables us to identify our inclusion and diversity strengths and areas for improvement which are then used when planning our programme of work. Organisations who participate in TIDE are benchmarked against other organisations TIDE entries in that year. SCRA achieved a Silver TIDEmark Award when benchmarked against other organisations in 2023. We seek to continue our good progress in this area and in May 2024 once again submitted our self-assessment, we will receive our award in October 2024.
- 3.36 SCRA has **three mandatory e-learning courses** that all staff are required to complete and ensuring completion of that training continues to be a focus. This includes the two previously mandatory courses 'Bullying, Harassment & Victimisation' and 'Unconscious Bias', and a new mandatory course 'Diversity, Equality & Discrimination'. Managers have been asked to ensure all staff have completed all three courses and these courses are also part of induction for new members of staff.
- 3.37 We also have access to additional equality, diversity and inclusion topical e-learning courses which focus on specific equalities related issues pertaining to specific protected characteristics. We encourage managers to use these resources to address specific issues or areas of concern that may arise locally, such as age discrimination and disability discrimination. In addition, we will continue to develop local training as and when requested or required. We still require to consider how best to use our Inclusion Ambassadors and Locality EDI leads in delivering this training and this will be an action for the Inclusion & Diversity Manager to consider in the forthcoming year.

3.38 As part of the annual staff survey conducted in November 2023, a number of questions were raised specifically relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. The results were as follows:

- 98% of staff understand their individual responsibility for inclusion and diversity and how this relates to their role;
- 95% of staff think that SCRA is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion
- 83% of staff know how and where to report a concern about discrimination or harassment;
- 91% of staff feel they are treated fairly and respected in SCRA;
- 91% of staff think that SCRA respects individual differences (e.g. cultures, working styles, backgrounds, ideas, etc);
- 94% of staff think that their line manager demonstrates a commitment to and support for inclusion and diversity; and,
- 80% of staff feel that SCRA provides an environment for free and open expression of ideas, opinions and beliefs.

3.39 Whilst these are strong results, we do acknowledge that there is always room for improvement. For example, we note that whilst 83% of staff indicated that they knew how and where to report any concerns around discrimination or harassment, only 67% of respondents said they would feel confident in reporting it. In early 2024 we trained our staff on our new Inclusive Behaviours and Standards Framework and we have planned a refresh of **our Dignity at Work Policies**, with accompanying guidance and training, all of which, we believe, will have a positive impact on staff feeling more confident to report any instances of concerning behaviours.

4 Equality Outcomes 2024-2027

4.1 Consultation and engagement on SCRA's Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 began in summer 2023, with consultation taking place with our workforce, partner agencies, children and the public between November 2023 and March 2024. SCRA has aligned its new Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 with our corporate planning cycle and, as such, will produce a new set of Equality Outcomes every three years going forward.

4.2 Our Equality Outcomes 2024-2027 are:

- We will consistently ask for and check the accuracy of children's equality data to improve the recording of children's protected characteristics on SCRA's computer system, CSAS so that we can identify areas of inequality and also identify trends and patterns in outcomes between and within the protected characteristics.
- We will review and revise our recruitment process so that it is more inclusive to attract more diverse candidates to work for SCRA and encourage greater workforce diversity.
- We will become a proactively anti-racist organisation; this will include all staff taking part in a mandatory anti-racist programme of work led by an expert external

provider, actively challenging racism and better understanding potential discrimination in our decision-making.

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

5 Proposed Inclusion and Diversity Priorities 2024-2025

5.1 The Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group, chaired by Susan Deery, Head of HR, will continue to meet quarterly throughout 24-25. Children's Hearings Scotland are also represented on the group in recognition of the alignment between the two organisations. In May 2024 SCRA and CHS held an initial meeting to try to ensure alignment in our inclusion and diversity objectives and activity, it is hoped these meetings will be held regularly moving forwards.

5.2 The Inclusion and Diversity Action Plan 24-25 is currently being developed and will be put to the next Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group meeting for discussion and approval, however we are once again committed to delivering an ambitious programme of work. Although not an exhaustive list of activities, this will include:-

- Commencing a programme of work to improve the categorisation, accuracy and completeness of the recording of children's protected characteristic data.
- Increasing the workforce diversity, ensuring our recruitment processes are fair, transparent, inclusive and attract diverse talent. Particularly concentrating how we might attract younger applicants, more men to the organisation (particularly to lower grades to reduce our Gender Pay Gap), people from the global majority and those with a disability.
- Embedding the Inclusive Standards and Behaviours Framework across SCRA, which will promote and encourage an inclusive culture through ensuring inclusive recruitment, inclusive supervision and line management, inclusive succession planning and inclusive learning and development for all our colleagues.
- Continue a campaign to increase the disclosure of protected characteristic data amongst staff.
- The development of a Race & Ethnicity Action Plan to better understand racism and racial inequality in SCRA and Scotland to enable us to identify what actions we can take to address this.
- Develop a better understanding of socio-economic needs through mapping exercises; better equip our people to be aware of what supports are available for families and investigate some direct support we may be able to provide; and provide training and awareness to staff on the impact that poverty has on families.
- A Disability Action Plan with a continued focus on neuro-inclusivity, BSL and Cancer.
- Progress to regaining the LGBT Youth Charter Foundation Award.
- Continued promotion of mental health awareness and support and our Trauma Training Programme and development of a pilot resilience programme for managers.
- Increase in training and awareness opportunities for all staff in EDI.

- Re-invigoration of the Women in Leadership Network.

5.3 We believe that mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion is a journey of continuous improvement and culture change. Awareness raising and understanding inequality across and between the protected characteristics is only part of the journey; the other part is in embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion in our ways of working, rather than seeing it as a specialised 'add on'. By embedding our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in our Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy, we are providing a foundation upon which all organisational strategy and plans are built, thus ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion is considered across and within everything we do.

5.4 Mainstreaming is further achieved by (in addition to the topical equality, diversity and inclusion work) embedding a robust and impactful approach to Equality Impact Assessment, through delivering consistent mandatory training and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in our localities to ensure it is a local priority, as well as a strategic one. As such, we will have a continued focus throughout 24-25 and beyond on:

- Review the current EHRIA process to ensure the process is efficient and effective.
- Training and awareness raising of our EHRIA process to empower colleagues to be able to identify when an EHRIA is required and complete them fully and timeously;
- Ensuring colleagues have completed the mandatory e-learning, and ensuring managers are aware of its importance, and promoting the use of topical e-learning amongst managers;
- Developing and expanding our Locality EDI Lead Network and EDI Ambassadors Network.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 SCRA's Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group have set another impactful programme of work for the forthcoming year, with a focus on achieving real and tangible improvements to enable us to encourage good practice.

6.2 It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Consider the Inclusion and Diversity Annual Report and associated programme of work.
- b) Note the publication of SCRA's Equalities Mainstreaming Report 2023-24 in line with The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 as amended.
- c) Note updates on key inclusion and diversity activity.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN’S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Communications – annual update

Accountable Director: Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

Author: Maryanne McIntyre, Press and Communications Manager

Date: 19 June 2024

Recommendation:

1. To note our communications activity over the past 12 months.

Reason for Report: For Board noting

Resource Implications: Within approved budgets

Strategy: Within approved plans

Consultation: Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

Equalities Duties Not required

Document Classification: Open

1. Introduction

- 1.1. SCRA's current three year Communications and Engagement Strategy has come to an end. The new strategy is currently being prepared, and will act in support of our SCRA Corporate Plan 2024-27
- 1.2. We aim to ensure SCRA continues to have a dynamic and integrated approach to communications and engagement, and one that supports the organisation's vision and values.
- 1.3. This report provides SCRA's Board with an update on our communications activity over the past 12 months.

2. Internal communications

- 2.1 Open and transparent internal communications is a key part of our strategy. In the 2023 Staff Survey, 80 per cent said that the communications from SCRA (either via all staff emails, the Team Brief, Team Brief virtual sessions, webinars or from Connect) gave them sufficient, timely and accessible information (same as 2022). We know we still have work to do to continue to improve our culture of effective communication and engagement.
- 2.2 We have multiple methods of communicating internally, but one of our main tools is [Connect](#), our staff intranet. Connect continues to grow with new sections being added on topics linked to health and wellbeing and the environment. The intranet is also a way of keeping staff informed critical issues such as pay, cyber security, practice and learning and development. It is also a way of keeping staff connected on more informal matters like the Big Team Challenge, linked to our Health and Wellbeing programme. It also enables us to advertise opportunities for staff to get involved in new areas of work.
- 2.3 The Team Brief continues to be published on a regular basis. Introduced back in 2012 (issue 87 was recently published) it aims to keep staff connected with updates from PR/CEO Neil Hunter on important topics like the Staff Survey and Keeping The Promise. During the pandemic, we introduced online sessions via Microsoft Teams following publication of each Team Brief (usually 3 sessions). These have proved popular and are now a staple feature of our internal communications and give staff regular direct access to the PR/CE.
- 2.4 As well as the Team Brief Teams sessions, there have been many other opportunities for staff to engage and learn online. Staff had lots of opportunities to engage in our Keeping The Promise work, including consultations, webinars and training.
- 2.5 Although there has been a plethora of online information and engagement sessions, face to face is still the preferred method of communication for many. We held our first national Staff Event for 5

years on 13 September 2023 in Perth Concert Hall. Around 200 members of staff and Board Members attended, as well as young people from Our Hearings, Our Voice, the Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping The Promise, Natalie Don MSP, Sheriff David Mackie, Chair of the Hearings System Working Group, National Convener Elliot Jackson and Fraser McKinlay, CEO of The Promise Scotland.

- 2.6 The event started with a Q&A session with Neil, the Minister and Sheriff Mackie. The questions were submitted in advance by staff and some of the young people from OHOV asked the questions. There was a big focus on Keeping The Promise throughout the day and there was also a series of lightning presentations on Child Friendly Scheduling, Taking Control of my Hearing and the Voice of Experience Reference Group. Delegates also got to take part in workshops on topics including rights, change, compassion, corporate parenting and LGBTQ+ awareness. Feedback from the event was mostly positive, with some learning for future events mainly around catering.
- 2.7 In addition to the Staff Event, our Management Development programme is a key part of our face to face communications. At our first 2 day event for all SCRA managers in March 2024, one of our sessions was on communication and the information from this session will feed into our new Communications Strategy. Managers were also provided with briefing material after the event to ensure key messages were delivered to all staff.
- 2.8 Our staff magazine, the National Reporter was re-launched in June 2021 with a fresh new look following a break due to the pandemic. The e-zine has continued to develop and is a good way of keeping colleagues connected with more personal news and stories. There is also a new HR newsletter which has its own brand and is issued twice a year providing staff with key updates from the HR Team on topics such as new/updated policies, learning and development, health and wellbeing and inclusion and diversity.
- 2.9 Throughout the year, we continued to promote key dates/campaigns including World Mental Health Day, Black History Month, Stress Awareness Month and Pride Month with information available on Connect about how to get involved, as well as events and resources.
- 2.10 We know from a survey carried out in advance of publication of the Hearings for Children report in May 2023, that many colleagues prefer information in an a glance/visual format. On 1 December 2023, we launched a 25 day 'advent calendar' to highlight in a visual way all of our work to Keep The Promise, linking to the findings in the Hearings for Children report. In addition to posting a visual on the home page of Connect each day and combining them into 1 dedicated page on Connect, we posted the visual with information on

all our social media platforms every day including 25th December. Feedback both internally and externally was extremely positive. More recently, to coincide with the publication of our Corporate Plan 2024-2027, we commissioned a graphic artist to create a [visual representation](#) of the plan. Again, feedback has been extremely positive with teams asking for printed copies to be displayed in staff areas.

3. External communications

- 3.1 SCRA has a large external audience with a variety of different information needs. It is important that we employ a range of communication tools to meet these needs. Some actions and successes over the last 12 months are outlined below.
- 3.2 We continue to see an increase in traffic to our [website](#) and we regularly monitor hits to the website for any gaps in our information and to ensure the site is up to date and user friendly. New content in recent months has included a new standalone going to court section (with individual pages for every court location), improved information on each Hearing centre location page with some video clips of Hearing centres recently added. At the end of last year, our website underwent an accessibility audit by the UK Cabinet Office. Our website passed the audit with some minor changes required (mainly fixing some colour contrast issues and adding accessibility tags to pdf documents).
- 3.5 Social media forms a key part of our Communications and Engagement Strategy. We currently use the following platforms to engage with our external audiences: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. We utilise these various platforms to highlight key messages and information, using visuals, cartoons, animations and GIFS to give posts more prominence. We ensure all our visuals on social media have the correct accessibility tags as well. We also target the content in our messages depending on the platform/audience. Some social media analytics are available at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 Our [partner e-news](#) continues to be published quarterly. This contains a round-up of all our latest news, such as new research reports, corporate reports and our new information materials. This is sent initially to LRMs for local distribution, and is then distributed by the Press and Communications Team to key national partners and people who have signed up to receive the bulletin via our website. It is also available on our website and is publicised via social media.
- 3.8 SCRA's Press and Communications Team continues to host and maintain a number of partnership websites, including the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership, Our Hearings, Our Voice, Hearings Advocacy, Stand Up for Siblings, My Corporate Parents,

the Youth Justice Improvement Board, the Glasgow Promise website and Bairns' Hoose. In addition, we were approached last year to build a Child Protection website for the Scottish Government and this is about to be launched. We have also started work on a website for East and Midlothian Public Protection Committee.

- 3.9 As highlighted in previous Board updates, there isn't as much emphasis on the traditional media nowadays. However, we do engage with the media when and where appropriate and continue to provide a media monitoring and press cuttings service to members of EMT and local newspaper coverage to LRMs.
- 3.10 We are committed to making all our information materials as accessible as possible. We have now produced and published 33 visual information guides – one for each of our main Hearing centres. The guides are based on 'Social Story' best practice and are a visual walk through of a Hearings centre. They are aimed at younger children or children who need additional support. We continue to develop our suite of British Sign Language material on our website. Several new BSL videos have been added, including one for victims. We recently filmed a BSL walk through of a Hearings centre with a young person from British Deaf Association Scotland. This will be launched later this year.
- 3.11 Our team provides communications support, not only to Stand Up For Siblings, but the recently established Community of Practice for Siblings. Support includes being on the planning group, organising events (online and face to face), writing content for the newsletter and website and creating visuals for social media.

4. Participation and engagement with children and young people

- 4.1 Engaging in a meaningful way with Hearings-experienced children and young people continues to be a cornerstone of our strategy and approach. Some of our activity over the last 12 months is detailed below:
- 4.2 SCRA continues to host and support Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV). SCRA also provides communications support to OHOV, and staff members regularly attend Board Meetings to support the project team and the young people, as well as undertaking consultations to shape and improve our services. In the past 12 months OHOV has worked with SCRA on improving information services for children and young people attending Court, our Communications with Children, Families and Professionals project and our new Hearing, Waiting and Receptions areas project. SCRA also delivers specialised assistance around the OHOV website and social media. In October 2023, to mark 3 years since publication of the 40 Calls to Action, we prepared our latest update for OHOV. We

continue to work with young people from OHOV on a number of projects, including Articulate Animation and VOICE magazine.

- 4.3 We also worked with OHOV on a Keeping The Promise project called Taking Control of my Hearing. Originally launched in Fife in November 2023, the pilot involves pro-actively inviting children and young people to a Pre-Hearing visit which will now include more in-depth Pre-Hearing planning. To support their preparation, children and young people will be sent their own scrapbook designed for and by young people. During the pilot, the scrapbook will be sent out to children and young people age six years and over who are coming to their very first Hearing in Fife.
- 4.4 The concept and design of the Scrapbook came from two young Board Members from Our Hearings, Our Voice. The scrapbook includes pages for children and young people to write down how they are feeling, to customise their Hearing beforehand and to record Hearing decisions afterwards. It also contains information about their rights in the Children's Hearings System and where to get help and more information. In April 2024, the scrapbook pilot was extended to the Western Isles. So far, feedback from children and families has been extremely positive.
- 4.5 In October 2023, we launched a new pilot initiative aimed at encouraging children and young people to provide feedback and make it easier to complain. Working jointly with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), the pilot covered Alloa, Elgin, Falkirk, Livingston and Stirling Hearing centres. Working with young people from the Harmeny Education Trust in Edinburgh, we designed and printed a postcard with a QR code. Once scanned, it takes you to a feedback web page on our joint My Corporate Parents website for children and young people. The pilot is currently being evaluated.
- 4.6 The current Hearing Room Improvement Programme is almost complete. A new programme is underway which has developed into a wider national programme looking at delivering new Hearing rooms, reception areas and waiting areas to provide a more supportive experience for children, young people and families. We have consulted widely with children and young people from across Scotland as part of the initial phase of development, including OHOV, local Champs Boards and young people in residential homes.
- 4.7 As part of SCRA's commitment to Keeping The Promise, SCRA launched its first ever group for care experienced staff in 2022. Staff members with any experience of care, whether having been through the Children's Hearings System, or being foster carers or adoptive parents etc were welcomed to join. The Voice of Experience Reference Group (VOERG) is a closed group managed by SCRA's Participation Lead, where staff members confidentially share their

thoughts, views and ideas on improvements within SCRA to improve services for children, young people and families. These are then reported to the Executive Management Team for consideration. The Principal Reporter is invited to attend VOERG away days to report on improvements to discuss new approaches and ideas for improvements. The group has met approximately five times in the past 12 months and also provided a consultation on the new Hearing rooms, waiting rooms and Receptions areas programme, as well as speaking at the Staff Event.

- 4.7 In November 2023, a pilot communications initiative got underway in our Glasgow Locality to help children and young people share their views in their Hearing. Communi-crate is a communication toolkit which includes a number of tools to help children and young people participate in their Hearing. The idea came from Hearings-experienced young people at the Celcis VIP project. The toolkit includes a worry monster, emoji fan, emoji cards, conversation cubes, whiteboard, and a range of communication cards including stop/go cards. Briefing materials were prepared for staff, panel members and partners and we promoted the pilot on our website, social media and partner e-news bulletin.
- 4.8 Our team regularly work with a variety of groups of young people, including OHOV, Proud2Care Inverclyde, Stirling Champs Board, Falkirk Champs Board and the recently re-established Glasgow Champs Board as well as other groups of children and young people, for example, from residential homes, to ensure that our workstreams are inclusive and co-designed with or design-led by care experienced young people.
- 4.9 In 2024 we celebrate celebrating our fifth year of working in partnership with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. The programme started in 2019 and has been rolled out annually to all Hearing centres. The books are distributed to SCRA by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and are then gifted to children aged 5 and under attending Children's Hearings. Led by our Participation Lead, thousands of books have been gifted to children across Scotland since we started the project. Following on from feedback from young people and a pilot in Paisley in 2023, in March 2024 we introduced a book gifting programme for older children and young people. These books and bookshelves were funded via our Corporate Parenting budget.

5. Recommendations:

- 5.1. To note progress on our communications activity.

Appendix 1 SCRA social media and website analytics - 01.06.23 – 31.05.24

X - 90 days insights




6,218K followers

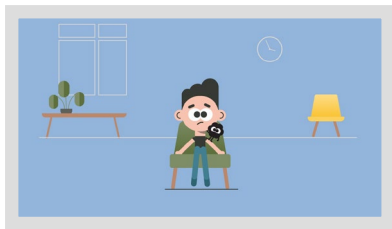
Our Tweets on X earned 35.7K impressions over this period

TOP TWEETS ON X

SCRA @ChildReporter

Amazing animation! We love it  It brings to life the importance of language in the Children's Hearings System.

4,408 impressions



SCRA @ChildReporter

Assistant Reporters play a key role in the Children's Hearings System and we have an exciting opportunity to join our team in Inverness. Check out the vacancy on our website. It closes on Wednesday 15 May, so don't miss out!

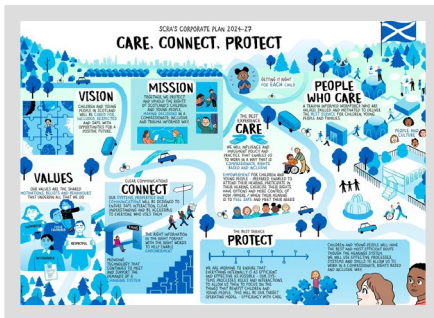
1,609 impressions





We were proud to publish our Language that Cares guide alongside the launch of [#ArticulateAnimation](#) with [@OHOV_Scotland](#) and [@CHScotland](#). It supports the [#LanguageLeaders](#) principles - what we hear in Hearings

940 impressions



SCRA [@ChildReporter](#)

Don't have time to read our Corporate Plan 2024-2027? Then check out this fabulous visual representation

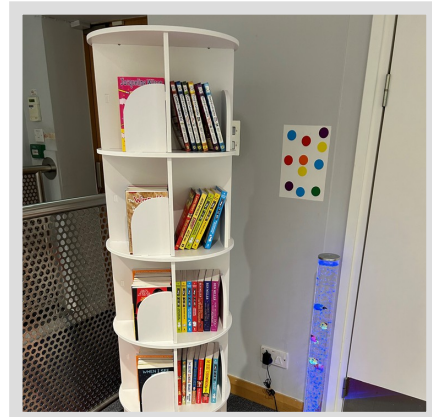
687 impressions



SCRA [@ChildReporter](#)

Lights, camera, action! We are excited to be filming a [#BSL](#) walk through of our Children's Hearings Centre in [#Glasgow](#) this afternoon.

523 impressions



SCRA [@ChildReporter](#)

Loving these new bookshelves which are popping up in our Hearing centres. There's some fabulous books for children and young people to take away before/after their Hearing

483 impressions



Facebook - 365 days insights

Facebook 1.5K Following

Everything posted organically by SCRA (no paid posts)

153K impression

32K reached

Have your say about lawyers in Children's Hearings

Are you a solicitor? Do you attend Children's Hearings? If the answer is yes to these questions we would love to work with you!

Why? We want to produce a good practice guide for solicitors, co-designed by children and young people with Hearings-experience and solicitors practising in Children's Hearings. This resource will offer support to practitioners who are working in the Children's Hearings System, as well as trainee solicitors and those who are newly qualified.

Who? The project team includes members of the Our Hearings, Our Voice board, Children's Hearings Scotland, Cian Childlaw, Civil Legal Assistance Office, Livingstone Brown, Children 1st, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and Advocacy.

How? We are hosting two workshops. One online workshop and one in person. You can come along to either of these to share your views and experiences with us.

When and where?
7th March: 4.30pm - 6.00pm **ONLINE MS Teams**
28th March: 4.30pm - 6.00pm **SCRA, Bell St, Glasgow**

What do I do next? Email collette.gallagher@scra.gov.uk for an invite to which session suits you best! If you are not able to attend either session, we can arrange a 1:1 catch up or you can share your thoughts by email.

Top Posts

Are you a solicitor? Do you attend Children's Hearings? We are co-designing a guide for solicitors and need your help. Come along to one of our workshops to have your say

5,279 impressions

WE'RE HIRING

VACANCIES

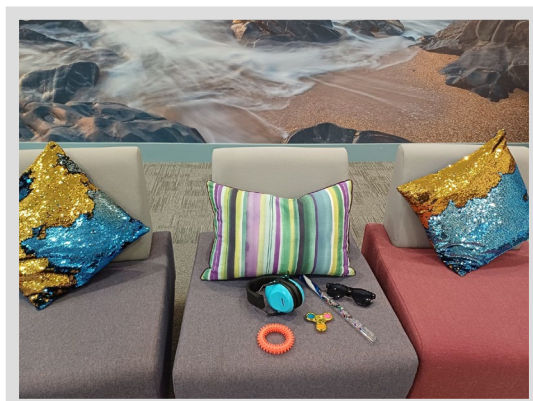
- Work experience opportunity in Stornoway

APPLY NOW!

www.scra.gov.uk/recruitment/

We have an exciting opportunity exclusively for a person with experience of being in care and/ or of the Children's Hearings System at our office & Hearings centre in Stornoway. Closing date is Friday 1 December.

4,560 impressions



Our Neurodiversity Champions are working hard to ensure our Hearing rooms support children and young people with sensory needs. In recent years, we have introduced a number of different tools including sequined cushions, fidget toys, ear defenders plus lots more! If you have any ideas, please get in touch.

2,598 impressions



We are looking for highly motivated administrators. Come and join our teams in Dumbarton and Glasgow. We have vacancies for 3 Locality Support Administrators

2,276 impressions



Board vacancies alert! We are looking for new Board Members. Plus a new Board Chair. Find out more

1,772 impressions



Excited to receive delivery of our new look scrapbooks – in booklet form! Looking forward to the next phase of the Taking Control of my Hearing pilot

1,092 impressions



Instagram 1.3K followers

90 days insights

Top posts:

We are hiring Business Support Administrator **331 impressions**

BSL walk through to help children and young people **337 impressions**

Young people from Larkfield taking part in our latest Hearing room improvement programme engagement session **280 impressions**

Corporate Parenting Plan **126 impressions**

OHOV launch scrapbook in Stornaway **115 impressions**

Age range 13 - 24 has increased to 10.4% of our audience



Linkedin – 2.1K followers

62,548 organic impressions over 365 days

It's hard to believe our Hearing room improvement programme started in 2015. Now more than 40 Hearing rooms have been revamped. We are excited to unveil that the next phase of the programme is about to get underway.

2,424 impressions

Interested in applying for the UK Boardroom Apprentice Programme? Check out a Q&A with one of our former Board Members - https://lnkd.in/eXje4S_s and a case study with one of our current Board Members

1,356 impressions

Interested in applying for one of our Children's Reporter vacancies? Want to find out more about the role? You can watch our short cartoon animation to find out how our Reporters help protect children and young people.

980 impressions

Come join the growing Community of Practice for siblings! Sign up here for the next online event on Thursday 16 May at 10am

680 impressions



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

SCRA website (www.scra.gov.uk)

365 days of insights

70K visitors

Page views
227,436

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/>

32,402 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/recruitment/current-vacancies/>

18,339 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/stats/>

11,820 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/recruitment/>

9,521 views

https://www.scra.gov.uk/young_people/questions-and-answers/

7,100 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/about-scra/role-of-the-reporter/>

6,381 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/contact-us>

6,380 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/contact-us/office-locations/>

6,109 views

https://www.scra.gov.uk/parent_carer/compulsory-supervision-orders/

5,090 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/about-scra/>

5,074 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/resources/>

4,049 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/children/>

3,395 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/parents-carers/>

2,619 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/young-people/>

2,442 views

<https://www.scra.gov.uk/about-scra/how-to-make-a-referral/>

1,861 views

Tech overview

55.9% DESKTOP USERS

42.9% MOBILE PHONE USERS

1.2% TABLET USERS

Traffic acquisition

Organic Search - 52%

Direct to website - 32%

Referral - 7%

Via social media 8%

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS 2023-24

Accountable Director: Head of Practice & Policy

Date: 19 June 2024

Report Author: Information Governance Manager

Recommendation:
1. To note the report.

Reason for Report:	To provide an annual report to Board as requested in June 2014.
Resource Implications:	None.
Strategy:	SCRA Complaints Procedure
Consultation:	EMT.
Document Classification:	Sensitive.
Equalities Duties	Not required

Section 1: **Introduction**

Section 2: **Number and sources of complaints requiring further investigation in 2023-24**

Section 3: **Localities and number of complaints**

Section 4: **Types of complaints**

Section 5: **Complaint resolution**

Section 6: **Lessons learned and actions**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 SCRA's Complaints Handling Procedure has been in place since 2011 and follows the Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP) provided by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), which was most recently updated in January 2020. Its main features are to allow:
 - more pro-active recording of issues as complaints
 - greater resolution at front line
 - greater visibility of issues of learning.
- 1.2 The Board and EMT request annual reports on complaints. Following the Board meeting in June 2024, this report will be shared with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), and with SCRA's Locality Reporter Managers and Head Office Managers.
- 1.3 An internal audit of SCRA's complaints process was carried out in February and March 2021. This found a moderate level of assurance and made seven recommendations: complaints process; complaints logging; complaints sign off; independent review of complaint and finding; complaints' root cause; and lessons learned. All these recommendations have been fully implemented.
- 1.4 SCRA worked with Deaf Scotland in 2022 to ensure that our complaints process is as accessible as possible for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. We introduced a British Sign Language (BSL) video on our website that outlines the complaints process and provides details on how to make a complaint. We have also been trialling the use of a text message service for BSL users, who can contact SCRA to make a complaint via text message. The text service was introduced in September 2022 and to date we have not received any complaints via this service (zero texts). Therefore, it is recommended that the service be discontinued. The SCRA will continue to provide various other flexible options for lodging a complaint. For example, this can be done in person or in writing, either via our online complaint form, email or by letter. Furthermore, an individual can ask someone else to contact the SCRA on their behalf to make a complaint.
- 1.5 A collaborative pilot between CHS and SCRA was launched in October 2023, to improve the accessibility of both organisations' feedback and complaint processes for children and young people. A postcard with a QR code was developed and distributed at the end of hearings within a couple of Highland localities. It was hoped that any feedback/complaints captured could be used to improve each organisation's service and may go some way to encouraging more complaints from children.

1.6 The QR code provides a single point of access for children and families and others who wish to either provide feedback or submit a formal complaint about an aspect of the Children’s Hearings System.

1.7 The pilot has now been completed. The postcard will remain in place within the pilot localities. CHS is carrying out an initial evaluation and a joint workshop is scheduled for the end of June 2024, to determine the next steps and scope for continuing the project. The current plan is to extend the circulation of the postcard to Inverness, Thurso and Stornoway, so that the full Highland Locality is engaged with the postcard option. CHS have indicated that they are keen to distribute the postcard nationally.

- Since the pilot launched, the SCRA has not received any feedback via the QR code.
- Regarding complaints, we are currently unable to determine if any complaint received in 2023-24 was submitted to the SCRA by an individual who used the QR code.

1.8 CHS has received a limited number of feedback or complaints via the QR code.

2. Number and sources of complaints requiring further investigation (Stage 2 complaints) in 2023-24

2.1 The number of complaints to SCRA over the last ten years is as follows:

Year	Stage 2 Complaints
14/15	42
15/16	54
16/17	28
17/18	39
18/19	40
19/20	61
20/21	36
21/22	66
22/23	48
23/24	41

* Average annual number of Stage 2 complaints since 2014-15 to present is 45.5.

2.2 There were 41 complaints received in 2023-2024 from 33 complainants. All required further investigation.

2.3 The number of complaints fluctuates from year to year, and it is difficult to determine any pattern to this. Over the last two years the number of Stage 2 complaints has decreased from 20/21. This could be related to the fact that 2021/22 was particularly challenging as we came out of the pandemic

and the fact that operational changes were still being embedded throughout SCRA in relation to our case management system and hybrid working. This year, the majority (75.6%) of complaints were from parents, including solicitors representing parents:

Source of complaint	Number of complaints in 2023-24	%	Number of complaints from previous year 2022-23
Parents	30	73.17	34
Other relatives	3	7.32	5
Foster carers, prospective adopters & adoptive parents	2	4.88	2
Panel Member	2	4.88	1
Member of Public	1	2.44	0
Solicitor (representing parent)	1	2.44	2
Victim of an offence (MSP obo)	1	2.44	1
Mother's Partner	1	2.44	0
Advocacy worker	0	0	1
MSP obo Parent	0	0	1
NHS Psychiatrist	0	0	1
Total	41	Approx. 100%	48

- 2.3 SCRA did not receive any direct complaints from children and young people in 2023-24. No complaints were received last year from children and young people either, which is largely in keeping with previous years.
- 2.4 Following a multi-year project of consultation, which included the SCRA, the SPSO published new [Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance](#).
- 2.5 The new guidance aims to ensure that children's rights under the UNCRC are met throughout the complaints process and that their concerns are handled in a way that will meet their individual needs. The guidance was published on 30 May 2024, and will now be implemented by the SCRA.
- 2.6 The impact of the new guidance will be reflected on within the interim 6-month complaints report that goes to EMT in October 2024.

3. Localities and number of complaints

- 3.1 All localities received at least two complaints that required further investigation:

Locality	Number of complaints in 2023-24	%	Number of complaints from previous year 2022-23
Grampian	8*	19.51	10
South East	6	14.63	3
Tayside & Fife	5	12.20	5
Glasgow	5	12.20	7
North Strathclyde	5	12.20	2
Lanarkshire, Dumfries & Galloway	3	7.32	7
National/Head Office/VIS	3	7.32	0
Highlands & Islands	2	4.87	2
Central	2	4.87	10
Ayrshire	2	4.87	2
Total	41	100%	48

**Please note that whilst Grampian received eight complaints, six of these were from the same individual.*

3.2 Over three quarters of these complaints (n=32; 78%) were dealt with by Locality Reporter Managers (LRMs). Nine complaints (22%) relating to data sharing or staff conduct were dealt with by the Information Governance Manager.

4. Types of complaints

4.1 Complaints are categorised into broad types. The types of Stage 2 complaints received in 2023-24 are shown below:

Complaint type	Number of complaints	%
Children's Hearings process and or administration	21	51.22
SCRA staff conduct	13	31.70
Virtual Hearings	3	7.32
Data protection related	2	4.88
VIS	2	4.88
Total	41	100

*See Section 5.6 for number of individuals who made multiple complaints. 33 complainants submitted 41 complaints.

5. Complaint resolution

5.1 SPSO guidance and SCRA's Complaints Procedure determines that where the matter can be resolved quickly and informally with little or no investigation, this should be done at the front line (Stage 1 complaints-5 working days to resolve). Previously Stage 1 complaints were only reported where the issue might have national significance. However, following the implementation of a recommendation from the internal audit of SCRA's complaints process, we now encourage staff to complete a Complaint

Reporting Form for all Stage 1 complaints, which are collated centrally via the complaint’s mailbox. This allows for an improved oversight of Stage 1 complaints. Eleven complaints were reported to have been dealt with at the front line in 2023-24, and 7 were resolved within 5 working days. The reasons for the delay in resolving the 4 remaining complaints include the complainant not answering their telephone or providing clarification regarding the nature of their complaint.

5.2 From the 41 complaints received in 2023-24, all of them were investigated. All 41 complaints have been responded to and are now closed.

5.3 Of the 41 closed complaints:

- 34 (83%) received an acknowledgement within 3 days
- 41 (100%) received a final response within the required timescale of 20 working days.

5.4 The majority of Stage 2 complaints, were not upheld (75.6%); which is more than previous years (65% in 2022-23 & 69% in 2021-22).

Three (7.3%) were upheld, four were partly upheld (9.7%), 31 were not upheld (75.6%) and three (7.3%) were neither upheld or not upheld, and these are summarised below:

Complaint summary:	Outcome
Non-Disclosure data breach of adoptive parents’ surname. Member of staff correctly redacted surname on RoP, but accidentally printed and issued the original unredacted version.	Upheld
Staff conduct – ex-member of staff spoke inappropriately to the complainant who swore at them on the call.	Upheld
Parent complained that part of the panel papers wasn’t issued to her partner, and the Reporter failed to get in touch before the court hearing, which would have prevented the parent from waiting unnecessarily in the Webex lobby.	Upheld
Unnecessary delay in making a decision following receipt of a referral. This element of the complaint was upheld.	Partly Upheld
Communication – reporter advised at the end of the hearing that the decision could be appealed, but quickly realised that the hearing had been deferred, so no decision had been reached. Reporter realised their mistake and corrected themselves. This element of the complaint was upheld.	Partly Upheld
The Reporter sent a notification of court proceedings to the child in error. The Sheriff had dispensed the child’s attendance.	Partly Upheld
The Reporter failed to provide the grounds of referral before a 2 nd working day hearing.	Partly Upheld
Complainant alleged that the reporter caused them ‘ <i>fear alarm and distress</i> ’ during the Proof and that a new reporter should be	Not Upheld

SCRA (June 2024) Item 12

appointed. Also complained about how the Reporter's manager responded to these concerns.	
Complainant alleged that there had been a failure to answer their enquiries and questions.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that there was a lack of information. Parent was sent the papers and invited to attend the hearing but didn't attend.	Not Upheld
A parent was advised that their emails couldn't be distributed to the hearing. Parent complained that the emails were never intended for the hearing and that should have been clear to SCRA.	Not Upheld
Uncle of child complained that SCRA allowed them to attend hearing centre, but the panel then didn't allow them to attend the Children's Hearing. Uncle was advised in advance that attending the hearing would be at the panel chair's discretion.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that her teenage daughter should not have been sent hearing papers as the content would have been traumatic for her to read. Parent intercepted papers that SCRA sent to her daughter.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that the Reporter's words at the hearing were meant to ridicule and provoke him.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that an LRM laughed at them during a telephone call, which was made in an attempt to address the complaint, which is stated directly above.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that the warrant to secure their child's attendance was unlawful and that the SCRA has no jurisdiction over their child.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that they weren't provided with sufficient notice of a review and permanence advice hearing and that their child was not legally represented.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that it was not appropriate for a receptionist to ask them why they were unable to attend the hearing. Plus, the parent complained that they could not hear people clearly during the virtual hearing.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that their child had an advocacy worker and that they didn't wish for their personal information to be discussed in front of them. Plus, the parent did not consider it necessary for the headmaster from their child's school to attend the hearing.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that their son's virtual hearing should have been conducted face to face. Child wished to avoid a 6 hour round trip to the hearing centre.	Not Upheld
Member of the public complained that SCRA assumed his identity from an email address, disclosed classified information, failed to record a conversation and was generally abusive towards them.	Not Upheld
Parent complained about how the reporter conducted the court proceedings, specifically that they supplied false accusations to the sheriff.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that SCRA illegally changed the grounds of referral to cause harm. When the complaint was submitted the CSO had	Not Upheld

been terminated and there were no active proceedings in respect of the child.	
Mother's partner alleged that his human rights had been infringed when he wasn't deemed a relevant person and again when his personal information was discussed during the hearing.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that the reporter had wrongly advised them in respect of their bail conditions.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that they shouldn't have been asked about their medical condition, which prevents them attending face to face hearings.	Not Upheld
Parent raised same issues of complaint, which were previously considered and addressed, therefore complaint was deemed vexatious. X2	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that they have been subject to unfair discrimination by the SCRA, as they are autistic.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that teenage child should not have received a set of hearing papers as they contained historical information that she didn't believe was relevant to the hearing.	Not Upheld
Parent claimed that the SCRA was prejudiced due to his nationality.	Not Upheld
Parent raised same issues of complaint, which were previously considered and addressed.	Not Upheld
Parent alleged that the SCRA failed to provide documentation, failed to record an alleged admission, and proceeded with grounds in error.	Not Upheld
Parent of victim complained that Reporter was wrong to have concluded that there was insufficient evidence. X2	Not Upheld
Parent complained that there had been an avoidable delay when processing their child's case.	Not Upheld
Parent complained that SCRA did not take appropriate steps to notify them of a hearing.	Not Upheld
A parent's partner complained that SCRA required consent to allow his personal information to be processed and that his partner's address should not have been disclosed.	Not Upheld
Two Panel Members separately complained about the conduct of the Reporter, specifically that they showed a lack of respect and created a hostile environment within a hearing. The Panel Members complained that the Reporter intervened inappropriately with corrections or clarifications and had a condescending tone, which they felt amounted to harassment and bullying. One PM advised that although the Reporter may have been making points that were technically correct, their delivery was disrespectful. During the complaint investigation, the Reporter advised that they had intervened at various points to clarify aspects of the decisions, which were necessary. Plus, the Reporter felt that the Chair had a rather abrupt manner.	Neither upheld nor not upheld

<p>Within the response to the complaint, the LRM highlighted that it can be difficult for a Reporter to know if the Chair will clarify matters and if this does not happen, the Reporter may be required to intervene to ask the PM to clarify aspects of the decision. Furthermore, the LRM advised that the Reporter did not mean to cause any distress and that they would continue to reflect on their role within their supervision. X2</p>	
<p>A victim complained via their MSP, that the referral ought to have been dealt with in the adult criminal justice system.</p> <p>The victim advised their MSP that the Police had provided assurances that the child who committed the assault, would be dealt with in an adult court and that <i>'justice would be done'</i>.</p> <p>An overview of how joint referrals are dealt with was provided to the MSP, and we explained that the case in question was not retained by the Procurator Fiscal (PF), as the presumption to refer the child to the Children's Reporter, was not overridden by the PF. A full list of the factors considered by the PF when making such a decision, was also provided.</p>	<p>Neither upheld nor not upheld</p>

5.5 Forty complainants were provided with the SPSO's contact details. The complaint received from the MSP, on behalf of their constituent, was not provided with the SPSO's details. Instead, an overview of how referrals are dealt with by the SCRA and COPFS was provided to help the constituent understand why the case was not dealt with in the adult criminal justice system. The SPSO will consider complaint referrals and may carry out its own investigation where there are indications that there may have been maladministration or service failure by the service provider.

There were four referrals made to the SPSO in 2023-24. All four were not upheld by SCRA. In all four cases, the SPSO decided not to investigate:

SPSO summary of complaint received	SPSO decision
<p>(1) Essentially, your complaint to the Ombudsman is about the sharing of your personal information in a report which could have been accessed by your daughter. You are also concerned that the report was shared with your daughter's father. The outcome which you seek is</p>	<p><i>Your complaint appears to be primarily in relation to how information was handled by SCRA and how they responded to this. In this instance the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is an independent authority set up to regulate data protection matters in Scotland. I can see that SCRA provided you with their details as well ours in their complaints response. The ICO has been set up specifically to look at complaints of this</i></p>

<p>that only relevant and appropriate information is contained in such reports.</p>	<p><i>nature and will have specialist expertise on this area. For that reason, we will not pursue your complaint further.</i></p> <p><i>No communication was received from ICO.</i></p>
<p>(2) SCRA failed to respond to this point of complaint and merely responded with “noted”.</p> <p>You disagree that a receptionist can ask you about your reason for not attending the Hearing in person.</p> <p>The set-up of the Hearing room is very poor and you have had to raise multiple complaints about this.</p> <p>You said that when the panel members were making their decision, they individually made different recommendations. You consider that one of the panel members was pressured to change their position.</p>	<p><i>I have assessed your complaint and my view is SCRA’s response to your complaint appears reasonable. This is because</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>• they have explained the steps they have taken to investigate your complaint</i> <i>• they have provided a clear response to the issues you raised</i> <i>• they have explained why they have taken a different position to yours.</i> <p><i>SCRA confirmed that you have submitted an appeal against the panel’s decision. SPSO is not permitted to consider matters that are being considered in court. SCRA also correctly advised that they could not consider this point of your complaint for the same reason.</i></p>
<p>(3) SCRA declined to investigate your concerns about information given to the SSSC on the basis that this was not a complaint about a service delivered on behalf of SCRA.</p> <p>SCRA stated they could find no evidence to support your position that data protection legislation or professional codes of conduct had been infringed by either member of staff.</p>	<p><i>My view is that SCRA have responded appropriately to the issues you raised, and have addressed the concerns you raised in the way we would expect.</i></p> <p><i>I consider it was reasonable for SCRA to decline to deal with a complaint about evidence given to another public body. Their position that this was not a complaint about SCRA’s service, and that any complaints or concerns about should be directed to SSSC appears reasonable, and in line with the complaints handling procedure, which defines complaints as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public or from another agency about SCRA’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by, or on behalf of, SCRA’.</i></p> <p><i>I feel this is a matter better suited to be raised with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).</i></p>

	<p><i>Response from ICO below:</i></p> <p><i>In light of your correspondence I have reviewed the evidence available to me and I now believe that I interpreted some of the evidence incorrectly and I am now satisfied with the way SCRA handled this matter. I therefore do not deem it necessary for SCRA to consider any further action.</i></p>
<p>(4) Essentially, your complaint to the Ombudsman is that you feel it is unfair that you are not classed as a <i>Relevant Person</i> in the case against your partner in relation to her children and that information relating to you has been shared with others without your consent.</p>	<p><i>Having assessed your complaint, my view is SCRA's response appears reasonable. This is because they have explained the steps they have taken to investigate your complaint and they have provided a clear response to the issues you raised. I see from SCRA's response to your formal complaint they explained that the decision not to designate you as a Relevant Person was made by a Children's Hearing at a Pre-Hearing panel.</i></p>

5.6 *Repeated and vexatious complaints:*

Four complainants lodged multiple complaints ranging from two to six complaints in 2023-24. In total, the four complainants lodged 12 of the 41 complaints received.

Two complaints were deemed as vexatious in line with SCRA's Complaints Handling Procedure. This was due to the fact the complainant had repeatedly contacted SCRA regarding a matter that had already been fully addressed.

6. Lessons Learned & Actions

6.1 Following the internal audit of SCRA's complaint process in February and March 2021, the root cause of each element of a complaint is recorded and analysed to identify any particular areas or processes that can be improved upon either locally or nationally. As there was a limited number of complaints that were upheld or partially upheld, there was a limited opportunity to identify and implement any improvements within our processes and procedures. However, the following actions were taken during 2023-24:

- All reception staff in one particular locality were reminded of the required standards for appropriate customer service.
- The correct redaction process was refreshed with all staff in one particular locality. Plus, an individual member of staff was spoken with to identify and highlight appropriate actions that they are required to take to ensure that their error, which resulted in a data breach, is not repeated.
- An LRM discussed with a member of staff how to effectively de-escalate challenging telephone conversations.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The Board is invited to note this report.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN’S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Influencing Report: 1st June 2023 to 1st June 2024

Accountable Director:	Head of Practice and Policy	Date:	31 st May 2024
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<p>Recommendation:</p> <p>1. That the Board notes the content of this report</p>
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Reason for Report:	<i>For information of Board</i>
Resource Implications:	<i>Within approved budgets</i>
Strategy:	<i>Within approved plans</i>
Consultation:	<i>Practice and Policy and Head Office Teams</i>
Document Classification:	<i>Open</i>

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1	<p>Introduction</p>
1.1	<p>In March 2011, the Practice and Policy Team produced a report for the Board outlining the key areas where SCRA had been able to be influential and apply its professional expertise, data and research to particular issues at a national level.</p> <p>The Board subsequently requested that a similar report be produced twice a year, but the report is currently provided annually.</p> <p>This is the twenty fourth such report and covers the period 1st June 2023 to 1st June 2024.</p> <p>The Board may be happy with this report being produced once a year, or they may prefer to return to the previous December and June Influencing Reports.</p>
1.2	<p>There are hyperlinks in this document - to external documents which may be of interest (including legislation and draft legislation) and to internal documents, published externally or internally.</p> <p>Where there are links to legislation these links are to a Bill or an Act, not to associated policy memoranda or regulations (unless these other documents are of specific interest). Some hyperlinks are to web pages where there are multiple documents of potential interest.</p> <p>We hope the information contained in this report is relevant and useful. We are happy to review this report content and format, if required. Some information still requires to be published on SCRA's website.</p>
1.3	<p>SCRA has positive working relationships with officials in the Scottish Government and continues to be engaged in informal and formal dialogue and through informal and formal consultation with them when relevant. Previously officers would spend time at Victoria Quay, but so few SG staff now work there on a daily basis following the pandemic that there is no current benefit to this.</p>
1.4	<p>SCRA's responses to National consultation exercises relevant to our work in the Children's Hearings System are published online, and can be found at https://www.scra.gov.uk/resources/articles/category/consultations-evidence/.</p> <p>Key messages from our full consultation responses are disseminated internally within SCRA to colleagues through CONNECT. The key messages can be accessed by all SCRA staff from either the news item on CONNECT or from the library of documents. Some consultation responses are more relevant to staff than others and every response is produced following planning about gathering views in relation to the response and following input from staff that is relevant and proportionate to the consultation.</p>

2	<p>Legislation & Parliamentary Work</p>
2.1	<p>United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024</p> <p>This Act of the Scottish Parliament will come into force on 16th July 2024.</p> <p>SCRA have engaged with Scottish Government officials to consider our state of readiness for the UNCRC Act and we have also been working on an internal project to improve our Article 12 compliance, which will be completed with relevant training and practice and operational updates in place before 16th July.</p>
2.2	<p>The Children (Scotland) Act 2020</p> <p>The Bill for this Act was introduced on 2nd September 2019 It was passed by the Parliament on 25th August 2020 and received Royal Assent on 1st October 2020.</p> <p>The provisions in the Act which promotes contact between looked after children and their brothers and sisters, through improved participation rights is already implemented and is explained in full on SCRA's website - Participation Rights - SCRA. Section 25 of the Act covers the opportunity to participate in children's hearings and a remedy for people when that opportunity has not been afforded and section 26 of the Act clarifies existing appeal rights in relation to deeming / undeeming of relevant person status and extends a section 164 right of appeal to the Principal Reporter. Sections 25 and 26 are in force.</p> <p>From 25th October 2021 the provisions to enable the creation of= the register of solicitors for section 22B of the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004; the register of child welfare reporters and the regulation of provision of contact services and regulation for curators ad litem are all in force. The detail of the registers and the regulation still requires to be developed and will likely be the subject of additional Government consultation.</p> <p>The other provisions of the Act are still to be implemented, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presumption that a child aged 12 or over is considered mature enough to give their views, to ensure that younger children who are capable of forming a view and wish to give that view are able to do so. • Children are to be supported to give their views in a manner they prefer. • New special measures to protect vulnerable witnesses including allowing the court to prohibit a party to proceedings conducting their own case. • The provision to make it clear that a child under 16 can apply for and be granted a contact order under section 11 of the 1995 Children (Scotland) Act. <p>The Family Justice Modernisation Strategy continues to operate in parallel to the provisions of the Act.</p>

<p>2.3</p>	<p>The Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020</p> <p>The Bill for this Act of the Scottish Parliament was passed by the Parliament on 10th June 2020 and received Royal Assent on 14th July 2020. The Act has not yet been fully implemented. Disclosure Scotland is developing new processes, engaging with stakeholders and developing training and guidance which will be available before new parts of the Act are implemented. Caroline Conway continues in post as the Independent Reviewer. There is information on the mygov.scot website about providing information to the independent reviewer – available here.</p> <p>SCRA will be doing some developmental work later in 2024 to look at the ways in which we can use our systems to support the provisions of the Act, by giving children who come into conflict with the law and have section 67(2)(j) grounds of referral, clear and accurate information about the future disclosure consequences of the (j) ground, if it is accepted or established and forms the basis for children’s hearing decision making.</p>
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019</p> <p>This Bill was passed on 7 May 2019 and became an Act on 11 June 2019.</p> <p>The commencement of the different provisions of the Act finally took effect on 17th December 2021. There are a number of different delivery groups for the Act where SCRA is represented.</p> <p>Alistair Hogg sits on the Age of Criminal Responsibility Advisory Group. We also have representatives on 2 of the working groups reporting to the Advisory Group. The main task for this group is to review the current age of criminal responsibility after 3 years of implementation, and to produce a report to the Scottish Parliament recommending whether this age should rise, and if so how far.</p> <p>The SCRA research in relation to offending by 12 to 15 year olds can be read online.</p>
<p>2.5</p>	<p>National Care Service</p> <p>The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill is at stage 2 with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee of the Scottish Parliament.</p> <p>A collaborative redesign project is also underway and more detail about that can be found here.</p> <p>Information about the Children’s Services Research that is ongoing can be found here.</p>

2.6

Children's Care and Justice Bill

The Children's (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill was passed on 25th April 2024. The Bill as passed can be read [here](#). There is no definite implementation date for the provisions of the new legislation but it is expected that the age of referral will rise in late 2025 or early 2026 – as one of the first provisions to be enacted.

[SCRA's news item](#) on the website about the passing of the Bill may be helpful.

This new law will help the children's hearing be UNCRC compatible. It will end the unfair and arbitrary age limits that are currently in place for referral to the Reporter so that anyone under 18 can access support through the children's hearing, for any ground of referral. The law ends the placement of under 18's in a Young Offenders institution and provides new supports for victims. The links between court and the children's hearing are simplified and are stronger as a result.

There is likely to be a focus on the implementation of the law around victims rights and their experience – victims organisations were very influential during the parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill. SCRA's Research team and Victim Support Scotland are collaborating on work to consider the experience of victims in the children's hearing and what recommendations can be made to improve that experience if required.

3	<p>Consultation Responses and Evidence</p>
3.1	<p>Covid 19 Inquiry – Scotland</p> <p>SCRA provided written evidence to the Scottish Covid 19 Inquiry. Our evidence summarised the key individuals in SCRA who were responsible for making decisions during the pandemic; and gave an overview of the work we did which was different as a result of the pandemic response between 1st January 2020 and 31st December 2022.</p> <p>The role of Human Resources was summarised and the key messages communicated to staff were presented alongside the learning that SCRA has taken from the key messages around communications; home working; change; technology; operations; workforce support. Health and safety responsibilities are described as are the responsibilities taken by SCRA’s property team.</p> <p>Practice during the pandemic period is described and an overview table of the key issues and impacts of the pandemic for SCRA, alongside the Scottish Government response to the issue is presented.</p> <p>From page 12 SCRA presents some composite Covid 19 stories, to illustrate the shifts in approach which occurred between 2020 and 2022.</p> <p>SCRA’s Covid 19 publications are summarised from page 16 – our series of Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 reports and our evidence to the Covid Recovery Consultation in 2021. Our experience of Government support is summarised and our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on the care of children is summarised using research evidence available to our research team. Early results from the research of Dr Catherine Nixon, now SCRA’s Research Manager, into the experience of virtual hearings, is presented and the documents that may be relevant to further deliberations of the Inquiry are summarised.</p>

3.2

[Victims, Witnesses and Justice Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#)

At the end of the Summer 2023 SCRA provided [written evidence](#) to the Criminal Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament about this Bill.

SCRA agreed with the role of a Victims and Witnesses Commissioner, who would not initially have a remit across the children's hearing system but who may expand their remit in the future. We were clear that SCRA deal with victims in a range of situations, including child victims of schedule 1 offences and sexual offences where the child is referred to us (or a member of the same household is referred); adult victims of both where the referred child has a close connection with the perpetrator; and victims of domestic abuse where the child has a close connection with the perpetrator. In addition, we emphasised that many children referred for committing offences will also be victims of offences, often committed by other children.

The key message from SCRA was that the children's hearing system is not a criminal justice system. It is a very different system, based on different principles that works in a different way.

We agreed with the re-stated definition of trauma informed practice as set out in section 69 of the Bill and we felt that the provisions of the Bill go some way towards meeting the recommendations around trauma informed practice that are in The Hearings for Children: The Redesign Report at pages 89, 90 and 148.

SCRA support the prohibition of personal conduct of a case, where required – and noted that for such provisions to be effective they may need to be available at short notice and in every court, in some form, to minimise delay.

We appreciated the potential expertise which could develop from the Sexual Offences Court and hoped that any expertise developed in the setting up and operations of the specialised Sexual Offences Court is cascaded through other courts dealing with the similar presenting concerns. In children's hearing court proceedings, proof proceedings in relation to sexual offending (whether by a child or against a child), are regularly heard, for example, and innovative court practice should be transferrable and adaptable.

<p>3.3</p>	<p><u>National Islands Plan Review</u></p> <p>Five members of SCRA staff who live or work on the Islands contributed their thoughts to SCRA's response about the new National Islands Plan. SCRA's collated response caused some difficulties for the Scottish Government team in terms of publication – as it was neither an organisational or an individual response.</p> <p>Staff were clear that their knowledge of the plan ranged from knowing nothing at all, to knowing a little. They felt that the plan either hadn't affected their life or they didn't know whether it had affected their life. Staff said the plan has not affected their lives and also indicated that in areas like the Outer Hebrides the situation has got worse – although that may not be to do with the existence of the plan. Staff either had no view or a negative view about the plan – and explained that a lot of the plan is aspirational but without the specific actions to make it meaningful. The current plan hasn't helped provide new ferries and the cost of living remains difficult. People on Orkney do not benefit at all from the renewable energy that is provided from the Island and there continues to be a difficulty in people remaining in Island communities stemming from the cost of property.</p> <p>Staff felt 134 commitments was probably too many – fewer commitments might be more meaningful. For SCRA the specific strategic areas for the new plan were Transport and digital connectivity.</p>
<p>3.4</p>	<p><u>Regulation of Legal Service (Scotland) Bill</u></p> <p>This Bill is currently at Stage 2 with the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee. SCRA considered this legislative proposal and whether it has practical implications for Reporters.</p> <p>Having looked at the Bill, the Policy Memorandum and the Explanatory Notes we didn't see anything which indicates that SCRA, the Principal Reporter or Children's Reporters exercising their delegated powers should or does come under the purview of the legislation.</p> <p>We are therefore not anticipating that the legislation will have a direct impact on the work of SCRA, the Principal Reporter or Children's Reporters. We indicated this to Scottish Government and asked that if they are of a different view, or it becomes clear that our assessment needs to be revisited, then we would need some further discussion and some additional time in order to fully consider the legislation.</p>

3.5**[Wellbeing and Sustainability Consultation](#)**

The full responses and report of the collated responses for this consultation are not yet available online. We are also still to publish our response on the SCRA website.

SCRA's response said that we weren't sure if a statutory definition of 'wellbeing' or 'sustainable development' is required. We did agree with the common definition - "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" but felt this may require additional guidance or a framework so that it is relevant across all policy areas.

SCRA felt that legislation could help embed impact assessment approaches in relation to both wellbeing and sustainability and we felt that a more explicit reporting duty in relation to reporting in relation to the national Outcomes could sit with the Scottish Ministers.

Our answer to the question "Do you have any views on how we can better report the achievement of wellbeing objectives which supports clear accountability and scrutiny of public bodies in Scotland?" highlighted the Rogon Wellbeing tool, developed by SCRA's research team and the late Dr Paul Rogon.

We were unclear about the relevance of an Independent Commissioner for Future Generations and wondered whether an expert panel of children and young people might be better to hold adults to account.

3.6

[Consultation on permanency of certain criminal justice measures from Coronavirus Recovery & Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2022 and modernising criminal justice procedures through digital processes](#)

The responses and report in respect of this consultation are still to be published online, as is SCRA's response.

SCRA's response was clear that our work is governed by the Children's (Hearings) Scotland Act 2011 and not the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 and that we would not comment on areas of the consultation which had no obvious consequential effect for us. We had some general comment in the widest sense around the participation of people in proceedings by electronic means:

- The preference of children and families should be taken into account.
- The preference of any witnesses, particularly witnesses who have been harmed by the behaviour of a child, should be taken into account.
- The success or otherwise of specific measures in relation to vulnerable witnesses should be taken into account.
- There should be a focus on trauma informed court practice which seeks to proactively prevent re-traumatisation or further trauma as a result of necessary proceedings.

We provided a response around the proposal that digital evidence rather than an original item should be used in criminal cases; the criminal rules of evidence apply when SCRA are pursuing section 67 (2) (j) grounds for referral – that a child has committed an offence. We pointed out that the detailed rules of procedure in the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 do not apply to children's hearings court proceedings - therefore any amendments made to the 1995 Act will have no direct impact on the court proceedings we are involved in.

If any proposed amendments are intended to apply to children's hearing court proceedings then additional legislative or regulation change will be required.

SCRA also said that it is important to ensure that the modernisation in relation to digital productions envisaged, is also available in all children's hearings court proceedings. If further discussion is required to ensure that this is achieved without disproportionate regulation of those proceedings, then SCRA will be happy to be involved in those discussions.

We gave our views around the potential equalities and socio-economic impacts of the proposals by referring to our study of the [Digital Lives of Care Experienced Children](#), and by commenting on the different skill sets of prosecutors and those they prosecute. This is summarised in the SCRA report reference above through considering connection, skills and kit – all of which may be lacking for the children and families who are required to come to children's hearings. Ultimately for the proposals in this consultation to be viable there needs to be consistent technological infrastructure across the whole of Scotland. Without this there will be local and regional variation in service delivery.

3.7**Child Friendly Complaints Handling Consultation**

In February 2024 SCRA responded to the SPSO questionnaire on their new Child Friendly Complaints Principles.

- We thought the principle 'For everyone under 18' was very clear.
- We thought that 'Focused on children's best interest' was partly clear and could be improved by explaining how evidence in relation to a complaint would be gathered and then used in order to make a decision about it.
- We thought that 'Trusting & inclusive' was partly clear and could be made clearer if some questions were answered - Will the response from the complaint handler be directed to the child? Will it be copied to a child's parents or their representative? What might affect the ways in which a complaint is handled?
- We thought 'centred on children's voices' and 'Kind and supportive' were very clear.
- 'Confidential' was partly clear, as it wasn't clear whether a child should expect to have a complaint remain confidential or whether elements of their complaint will need to be shared. We felt this principle could be more explicit.
- 'Educational about rights' was also partly clear – we weren't sure whether it was about education or about information provision – we suggested the principle might be clearer if it was about providing the right information, to the right people, at the right time.

Overall the principles, when finalised, will be a welcome addition for public services and SCRA may want to review our own process and available materials when they are available.

3.8**[Learning Disability, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill Consultation](#)**

SCRA provided a full response to this consultation after an open call to staff, asking them to provide their views through a survey monkey questionnaire. This is an area of policy development that staff across SCRA are very interested in. The responses and report are not yet available online and SCRA's response has not yet been published.

SCRA staff agreed that the term people who are neurodivergent / neurodivergent people was the best definition to use. We asked whether legislation will apply to those who are undiagnosed or whose diagnosis is under review, and commented that there will be a high prevalence of co-existing conditions (some of which may be un-diagnosed). SCRA staff supported clear and effective governance and the idea that there should be both local and national accountability for relevant budget allocation, to meet assessed needs. This is a field of knowledge which is constantly developing – SCRA emphasised this and indicated that a specialist help service could provide the right supports but could also keep up with knowledge developments.

We agreed with the need for mandatory training – with the message 'ask those that know, not those who think they know' coming across clearly. It was felt that messages should be the same across the public sector and that training could follow a national model, like the NES Transforming Connections Trauma Training (for example). This would make it possible for joint training delivery – so that SCRA staff could train alongside those from mental health work, social care, Social work or policing. We asked that the often different experience of women and girls is captured in the training and that the validity of self-diagnosis or recognition has to be considered, including why this is important to those in the neurodivergent community.

SCRA staff agreed different communication formats and channels were important and that there can be financial implications for this. We asked for Government to consider whether materials in Braille, Scottish BSL and Easy Read formats could be made available free of charge across the public sector. We also asked whether development work in relation to investment in generative artificial intelligence technologies could be of use here.

Confidentiality and privacy issues were very important around data collection and reporting – and SCRA pointed out the difficulties in data accuracy for an organisation which receives data indirectly from others, rather than gathering the data directly.

We supported the proposals in relation to advocacy provisions. Advocacy is a crucial resource and should be introduced to people as early as possible. We were unclear about how patient passports or annual health checks would work but could see that an annual needs assessment could be of use. Work to destigmatise the language around mental health was positive but that further work in this specific area was required to ensure that change did not result in any erosion of current protections.

We were aware of the numbers of people in criminal justice systems with diagnosed / undiagnosed neurodivergence and felt that training in the criminal justice sector was required. For children in conflict with the law there is a strong evidence base on the links between speech, language and communication needs and some behaviours which can bring children and the law into conflict. Further understanding around this is required. It might also be important to consider how supports for adults can be built into systems – a support like the 'safeguarder' in children's hearings might be required for someone over 18 at court, for example.

Physical restraint should always be a final option and specific training for those who may be required to use it is essential. We had some concerns round the proposal in relation to transition to adulthood; with some questions about the lack of focus on the support provided to individual children across Scotland in a consistent way. We were not sure that the proposals will make such support any more likely to happen and we think that this is a concern. We did not agree wit a new commission or commissioner, as we felt established bodies with a remit for scrutiny could do this work if they were appropriately resourced and supported.

This was a long consultation document - but one which can hopefully result in some real improvements for neurodivergent people or those with a learning disability or autism. Such improvement is needed in order for their experience to become more similar to those who are neurotypical. The consultation recognises that the neurotypical world and approach has not always been helpful for people who are not neurotypical.

4	<p>Current partnership & collaborative work</p>
4.1	<p>ACR Data and Research Sub Group</p> <p>SCRA were asked to profile children referred on offence grounds over the past few years by whether the behaviour in the offence is likely to come within the test in s.39 of the Age of Criminal Responsibility Act that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • by behaving in a violent or dangerous way, the child has caused or risked causing serious physical harm to another person, or • by behaving in a sexually violent or sexually coercive way, the child has caused or risked causing harm (whether physical or not) to another person. <p>SCRA met with Police Scotland and Social Work Scotlans to seek their expertise and agree mappings for the data. Once the mapping was completed we extracted data from 1st January 2021 to 31st December 2023 and provided analysis for the sub group. This analysis has not been published.</p>
4.2	<p>Bairns' Hoose</p> <p>SCRA's Communications Team designed the website for Bairns' Hoose and we are involved at all levels of the discussions and developments.</p> <p>SCRA continue to be members of the national Bairns' Hoose Governance Group, and also chair a working group looking at whether children who cause harm may also have access to the Bairns' Hoose. SCRA are involved in the Pathfinder phase of the national development of a Bairns' Hoose blueprint for Scotland and to support staff in this work we have set up an internal Bairns' Hoose working group. The group will share information, learning and thinking as the pathfinder phase develops.</p> <p>On 14th May 2024 members of the group visited the first working Hoose in Scotland.</p>
4.3	<p>Child Trafficking Strategy Group</p> <p>SCRA are a member of this working group which has recently got a new Chair, chaired by the Scottish Government.</p>
4.4	<p>Children's Rights Framework and Training</p> <p>Jennifer Orren, Participation Officer and Melissa Hunt, Policy & Public Affairs Manager have been members of the professional panel for the ongoing project to develop a framework and training plan for public services in Scotland to uphold children's rights. The project has been a collaboration between the combined delivery team and the children & families and professional panels. Additional detailed information about the project can be found online The Project – UNCRC.</p> <p>The project work is being handed over to Scottish Government and is likely to be launched in the Summer of 2024. The framework and the training may be areas of work that SCRA will wish to adopt in full, or in part.</p>

4.5

Children’s Rights

SCRA’s Right Direction group has a new academic supporter – Professor Kay Tisdall at Edinburgh University, Chair of Childhood Policy, is willing to provide us with help when required. SCRA have developed a Theory of Change, building on our thinking around mainstreaming children’s rights.



SCRA Children’s Rights - Theory of Ch:

This Theory of Change will form the basis for our Rights outcomes in a new Rights, Inclusion and Corporate Parenting Strategy and will see us focus on developing our thinking and our work in line with the UNCRC.

Gill Short, Practice Manager, has project managed a project in relation to Article 12 of the UNCRC, which aims *“To identify by June 2024 options for development of practice in relation to children’s views when making decisions on referrals including through related court proceedings, for consideration by the Head of Practice and Policy, for the purpose of ensuring that reporter practice complies with ECHR article 12 in the most appropriate, consistent and proportionate way.”*

This project may result in developments to CSAS in relation to recording and in further training.

SCRA’s Practice Team have developed training in relation to the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2023 for all staff, which will be delivered before the Act becomes live on 16th July 2024.

4.6

Contextual Safeguarding Network

SCRA is a member of this network. This is co-chaired by Stuart Allardyce (Stop it Now) and Lorette Nicol (Social Work Scotland) and is a meeting of interested professionals from across Government, the statutory and third sector. The group keeps an eye on the pilot in North Lanarkshire but also considers how contextual safeguarding can be mainstreamed across more areas of child protection and safeguarding in Scotland. The Contextual Safeguarding Network is in talks with CPC Scotland to become a sub group of CPC Scotland, so more closely linked to the national thinking in relation to child protection.

SCRA continue to be involved in the North Lanarkshire pilot work.

Informative / awareness raising training is in development in SCRA. A current draft of this online package is included for information. You will need to ‘enable external content’ if you want to access the external resources we link to in the powerpoint.




Contextual%20Safegu arding%20%20-%20C

<p>4.7</p>	<p>Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)</p> <p>Alistair Hogg sits on the Family Group Decision Making Steering Group and the Key Leaders group.</p> <p>We are planning some further collaborative work with Children 1st around FGDM – and are considering how to build knowledge and confidence in the approach across the SCRA staff group.</p>
<p>4.8</p>	<p>Glasgow training for Social Workers</p> <p>A new learning opportunity has been developed for social workers that is being trialled in Glasgow. Taking place over half a day and facilitated by a senior practitioner and reporter from the locality alongside the CHIP L&D Lead the sessions provide an opportunity for social workers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connect with some of their local SCRA team members ▪ Consider the roles and responsibilities of practitioners in the hearings system ▪ Discover how Reporters make decisions- and the role that social workers play in supporting good decision-making ▪ Refresh their knowledge of legal duties and some key legislation around hearings
<p>4.9</p>	<p>Online Training – developed for North Lanarkshire</p> <p>The training package developed by SCRA and the CHIP Learning and Development Lead continues to be available online or as a face to face training package.</p> <p>Social workers Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership (chip-partnership.co.uk)</p>
<p>4.10</p>	<p>Police Scotland and COPFS</p> <p>SCRA has regular liaison with COPFS, and also has a bi-monthly tripartite meeting with COPFS and Police Scotland.</p>
<p>4.11</p>	<p>Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM)</p> <p>SCRA has been heavily involved in this work, and provides regular invaluable reports to the National Joint Investigative Interviewing Governance Group.</p> <p>This entry on the Social Work Scotland website gives a clear description of the work - https://socialworkscotland.org/projects/joint-investigative-interviews/.</p>

4.12	<p>Secure Care Group</p> <p>Chaired by the Scottish Government. SCRA attends this group and is involved in the working group in relation to siblings and secure care. SCRA are also involved in the Secure Care Practitioner Forum and the Secure Care Standards and Pathways Champions group.</p>
4.13	<p>Youth Justice Improvement Board</p> <p>SCRA are members of the YJIB, and have representatives on both of the sub groups of the YJIB.</p>
4.14	<p>Victims Task Force</p> <p>SCRA sits on the Victims Taskforce, and also the group set up to implement the recommendations from the Lady Dorrian review into the management of sexual offences.</p>

6	Research
6.1	<p>Main areas of influence:</p> <p>Staying Connected – care experienced children and young people with a sibling in prison, or secure accommodation research (January 2022 – December 2023) Staying Connected is a partnership research project funded by the Promise Partnership in conjunction with the third sector organisation, Families Outside. The final report for this project was published in December 2023.</p> <p>In-brief and child-friendly copies of the report were also published. A joint communication strategy for the research was developed by SCRA and Families Outside. This included the dissemination of key messages via social media, coverage of the research findings within the Herald newspaper and the delivery of an online launch event for policy makers and practitioners.</p> <p>The online launch event included short talks from young people who had experienced separation from siblings due to imprisonment, and will be followed up by an event at the Scottish Parliament in June 2024.</p>
6.2	<p>National Youth Justice Conference</p> <p>The SCRA Research Team facilitated a workshop on the inclusion of children’s voices in practice, policy and research at the National Youth Justice Conference in June 2023. The workshop was designed and delivered by young people from Our Hearings, Our Voice and Families Outside with support provided by the Research Team.</p> <p>The purpose of the presentation was to explore young people’s perceptions of participating in the Hearings System Redesign Project and the Staying Connected project. It was also used as an opportunity to identify how different organisations could work to ensure the meaningful inclusion of children’s voices in practice and policy decisions.</p>
6.3	<p>Social Work Scotland Conference</p> <p>The SCRA Research Team also facilitated two workshops on the inclusion of children’s voices in practice, policy and research at the Social Work Scotland Conference in October 2023. The workshops were designed and delivered by young people from Our Hearings, Our Voice and Families Outside with support provided by the Research Team. The purpose of these workshops was the same as the workshops above.</p>
6.4	<p>Virtual Hearings Research</p> <p>An article describing the delivery of Children’s Hearings during the Covid-19 pandemic was published in a special edition of Adoption and Fostering in November 2023. The article described the evolution of virtual Hearings over the course of the pandemic, the challenges to implementing the service and how these were overcome, and what impact the introduction of virtual Hearings had upon the rights of children and families.</p>

<p>6.5</p>	<p>Royal Geographic Society Annual Conference Findings on the impact that the development and delivery of virtual Hearings during the Covid-19 pandemic had on children’s participation in decisions about their own care and protection were presented at the Royal Geographic Society Annual Conference in August 2023.</p> <p>The presentation was delivered as part of a specially organised session focussed on young people’s experiences of how spaces, including digital spaces, were used during the pandemic. The presentation is entitled “Connected but disconnected: navigating the emotional geographies of virtual Children’s Hearings during the Covid-19 pandemic”.</p>
<p>6.6</p>	<p>European Society Association on Residential and Family Care Members of the research team participated in an organised symposium on the topic of ‘child- and young person-centred practice’ across the youth care and justice sectors at the EUSARF conference in September 2023.</p> <p>The symposium was a collaboration between researchers from SCRA, CELCIS and the University of Sussex. Findings from the Staying Connected Project and research on the experiences of 5-11 year olds in residential care were presented.</p>
<p>6.7</p>	<p>Membership of advisory groups Members of the research team sit on and regularly attend the following advisory groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Brothers and Sisters Community Practice, which is funded through The Promise Partnership ‘Brothers and Sisters’ funding stream. The group is run by STAR, Stand Up for Siblings, AFKAS and The Promise. - The Children’s Health in Care in Scotland study being run by the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow. This study uses linked NHS, CLAS data and pupil census information to explore health outcomes of care experienced children with those of non-care experienced children. - The Scottish Government’s Justice Analytical Services Cross Justice Working Group on Race Data and Evidence - The Scottish Government’s Age of Criminal Responsibility Data and Research Subgroup - The Scottish Government’s AI task force
<p>6.8</p>	<p>External collaborations The Research Team regularly attend the AFKAS research forum meetings on behalf of SCRA to hear about research and practice initiatives being undertaken in relation to adoption, fostering and kinship care.</p> <p>SCRA have set up a working group with statisticians based within CELCIS, Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research (SCADR) and the Scottish Government’s Education and Justice team to explore the feasibility of linking data held by SCRA with other administrative datasets.</p>

7	Additional Work
7.1	<p>Scoping of External Training Delivery</p> <p>This scoping work was done in 2019. Post pandemic this scoping needs to be done again.</p>  <p>External Training Provision - PIN Discu</p>
7.2	<p>Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP)</p> <p>The large CHIP group started meetings again in 2021. Focus has been on recovery from the pandemic, the potential increase in the age of referral, Better Hearings, OHOV and the Promise. The CHIP has determined that the Tuesday Children’s Hearings COVID Recovery Group will become an Improvement Delivery Group. A working group focussed on Language in the Hearings System has also been convened and will progress multi agency work on language.</p>
7.3	<p>Children’s Hearing – Training for schools / information for staff and pupils</p> <p>SCRA continues to work on a Primary School Resource, based around a series of short stories.</p> <p>This work will take some time – but it is exciting that one of the short stories is being animated by BBC Bitesize as part of their suite of materials on UNCRC. SCRA will be able to link to this resource once it is available.</p>
7.4	<p>Advocacy for Children’s Hearings</p> <p>Locality Reporter Managers continue to engage with local advocacy service providers and positive partnership discussions are happening across the country. SCRA also attend the national providers network and the expert advisory group.</p>
7.5	<p>Transforming Connections</p> <p>SCRA have a group of internal trainers ready to deliver the NES National Trauma Training Programme at Skilled level across all SCRA staff. We are working alongside NES trainers to do this and to ensure the delivery is relevant for SCRA and the work that we do.</p>
8	Horizon Scanning
8.1	<p>Other legislative Reform</p> <p>Consultations in respect of a variety of areas are likely to be published in the Summer, following the UK General Election on 4th July. We are expecting consultations on the Children’s Hearings System (the Promise); transitions to adulthood, the definition of care experience and the future of foster care.</p>

<p>8.2</p>	<p><u>Consumer Scotland</u></p> <p>Consumer Scotland is the recently established statutory and independent body for consumers in Scotland. The Consumer Duty came into force in April 2024 – but there is a 12 month grace period before it comes into force. Draft guidance is currently available and a consultation will close on 16th June. SCRA is a listed Public Authority in respect of the Consumer Scotland Act and will need to report under the Duty.</p>
<p>8.3</p>	<p><u>Independent Care Review – The Promise</u></p> <p>Keeping the Promise has become a significant piece of standalone work within SCRA. It will therefore no longer be covered in this report. Board members have been receiving regular separate updates. However, it is worth stating that this policy and influencing work has been intensive and has involved a significant number of SCRA staff. This work has consumed huge amounts of time and effort. Although it has been extremely challenging, SCRA has been able to maintain all our other essential partnership work.</p>
<p>8.4</p>	<p><u>Improving the Management of Sexual Offences Cases</u></p> <p>SCRA's Practice Team have, in consultation with the Practice Network of Senior Practitioners, developed mandatory training for Reporters on Harmful Sexual Behaviour. This training is currently being delivered across the Reporter workforce.</p>

9	Other Influencing Work & Training
9.1	<p>SCRA has continued to be involved in the Implementation Group for the National Child Protection Guidance (which has now ended) , the Police Scotland Child Protection group and the National Stop and Search Steering Group.</p> <p>We were also involved in the Monitoring and Evaluating Rights, Respect and Recovery for health and social harms advisory groups – and a baseline report has been published – which is available online here - Monitoring and Evaluating Rights, Respect and Recovery (MERRR) - Substance use - Our areas of work - Public Health Scotland..</p>
9.2	<p>Health Visitor and School Nurse Training Event</p> <p>In Autumn 2023 SCRA staff were involved in presenting to online meetings of Health Visitor and School Nurse Staff across different geographical areas of the country. Slides were developed centrally for the presentations but local staff were involved in delivering the presentations and building links with local partners across health services. The presentations were delivered to four areas (East, Islands, North, West) and were planned for 100 participants at each event. Feedback from the events was positive and we will look to do some additional training for Health Visitors and School Nurses in 2024 / 2025.</p> <p>CHS colleagues were also involved in the development of the presentation and in some of the events.</p>
9.3	<p>Scottish Government – Child Protection Team Training</p> <p>SCRA and the CHIP L&D Lead are currently developing a training input at the request of colleagues from the Government Child Protection Team. This input is being tailored to the needs of the team and is likely to cover the move into statutory child protection systems and what a children’s hearing is like, what a children’s hearing can do.</p>

10	Recommendation
a)	The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION

Strategic and Operational Risk Registers

Accountable Director: Principal Reporter/Chief Executive **Date:** 19 June 2024

Report Authors: Acting Head of Finance & Resources; Governance Officer

Recommendation:

1. To review the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.

Reason for Report: For monitoring

Resource Implications: Not applicable

Strategy: Not applicable

Consultation: Executive Management Team, Locality Management Teams

Equalities Duties: Equalities impact assessment not required

Document Classification: Not protectively marked

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an update to the Board on the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.
- 1.2 The Risk Registers were last reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its May 2024 meeting and the Board at its December 2023 meeting.

2. Risk Management in SCRA

- 2.1 Following a light touch review, SCRA's revised Risk Management Policy was approved by the Board at its meeting in December 2023. The Board has responsibility for the system of internal control and risk management within SCRA. The Board charges the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) with overseeing the operation of the system of internal control and with ensuring robust risk management arrangements within SCRA, including reviewing the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers six- monthly.
- 2.2 The Strategic and Operational Risk Registers are kept under review by the Executive Management Team (EMT) and the Locality Risk Registers are kept under review by Locality Management Teams (LMTs) and the Planning and Performance Network (PPN).
- 2.3 Each locality risk register was considered as part of the recent round of Locality Performance Reviews.
- 2.4 The risk register format includes an assessment of inherent, residual and target risk in order to demonstrate the impact of existing control mechanisms and to link the agreed risk appetite.
- 2.5 Risk leads are now familiar with the risk management tool, Decision Time, rolled out in summer 2022. Whilst there is more functionality that can be accessed, the tool is proving effective and the Head of Finance and Resources has been exploring the best way of reporting on risks to EMT, LMT's, the ARC and the Board.
- 2.6 Summary risk reports for Strategic and Operational Risks are at the end of this paper along with an Assurance report for Strategic risks.

3. Strategic Risk Register

- 3.1 Changes to the register are as follows:

Risk 1 - 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. No changes to the risk scores in latest review. The following actions are outstanding, but are in hand with the appointment of our new Data Security Manager:

- EMT 'exercise in a box';
- Annual review of Cyber Security Policy
- Reporting on security related performance measures.
- Annual refresher training
- Align Cyber Security Strategy with Digital Strategy 2024-28; and
- Engage third party to conduct hardening review and follow-up mitigation actions of CSAS

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. Residual risk score reduced from 9 to 6 (likelihood reduced from 3 to 2), close to target risk score of 4. In the latest review four new actions were added:

- Create separate SCRA Digital Board
- Consideration of Software Asset Management (SAM) Database.
- Develop shared investment profile between CHS and SCRA to financial year end 23/24 in first instance.
- SCRA/CHS Digital Services management working with consultant towards closer alignment and collaboration.

Assuming completion of these actions shortly (with investment profile for 2024/25) it may be possible to close this risk at the next six-monthly review point.

Risk 3, SCRA do not maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce which can meet current demands and future needs. Inherent risk score reduced from 20 to 12 and residual risk score reduced from 12 to 9 (impact reduced from 4 to 3), still some way from target risk score of 4. Controls have been substantially updated with all now assessed as operating effectively. One action closed “develop a transition plan from pandemic to endemic” and only one action remains open “review roles and responsibilities aligned to the Standard Operating Model” which will be a major focus for 2024-25, commencing with the Role of the Childrens Reporter.

Risk 4, Significant policy, legislative and reform/transformation change agenda impacts on SCRA’s ability to deliver core services or necessary change programmes. Residual risk score reduced from 12 to 6 (impact reduced from 4 to 3; likelihood reduced from 3 to 2), close to target risk score of 4. Controls and assurance sources have been updated, and two new controls added “Membership of Hearings for Children Implementation Board” and “SCRA Programme Board”. One new action “Ensure budget plan and business plan for 24/25 capture necessary objectives and required funding to successfully implement policy, legislative and reform changes” has been completed.

Risk 5, Failure to progress Board approved Environmental plan (e.g. reduce GHG emissions by 10%-20% by March 2024) and inability to accelerate plans to meet new targets. No changes to scores in latest review. One new action added, “sustainability actions to be included in all 2024/25 Locality Plans and 2024/25 Business Plan”.

SCRA missed its initial 3 year emissions reduction target and the Board approved a new 3 year target in March 2024 (as a result mainly of new rules in relation to scope 3 emissions). Given this risk effectively crystallised, this risk could be closed and a superseding environmental risk opened, capturing the challenge of measuring scope 3 emissions and the challenge of decarbonising the estate.

Risk 6, Inability to engage with digital inhibits realisation of full potential of new technologies resulting in significant operational disruption. Inherent risk score reduced from 16 to 9 (both likelihood and impact reduced from 4 to 3); residual risk score reduced from 12 to 4 (impact reduced from 4 to 2, likelihood reduced from 4 to 2), meeting target risk score of 4. Controls have been reviewed and all assessed as operating effectively. Three actions are ongoing/outstanding:

- Ongoing development of CSAS.

- Implementation of Digital Training Strategy.
- Review roles and responsibilities.

Risk 7, Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change. Inherent risk score reduced from 20 to 16 (impact reduced from 5 to 4).

Risk 153, Inability to spend 2023/24 CCJB 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 less optimal solutions reduce the efficiency of staff and the quality of service when the legislation is implemented in 2024/25. This risk has now been fully developed and revenue allocations covered as well as capital. In the latest review a number of controls moved from Amber to Green however there are nine actions outstanding five of which are rated Amber:

- Develop proposal for Glenrothes property and make case for use of CCJB capital funding for expanded scope – this is underway but not yet complete
- EMT approval for inclusion of CCJB projects in 2023/24 Digital Plan. This principally applies to Digital Evidence Sharing Capability which is currently being scoped with Justice colleagues.
- Increase capacity within Digital Team and G-Cloud procurement exercise to secure resources from external providers.
- Digital Planning & Engagement and Internal Design Teams to assess, size and prioritise digital requirements coming from SCRA programme activity. Recruitment to the vacant Digital Planning and Engagement Manager is being scoped.
- EMT agree re-allocation of CCJB revenue underspends due to delay in practice development and training.

New risk 188, 2024/25 Scottish Government budget does not deliver required level of revenue funding with impact on ability to deliver a quality service and respond effectively to new legislative and policy pressures. This risk is new however it is similar to the 2023/24 Budget risk which was closed at the last review as it had crystalized.

New risk 191, Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change. This risk is new however it is similar to the 2022/23 pay risk which was closed at the last review as a settlement on pay was reached in March 2023.

EMT are considering whether new risks relating to the progress of Hearings for Children's recommendations and SCRA's programme/reform work should be identified and assessed.

4. Operational Risk Register

4.1 Changes to the register are as follows:

Risk 8, “During the early implementation of CSAS there is a heightened risk of Non-Disclosure breaches”. Residual risk has dropped from 9 to 4 (both impact and likelihood dropping from 3 to 2). With a pilot beginning on a potential new approach to redaction and residual risk score matching the target, this risk may be closed.

Risk 133, “Reduced system capacity, particularly in key partners, impacts on SCRA’s efficiency in terms of progressing hearings and making decisions resulting in delayed outcomes for children and young people”. No changes to scores in latest review. Controls substantially updated and three out of seven controls assessed as effective. “Streamlining of information for reporters and hearings” and “Protect Programme – reports project” are amber/red with a dependency on the SG’s response to Hearings for Children report and recommendations. Four actions are outstanding with the three out of four actions moving from amber (delays possible) to green (on track):

- Create Operational Delivery Group (formerly Hearings Management Group)
- Implement national minimum dataset.
- Re-introduce Locality and national KPIs for management of delay.
- Development of EMT dashboard.

Risk 134, Inefficient case processing and budget restrictions (temporary staffing) leads to delay in establishing the optimum workforce profile resulting in ineffective use of resources and reduced quality of service”. Residual risk score reduced from 12 to 6 in latest review (likelihood from 3 to 2 and impact from 4 to 3), close to target risk score of 4. All controls now assessed as operating effectively. It is noted that the risk to staffing caused by vacancy management has now passed. Three actions are outstanding, all assessed as on track:

- Develop target operating model for case processing.
- Within Project Protect ensure alignment of workforce profile with the developing operational model.
- HR, Finance and SOMs to ensure all available reporter budget applied to meet 2023/24 operational targets (e.g. reducing delay).

We intend to review this in the net quarter with a view to closure.

Risk 152, “Wider system and partner changes have potential to destabilise operations and divert resources from service delivery and improvement work”. Target risk score reduced from 6 to 4 in latest review (likelihood from 3 to 2). Two controls relating to Communications, Locality and Business Plans moved from amber to green. Two actions “engagement with LRM network” and “staff event” marked complete. Outstanding action relates to delivery of the management development programme.

4.2 A new risk relating to failure to achieve the Target Operating Model is under consideration by the SOMs.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The risks across both registers focus on the ongoing challenges in the delivery of a safe and effective service with the focus on capacity, resources and information governance. In this context it is important the Audit & Risk Committee and the Board keep risk appetite under review.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 To review the Risk Management Policy and the Strategic and Operational Risk Registers.

Previous Papers:

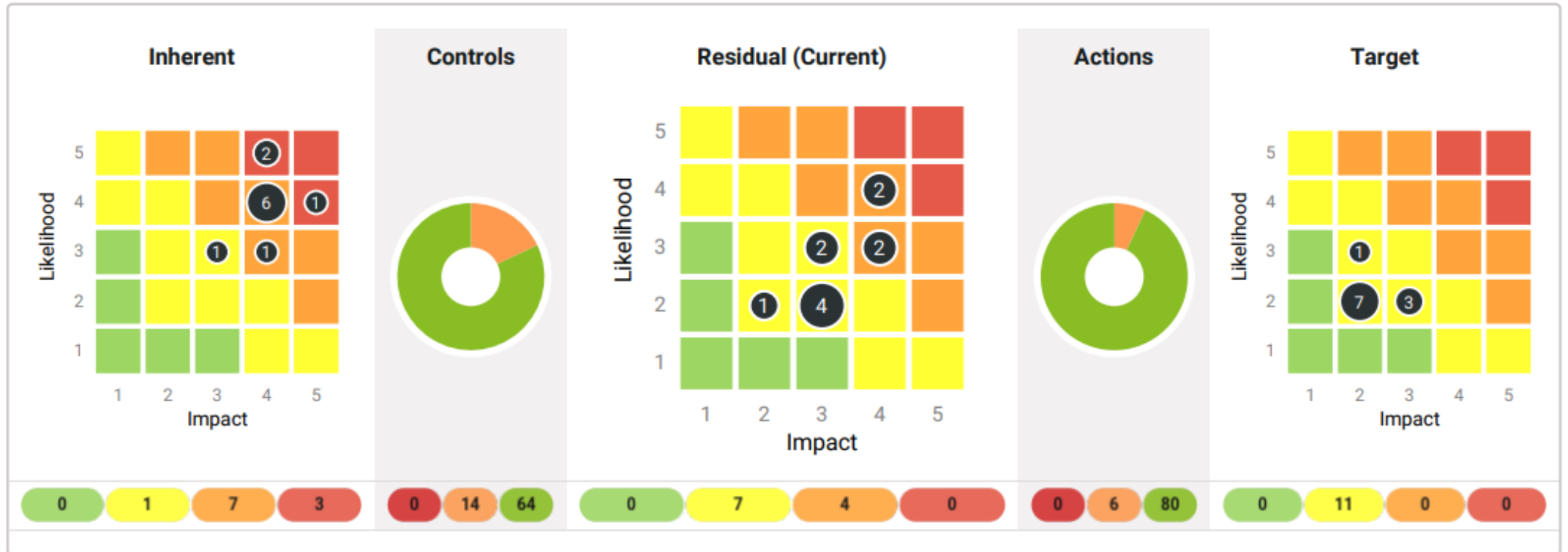
Risk Register Report to Audit & Risk Committee May 2024

Risk Register Report to Board – December 2023

Risk Summary Report

Risk Register: Strategic Risk Register

Risk Status: New/Emerging, Open, Closed









Ref	Title	Risk Category	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	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	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	4 x 4 16	7 Green	3 x 3 9	↔	10 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
2	The optimum model for CSAS ownership and accountability and a joint future partnership between SCRA and CHS is not adequately defined and agreed.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	4 x 4 16	1 Amber 8 Green	2 x 3 6	↓ 3 x 3 = 9 19th Oct 2023	1 Amber 13 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
3	SCRA do not maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce which can meet current demands and future needs.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	3 x 4 12	9 Green	2 x 3 6	↓ 3 x 3 = 9 4th Apr 2024	7 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
4	Significant policy, legislative and reform/transformation change agenda impacts on SCRA's ability to deliver core services or necessary change programmes.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 4 16	7 Green	2 x 3 6	↓ 3 x 3 = 9 2nd Apr 2024	4 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
5	Failure to progress Board approved Environmental plan (e.g. reduce GHG emissions by 10%-20% by March 2024) and inability to accelerate plans to meet new targets.	Reputation	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 4 16	1 Amber 4 Green	3 x 4 12	↔	1 Amber 6 Green	2 x 3 6
Review Note: Risk has crystallized in sense of failure to meet initial emissions reduction target and need for Board to agree a new target in March 2024. Date: 27th Mar 2024										

Ref	Title	Risk Category	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
6	Inability to engage with digital inhibits realisation of full potential of new technologies resulting in significant operational disruption.	Operational	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	3 x 3 9	8 Green	2 x 2 4	3 x 3 = 9 4th Apr 2024	5 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
7	Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change.	People	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 4 16	1 Amber 5 Green	3 x 4 12	↔	5 Green	2 x 3 6
Review Note: -- Date: --										
108	2023/24 Scottish Government budget does not deliver required level of revenue funding with impact on ability to deliver a quality service and respond effectively to new legislative and policy pressures.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Cautious	5 x 4 20	6 Amber	4 x 4 16	21st Sep 2022	10 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: Agreement to close from ARC and Board as risk crystalized. Date: 3rd Jul 2023										
153	Inability to spend 2023/24 CCJB 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 less optimal solutions reduce the efficiency of staff and the quality of service when the legislation is implemented in 2024/25.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Open	5 x 4 20	5 Amber 4 Green	3 x 3 9	4 x 3 = 12 18th Oct 2023	4 Amber 7 Green	3 x 2 6
Review Note: -- Date: --										
188	The 2024/25 Scottish Government budget settlement does not deliver the required level of revenue funding with an impact on ability to deliver a quality service to children and families and at the same time respond effectively to new legislative/policy pressures and drive the transformation and reform agenda.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 5 20	6 Green	4 x 4 16	18th Oct 2023	8 Green	2 x 2 4

Ref	Title	Risk Category	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
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Review Note: --

Date: --

191	Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change.	Strategic	Strategic Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 4 	 6 Green	2 x 3 	 3 x 4 = 12 4th Apr 2024	 5 Green	2 x 3 
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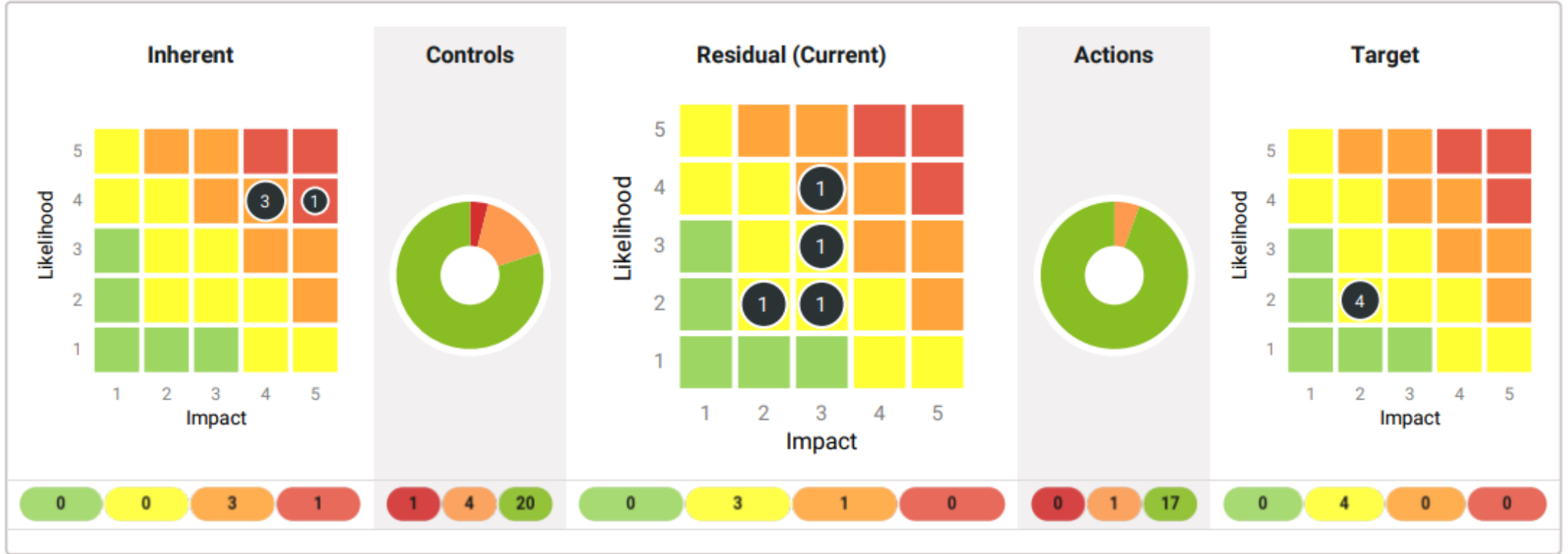
Review Note: --

Date: --

Risk Summary Report

Risk Register: Operational Risk Register

Risk Status: New/Emerging, Open



Ref	Title	Risk Category	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
8	During the early implementation of CSAS there is a heightened risk of Non-Disclosure breaches. The components of the heightened risk are: 1. Staff pressures 2. Capacity for double-checks 3. CSAS functionality changes 4. CSAS migration	Reputation	Operational Risk Register	Minimalist	4 x 5 20	10 Green	2 x 2 4	3 x 3 = 9 2nd Apr 2024	4 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
133	Reduced system capacity, particularly in key partners, impacts on SCRA efficiency in terms of progressing hearings and making decisions resulting in delayed outcomes for children and young people.	Operational	Operational Risk Register	Cautious	4 x 4 16	1 Red 2 Amber 4 Green	3 x 3 9	27th Oct 2022	4 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										
134	Inefficient case processing and budget restrictions (temporary staffing) leads to delay in establishing the optimum workforce profile resulting in ineffective use of resources and reduced quality of service.	Operational	Operational Risk Register	Cautious	4 x 4 16	4 Green	2 x 3 6	3 x 3 = 9 19th Oct 2023	7 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: Risk to staffing caused by vacancy management has now passed. SOM/CSAS now embedded with a well managed process for improvement/iteration. Further development of Target Operational Model picked up in programme workstreams. Suggest this risk be closed off now. Date: 17th Oct 2023										
152	Wider system and partner changes have potential to destabilise operations and divert resources from service delivery and improvement work.	Operational	Operational Risk Register	Open	4 x 4 16	2 Amber 2 Green	4 x 3 12	13th Apr 2023	1 Amber 2 Green	2 x 2 4
Review Note: -- Date: --										

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 1]</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Douglas Cameron</p> <p>Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Gaps in CSAS security arrangements.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Significant data loss.</p>	<p>Operational Control</p> <p>Any case information stored within the SCOTS environment is protected by ITECS. Case data is also stored in the Microsoft cloud, this data is protected via the CSAS support and maintenance contract which includes a level of service for cyber security, Microsoft built service cyber security as well as the CSAS platform being accredited by an established provider for cyber security adding additional independent assurance for the security of the CSAS platform.</p> <p>By having CSAS disaster recovery procedures in place and reviewing and reviewing SCRA business continuity plans annually gives assurance that SCRA is capable of recovering from a cyber-security attack.</p> <p>Kept up-to date with new threats by attending cyber security events and professional membership – SCRA’s Digital Security & Governance Manager is a member of the Cyber-security Information Sharing Partnership (CiSP)</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>ITECS have achieved their Cyber Essentials Plus certification for the SCOTS network.</p> <p>Annual Penetration testing of CSAS ensures that CSAS’s vulnerability to common cyber threats is fully understood.</p> <p>Internal Audit</p> <p>Cyber review against Scottish Public Sector Cyber Resilience Framework V1.2</p> <p>Data Protection review.</p>		<p>EMT ‘exercise in a box’.</p> <p>Attend seminars/events to learn from other public bodies experiences. (Ongoing)</p> <p>Annual review of Cyber Security Policy.</p> <p>Regular tracking of Top Five cyber security risks. (Ongoing)</p> <p>Annual refresher training.</p> <p>Security related performance measures. Ongoing 6 month cycle (next due Jul 24)</p> <p>Align Cyber Security Strategy with Digital Strategy 2024-28</p> <p>Engage third-party to conduct hardening review and follow-up mitigation actions of CSAS</p>	<p>31st Mar 2024</p> <p>31st Mar 2024</p> <p>1st May 2024</p> <p>30th Jun 2024</p> <p>31st Mar 2024</p> <p>31st Jul 2024</p> <p>30th Jun 2024</p> <p>31st May 2024</p>	<p>Inherent 16</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 4 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Residual 9</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 3 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p> <hr/> <p>Target 4</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 2 x 2</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG	
[Ref: 2] The optimum model for CSAS ownership and accountability and a joint future partnership between SCRA and CHS is not adequately defined and agreed. Risk Owner: Douglas Cameron Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022 Reviewed: 19th Oct 2023 ()	Cause 1. Lack of clarity and purpose in pursuing a partnership approach.	Corporate Oversight Digital Change Advisory Board Development of CHS and SCRA Digital Boards with clear links to the CHS/SCRA Authorisation Board - *consider for revision/deletion in favour of other effective controls* Legal ownership agreed.	External Assurance External audit testing of key systems and recommendations. Internal Audit Digital Delivery Plan.		Create separate SCRA Digital Board.	29th Dec 2023	Inherent 16 Likelihood Impact 4 x 4 Amber	
	Consequence 1. Senior teams do not commit to development of a partnership model.					Consideration of Software Asset Management (SAM) Database	31st Jan 2024	Residual 6 Likelihood Impact 4 x 4 Amber
			Operational Control Licencing and software agreements. Joint Agreement/Investment Portfolio of the CSAS Change Management Strategy Change Configuration Board. Re-introduce Internal Design Team arrangements			Develop shared investment profile between CHS and SCRA to financial year end 23/24 in first instance	31st Dec 2023	Residual 6 Likelihood Impact 2 x 3 Yellow
						SCRA/CHS Digital Services management working with consultant towards closer alignment and collaboration	30th Nov 2023	Target 4 Likelihood Impact 2 x 2 Yellow

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
[Ref: 3] SCRA do not maintain a skilled, motivated and flexible workforce which can meet current demands and future needs. Risk Owner: Susan Deery Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022 Reviewed:	Cause 1. Insufficient focus on staff development and wellbeing. Consequence 1. Services are not responsive, objectives are not completed.	Operational Control L&D Strategy. Agile working policy. Agreed roles and responsibilities. Maintain focus on staff wellbeing in all plans. People Plan 22/23. Alignment to SG Fair work policy. Digital Skills Survey and post action plan.	Internal Audit Workforce Planning & Resource Management Review Learning & Development Review.		Review roles and responsibilities aligned to the SOM.	31st Mar 2025	<div style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> Inherent 12 <small>Likelihood Impact</small> 3 x 4 Amber </div> <div style="background-color: #ffff00; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;"> Residual 6 <small>Likelihood Impact</small> 2 x 3 Yellow </div> <div style="background-color: #ffff00; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;"> Target 4 <small>Likelihood Impact</small> 2 x 2 Yellow </div>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 4]</p> <p>Significant policy, legislative and reform/transformation change agenda impacts on SCRA's ability to deliver core services or necessary change programmes.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Alistair Hogg</p> <p>Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Unrealistic timescales for significant change events.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Delays in service delivery/improvement projects and ineffective use of resources.</p>	<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>Unison Partnership Framework.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>Influencing Strategy.</p> <p>Corporate/Business Plan priorities, and budget</p> <p>Staff engagement.</p> <p>Programme Board</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>SG dialogue, secondments to legislative programmes.</p> <p>Membership of Hearings for Children Implementation Board</p>				<p>Inherent</p> <p>16</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>4 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Residual</p> <p>6</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p> <hr/> <p>Target</p> <p>4</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 2</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 5]</p> <p>Failure to progress Board approved Environmental plan (e.g. reduce GHG emissions by 10%-20% by March 2024) and inability to accelerate plans to meet new targets.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Ross Mackenzie</p> <p>Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022</p> <p>Reviewed: 27th Mar 2024 (Risk Reviewed)</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Other business objectives take priority.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Emissions do not reduce or start to increase.</p>	<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>Annual Environment report to Board.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>Environmental strategy group.</p> <p>Environmental ambassadors group.</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>Annual Environmental performance report to Scottish Government.</p> <p>Internal Audit</p> <p>Sustainability review.</p>		<p>Sustainability actions to be included in all 2024/25 Locality Plans and 2024/25 Business Plan.</p>	30th Jun 2024	<p>Inherent</p> <p>16</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>4 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Residual</p> <p>12</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>3 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Target</p> <p>6</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 6]</p> <p>Inability to engage with digital inhibits realisation of full potential of new technologies resulting in significant operational disruption.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Susan Deery</p> <p>Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. No training and support offering is made to staff or lack of time/fear of technology inhibits take up of training offered.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Request for additional staffing capacity to stay on top of workload.</p>	<p>Operational Control</p> <p>People and Operational Plans.</p> <p>CAB and ongoing CSAS Development.</p> <p>Standard Operating Model.</p> <p>Digital Upskilling/ Confidence.</p> <p>Operational Development Team.</p> <p>Technology that is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Digital Skills Research formulating a digital skills strategy.</p>	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>Virtual Hearings review.</p>		<p>Ongoing Development of CSAS.</p> <p>Implementation of Digital Training Strategy.</p> <p>Review of Roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>31st Mar 2024</p> <p>31st Mar 2025</p> <p>31st Mar 2025</p>	<p>Inherent</p> <p>9</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>3 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p> <hr/> <p>Residual</p> <p>4</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 2</p> <p>Yellow</p> <hr/> <p>Target</p> <p>4</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 2</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 7]</p> <p>Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Susan Deery</p> <p>Risk Opened: 21st Jun 2022</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Insufficient funding available or SG do not approve pay proposals.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Work to rule and/or non-engagement in new work.</p>	<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>SCRA Budget.</p> <p>Partnership with UNISON.</p> <p>Sponsor Team support.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>L & D Plan/Wellbeing Strategy.</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>SG Pay Policy Guidance.</p>				<p>Inherent</p> <p>16</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>4 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Residual</p> <p>12</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>3 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Target</p> <p>6</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG																														
<p>[Ref: 108]</p> <p>2023/24 Scottish Government budget does not deliver required level of revenue funding with impact on ability to deliver a quality service and respond effectively to new legislative and policy pressures.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Neil Hunter</p> <p>Risk Opened: 21st Sep 2022</p> <p>Reviewed: 3rd Jul 2023 (Risk Reviewed)</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Inability to influence SG budget decisions.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Scale back ambition and objectives in Business Plan.</p>	<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>Five year Financial Plan.</p> <p>Regular reports to the Board (December 22, January 23, February 23, March 23) on development of Budget 23/24.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>Regular officer and Board dialogue with Ministers and SG (DCAF, Sponsor Team, Finance Business Partner).</p> <p>Continue to demonstrate and evidence SCRA's relevance to ministerial policy outcome ambitions and core statutory duties.</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>External audit review of financial sustainability arrangements.</p> <p>Internal Audit</p> <p>Annual Core Financials review.</p>				<table border="1"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Inherent</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Likelihood</td> <td>Impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>x 4</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Red</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Residual</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Likelihood</td> <td>Impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>x 4</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Amber</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Target</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Likelihood</td> <td>Impact</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>x 2</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Yellow</td> </tr> </table>	Inherent		20		Likelihood	Impact	5	x 4	Red		Residual		16		Likelihood	Impact	4	x 4	Amber		Target		4		Likelihood	Impact	2	x 2	Yellow	
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<p>[Ref: 153]</p> <p>Inability to spend 2023/24 CCJB 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 less optimal solutions reduce the efficiency of staff and the quality of service when the legislation is implemented in 2024/25.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Neil Hunter</p> <p>Risk Opened: 24th Apr 2023</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>		<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>Board approved 2023/24 Property Programme.</p> <p>Regular reporting to EMT and the Board on 2023/24 capital projects.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>Agreed criteria for CCJB capital spend.</p> <p>Regular dialogue with PR/CE, SOM's and Head of Practice & Policy on the impacts of CCJB implementation of CCJB on the estate and IT systems.</p> <p>Clear timetable for CCJB implementation.</p> <p>Digital CAB and CCB oversight of digital plan delivery.</p> <p>Digital Team engagement in Programme activity.</p> <p>Initial assessment of CCJB digital spend need by Digital Planning and Engagement Team.</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>Regular dialogue with Sponsor Team and SG Finance on use of 2023/24 CCJB capital funding.</p>		<p>Develop proposal for 2024/25 Glasgow hearing suite project.</p> <p>Assess requirements for CCJB property adaptations in major urban centres (Dundee, Inverness, Aberdeen).</p> <p>Make the case to Sponsor Team and SG Finance for capital carry forward or re-allocation of CCJB funding to 2024/25 as required.</p> <p>EMT approval for inclusion of CCJB projects in 2023/24 Digital Plan.</p> <p>Increase capacity within Digital Team and G-Cloud procurement exercise to secure resources from external providers.</p> <p>Digital Planning & Engagement and Internal Design Teams to assess, size and prioritise digital requirements coming from SCRA programme activity.</p>	<p>30th Jun 2024</p> <p>31st Mar 2024</p> <p>30th Apr 2024</p> <p>5th Sep 2023</p> <p>29th Sep 2023</p> <p>29th Sep 2023</p>	<p>Inherent 20</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 5 x 4</p> <p>Red</p> <p>Residual 9</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 3 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p> <p>Target 6</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 3 x 2</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 188]</p> <p>The 2024/25 Scottish Government budget settlement does not deliver the required level of revenue funding with an impact on ability to deliver a quality service to children and families and at the same time respond effectively to new legislative/policy pressures and drive the transformation and reform agenda.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Neil Hunter</p> <p>Risk Opened: 18th Oct 2023</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Inability to influence SG budget decisions.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Scale back ambitions and objectives in Business Plan.</p>	<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>5 year Financial Plan.</p> <p>Regular reports to the Board on development of the 2024/25 Budget.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>Regular officer and Board dialogue with Ministers and SG (DCAF, Sponsor Team, Finance Business Partner).</p> <p>Continue to influence by demonstrating and evidencing SCRA's relevance to Ministerial policy outcome ambitions and core statutory duties.</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>External Audit review of financial sustainability arrangements.</p> <p>Internal Audit</p> <p>Annual Core Financials review.</p>				<p>Inherent 20</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 4 x 5</p> <p>Red</p> <hr/> <p>Residual 16</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 4 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Target 4</p> <p>Likelihood Impact 2 x 2</p> <p>Yellow</p>

Risk	Risk Impact	Risk Controls	Assurance Sources	Gaps in Assurance	Improvement Actions	Due Date	Assurance Control RAG
<p>[Ref: 191]</p> <p>Inability to meet staff expectations on pay/reward resulting in operational disruption/staff engagement in change.</p> <p>Risk Owner: Susan Deery</p> <p>Risk Opened: 24th Oct 2023</p> <p>Reviewed:</p>	<p>Cause</p> <p>1. Insufficient funding available or SG do not approve pay proposals.</p> <p>Consequence</p> <p>1. Work to rule and/or non-engagement in new work.</p>	<p>Corporate Oversight</p> <p>SCRA approved 2023/24 Budget.</p> <p>Partnership with Unison.</p> <p>Sponsor Team liaison and support.</p> <p>Remuneration Committee.</p> <p>Operational Control</p> <p>L&D Plan/Wellbeing Strategy.</p>	<p>External Assurance</p> <p>SG Pay Policy Guidance.</p>				<p>Inherent</p> <p>16</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>4 x 4</p> <p>Amber</p> <hr/> <p>Residual</p> <p>6</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p> <hr/> <p>Target</p> <p>6</p> <p>Likelihood Impact</p> <p>2 x 3</p> <p>Yellow</p>