

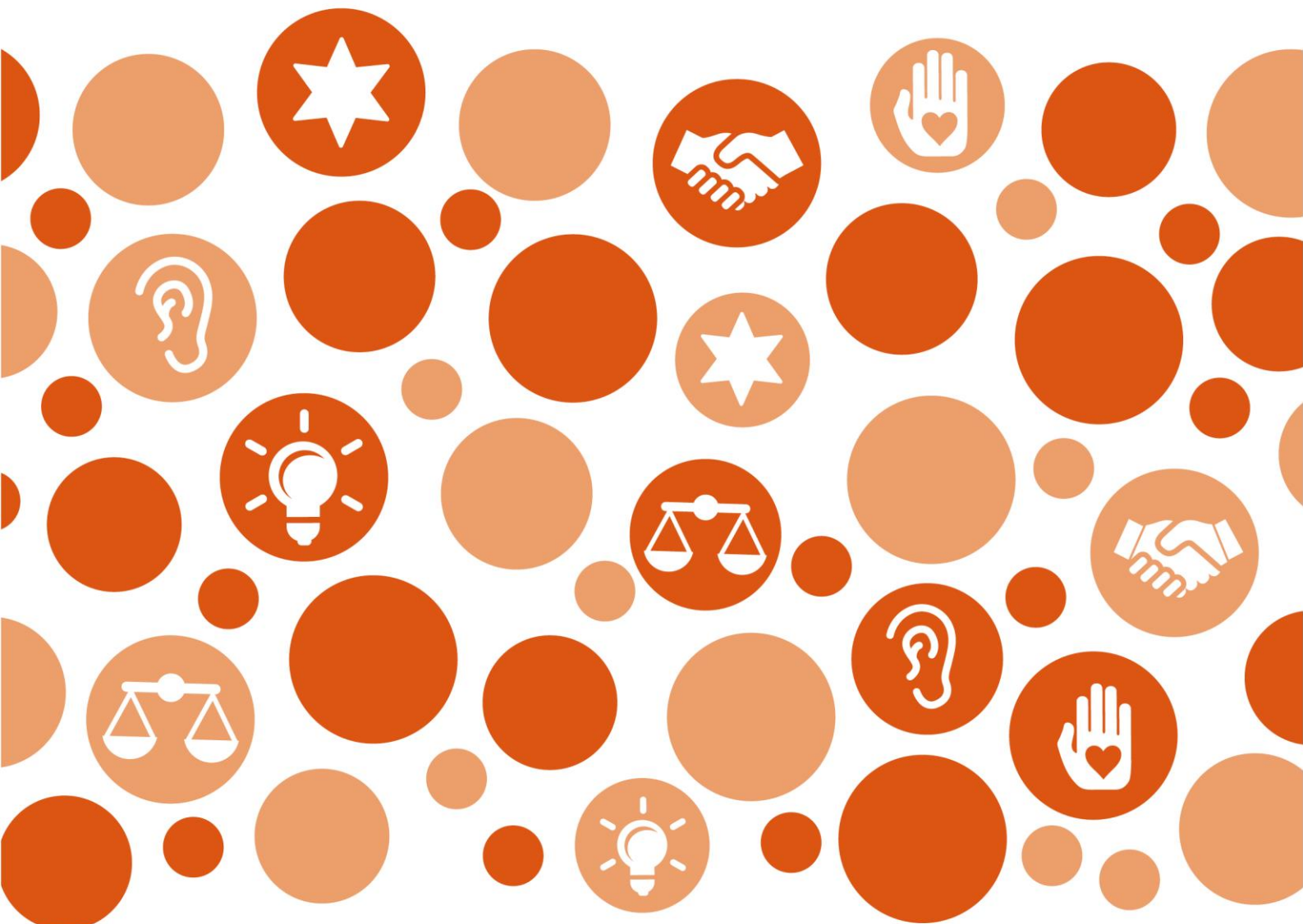


*The Children's Panel — life changing.*

# Panel Member Profiles

August 2019

Version 2.0





# Contents

**Section 1: Background and Pilots.....3**

Why did we carry out Panel Member profile pilots?  
How did the pilots work?  
Feedback

**Section 2: National Roll-out.....6**

CHS’s commitment  
Learning from the pilots  
Observers  
Placement of profiles and SCRA’s role  
Implementation timeline

**Section 3: Resource Materials.....11**

- Four profile options.....12
- Profile template .....13
- How to create a Bitmoji.....14
- Briefing sheet for partners.....16
- Briefing sheet for Panel Members.....17
- FAQs.....19



## Section 1: Background and Pilots

### Why did we carry out Panel Member profile pilots?

During 2014-16 Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) carried out ten consultation workshops with over 50 children and young people who had experience of attending children's hearings. The workshops were on a wide range of different subjects from Panel Member recruitment to making complaints and communication within the hearing.

One of the reoccurring themes that children and young people brought up was that they would like to know some information about the Panel Members they were going to meet before they went into their hearing.

The reasons for this were:

"...to make the hearing and the Panel Members seem much more child-friendly"

"...it wouldn't hurt for Panel Members to reveal a bit about their own life or personality, hobbies, why they became a Panel Member to put the children and young people at ease, especially since they know everything about us from the reports"

"...we would like Panel Member profiles – to help put young people at ease – not to contain any confidential information – just light-hearted facts and a photo, name, age, hobbies, why they became a Panel Member"

The 'Next Steps to Better Hearings' research reinforced these messages as "Young people have raised that they never know who the Panel Members will be" which can lead to "anxiety about meeting three people who they do not know and who have a degree of control over their futures."

In response to the request from the children and young people consulted, CHS developed a Panel Member profile template to help put young people at ease without revealing sensitive information about Panel Members.

## How did the pilots work?

Profiles were piloted at the SCRA Hearings Centre in Market Street, Aberdeen from October 2016 to May 2017. Subsequent pilots took place in East Lothian and Glasgow with similar positive results.

Although participation wasn't mandatory, 66 people took part. This number consisted of 59 Panel Members and 7 Panel Practice Advisors (PPAs), which represents 57% of all Panel Members and 100% of all PPAs in Aberdeen.

The profiles contained very brief information:

- **First name** – only the first name of the Panel Member was included.
- **Photo**
- **Information** – a couple of sentences about the Panel Member's interests or hobbies.

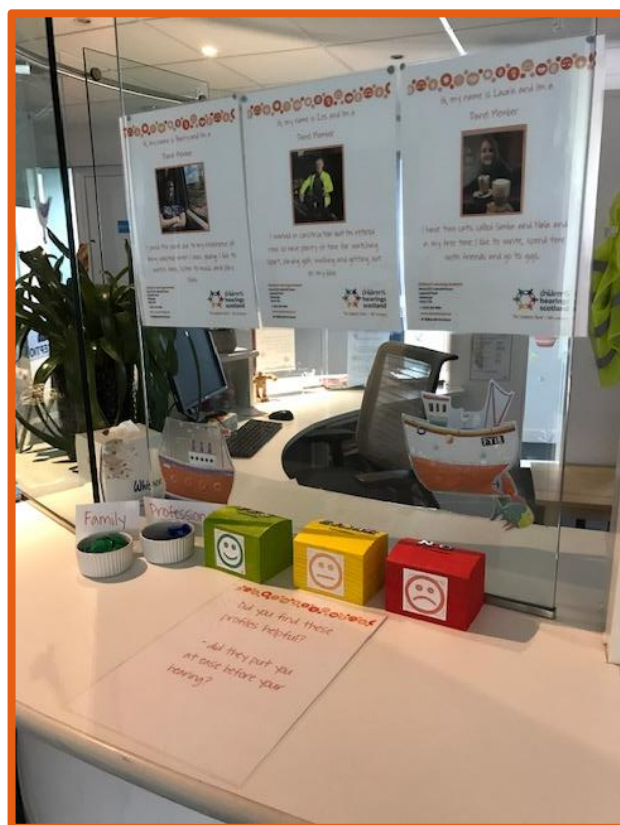
Due to Panel Member concerns around profiles being removed from the hearing centre, SCRA reception staff displayed the relevant profiles behind the glass reception.

As the pilot was optional, not all hearings had profiles to display. The Area Support Team decided profiles would only be shown when at least two of the Panel Members attending the hearings session had provided a profile.

Posters were printed for the waiting rooms to help raise awareness of and inform children and young people about the pilot.

On arrival at the hearing centre, reception staff explained the pilot to attendees and encouraged quantitative feedback on the profiles. Different coloured tokens were given to children under 12 and aged 12 and over to differentiate responses. They were encouraged to consider **“Did you find these profiles helpful? - did they put you at ease before your hearing?”** Attendees placed their tokens into one of three containers depending on whether they felt the answer to this was “Yes”, “No” or “Same”.

Tokens were also provided for any family members or professionals who wanted to participate. Comments forms were also available to provide feedback.





## Feedback

### Children and young people

In total, 18 children and young people responded. This is quite a low number partly because many children were excused from their hearing or were too young to respond but also, when children were present, profiles were not always there for them to see.

In response to the question:

- 56% answered "Yes"
- 33% answered "No"
- 11% answered "The same"

However, when looking at the results broken down by the age of the child, 100% of those under 12 felt the profiles were helpful, compared to just 33% of those aged 12 and over.

### Families

In total, 62 family members or carers responded to the survey:

- 82% answered "Yes"
- 15% answered "No"
- 3% answered "The same"

Despite the positive response, families were not vocal about the profiles before or during the hearing. However, they clearly had a positive impact as when the profiles were removed from the hearing centre at the end of May, the following day families asked where they had gone and if they were coming back.

### Professionals

Comments from professionals attending hearings included:

*"Profiles were a great idea."*

*"Attending with a child with additional support needs, it was good to know before the hearing that a Panel Member would have an Australian accent."*

*"Good idea/helpful particularly for the children we are working with, although the 3<sup>rd</sup> Panel Member (in their profile) had sunglasses on so we were unable to see their face!"*



# Section 2: National Roll-out

## CHS's Commitment

The CHS [Business Plan 2019/2020](#) lays out our commitments to children and young people including:

**“...we will roll out Panel Member profiles across Scotland...  
to make the hearing experience more child friendly and put children and young people at ease.”**

After multiple successful pilots with positive feedback from children and young people, profiles will be rolled out across Scotland in 2019. These will continue to be physical A4 profiles however, in the long-term, it is still the intention to introduce digital Panel Member profiles as part of the work to deliver the ‘Digital Strategy for the Children’s Hearings System’.

At present, profiles are being displayed daily in hearing centres in Falkirk, Stirling, Glasgow, Aberdeen and East Lothian. This toolkit brings together the learning from the pilots and provides resources to enable Area Support and Improvement Partners to work closely with AST and Panel Members to successfully implement profiles across the country in the next six months.

## Learning from the pilots

Panel Members raised a number of concerns both before and after the pilot which CHS has taken on board and has adapted the project based on this useful feedback.

You said...	We did...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Panel Members were concerned about their privacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are now four options for profiles, each sharing a different amount of personal information. The final option is a Bitmoji (see page 13) and a general statement which contains no personal information whatsoever.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What if the profiles are removed from the hearing centre?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lockable Perspex notice boards can be provided or they can be displayed from behind glass at a reception desk.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are ‘fun’ facts about our hobbies and families appropriate?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Profiles should make Panel Members relatable to children and families so AST members or Area Support and</li> </ul>





	Improvement Partners will make sure that all photos and information are appropriate. For example, saying you like to explore new places shows you are curious and adventurous. Saying you go on three foreign holidays every year is neither appropriate nor relatable to many people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some hearings can be particularly volatile and I would prefer not to share more information that I have to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If Panel Members have real concerns about an individual hearing, they can choose not to display them and/or ask SCRA staff not to. It is for Panel Members alone to make this judgement call.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Won't these make hearings less formal?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The aim is to make hearings less formal so no adjustments have been made here. If Panel Members truly feel they should not be displayed for a particular hearing, they can choose not to display them, as above.</li> </ul>

## Observers

Children's hearings are held in private and, while the chair has a duty to keep the number of people in the hearing at a minimum at any one time, there are certain observers whose presence benefits the Children's Hearing System through training new Panel Members or providing a quality assurance function. It is essential that their attendance is achieved in an open and empathetic manner. Children and families should never enter the hearing room to discover there is an unexpected observer present.

Displaying profiles of Panel Practice Advisors and trainee Panel Members is essential to prepare a child and family for who will be in the hearing room and why. While not observers, it should be noted that in Glasgow, reporters are also displaying their own profiles before hearings.

## Panel Practice Advisors (PPAs)

During the first pilot, the positive benefits of displaying PPA profiles were unexpected and were possibly more noticeable in the hearing room than the benefits of Panel Member profiles as they had a tangible, rather than emotional, effect:

"Families and children were expecting us when we were introduced so they already knew we were going to be there and why."



A short accompanying briefing sheet should be displayed which prepares the child and family for the PPA's presence, explains why there is a PPA present, why it is important for them to be there and the PPA's right to be present. It also emphasises that, despite this, the PPA will not remain in the hearing against the child or family's wishes.

As Panel Members are not aware there will be a PPA present in advance, PPAs should take responsibility for ensuring their profile and briefing sheet are displayed when they arrive.

### Trainee Panel Members

At trainee Panel Member Welcome Nights in December, it should be made clear to all trainees that, as Panel Members, they will receive a significant amount of information about children and families and that Panel Member profiles are a small step towards redressing that balance of power and can help put children and families at ease before a hearing.

As part of gathering availability for their observations, trainees should be provided the four profile exemplars and asked to submit their photo or Bitmoji and information as soon as possible to allow a profile to be made up before their first observation.

A short accompanying briefing sheet should be displayed which prepares the child and family that there will be a trainee present, explains why there is a trainee present and why it is important for part of their training but also emphasises their right to object to their attendance in the hearing and confirms the trainee will not stay in the hearing against the child or family's wishes.

Profiles should clearly state "Hi, I am X and I am a Trainee Panel Member" to avoid any possible confusion. Official Panel Member profiles should be created before their first hearing sitting as a Panel Member in June.

### Placement of profiles and SCRA's role

To be easily seen, the profiles need to be placed somewhere very prominent within the hearings centre, but also somewhere where Panel Members feel comfortable with them being displayed. Local discussions with Panel and AST Members and SCRA will identify the best place for profiles in each hearing centre. This may be in waiting rooms, in a reception area, on the door of the hearing







room or displayed from behind the reception desk.

CHS can provide lockable notice boards or other display devices, if required.

SCRA have been supportive of Panel Member profiles but discussions must take place at a local level to determine what level of support, if any, may be provided. Due to the variations in staffing, building layouts and the number of hearings taking place at any one time, there is no expectation of SCRA to provide practical support to the project but local discussions will identify how best to meet the needs of the area.

In the initial Aberdeen pilot, reception staff were responsible for displaying and removing the profiles before and after each session largely due to Panel Members' unease about their profiles being left unattended. To address this, the profiles were displayed around 15 minutes before the first hearing started and removed after the last hearing had begun. This ensured there was always a member of staff in reception with the profiles.

During the six month pilot, it became clear that, with up to three hearing sessions taking place simultaneously, it was more time and labour intensive than expected for reception staff to ensure the correct profiles were displayed for each hearing session. In smaller hearing centres, with only one hearing room, SCRA may be willing to display the profiles, while in many areas this will be too onerous.

In busier hearing centres, as Panel Members are required to arrive 30 minutes before the start of their hearing session, there is more than enough time to display their own profiles. This also gives Panel Members the autonomy and authority to choose not to display their profiles if they are concerned about potentially volatile hearings and have health and safety concerns about providing additional information to attendees.

In non-SCRA owned buildings, there will be no opportunity to securely leave the profiles in the venue between hearing sessions. This will require Panel Members to take responsibility for their own profile and bring it to each hearing session. In this scenario, SCRA may provide useful feedback to the AST if Panel Members are regularly forgetting their profiles, allowing the AST to address this quickly.

In future, discussions will take place at a national level to determine the support SCRA can provide to display digital Panel Member profiles.



## Implementation timeline

Each AST will have competing priorities and different capacities; many areas have already begun the implementation of Panel Member profiles whereas others are focussing on different ways to improve hearings for children first.

Depending on the size of the volunteer community, it may take several months to begin displaying profiles in an AST area and even longer to fully embed profiles across all volunteers. In multi-authority ASTs, it may be easier to implement one local authority at a time, depending on available support to help facilitate the project.

As a guide, a suggested timeline is:

### Preparing – 2 weeks

Area Support and Improvement Partners should work with the AST and SCRA to decide and plan:

- Who will collect the photographs/Bitmojis from Panel Members?
- Who will create and laminate the profiles?
- Where they will be stored?
- Where they will be displayed?
- Who will display them?

Profiles should also be created of AST members for use in a briefing sheet to Panel Members (see pages 17-18).

### Communicating – 2 weeks

Communicating the rationale behind Panel Member profiles, answering questions and providing reassurance will be key to progressing with the project. An AST specific briefing sheet should be sent to all volunteers followed face to face discussions at a specific event, if required.

### Collecting profile information – 4 weeks

Volunteers are busy people and submitting information will not necessarily be a priority for all Panel Members. In all previous roll outs, it took longer than expected for participants to supply photos and text, so allow time for this when planning the roll out. Weekly reminders before the go-live date and individual reminders after profiles are live will help identify if Panel Members object to taking part, if they need support to make a Bitmoji or if they are happy to take part and simply haven't gotten round to submitting their information yet.



The latter issue occurred in every area so a fixed go-live date is recommended, regardless of how many profiles are outstanding. Profiles can be created at any stage and seeing other people's profiles on display will act as a reminder to Panel Members.

### **Creating profiles – 2 weeks**

To create Panel Member profiles, please use the template provided on page 13. To change the photo, simply right click on the photo and select 'change image' or cut and paste a new image. Simply type over the text as required. Profiles should:

- Only include the first name of the person
- Include a photo of the person where they are clearly recognisable as the person who will be in the hearing i.e. not a ten year old photo or a Bitmoji which doesn't represent you accurately
- If the photo shows a person doing an activity – make sure it is something that children and young coming to hearings will be able to relate to. No alcohol please!
- Not include a photo of the person wearing sunglasses (young people told us they couldn't see the faces)
- Not over emphasize 'family' as this could be distressing to some children and young people coming to a hearing i.e. "I like swimming and I have two daughters" is different to "I have two amazing daughters who I love to take swimming at the weekend."

**Go live!**

## **Section 3: Resource Materials**

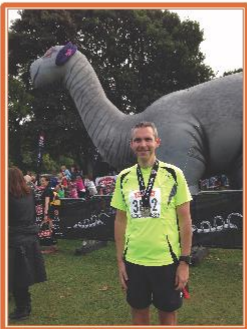
### **Contents**

- Four profile options
- Profile template
- How to create a Bitmoji
- Briefing sheet for partners
- Briefing sheet for Panel Members
- FAQs

For editable versions of these documents, please contact your Area Support and Improvement Partner who can tailor the resources to suit your local needs. Copies of observer information sheets and the CHS Waiting for the Sunrise font can also be provided by your Area Partner.




Hi, my name is Brian and I'm a  
Panel Member



I like running to keep fit - it takes me all  
over Scotland. I have 2 sons of my own.


Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/1/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3596  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland



The Children's Panel - life changing


### Option 1: Photo and Personal Information

Hi, my name is Christopher and I'm a  
Panel Member



I look forward to listening to your views  
at your hearing.


Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/1/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3596  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland



The Children's Panel - life changing


### Option 2: Photo and Statement

Hi, my name is Beth and I'm a  
Panel Member



I love going for drives to nice places  
to walk with my dog, Willow.


Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/1/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3596  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland



The Children's Panel - life changing


### Option 3: Bitmoji and Personal Information

Hi, my name is Lynne and I'm a  
Panel Member



I look forward to meeting you  
at your hearing.

Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/1/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3596  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland

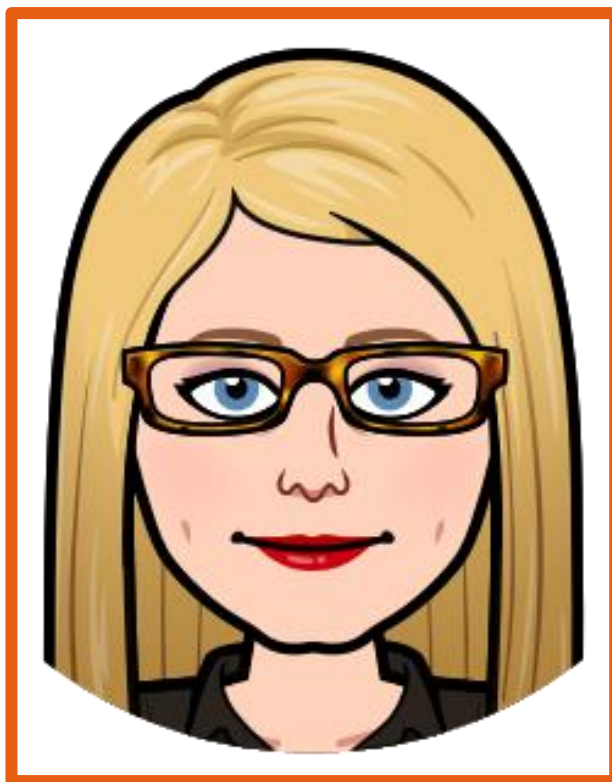


The Children's Panel - life changing

### Option 4: Bitmoji and Statement



Hi, my name is XXXX and I'm a  
Panel Member



I like running, going to the football and have two  
dogs who like to run with me.

**Children's Hearings Scotland**

3rd Floor  
Thistle House  
91 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh, EH12 5HE

t: 0131 244 3696

[www.chscotland.gov.uk](http://www.chscotland.gov.uk)

Follow @CHScotland



children's  
hearings  
scotland

The Children's Panel — life changing.



## How to create a Bitmoji

**If you would prefer children to meet a Bitmoji of you instead of a photograph, the following instructions will help you to create an avatar you are happy represents you. If you would like some help creating the Bitmoji, please get in touch with your Area Support Team who can assist or can create one for you from a photograph you provide.**

### Step 1 - Install the Bitmoji app on your smartphone or tablet



From the App Store or Play Store on your device, search for “bitmoji”. Follow your devices’ instructions to download the Bitmoji app with the image shown to the left. It is a free app and you will not have to pay to download it but you may need to enter your Apple ID password if using an Apple device.

### Step 2 – Sign up for Bitmoji

Once downloaded, open the app by tapping on the Bitmoji icon. To use Bitmoji, you will need to sign up with an email address. This won’t cause you to receive spam emails but feel free to use your @childrenshearings.org.uk email address here. Tap ‘Sign up with Email’ and you will also need to enter your name, date of birth and set a password so only you can use your account. Once finished, tap ‘Sign Up’ and you are ready to make your Bitmoji.

### Step 3 – Design your Bitmoji

There are lots of features you can choose to make your Bitmoji as realistic as possible - remember the point is that children will be able to link your profile before the hearing to you in the hearing so if you don’t have green hair, please don’t give your Bitmoji green hair!

The app will give you the option of taking a selfie to compare yourself to as you choose your features – it’s probably easiest to ‘Skip’ that option and choose for yourself.

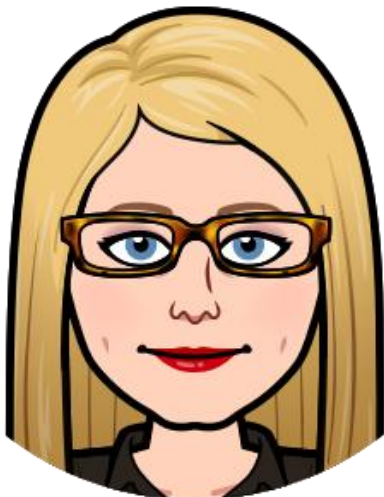
Starting with gender, the app will walk you through choosing every feature of your Bitmoji; beginning with hair colour, length and style to wrinkles and makeup.

The last option is your outfit. There are hundreds of outfits to choose from so hopefully there is something which you feel represents you as an individual. Once you have chosen your outfit, tap ‘Save Avatar’ and you are done!



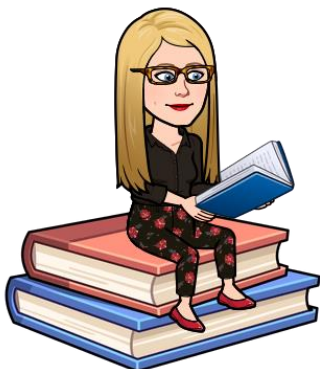


## Step 4 – Choose your image to be displayed



The app offers lots of variations of your Bitmoji and you can choose which one is displayed on your profile. Relating it to the hobbies and interests mentioned in your profile might be appropriate such as the golf, cinema and reading examples below.

If you would prefer just a Bitmoji of your face, the image on the left and can be found near the top of the fourth page of options shown here.



## Step 5 – Get your profile made up

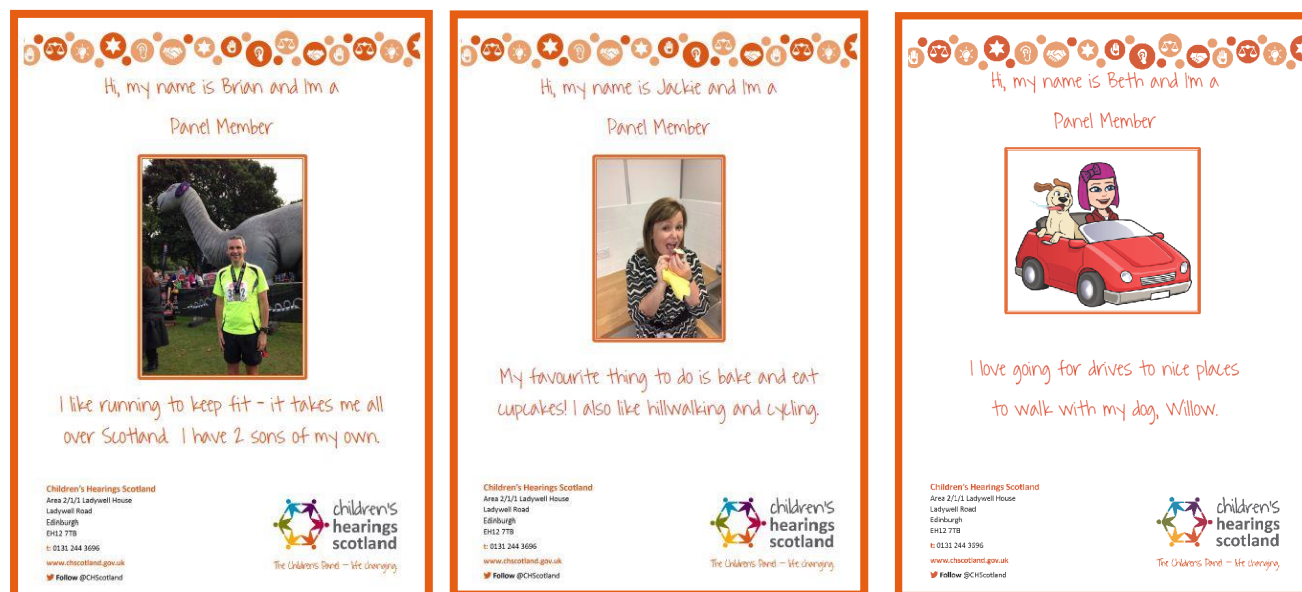
Once you've chosen your image, email or text it to the person leading on Panel Member Profiles in your area. Remember to include a couple of lines about yourself or a general statement to be displayed along with your Bitmoji.



# Partner briefing sheet: Panel Member profiles

## What are Panel Member profiles?

Children's Hearings Scotland are rolling out Panel Member Profiles across Scotland. Profiles contain the first name of the Panel Member, their photo or Bitmoji and some brief information about them.



**We hope that by using Panel Member profiles, we can help to make children and young people feel less anxious about going into their hearing, as they will have some idea of the Panel Members they are going to meet. They will be able to see that they are just normal people with normal interests.**

## What can you do to help?

- Be honest with us about whether the profiles are making a difference. Your feedback, both positive and negative, will enable us to amend and improve the profiles going forward.
- If you are attending a hearing with a child or young person, you could point the profiles out to them. You will find them in the reception area or outside the hearing room. Please note though that participation is not mandatory, so you may find that profiles are not available for all Panel Members at every hearing.

## If you have any queries, concerns or feedback, please contact:

[Name] | Area Convener/Area Support and Improvement Partner  
 e: [email address] | m: [mobile number]



## Panel member profiles

### Why are we doing this?

CHS carried out ten consultation workshops with over 50 children and young people who have experience of attending children's hearings. The workshops have been on a wide range of different subjects from panel member recruitment to making complaints and communication within the hearing.

One of the reoccurring themes that children and young people have brought up is that they would like to know some information about the Panel Members they are going to meet before the hearing.

The reasons for this are:

"...to make the hearing and the Panel Members seem much more child-friendly"

"...it wouldn't hurt for Panel Members to reveal a bit about their own life or personality, hobbies, why they became a panel member to put the children and young people at ease, especially since they know everything about us from the reports"

"...we would like panel member profiles – to help put young people at ease – not to contain any confidential information – just light-hearted facts and a photo, name, age, hobbies, why they became a panel member"

Over the last two years, several ASTs have listened to these views and have successfully displayed profiles before every hearing. [Name] AST are listening to these views too and would like to work with Panel Members to have profiles visible to children in [Local Authority area] by [date].


### What information will the profiles contain?

There are several options and Panel Members can choose which option they are most comfortable with. In all cases they only contain brief information:

- **Your name** – only your first name will be included.
- **Your choice of photo or a Bitmoji** – this is really important so that children can see who they are going to meet. The photo doesn't have to be close up or you can choose a Bitmoji.
- **Some information about you or a nice statement** – this is really brief and none of the information is confidential. You only need to include what information you are happy to, but it would be good if it could be something that children and young people can relate to.



Hi, my name is Brian and I'm a  
Panel Member




I like running to keep fit - it takes me all over Scotland. I have 2 sons of my own.

Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/2/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3696  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland

children's  
hearings  
scotland  
The Children's Panel - We're changing.

Hi, my name is Jackie and I'm a  
Panel Member




My favourite thing to do is bake and eat cupcakes! I also like hillwalking and cycling.

Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/2/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3696  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland

children's  
hearings  
scotland  
The Children's Panel - We're changing.

Hi, my name is Beth and I'm a  
Panel Member



I love going for drives to nice places to walk with my dog, Willow.

Children's Hearings Scotland  
Area 2/2/1 Ladywell House  
Ladywell Road  
Edinburgh  
EH12 7TB  
t: 0131 244 3696  
www.chscotland.gov.uk  
Follow @CHScotland

children's  
hearings  
scotland  
The Children's Panel - We're changing.

## How will the profiles work?

- To be live by [date], we would like all Panel Members to submit a photo **or** Bitmoji and some information **or** a general statement to [name], [role], by the end of [month].
- The profiles can then be made up and a lockable glass case installed in the hearing centre.
- Profiles will be kept safely in the hearing centre and Panel Members (normally the chair) will display them when they arrive. On rare occasions, the Panel Members may decide not to display the profiles due to health and safety concerns. This is absolutely fine.

Participation is not mandatory, but this is something we can each do to help make the hearings experience less intimidating for children and young people, so we would encourage as many people as possible to take part. The feedback from children in other areas has been so positive, we would love to make a difference to hearings in [Local Authority area] too!

## If you have any queries or concerns, please contact:

[Name] | Area Convener / Area Support Improvement Partner  
e: | m :

Laura Conachan | Community Projects Lead  
e: [laura.conachan@chs.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:laura.conachan@chs.gsi.gov.uk) | m: 07515 376766





## FAQs

### **What information is included in the profile?**

The profile will only contain your first name, your photo or a Bitmoji and a couple of sentences about you or a general statement. Only include information that you are comfortable with.

### **Do I have to take part?**

The profiles are not mandatory. However, this is something that children and young people have asked us for and it is something that is within our power to do to help them feel more at ease attending hearings. With the four options available, we hope there is an option all Panel Members will feel comfortable with.

### **I do not want to share any information about myself on a profile.**

If you don't want to share any information, please still take part but use the profile that only includes your name, Bitmoji and general statement. Remember that your full name is on the hearing paperwork already and the family will see what you look like you as soon as they enter the hearing room, so you are providing no more identifiable information that at present.

### **I am worried that my profile might be stolen or a photo might be taken of my profile and put on social media.**

Profiles have been displayed in multiple hearing centres for over a year and there have been no incidents of this happening. We do recognise that this is still a fear so we have guidance on the actions CHS will take to have the photo removed. In the last 6 years, there have been roughly 200,000 hearings and the number of times a photograph has been taken of a Panel Member – in a hearing or in the community - can be counted on one hand.

Lockable noticeboards have also been provided so the profiles are behind Perspex and inaccessible without a key at all times.

We need to remember how much incredibly personal information Panel Members receive about families and weigh this up against what Panel Members are being asked to provide. Panel Members are right to consider the risks of doing so but there have been no negative incidents reported and if there are serious health and safety concerns at a hearing session, Panel Members can choose not to display their profiles; this is entirely for the Panel Members to decide based on their own judgement. This should be done on a case by case basis rather than assuming there will be issues with all children and families viewing the profiles and using this as a reason not to try to improve hearings for children who attend.



### **What if there's no child present at the hearing?**

Even so, the feedback from families has also been very positive and there have been no negative consequences from sharing this basic information with any attendees. We need to remember that most families are nervous when attending a hearing and the profiles show that Panel Members are regular people who have relatable lives. Putting family members at ease can also help reduce tensions in the hearing room.

We do know that there are children present at around 50% of hearings and regularly hear Panel Members say they wish there were more. In many cases, it is not appropriate for a child to attend, but to encourage those who can, we need to make hearings child-friendly first and then look to increase attendance. Panel Member profiles are a significant step towards that.

### **What about the children who come to hearings who are either too young to read the profiles or aren't interested.**

In the Aberdeen pilot, 100% of children under the age of 12 found the profiles helpful. In Glasgow, the profiles have been fundamental in encouraging a young child with autism to enter the hearing room for the first time as they could now visualise who they were to meet and talk to.

The profiles will be used in different ways by different individuals; a parent may be glad to see a familiar Panel Member or a child may be reassured that the three strangers in the next room aren't the scary judges they had imagined.

### **I feel it is patronising to share fun little snippets about my life when I know so much about the children and young people who come to a hearing.**

Children, young people, families and the Independent Review of Care are giving positive feedback on the profiles. If that changes, CHS will amend our approach but this is not the feedback we are receiving. What we have consistently heard for years is that children would like to see who they will be meeting in advance and the profiles will achieve this.

### **I think these profiles take away from the formality and seriousness of the Children's Hearings System.**

We hope so. The main aim of all initiatives such as this and the model hearing rooms is to try and put the child or young person more at ease during their hearing. By doing this we would hope that the child or young person would feel more able to participate in the hearing and share their views with the Panel Members – and theirs is the most important voice at the hearing.

Clearly, you need to think carefully about the photo you use. Try to ensure that if you are doing an activity in the photo that it is something that a child or young person coming to a hearing could





relate to. If it is just a picture of you then make sure you are smiling.

### **Will the profiles improve hearings?**

For Panel Members, probably not. This is an initiative for children and families and the difference they have reported is in making them feel at ease before a hearing and making the Panel Members seem more relatable. Their hearing experience will improve but Panel Members should not expect attendees to enter the hearing room and chat about their shared love of gardening.

Approaching a closed door when the three strangers behind it will make life-changing decisions about you is daunting for anyone. Seeing those people beforehand and relating to them as human beings with hobbies and interests can reduce tension and reduce the power imbalance as they know a little about the Panel Members too. The difference is often emotional rather than tangible.