



Renfrewshire
Area Support Team

Notice of Meeting and Agenda Renfrewshire Area Support Team

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 26 October 2021	14:00	Remotely by MS Teams,

KENNETH GRAHAM
Head of Corporate Governance

Membership

Eileen Anderson; Derek Brama; Craig Campbell; Annemarie Currie; Jacqueline Doherty; Rhiannan Dock; Edi Hanley; Jennifer Hay; Alex MacDonald; Ruth MacLeod; Hannah McCulloch; Ewan McNaught; Jim Melrose; Marion Robinson; Angela Stevenson; Alison Thompson.

Representing Renfrewshire Council: Councillor John Shaw.

Chair

D Brama, Area Convener.

Apologies

Apologies from members.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare an interest in any item(s) on the agenda and to provide a brief explanation of the nature of the interest.

Items of business

- | | | |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Minute of Previous Meeting | 1 - 8 |
| | Minute of previous meetig held on 17 August 2021. | |
| 2 | Matters Arising | |
| 3 | Hearings Management Sub-group | 9 - 12 |
| | Minute of meeting held on 12 October 2021. | |
| 4 | Learning and Development Sub-group | 13 - 14 |
| | Minute of meeting held on 7 October 2021. | |
| 5 | Practice and Recruitment Sub-group | 15 - 18 |
| | Minute of meeting held on 7 October 2021. | |
| 6 | Better Hearings Renfrewshire | 19 - 38 |
| | Reports by SCRA | |
| 7 | Better Hearings Update | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 8 | COP26 Arrangements | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 9 | Capacity | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 10 | Area Plan Progress | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 11 | Lead Panel Representative | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 12 | Devolved Funding | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 13 | Clerking Services | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |
| 14 | Recognition Event | |
| | Verbal report by Area Convener. | |

15 Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Tuesday 14 December 2021 at 2.00pm

Minute of Meeting

Renfrewshire Area Support Team

Date	Time	Venue
Tuesday, 17 August 2021	14:00	Remotely by MS Teams,

PRESENT

Eileen Anderson; Derek Brama; Annemarie Currie; Craig Campbell, Jacqueline Doherty; Edi Hanley; Alex MacDonald; Ruth MacLeod; Hannah McCulloch; Ewan McNaught; Jim Melrose; Marion Robinson; and Angela Stevenson.

CHAIR

D Brama, Area Convener, presided.

ALSO PRESENT

L King, Locality Reporter Manager and C Gibson, Area Support and Improvement Partner (Children's Hearings Scotland).

IN ATTENDANCE

P Shiach, Senior Committee Services Officer and J Barron, Assistant Committee Services Officer (both Finance and Resources).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest intimated by members prior to the meeting.

APOLOGIES

A Thompson and P Watson.

ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Area Convener indicated that there was one additional item which had not been included in the notice calling the meeting. The Area Convener, being of the opinion that the items which were dealt with at item 13 of the agenda was competent and relevant, authorised its consideration.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

In order to facilitate the business of the meeting Item the Convener proposed that item 10 of the agenda be considered before item 1; and . items 11, 7 and 8 be considered before item 3. This was agreed.

1 RAVHI IMPLEMENTATION

The Area Convener introduced C Gibson, Area Support and Improvement Partner for Tayside and Fife to provide information on the RAHVI roll-out across Scotland which she was leading on behalf of the National team.

She advised that RAHVI was the new virtual platform being implemented across Scotland and set the context in relation to RAHVI, indicating that there had been five pilot areas in the initial roll-out. It had been agreed to scale up what had been done in Fife across the country replicating the areas which had worked well and addressing those elements which had not. She advised that a resource package had been produced for all ASTs consisting of a number of short videos and a CHS document "Getting Ready For RAVHI" which was produced in collaboration with SCRA. To complement this, the Learning Academy was asked to set up training sessions with three distinct aims, namely that the session would give the panel community the opportunity to join a RAHVI session using the link and to check that they had the ability to join; to ensure that everyone had a gallery view; and to cover off some of the practicalities involved.

C Gibson was then heard in answer to questions from members of the AST, including perceived deficiencies in the Learning Academy training; digital papers; input of designated roles at hearings; inability to join RAHVI through Teams; concerns over the system going live without sufficient training for Panel Members; and the number of Panel Members who had signed up to RAHVI or had done the Learning Academy course.

C Gibson was then thanked for her contribution.

DECIDED: That the information be noted

SEDERUNT

C Gibson left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item of business.

2 MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

There was submitted the Minute of the previous meeting of Renfrewshire Area Support Team (AST) held on 15 June 2021.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

3 **MATTERS ARISING**

(i) Renfrewshire Area Plan

A Currie updated the Committee in terms of the next Recruitment Campaign indicating that the recruitment would take place early in 2022, and that the recruitment of young people in relation to interviewing candidates should take place in quarter three to allow sufficient time for the necessary training. This was agreed.

DECIDED: That the recruitment process to appoint young people to the next Panel Member recruitment process be undertaken in quarter three to allow sufficient time for appropriate training.

(ii) Children (Scotland) Act Changes – AST Promotion Toolkit

The Area Convener referred to decision (b) of this item and indicated that he had not yet sent letters to Panel Members, emphasising the need to access emails and Teams. He indicated that a composite letter including information on RAHVI would be sent to Panel Members later in the week

DECIDED: That the information be noted.

(iii) Review of AST Composition and Areas of Work

The Area Convener advised that one of the new Panel Members , Ciara McLean had attended the last meeting of the Learning and Development sub-group.

DECIDED: That the information be noted.

(iv) Appointment of Area Convener

The Area Convener advised that he had been reappointed for a further three year period.

DECIDED: That the information be noted.

4 **MANDATORY TRAINING UPDATE AND ROTA IMPLICATIONS**

The Learning and Development Co-ordinator updated the position in relation to mandatory training and rota implications based on information received from the Learning Academy indicating that as of 13 August 2021 there were 12 Panel Members had not yet completed Hearings in Lockdown; 16 had not completed Emerging from Lockdown; 18 had not completed the Enhanced Practice course; and 13 had not completed the Advocacy course. In addition, there were 11 panel members who had not completed any of the courses however this figure included Panel Members who were currently on leave of absence, and there were three Panel Members who had not completed any of the courses and who were currently on the Hearings rota.

The Area Convener advised that any Panel Member who had not completed the necessary courses by the end of September should be removed from the rota, and that

this would have implications for rota management. He suggested that the Panel Members in question be contacted by telephone in an attempt to get them re-engaged, following which a letter would be sent out indicating that if the training was not completed by the end of September they would be removed from the rota.

C Campbell indicated that as PPAs were returning to face-to-face observations in September, this could present them with an opportunity to remind Panel Members of the need to fulfil their mandatory training courses. This was agreed.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be agreed that Panel Members who had not completed the mandatory courses be contacted by telephone in an attempt to get them re-engaged, following which a letter be sent out indicating that if the training was not completed by the end of September they would be removed from the rota ; and

(b) That it be agreed that PPAs when attending face-to-face observations take the opportunity, if available to remind those Panel Members who had not yet completed their mandatory training courses, of their obligation to do so.

5 **LOCALITY REPORTER MANAGER - UPDATE**

Prior to her report the Locality Reporter Manager provide an update on aspects of RAVHI relating to identifying the role of participants on screen. A full discussion ten followed on this and other Hearings issues, including suggestions that for face-to-face meetings, Panel Members would enter the Hearing room last, which conflicted with the statutory duty of the Hearing Chair to limit the number of people attending a Hearing. The Area Convener undertook to raise the issue with CHS and at the next at the Area Conveners Liaison meeting.

The Locality Reporter Manager provided an update of staffing indicating that one member of the support staff was now involved with the RAVHI team, and that the front office admin team was subsequently short staffed; there was no back-filling however interviews were being arranged; staff were in the office every day on a rota basis; COVID precautions include the wearing of face coverings while moving around the building; and two metre distancing was still taking place within the Hearing room.

The Locality Reporter Manager provided an update on new legislation. She further indicated that those Panel Members receiving hard copies of papers should receive them as the same times as the link to electronic papers is published.

The Locality Reporter Manager was then heard in answer to questions from members on the report.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be noted that the Area Convener would raise the issue of Panel Members being last into Hearing Rooms with CHS and at the next at the Area Conveners Liaison meeting; and

(b) That the report be otherwise noted.

6 GLEN LANE ACCOMMODATION ALTERATIONS

The Area Convener updated the position relative to proposed alterations to accommodation in Glen Lane and the potential non availability of the Panel Members room. He expressed concern in relation to issues such as Panel Member health and wellbeing; accommodation for Panel Members when a previous session has overrun its allocated time; where do PPAs hold post observations with Panel Members; and refreshment arrangements

Concerns were expressed in terms of confidentiality; and the ability of Panel Members to have a designated breakout space for private discussions with PPAs of general wellbeing following challenging hearings.

The Locality Reporter Manager indicated that Hearing Room might provide a temporary solution in terms of Panel Members arriving before the previous session has ended, as Room 2 was currently unsuitable for Hearings. Other solutions might also become available. She further indicated that the proposed alterations were not imminent but felt that Panel Members should be given as much advance notice as possible.

In response to a question relative to the tables used by Panel Members which had subsequently been removed, the Locality Reporter Manager indicated that she would need to raise this with SCRA Property Section as a request from the AST. The Area Convener requested that a formal consultation take place with the AST prior to the plans being finalised. The Locality Reporter Manager indicated that it was unlikely that works would be undertaken before the end of the current financial year

DECIDED:

(a) That it be noted that the Locality Reporter Manager formally request the return of the CHS Hearing room tables with SCRA on behalf of the AST;

(b) That it be agreed that the AST request formal consultation with SCRA prior to the alteration plans being finalised; and

(c) That the report be otherwise noted.

7 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT SUB-GROUP

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Learning & Development Sub-group held on 20 July 2021.

The Minute provided information relative to mandatory training; RAHVI training; pre-service update; in-service update; and Management of Hearings training.

The Rota Manager requested that consideration be given to deferring Management of Hearings training for the 2020 cohort as this group had been unable to sit on Hearings due to pandemic restrictions. She indicated that many of that group would not be comfortable chairing under the current circumstances.

Discussion followed on the possibility of offering the 2020 cohort opportunities to undertake observations and including the 2019 cohort who may have been similarly affected. The Rota Manager suggested that a trawl be undertaken as far back as the

2018 cohort to establish which Panel Members had undertaken MoH training. It was also suggested that the letter to be circulated to Panel Members in relation to emails and Teams also refer to whether they had undertaken the training and do they feel comfortable to chair Hearings

DECIDED:

(a) That the Minute be approved;

(b) That a trawl be taken from the 2018 cohort to establish which Panel Members had not undertaken MoH training; and

(c) That the letter to be circulated to Panel Members in relation to emails and mandatory training also seek confirmation that they had undertaken the training and whether they felt comfortable to chair Hearings.

8 HEARINGS MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Hearings Management Sub-group held on 11 August 2021.

The Minute provided updated information in relation to sabbaticals; resignations; hearing statistics for the period for the period 11 June to 10 August 2021 including deferred and cancelled sessions, secure hearings, additional hearings; swaps and continuity hearings; pastoral care; and panel member strength which indicated that including the new intake there were currently 88 panel members 63 female and 25 male panel members.

The Lead Panel representative was then heard in answer to questions on various issues highlighted in the Minute.

DECIDED: That the Minute be approved.

9 RENFREWSHIRE BETTER HEARINGS MANAGEMENT GROUP

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Better Hearings Group held on 28 July 2021.

The Depute Area Convener provided an update on the Better Hearings Action Plan including case sampling of reports to be completed to assess quality, ensure they were multi-agency and provided sufficient information and justification for robust decision making; and an update on the Hearing Preparation Guidelines.

DECIDED: That the Minute be noted.

10 NORTH STRATHCLYDE HUB MEETING

There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the North Strathclyde Hub held on 28 June 2021.

DECIDED: That the Minute be noted.

11 RENFREWSHIRE AREA PLAN 2021-22 - UPDATE

There was submitted a report by Children's Hearings Scotland relative to the Renfrewshire Area Plan 2021/22

The Plan provided details of the four CHS Corporate Plan Strategic Themes 2020-2023 as under: -

Theme 1 - Better protect and uphold the rights of children;

Theme 2 - Deliver consistently high quality hearings;

Theme 3 – Continue to build an effective Panel that is well supported; and

Theme 4 – Be well-informed and influential in our environment and communities

The report was in the form of a RAG system which detailed progress against each of the themes.

DECIDED: That the report be noted.

12 RETURN TO FACE-TO-FACE LOCAL MEETINGS

The Area Convener provided an update on the return to face-to-face local hearings, indicating that the first meeting had taken place on 16 August with the 2020 cohort. Ten people had been in attendance at Wallneuk North Church hall and the meeting had gone well. He advised that a larger meeting was scheduled for Thursday 19 August with the 2021 cohort with approximately 20 people expected to be in attendance.

In response to a question on the possible return of AST meetings to Renfrewshire House, the Clerk explained why this was unlikely to resume during the current calendar year.

DECIDED: That the information be noted.

13 PANEL PRACTICE ADVISERS

The Depute Area Convener advised that a meeting of the Panel Practice advisers had been arranged for 24 August and planned observations were due to resume on 6 September 2021. He advised that the meeting was to ensure that PPAs were fully aware of the changes now in place relating to observations.

DECIDED: That the information be noted.

14 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

DECIDED: Members noted that the next meeting of the AST was scheduled for Tuesday 26 October 2021 at 2.00 pm.

HEARINGS MANAGEMENT SUB-GROUP

AGENDA

Minutes of Meeting 12th October 2021

Virtual @ 10:00AM

1. Apologies

None

2. Sabbatical

There are currently nine panel members off rota as a result of being on sabbatical or not responding to communications.

3. Resignations

2 Female

4. Hearing Stats - period 11th August - 11th October 2021

- Deferred Cases - Eleven virtual cases deferred; one August where grounds still at court; five in September of which two were late in starting and unable to be concluded due to technical difficulties; one relevant person and their legal representative failed to attend; one where no new placement had been identified for the child and one where the child's legal representative failed to attend; five in October which were due to one where grounds still at court; one adoption case with no social work reports; one to appoint a safeguarder and two where social work reports were received late.

Six face to face deferred - Two cases in August no social work reports received, one of the social workers was off sick; four cases in September made up of two where relevant persons failed to attend; one where relevant person failed to attend and failed to instruct their legal representative who was present; one where relevant persons legal representative did not attend

- Cancelled Sessions - Three virtual sessions and one case cancelled in August; September six cancelled virtual sessions and one so far for October. For face to face hearings there was one session for August, three for September and One for October cancelled.

- Secure Hearings - None
- Extra Hearings/Sessions - None
- Swaps - Virtual hearings there were a total of thirteen swaps; six in August and September and one for October to date. For face to face hearings there were fifteen swaps; five in August, eight in September and two in October.
- Continuity - two requests

5. Pastoral Care

One panel member is receiving support.

6. Panel Member Strength

Eighty six panel members, of which sixty two are female and twenty four are male. Currently there seventy five panel members who are available for rota scheduling, this is made up of fifty four females and twenty one males.

7.AOCB

One panel member had raised a concern with Edi regarding being delayed at a face to face hearing, the information passed to Edi was not complete and further investigation showed that the session was not only two cases as had been advised to Edi, but rather that an 8th working day hearing had been added as the third case and to compound matters technical issues with recording the ROP meant that the panel were not completed with their afternoon session until 18.30. Information to be noted only.

Two virtual cases went ahead in August using emergency legislation with only two panel members.

Two standby sessions in September not required.

Update from Lesley King that the hostess trolley/refreshment station has been ordered and should be delivered by the end of the week.

The concerns raised by panel members regarding the removal of previously provided CHS tables, was followed up by a meeting between SCRA , Derek Brama and Pamela Wilson, with the view of SCRA being that the current tables are sufficient. Derek and Pamela to have further discussion and get back to Lesley King.

Discussion took place around the upcoming COP26 and that there may be a requirement for panel members to be available for face to face custody hearings on 6th and 13th November. Further discussion to be had with Derek Brama, Pamela and AST to implement plan.

SCRA have staff training taking place week commencing 25th October which is scheduled for the week; a number of hearing sessions have been cancelled as a result and will be included in the next figures.

8. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 30th November Virtual at 10:00am



Renfrewshire
Area Support Team

Learning & Development Group Meeting

07 October 2021

MINUTES

In attendance: Ciara McLean, Alex MacDonald, Edi Hanley, Derek Bramma, Jacqueline Doherty

Apologies: Ewan McNaught, Kirsten Miller

1. Mandatory training completion

- Learning Academy (LA) have offered a walk through of training for Panel Members (PMs) who have mandatory modules to complete. It was proposed that this will be offered to PMs and they will be directed to LA as appropriate.
- Some PMs are genuinely having technical issue which make virtual learning difficult.
- PMs have been contacted at various points throughout, but some will need further prompting.
- Enhanced practice module has been dropped from mandatory training and now that emergency legislation has ceased the Emerging from Lockdown has also been removed.
- 2020 Act and Advocacy module are the only current mandatory modules.
- Failure to complete mandatory training has an impact on rota. Sharing of PMs with other regions has been discussed.
- Another reminder call will be made to these panel members, after which another method of encouragement may need to be explored. Edi and Alex will coordinate this.
- Some PMs are marked as still in progress, and it may simply be that they haven't ticked the necessary boxes or completed the questionnaire.

2. Pre-Service Update

- Local sessions for new panel members – the last meeting of this group was successful for those who attended, and a future meeting was considered. It was suggested that this could either be virtual or face to face. Although there was a small attendance last time it was felt that those who came along really benefited from it being face to face. Agreed to ask cohort for their view.
- Discussion around having a recognition event early in the new year, perhaps end of January. Possible venue would be St Mirren Park, although other venues will be explored.
- Pastoral support for new panel members – unfortunately the usual local training sessions with education, social work, etc haven't taken place. Education are keen to come and present on the changes with Additional Support for Learning and Health on the new changes with the reintroduction of school nurses. It was agreed that these sessions would benefit all PMs (see in-service update below).

3. In-Service update

- North Strathclyde training proposal – a joint training session around Reasons and Decisions, therefore no need for this to be covered locally in Renfrewshire at this time.
- Subject matter for next local development session – topics raised recently include:
 1. education and health input (see section 2 above)
 2. domestic abuse
 3. Phil Capaldi from Public Protection Unit came before and gave a very informative talk, and this would be useful once again.
 4. gender identification

Derek will arrange a suitable time and date for 1. Jacqueline and Ciara will pursue possible presenters for 2,3 and 4.

- Next year there will be many reappointment interviews and recruitment within a short period which will be a busy time for PPAs. It is proposed to put a letter out before Christmas to gauge PMs intentions with regards to reappointment. This will allow the AST to determine how many new PMs need to be recruited.

4. Management of Hearings Training

Proposal to include Renfrewshire in trial to get people back to face to face training. This would be a joint training for PMs and PPAs, with all attendees coming from different regions. This will reduce risk of pressures on rota created by possible Covid outbreak.

5. AOCB

- Suggestion that new members should be invited onto the group.
- Letter of suggestion sent to CHS around recruitment. Currently only those working or living in an area can apply to be a PM there, however it would seem reasonable to consider allowing those with a significant involvement in an area being considered. Those already in service are not constrained by these rules, therefore the CHS approach is not consistent.

6. Date of next meeting - To Be Advised

Recruitment and Retention subgroup (PPA meeting)

Wallneuk Church

Tues 12th Oct. 7.00pm

Agenda

- 1. Last meeting notes. - 24.8.21**
- 2. Observations on observations.**
- 3. Comments from PM chair**
- 4. Support for Inverclyde PPAs**
- 5. Reappointment interviews - best time**
- 6. CSAS feedback**
- 7. PPA forum**
- 8. Moderation**
- 9. AOB**

- 10. Next meeting**

Apologies : Hannah McCulloch, Alison Thompson, Jennifer Hay, Ruth MacLeod, Pamela Wilson

1. Last meeting notes. - 24.8.21

All items actioned and PPA permissions updated.

2. Observations on observations.

DAC allocates PPAs to observations on CSAS as per the observation rota. Changes can be made as required.

Observations allocated prior to PPA having access to reports can now be completed.

CSAS system is now accessible by all PPAs with changes to their permissions now in place.

One PPA was able to complete two observations and record and send the observation reports by the end of the hearing session.

CSAS report completion seems to be a bit variable – saving / not saving and a cut and paste approach seems to be safest.

It was agreed previously that new PMs would not be formally observed although the PPAs have had discussion new PMs which in general have been very positive.

One PPA has completed a brief report on CSAS for a new PM to record their comments. The majority of the boxes were written as N/A but the final comment box was entered. New PM was happy with this and ***we might consider doing this as a matter of course.***

With the PM being not receiving an email that the completed report has been sent it is important that PM is told at post hearing meeting that the report will follow and also that an email be sent when the report is completed by the PPA. It should also indicate that the report on CSAS be acknowledged by the PM.

The issue of PMs being notified that a PPA would be observing was discussed. There is no automatic CSAS system that PMs are notified. Renfrewshire has no issue with PMs being notified of observations.

ASIP to take back to CHS

An update on the process for PMs is probably required now that we have a number of observations completed.

DAC will produce an update.

3. Comments from PM chair

A chair made contact with the DAC to discuss issues relating to the observation.

Q What happens if report is not acknowledged after 5 days?

The report is recorded on CSAS without an acknowledgement.

Q Who can read the report?

The report can be read by the AC and DAC and then by the PPA observing that PM on the next occasion.

Q How can a PM contribute to the report.

The PM can contribute to the report at the acknowledgement stage. Discussion between the PPA and the PM after the hearing session might be included by the PPA but the PM can add any information considered to be relevant in their acknowledgement statement eg context for a particular hearing.

Q How can PM provide feedback on the observation process?

Feedback on the process should be made by email to the AC / DAC

Q How can good practice be recognized?

PPAs should recognize good practice in the report – something that was already happening and we now have a means of identifying and sharing.

DAC will collate this.

4. Support for Inverclyde PPAs

AC has received request from AC in Inverclyde for assistance with new PPAs.

Inverclyde PPAs will be invited to attend hearings in Glen Lane with our PPAs and share their experience in an actual observation(s).

AC to report to Inverclyde AC

5. Reappointment interviews - best time

It was agreed that reappointment meeting for the large cohort of PMs(~45) will be held in March after the recruitment interviews. These could be carried out face to face or online as appropriate at the time.

6. CSAS feedback - Carried forward

7. PPA forum – carried forward





8. Moderation

Very brief discussion of this topic and carried forward to next meeting.

9. Next meeting

Tuesday 30th November 2021
Wallneuk Church 7.00pm

Agenda

		PAPERS
1.	Apologies	
2.	Minutes of last meeting	 Minutes 21 July 2021.doc
3.	Action Plan	 Renfrewshire Better Hearings Plan May 2
	Case Sampling of reports to be completed to assess quality, ensure they are multi-agency and provide sufficient information and justification for robust decision making - SCRA / SW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit to be completed by SW & SCRA Autumn 2021 	
	Consider front page summary for reports and continue to implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines – SW <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be kept on the Agenda of Child's Plan Steering Group 	
	Update and Implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines - SCRA / SW / Advocacy	 Guidance - Better Hearings - Renfrews
	Ensure reports provide sufficient information to implement new legislative provisions - SW / SCRA	
	Hearing reports submitted in good time to allow planning – SCRA / SW	
	New chairperson training to be considered to support and embed the Charter - CHS	
	New advocacy provision will be kept under review to monitor uptake and assess impact – SW / Advocacy	
	Attempt to gather some figures regarding the number of children attending hearings with advocacy representation - CHS	 Use of Child Advocacy Services in
	Initial feedback to be gathered via ongoing work with young people around The Promise - SW	
	Influence and Implementation new Sheriff Principal Practice Note – SCRA / Bar	
4.	Keeping number of attendees at a Hearing at a minimum	
5.	Quality assurance of referrals (in particular of referral screening groups)	

6.	Other ideas / what next...?	
	Date of next meeting	

		ACTIONS
1.	Present: Nicola Harkness; Andrew Mobbs; Jim Melrose; Michelle McCargo; Kevin Smith; Aine O'Byrne; Jane Scott; Ruth Wallace; Susan Clocherty; Karen Loney; Selwyn McAusland Apologies: Julie McTaggart; Derek Bramma; Pamela Wilson; Stuart Wilson	
2.	Minutes of last meeting - agreed	
3.	Action Plan	
	Case Sampling of reports to be completed to assess quality, ensure they are multi-agency and provide sufficient information and justification for robust decision making - SCRA / SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SW to lead an audit of reports in the autumn and this issue will be covered – SCRA to be involved Chronologies – training still to be rolled out Child's Plan Steering Group to manage this Safeguarder reports are audited and quality assured by Children 1st
	Consider front page summary for reports and continue to implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines – SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> still felt to be a positive idea worth considering further – Child's Plan Steering Group to manage this Michelle to contact East Dunbartonshire to see what progress they have made
	Update and Implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines - SCRA / SW / Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated version of the Guidelines attached with links to information on new legislation SW to try to gauge staff feedback on helpfulness of the guidelines and identify any areas for improvement Staff (Advocacy Services in particular) also to be encouraged to use the post-hearing section to ensure understanding of the process and gather feedback Andrew and Kevin to liaise on setting up a training session for new social workers on Children's Hearings
	Ensure reports provide sufficient information to implement new legislative provisions - SW / SCRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes have been put in place to ensure reports contain the information necessary for reporters and panel members to implement the new legislative provisions
	Hearing reports submitted in good time to allow planning – SCRA / SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration between SCRA and SW seems to be achieving positive results
	New chairperson training to be considered to support and embed the Charter – CHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHS continue to work on this – hoped this will lay the ground rules and expectations for the management of the hearing, how views will be heard and what behaviours are expected from participants – this should also include management of those only entitled to attend part of the Hearing

	New advocacy provision will be kept under review to monitor uptake and assess impact – SW / Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The multiagency Advocacy Group will continue to oversee this. • National Outcome Framework for Advocacy should provide additional data • SW to ensure an offer of advocacy is being made to every child – and to consider recording this, and the child's response, in the Child's Views Section of the Child's Plan • CHS to ensure children asked if advocacy has been offered
	Attempt to gather some figures regarding the number of children attending hearings with advocacy representation - CHS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCRA to carry out audit of advocacy provision at Children's Hearings over a short period • SCRA and Advocacy Services to try to collate data to provide a clearer picture of current numbers of children attending hearings with advocacy support
	Initial feedback to be gathered via ongoing work with young people around The Promise – SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial feedback to be gathered via Your Voice Your Way – this work is only just beginning • To continue to assess other methods of gathering children's views and feedback – including through possible technological solutions – ideally on a multiagency basis – to be picked up in the wider Promise work
	Influence and Implementation new Sheriff Principal Practice Note – SCRA / Bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No current significant issue re post-Covid backlog
4.	Keeping number of attendees at a Hearing at a minimum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This issue and its management should be covered by the CHS chair training mentioned above. • This meeting will continue to assess the impact of this on Hearings and on partner agencies
5.	Quality assurance of referrals (in particular of referral screening groups) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed in light of other priorities to c/f at this point 	c/f
6.	Other ideas / what next...?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health input to be arranged to panel members on Health Visitor Pathway and School Nursing provision • Education input to be arranged for panel members
	Date of next meeting	

Renfrewshire Better Hearings Action Plan – May 2021

Area for Improvement 1: Ensure High Quality Information Is Provided To Children's Hearings					
Areas for improvement	Key Improvement Actions	Owned By	Timescale		Measures of Success
			Start	End	
Before the Hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality assure reports provided for reporters and Children's Hearings. Communications and reports will be understood by children and young people Children's Views should always be available for Children's Hearings Information required to implement legislation to support sibling contact and participation will be available for Children's Hearings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Sampling of reports to be completed to assess quality, ensure they are multi-agency and provide sufficient information and justification for robust decision making. Consider front page summary for reports and continue to implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines Implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines Ensure reports provide sufficient information to implement new legislative provisions. 	SCRA / SW (Nicola / Michelle) SW (Michelle) SW / Advocacy (Kevin / Julie) SW / SCRA (Michelle / Andrew)	May 2021 May 2021 May 2021 May 2021	Oct 2021 Oct 2021 Jul 2021 Jul 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel members will be better prepared for hearings and have all the information they require All agencies will share ownership of single report Children and families will better understand hearing paperwork Hearing paperwork will clearly and accurately reflect the child's views Hearing paperwork will clearly and accurately identify those with a sibling relationship to the child and assess their contact with the child
Area for Improvement 2: The Experience of Children and Young People Attending Hearings Will Be Improved.					
Areas for improvement	Key Improvement Actions	Owned By	Timescale		Measures of Success
			Start	End	
Before the Hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children will be prepared and understand the process Children's Hearings will be well planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update and implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines Hearing reports submitted in good time to allow planning 	SCRA / SW (Nicola / Andrew / Kevin) SCRA / SW (Nicola / Karen)	May 2021 May 2021	Jul 2021 Jul 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children be less anxious and more engaged their Children's Hearing will be well prepared and planned
During the Hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hearings will be well managed and run on time. Children should feel able to participate in their own hearings and feel that their views are listened to. Children should feel like the most important person at their hearing Those attending hearings will support and encourage the participation of children and young people and ensure the atmosphere at the hearings remains calm and supportive Advocacy services will be available where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New chairperson training to be considered to support and embed the Charter New advocacy provision will be kept under review to monitor uptake and assess impact. Attempt to gather some figures regarding the number of children attending hearings with advocacy representation 	CHS (Derek / Jim / Pam) SW / Advocacy Services (Michelle / Julie) CHS (Derek)	May 2021 May 2021	Jul 2021 May 2020 May 2020 Oct 2021 F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer Hearings will overrun Hearing will be less acrimonious C & YP will report that their experience at Hearings has improved. Children and YP report that they feel their voices are really being heard by those involved in Children's Hearings Advocacy will be available to all children who wish to access it
After the Hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and YP will understand the outcome of their hearing and know their rights Gathering feedback from children and young people about their experience of the Hearing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the Hearing Preparation Guidelines Initial feedback to be gathered via ongoing work with young people around The Promise. 	SW (Kevin) SW (Ruth)	May 2021 May 2021	Jul 2021 Jul 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and YP will understand the outcomes of children's hearings and understand their rights. Children's views and ideas will influence further improvements
Area for Improvement 3: Delay in the Hearing process will be reduced.					
Areas for improvement	Key Improvement Actions	Owned By	Timescale		Measures of Success
			Start	End	
After the Hearing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimising delay at proof and appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence and Implementation new Sheriff Principal Practice Note 	SCRA (Andrew / Stuart)	May 2021	Dec 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The time between a grounds hearing and a hearing reaching a decision on established grounds will be reduced

Guidelines on preparing children and young people for attending a Children's Hearing

It is vitally important that children/young people attending a Hearing are well prepared and understand the process and what is likely to happen. The attached Checklist provides a framework for professionals preparing children/young people for attending a Children's Hearing and these Guidelines are to help ensure it is used effectively.

Children/young people should understand that their Hearing is an opportunity for them to get changes made that will improve their lives. They need to be supported to be able to take part in the decisions that will be taken about them. No child should attend their Children's Hearing without an understanding of what may happen.

If you are preparing a child/young person for a Children's Hearing and you have any queries not answered in these Guidelines, please contact the reporter or the child's social worker.

Pre-Hearing Checklist

1. I have explained what a Children's Hearing is and the powers it has.

Ensure that the child/young person understands what a Children's Hearing is and what powers it has to make decisions that may impact on the child. Useful resources can be accessed on the "Children" or "Young People" pages on the [SCRA website](#) including [The Children's Hearing System factsheet](#) and [Going to a Hearing leaflet](#)

2. I have explained the layout of the local hearing rooms and offered a pre-hearing visit.

Explain the physical set up of the Hearing centre and what the waiting rooms and hearing room will be like. [Click here to see the Hearing Centre in Paisley](#) and [click here for 360 images](#).

During Covid19 restrictions many Hearings are likely to take place virtually rather than face-to-face. Information on Virtual Hearings can be found [here](#) and in this [leaflet](#). Please let the Reporter know as soon as possible if there is a reason the child or family would prefer to attend a virtual or a face-to-face hearing.

If it is the first time the child/young person is attending a face-to-face Hearing, make sure they know that they can visit the Hearing centre beforehand. You can arrange a pre-hearing visit by contacting the Reporter on 0131 244 8201. [Click here to view the pre-hearing visit film](#)

3. I have explained who is likely to be there and why

Ensure the child/young person knows that at a Children's Hearing there will be three Panel Members who have been trained to make decisions in the best interests of the child and that they are independent from social work and SCRA. Explain who else will be there and why they have been invited.

Remember to discuss all professionals and relevant persons likely to attend and to explain that all relevant persons have a right to bring both a representative and a legal representative.

For younger children [Click here to view Barnardo's hearing avatars](#) For older young people [Click here to view videos explaining the roles of the professionals at the Hearing.](#)

Ensure the child/young person knows who their "relevant persons" are (i.e. the parent/s and/or person/s who have or have recently had significant involvement in the upbringing of the child or young person). If they/you are unsure who the relevant persons are, please contact the Reporter or the social worker for clarification. [Click here for more information about "relevant persons"](#)

Ensure all siblings and any persons with an ongoing sibling type relationship with whom the child has live have been identified and contact assessments completed for each of them. Ensure the child/young person understands which of these individuals may have a right to participate in the Hearings and why. [Click here for more information on siblings and participation individuals](#)

4. I have explained the type of hearing and the decisions that could be made.

Explain what type of Hearing the child/young person will be attending. Is it, for example a grounds or a review hearing, and why is it being held? Refer to the hearing notification to identify the type of Hearing (if you are unsure discuss with the reporter) and explain to the child/young person the purpose of this hearing.

Explain the possible decisions this specific Hearing could make – for example whether a CSO or ICSSO is necessary; where the child will live; whether there needs to be measures about contact with family members; whether a Safeguarder is needed – again, if you are unsure about this speak with a reporter. Explain that the Panel Members will hear from everyone present including the child/young person and consider all the reports before making a decision.

5. I have explained the multi-agency recommendations and the reasons for them.

All children should be aware of and helped to understand what is being recommended by the Local Authority (typically via their Social Worker) at their Hearing. Make sure you know the Local Authority's recommendation before speaking to the child/young person and ensure the child/young person understands the recommendation and the reasons for it.

6. If the child is over 12 I have gone through the child's plan

Children who are capable of understanding their reports (usually identified to be children over 12) have a right to see their reports. It is important that they are supported in reading and understanding the content of reports not only the recommendations. Be alert to children receiving copies of reports for the first time, general when they become 12, even if they have been attending Children's Hearings for some time.

7. Grounds Hearing - I have gone through the statement of grounds to ensure the child understands them (depending on age of child) and explained how these will be dealt with at the hearing

If it is a Grounds Hearing make sure that the child/young person has received, read and understood the Grounds for Referral (to their age and maturity). Grounds will usually be sent to children aged from 8.

Explain that the child/young person and the relevant persons will need to either accept or not accept (e.g. answer yes or no) the grounds at the hearing: statements of fact first then the overarching ground for referral – it is also possible to respond that you do not understand. Amendments may be made if everyone is in agreement and the amendments do not undermine the ground for referral. The grounds may be put to the child/young person separate from the relevant person(s) if the presence of the relevant person(s) would make it harder for them to respond to the grounds. They would need to ask for this at the start of the Hearing.

Explain if the child or relevant person(s) do not accept, or do not understand, the grounds it is likely the hearing will send the case to the sheriff for proof. Very occasionally, if compulsory measures of supervision are not felt to be necessary, the hearing may discharge the case.

If there are offence grounds, it is very important that the child/young person understands the implications for them under the Rehabilitation of Offenders' Act. This is a complex area and it is not appropriate for Reporters or Hearings to attempt to explain the details. If a child or young person requires further information on the implications for them, it would be better if an appointment were made for them to see a solicitor.

8. I have explained the child's right, and obligation to attend and requested a PHP if excusal is to be considered.

Emphasise to the child/young person the Hearing is about them, that they are the most important person in the room and the Panel want to hear their views. They have not only a right but an obligation to attend and should normally attend unless excused.

A Children's Hearing may excuse the child from attending if satisfied that the attendance of the child at the hearing would place the child's physical, mental or moral welfare at risk, or taking account of the child's age and maturity, that the child would not be capable of understanding what happens at the hearing or that part of the hearing.

If it is considered that a child/young person should not attend a Pre-Hearing Panel (PHP) can be requested and arranged. A PHP takes the form of a Children's Hearing with Panel Members and the Reporter but will not have a full discussion of the case, it will only focus on the purpose of the request. The child can give their views on the request in person or in writing [Click here to see the "Your Views" sheet](#)

Anyone with a right to attend a hearing can now request to attend by electronic means. [Click here to see "Briefing Sheet for Social Workers"](#)

While Covid-19 restrictions remain, a PHP is not needed to excuse a child from their hearing, as the obligation to attend has been removed automatically. You should however continue to encourage a child to attend to give their views and participate in the decisions being made.

9. I have considered, and where appropriate offered, advocacy support and explained the child's right to bring a representative and/or legal rep.

Make sure the child/ young person knows they have a right to take along a representative or an Advocacy worker and a solicitor to support them at the Hearing. Help them to think about who that might be.

Explain to the child/young person the role of an Advocacy worker and how they might support the child/young person before during and after the Hearing. The Referral Pathway for Advocacy Services in Renfrewshire is attached [here](#). If a young person is not initially keen this can be revisited at a later date and advocacy should always be promoted and discussed.

A child may also instruct a Legal representative and should be entitled to legal aid to fund this. The Scottish Legal Aid Board can help find a lawyer in your area, their number is 0131 226 7061 , and their website is www.slab.org.uk. The Scottish Child Law Centre also provides free legal advice to children and young people. They can be contacted on their Freephone number on 0800 328 8970, emailed at enquiries@sclc.org.uk or visit their website at www.sclc.org.uk

10. I have sought and recorded the child's views and explored how best the child might be able to participate in the Hearing

Emphasise to the child/young person the Hearing is about them, that they are the most important person in the room and the Panel want to hear their views. Explain that their views are important and will be listened to. It is also important to explain that the Hearing is obliged to make a decision that is in the best interests of the child/young person, which isn't necessarily the same thing that the child/young person wants.

Explain there are many different ways to provide their views ahead of the Hearing. The child/young person should be encouraged to fill in the "All About Me" form. Links to the forms are below.

[click here](#)
12 and over



The form is titled "All about me" and includes a pink cloud icon. It contains the following text: "It's important that you tell the people at your hearing how you are feeling, and how you feel about the things that are happening to you. It's important that you tell them how you feel about the things that are happening to you. It's important that you tell them how you feel about the things that are happening to you." Below this text are three numbered questions: 1. How do you feel about going to a hearing, and how would you like to be involved? 2. What do you want to say to the people at your hearing? 3. How do you feel about the things that are happening to you?

[click here](#)
11 and under



The form is titled "All about me" and includes a cartoon character icon. It contains the following text: "It's important that you tell the people at your hearing how you are feeling, and how you feel about the things that are happening to you. It's important that you tell them how you feel about the things that are happening to you. It's important that you tell them how you feel about the things that are happening to you." Below this text are three numbered questions: 1. How do you feel about going to a hearing, and how would you like to be involved? 2. What do you want to say to the people at your hearing? 3. How do you feel about the things that are happening to you?

Suggest they write down what they want to say beforehand or get someone else to write down what they want to say. Help them to work out what is best for them. It is helpful if the views of a child/young person can be included in their own words.

Discuss what might be the best way to share these views with the Hearing. Explain that it might be possible for them to speak to the panel members on their own or with their representative or another trusted person if this would be helpful. However, remind them that the gist of anything discussed will still need to be shared with the larger group.

Discuss whether they might wish to be excused from part(s) of their Hearing and how to indicate and request this. In certain circumstances it may be possible for young people to participate in their Hearing through video link if available. This will generally be where there is a good reason to not attend in person or electronic attendance will enhance effective participation. If there are other barriers to the child's participation e.g. special needs /autism consider what measure can be put in place to mitigate this.

11. I have ensured the child understand their rights.

Share the [Going to a Children's Hearing - Your Rights leaflet](#) and ensure the child understands their rights and any limitations that might be placed on these there is also a short video animation you can view [here](#). For example, it will ultimately be for the panel members to decide who should be permitted to attend the Hearing and if any Hearing should be continued. Although children/young people can ask to speak to the panel members on their own relevant persons also have a right to attend and, if they are unwilling to leave voluntarily, can only be excluded if the panel members are satisfied the presence of the relevant person is preventing the hearing from obtaining the views of the child, or is causing, or is likely to cause, significant distress to the child; and that after any exclusion has ended the hearing must explain to the relevant person what has taken place in their absence (s. 76).

12. I have considered any hearing management or health and safety risks and let SCRA know if special arrangements need to be made.

Ensure you have discussed and assessed any hearing management or health and safety risks. Let SCRA know if special arrangements need to be made e.g. if a police presence or separate waiting rooms is required. Do parties require to arrive or leave separately? How do they intend to travel to Hearing Centre?

Please assist them to arrange travel if required. Are there any specific dates or times that should be avoided as something important is happening, for example a special trip, exams or prelims?

Post-Hearing Checklist

1. I have explained the decision and what this means

Explain that the child/young person can speak to their social worker or the reporter after the Hearing if there's anything they don't understand or they need any clarification regarding what the decisions will mean for them.

Make sure the child/young person knows that they will be sent the decisions and reasons in writing and that if they have any further questions they can ask their social worker or contact the Reporter.

2. I have explained rights of appeal and review

Make sure the child/young person is aware of their rights of appeal and how they can be supported to appeal their decision if they feel it is not justified. If an order is made, continued or varied ensure the child/young person knows they can request a review Hearing to reconsider their CSO after 3 months.

3. I have sought feedback

Gather the views of the child/young person about how they feel the Children's Hearing worked for them. What went well? What could have been done better? What was especially difficult? How might we do things differently to improve their experience?

We are continuing to work on a technological solution to gather and collate these views (possibly an App), but meantime please attempt to gather feedback and share any areas for improvement with the relevant professional or agency.

Better Hearings in Renfrewshire



Pre-Hearing Checklist

	initials	date
1. I have explained what a Children's Hearing is and the powers it has		
2. I have explained the difference between F2F and Virtual Hearings, the layout of the local hearing rooms and offered a pre-hearing visit		
3. I have explained who is likely to be there and why		
4. I have explained the type of hearing and the decisions that could be made		
5. I have explained the multi-agency recommendations and the reasons for them		
6. If the child is over 12 I have gone through the child's plan		
7. Grounds Hearing - I have gone through the statement of grounds to ensure the child understand them (depending on age of child) and explained how these will be dealt with at the hearing		
8. I have explained the child's right, and obligation to attend and requested a PHP if excusal is to be considered.		
9. I have considered, and where appropriate offered, advocacy support and explained the child's right to bring a representative and/or legal rep.		
10. I have sought and recorded the child's views and explored how best the child might be able to participate in the Hearing		
11. I have ensured the child understand their rights.		
12. I have considered any health and safety risks and let SCRA know if special arrangements need to be made.		

Completed (date) _____ by (signed) _____

Post-Hearing Checklist

	initials	date
1. I have explained the decision and what this means		
2. I have explained rights of appeal and review		
3. I have sought feedback		

Completed (date) _____ by (signed) _____

Use of Child Advocacy Services in Children's Hearings: Renfrewshire

September 2021

Section 122 of the Children's (Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 deals with children's advocacy services. It came into force in full on 21 November 2020.

Section 122(2) requires the chair of any Children's Hearing to inform the child of the availability of children's advocacy services unless the chair, taking account of the age and maturity of the child, considers it would not be appropriate to do so.

At the Better Hearings meeting of 28th July 2021 it was agreed that SCRA would undertake a short sampling exercise of advocacy use by children within Hearings. The purpose of the exercise was to gain a better understanding of the use of independent child advocacy services in Hearings to help inform future discussions.

Accordingly, between 9th August and 27th August 2021 inclusive, the Reporter who was in each Hearing completed a sampling tool and the results have subsequently been analysed. This report provides the detail of the analysis.

Sample Size

During the sample period, there were 60 individual child cases at Children's Hearings. This sample size covered the spectrum of the Hearing modes available and can be broken down as follows:-

Hearing Mode	Number of Hearings
Face-to Face	33
Virtual only	23
Face-to-Face/ Virtual blend	4

For the blended Hearings 2 were with expected attendance of the child virtually and 2 in-person giving a 35:25 Face-to-Face: Virtual Split (58% Face to Face: 42% Virtual).

The age range of the children was also recorded and broken down as follows:-

Age Profile	No. of Children
Under 5	11
5-12	27
12-16	15
16-18	7

Attendance of Children

Of the 60 Hearings, children were absent for 73% of their cases, present only on 16 occasions (approx. 27%):-

Type of Attendance	Number Attending
Present – In person	9
Present – Virtually	7
Absent	44

This can be analysed further to say that children were in attendance 26% (9/35) of their face-to-face Hearings and 28% of virtual Hearings (7/25).

It should be noted that during this sample period there was no obligation on children, or indeed relevant persons, to attend the Hearings due to the current Coronavirus provision. These provisions are set to continue until at least March 2022 (unlike other Children's Hearing Coronavirus provisions).

Offer of Advocacy

During the sample period Reporters were asked to record the response during the Hearing as to whether the child has been offered advocacy services prior to the Children's Hearing taking place. On occasion the responses were initially unclear and further investigation became necessary. The results as recorded by the Reporter were-

Offer of Advocacy	Number of responses
Offered & Accepted	22
Offered & Rejected	12
Not offered	26

Where a reason for no offer of independent advocacy support having been made during the Hearing was given this was recorded on the sampling tool. This information has not been separately verified. Some of the reasons that were identified and relevant for the purpose of the report included-

- In 11 cases the child was considered too young (under 5);
- In 2 cases the child was considered unable to instruct an advocate due to their disabilities;
- In 1 case the social worker considered it inappropriate to offer the child (aged 8) advocacy as she had too much going on in life and additional person would complicate matters;
- In 1 case the social worker knew the child would use other supports so didn't offer advocacy in addition to those supports;
- In 4 cases the Hearing was deferred and the issue of advocacy did not arise at the point decision made – there were 10 cases including these cases where the Reporter noted the Hearing members failed to discuss advocacy services for the child at any point in Hearing.

On one occasion it was noted that during the Hearing the child (13 year old) mother said she only found out about option of advocacy the week before the Hearing and thought child did not need this (recorded as offered – rejected). In this case the Children's Hearing stated that child has a right to decide upon their own advocacy provision and it was unclear as to whether the child has been spoken to independently about advocacy. The Hearing requested the local Children's Services Department to review this as a matter of urgency.

Advocacy Worker Presence

During the sample period Reporters were asked to record whether there was an advocacy worker present at the Hearings after advocacy services had been accepted.

Offer of Advocacy	Number of responses
Worker Present following acceptance of Advocacy	18
Worker Absent following acceptance of Advocacy	4

Of the 4 occasions where no advocate was present 2 had written views submitted in advance, 2 did not.

There were two occasions where an advocate was involved, the child was present but the advocate was not in attendance. Of those two cases one the child was able to speak for themselves and on the other it was one of the two cases where written submissions were available to the Hearing in advance.

There was one occasion not included above where the child attended with other support workers: Includem & RADAR – the Hearing however did not enquire in relation to the child having been offered advocacy support.

On a separate occasion there was an advocate was allowed to be present although the child had decided he did not want advocacy services any more.

Written Submissions of Views

During the sample period Reporters were asked to record whether the panel had any written or audio/video submissions from the child outlining their views regardless of whether they had any advocacy workers:-

Availability	Number of responses
Written or Video Submission Available to Hearing	9
No written or video Submission Available to Hearing	51

In the 9 cases where written or video submission were available the child was only also present on 2 occasions.

There were 22 children who had accepted advocacy services – meaning 13 cases had advocacy workers but no written submissions (59%) for consideration by the Hearing for the start of the Hearing.

SCRA Update on Advocacy

“Non-instructed advocacy” has come up in discussions, and in particularly during a sessions run by Children 1st. SCRA’s position is that all advocacy support at Children’s Hearings must be instructed advocacy and ‘non-instructed’ advocates should not be allowed into Hearings. SCRA is issuing an updated practice note to all Reporters which will also include confirmation that the reporter may give date/time/place of a Hearing to an advocacy worker we know is instructed. Criteria will be set for what is necessary before we can be satisfied they are instructed. Reporters will also be reminded of their role in ensuring Hearing Members comply with the requirements of section 122 of the 2011 Act.

Separately, following SCRA has lodged an appeal to the Sheriff Appeal Court against a decision made by a Sheriff in Glasgow. The Sheriff considered that the chair's failure to inform the children (who were not present) of advocacy services to be a material procedural irregularity. As at the time of writing this report SCRA is awaiting a copy of the stated case (as the Sheriff did not issue a note) and will update Reporters in due course on the case progress. SCRA continues to work with CHS regarding compliance with the statutory provision within Children’s Hearings.

Andrew Neil Mobbs
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SCRA (North Strathclyde)

