

Business and Corporate Parenting Plan

2021 - 2022



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OUR PLANS FOR 2021-22 AT A GLANCE



Our main priorities and activities for the year will be:

PRIORITY 1: COVID-19 recovery

- Work with our partner agencies to monitor and manage the recovery of the hearings system.
- Continue to keep our volunteer community updated through regular communications.
- Deliver online pre-service learning to trainee Panel Members.
- Pilot new digital hearings platforms and of ways of working.
- Provide devices and support to volunteers for virtual hearings.
- Monitor the use of emergency legislation in hearings.
- Take care of our staff and volunteers through wellbeing packages and initiatives.

PRIORITY 2: Implementing Legislative Change

- Deliver work to give further effect to the UNCRC in our work.
- Carry out activities to ensure hearings are compliant with incoming legislation around siblings rights.
- Ensure our Panel Members understand the change in the Age of Criminal Responsibility.

PRIORITY 3: Establishing our 'Promise Programme'

- Engage our volunteer community to quality assure the voice the child is heard and siblings are included in hearings.
- Work with multi-agency partners to ensure Panel Members have what they need to avoid delay in decision making.
- Introduce new Programme Management methods to CHS

PRIORITY 4: Embedding our Digital Platform

- Begin to develop our future strategy for using digital tools in hearings and for volunteer roles.
- Identify on-going improvements and developments to our digital system.
- Improve the Management Information reports available to us and how we can use our digital system to share data with SCRA.

INTRODUCTION



In the last year, things have changed substantially: from coronavirus challenging us to reimagine some of the most essential elements of how we operate, making us adapt and identify new ways of working, to the Independent Care Review creating The Promise to deliver its work for infants, children and young people.

Throughout the unprecedented year that 2020/1 was, our focus has always been to ensure that Panel Members continue to make high-quality decisions that put the child's best interest at their heart, in a rapidly changing legal context. I am hugely grateful to all, both within CHS and from our partner organisations, who have enabled that to happen.

Looking forward, it is important to protect the gains that we have made; different ways of doing things, new and strengthened relationships, and a shift in how we support one another. We must continue to make improvements that will help us deliver meaningful change for our infants, children and young people.

Our Promise Programme, that we will continue to develop this year, will do just that, delivering meaningful change for children and young people attending hearings, that we hope will help them to feel supported, safe and respected.

It is also important for me to acknowledge that as well as the gains that have been made, this last year has come at a cost. In many instances that cost has been, in one way or another, human. Our volunteers and staff have delivered a volume and complexity of work unlike any other year before. While the uncertainty of our current situation, and the personal and professional strains that it causes, is still present, we must be careful not to run before we can walk.

With all of these factors in mind, we have taken time to refocus our priorities for the coming year. We will therefore have a number of key priorities for 2021-22:

- **COVID-19 recovery** – continuing to ensure children and young people are receiving the best possible hearings and decisions in ways that safe and responsible. We must make sure our volunteer community is supported to deliver on this.
- **Implementing legislative change** – we will see important legislative change on the rights of children and their brothers and sisters, and we must be ready to embrace this.
- **Establishing our 'Promise Programme'** – delivering on The Promise, we will work at both a local and national level, to implement lasting change that will improve the experiences of children, young people and their families attending hearings. We will spend this year laying the ground work for its development, including making

improvements in strategy, policy and practice that arise out of implementation of legislation.

- **Embedding our digital platform** – with our new digital system now in place, we will focus on making sure it is delivering exactly what and how we need it to.

These priorities have formed the basis for the actions identified in this plan. But we should also expect this to be another year where uncertainty and the need to adapt are still very much present. This plan therefore represents our understanding at a point in time and focusses primarily on the first half of the year. Over the course of 2021-22, we may need to change our expectations and to modify our delivery of work. We will do this by keeping the actions in this plan under review and, if required, publishing updated or additional plans through the year.

Despite the challenges which may lie ahead, I look forward to another year of working alongside CHS volunteers and staff and professionals from other agencies and organisations. And, of course, I also look forward to working with our children and young people, who are our motivation to make lasting change within the children's hearings system.



Elliot Jackson
National Convener
& CEO

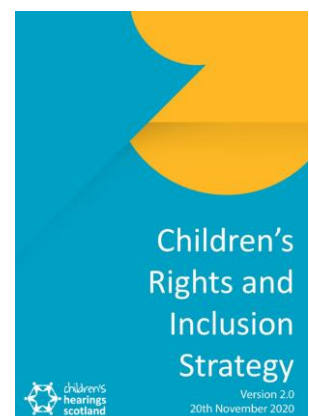
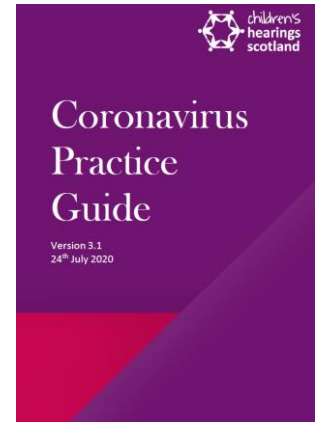
2020-21 IN REVIEW



Both despite, and due to, the challenges and situations presented by COVID-19, we delivered a wide range of work during 2020-21 in exceptionally difficult circumstances.

Some major achievements included:

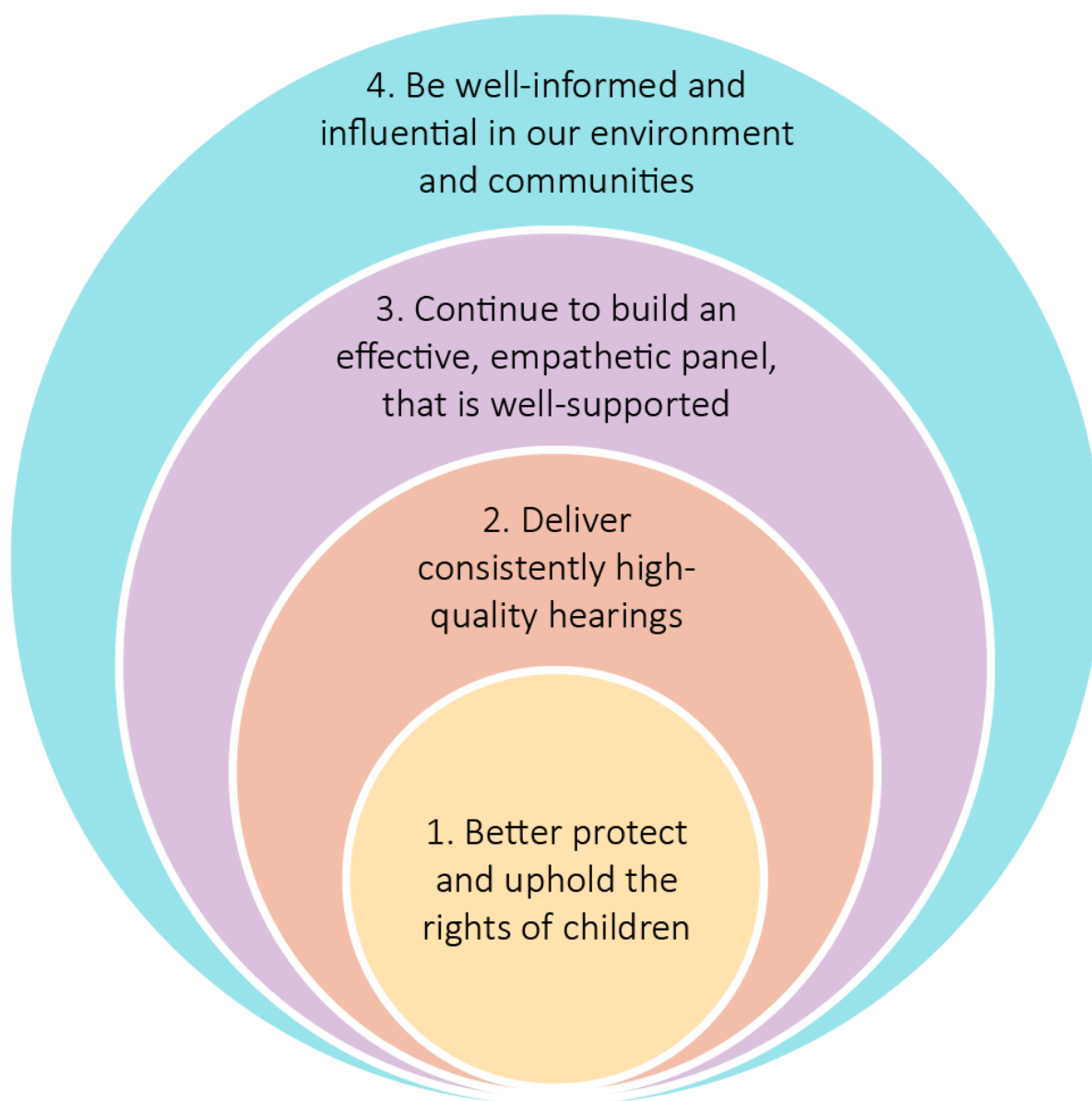
- Working with partner agencies to create a new way of working through **virtual hearings**
- Participating in new **strategic forums and groups** within children's services and the hearing's system
- Developing new training focussed on '**Hearings in Lockdown**'
- Issuing practice guidance through the '**Coronavirus Practice Guide**'
- Moving **pre-service training** online
- Helping CELCIS recruit Panel Members in to **new research** on virtual hearings
- Collaborating with SCRA to produce **bi-monthly reports** monitoring use of emergency legislation
- Establishing a **CHS Resilience Group**, and introducing a **weekly meeting** with our Area Conveners.
- Acquiring and issuing 'Chromebook' **devices** to volunteers to enable participation in virtual hearings
- Moving all CHS to fully remote working, and introduced new staff **wellbeing initiatives**, driven by our Staff Forum.
- Issuing a major update to our **Practice and Procedure Manual**
- Making training and guidance available on new **Advocacy** provisions
- Launching our new **digital system** across our whole community
- Launching a new online training course on **Permanence**
- Launching a new online training course on **Child Development**
- Welcoming a new **Rights & Inclusion Coordinator** to CHS
- Publishing our 2020-2023 **Children's Rights and Inclusion Strategy**
- Preparing our first '**Progressing Rights**' report on our efforts to further UNCRC in our work
- Creating a **device lending library** to enable participation in hearings
- Running a series of 8 online '**Connecting our Community**' virtual events
- Issuing a number of **recognition rewards**
- Launching a **volunteer wellbeing** package, including resources for flu vaccines and access to expert support and advice through Health Assured.
- Running our biggest ever **recruitment campaign**



OUR STRATEGIC THEMES 2020-2023



In our new corporate plan, *Our Strategic Outlook 2020-2023*, we set out what our priorities for the next three years will be. We call these our “Strategic Themes” and together, they set out an ambitious, improvement-driven direction for CHS that places children’s rights at its centre. Our Strategic Themes are:



STRATEGIC THEMES – AN OVERVIEW



Theme 1. Better protect and uphold the rights of children:

Rights-based working is built in to Scotland's children's hearings system. Decisions are required to be made in the best interests of the child and it gives children and young people the right to have a say in decisions about them. But we recognise that we have a responsibility to integrate the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in to our work and this will form a major strand of our effort over the coming years.

Theme 2. Deliver consistently high-quality hearings:

We want the hearings experience to be the best it can be and produce sound decisions which move infants, children, young people and their families forward, positively, in their journey. We want children's hearings to be seen as an exemplar of empathetic, loving and respectful practice that promote dignity and avoid stigma.

Theme 3. Continue to build an effective and empathetic panel, that is well-supported:

Central to the quality of hearings is Scotland's Children's Panel. They must be child and family focused, knowledgeable and skilled to undertake their role and understand the range of experiences that infants, children and young people may have and the impact of those experiences. To do this, the Children's Panel must be supported with not only the technical aspect of their role, but also the personal effect of making significant decisions.

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

Over the coming years, we want to develop not only hearings, but also how we deliver our work and how we operate within the wider system and sector. We want the experience of participation in hearings to be one part of seamless, targeted services that are driven by the needs and promotion of wellbeing for children and their families. We will look to evidence – from data, research, but also from what we are told by people with experience of hearings - to under-pin our decision making and adopt structured approaches to pilots and innovations. We will also look for opportunities to lead change within the care system and engage actively with our partners.

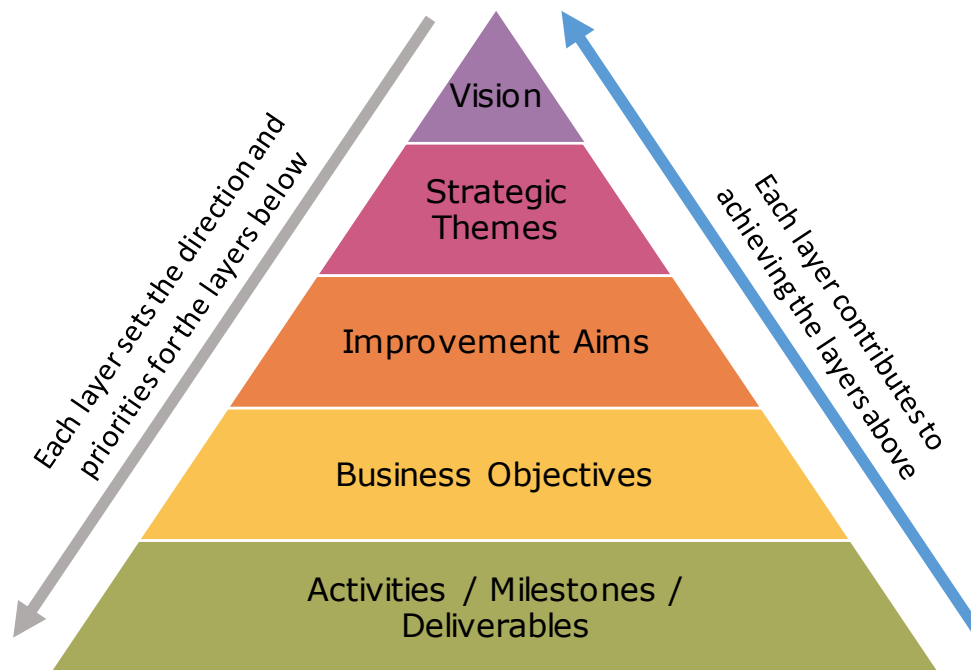
We believe these Themes represent an ambitious future for CHS, children's hearings, and those who come in to contact with hearings. We are committed to working with partners, and with the implementation structures of the Independent Care Review, to see them realised.

Pages 13-17 of this Business Plan outline the actions we are taking in 2021-22 to make progress toward achieving these Themes.

OUR PLANNING APPROACH



To aid our planning, we have turned the strategy outlined in our corporate plan in to action through a number of operational 'layers'. As we move down the layers, the level of detail increases and their content becomes more action-focused:



- **Vision** – this is the future state we are working towards:

“A forward looking and evolving children’s hearings system, working as a community to ensure infants, children and young people are cared for, protected and their views are heard respected and valued.”

- **Strategic Themes** – these are our big, multi-year priorities. Our themes, set out in our corporate plan 2020-23.
- **Improvement Aims** – these are the major improvement-focused priorities within each Strategic Theme. Each aim has specific measures, some of which will be organisational KPIs. These Improvement Aims are delivered through our Promise Programme.
- **Business Objectives** – these are the clusters of projects or programmes that are required to deliver our aims.
- **Activities / Milestones / Deliverables** – these are the individual tasks and projects that make up a Business Objective.

OUR 'PROMISE PROGRAMME'



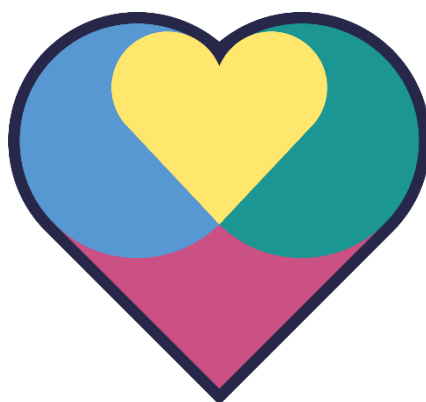
CHS will work collaborative to co-produce transformational improvement to the experience of children and their families when they participate in a hearings. In doing this we will positively contribute to short term outcomes and long term life long wellbeing.

We will work with The Promise team, people with lived experience and those agencies that provide support and protection to children. We will do this by engaging nationally and strategically with government, our Board and other senior leaders, underpin change with policy and support for legislative change, and ensure our organisational structures and the support to the people within it are able to deliver the change we need.

We will put in place timescales and milestones for delivery of the programme, gather evidence from people with lived experience and other improvement measures to ensure we are making a difference aligned with The Promise, and challenge ourselves, and others, in our plans and delivery.

Working alongside The Promise, principles of service redesign, and improvement frameworks, we will understand how our own service provision impacts on the wellbeing of children and their families, celebrate and promote with consistency those elements that people with lived experience tell us work, and change where it does not.

This work will be developed throughout 2021, and in line with The Promise timeline we will forecast and schedule a programme of work for the future.



#KeepThePromise



CORPORATE PARENTING



As Corporate Parents under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, CHS and the National Convener have responsibilities to make sure our attention and resources are focused on upholding the rights, safeguarding, and promoting the wellbeing of Scotland's looked after children and care leavers.

The specific duties on Corporate Parents are to:



Be alert to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people.



Assess the needs of looked after children and young people for the services and support we provide.



Promote the interests of looked after children and young people.



Provide opportunities for looked after children and young people to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.



Take appropriate action to ensure looked after children and young people **access** these opportunities and make use of our services and support.



Take any other action appropriate to **improve** our functions to meet the needs of looked after children and young people.

Throughout this plan, we have identified the actions we plan to undertake in order to fulfil our Corporate Parenting duties by using our heart symbol and a letter, according to the list above.

We monitor our Corporate Parenting actions as part of our in-year performance management and report on our progress against these actions in our annual Impact Report.

OUR PLANS - COVID-19 RECOVERY



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
1	Work closely with SCRA nationally and locally to monitor and manage the recovery of the hearings system, matching capacity with need - <i>Area Support; SMT; Resilience Group</i>	Strategic and operational collaborative activities with colleagues, locally and nationally	Progress to end Q2, initially
2	Keep our volunteer community updated on what the changing environment means for hearings and recovery through effective communication – <i>Communications; Senior Management Team (SMT)</i>	Produce and distribute “Coronavirus Updates” to the whole CHS volunteer community	Progress to end Q2, initially
		Communicate specifically to our Area Conveners, through a programme of regular calls	Progress to end Q2, initially
3	Ensure we understand the impact of COVID-19 on hearings by monitoring and reporting on our use of emergency legislation – <i>Quality & Performance</i>	Record data on Panel Composition and supply to Scottish Government	Progress for as long as legislation in force
		Produce supplementary data reports in partnership with SCRA	Progress for as long as legislation in force
4	Improve the capacity of the hearings system to carry out any outstanding hearings and handle future need by completing the recruitment and training of new Panel Members – <i>Recruitment and Retention; Training</i>	Complete interviews and pre-service checks	Complete by end Q1
		Deliver online pre-service training	Complete by end Q1
5	Re-instate observations by Panel Practice Advisors to quality assure hearings practice and conduct – <i>Resilience Group</i>	Confirm route to return and support / guidance required	Complete by end Q1
		Begin to implement the route the return	Complete by end Q1
6	In collaboration with SCRA, improve the virtual hearings experience by running pilots testing new platforms and way of working - <i>Digital</i>	Delivery of pilots across Scotland	Complete by end Q1
		Evaluation of pilot and recommendations for future	Complete by end Q1



OUR PLANS - COVID-19 RECOVERY continued



	Objective and Owner	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
7	Ensure CHS staff are supported to undertake their work safely and productively, while managing their wellbeing effectively during restrictions – <i>HR & OD; SMT; Staff Forum</i>	Undertake relevant actions to enable a phased return to the use of the CHS main office at Thistle House	Progress to Q2 as/if restrictions allow
		Undertake relevant activities to promote staff wellbeing through the Staff Forum	Progress to end Q2, initially
8	Support our volunteers to continue to deliver hearings during restriction, while looking after their wellbeing – <i>Area Support; Resilience Group; Digital</i>	Continue to promote and develop our volunteer wellbeing package	Progress to end Q4
		Continue the provision of, and support with, devices across the community	Progress to end Q4
		Work alongside ASTs to understand and manage capacity to deliver hearings	Progress to end Q2, initially
9	Contribute to whole-system recovery by working with partners at national multi-agency leadership groups and forums focussed on hearings and children's services recovery – <i>SMT</i>	Participation in multi-agency recovery groups and meetings	Progress to end Q2, initially



OUR PLANS - THEME 1: BETTER PROTECT AND UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
10	Under our Promise Programme , carry out activities to give further effect to the UNCRC in our work, in line with its incorporation in to law – <i>Area Support; Practice</i>	Implement UNCRC by delivering learning and development to all volunteers	Progress to end Q4
		Focus on ensuring the views of the child on decisions that are made in hearings are included in the Record of proceedings from a hearing	Progress to end Q4
		Engage Panel Practice Advisors (PPAs) to quality assure the voice of the child in heard in hearings (or that of their carer if they are unable to verbally express their views)	Progress to end Q4
		Area Support Improvement Partners work with multiagency partners to ensure PMs have the information they need to avoid delay in decision making	Progress to end Q4
11	Under our Promise Programme , carry out activities to ensure hearings are compliant with incoming legislation around siblings rights – <i>Area Support; Practice</i>	Implement the principles of the Children (Scotland) 2020 Act through learning and development delivered to volunteers through the CHS Learning Academy	Complete by end Q2
		Focus on ensuring the inclusion of brothers and sisters is accurately reflected in written reasons for decision	Complete by end Q4
		Engage PPAs to quality assure the inclusion of brothers and sisters in hearings (or that of their carer if unable to verbally express their view).	Progress to end Q4
		Area Support Improvement Partners work with multiagency partners to ensure PMs have the information they need to avoid delay in decision making	Progress to end Q4








OUR PLANS - THEME 1: BETTER PROTECT AND UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN continued



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
12	Ensure our Panel Members understand the change in the Age of Criminal Responsibility – <i>Area Support; Practice</i>	Implement legislative changes through learning and development with support from the CHS Learning Academy	As required by legislation timescales
13	Review how Panel Members ensure children are supported to express their views and opinions by implementing the national Advocacy Scheme in children's hearings - <i>Practice</i>	Review the implementation and Panel Member experience of advocacy by gathering feedback	As recovery allows
14	Improve how we deliver on our responsibilities as a rights duty holder by implementing our Rights & Inclusion Strategy in an inclusive and co-designed way – <i>Rights & Inclusion</i>	Identify activities for delivery during the year	Complete by end Q1
		Deliver appropriate activities during the year	Progress to end Q4

OUR PLANS - THEME 2: DELIVER CONSISTENTLY HIGH-QUALITY HEARINGS



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
 15	With partners, continue to evaluate and improve the virtual and 'hybrid' hearings experiences – <i>Resilience Group</i>	Undertake evaluation activities and improvement actions	Complete by end Q1
 16	Under our Promise Programme , carry out activities to improve the extent to which hearings are trauma-responsive – <i>Area Support</i>	Development of learning opportunities for our volunteer community	Progress up to end Q4
		Apply improvement methodology to trauma-responsive developments	Progress up to end Q4
 17	Have an accountable high-quality hearings system by progressing an effective and efficient complaints process – <i>Information Governance</i>	Disseminating the process across our community	Complete by end Q1
		Delivering training and support	Complete by end Q2
 18	Keep Panel Members equipped with accurate, up-to-date information and advice to be able to make effective and timely decisions - <i>Practice</i>	Issue guidance focussed on good quality hearings and decision making	Progress up to Q4
 19	Collaborate as a key partner in locally-driven projects to improve hearings environments and experiences – <i>Area Support</i>	Attendance and involvement in groups and projects as appropriate	Progress to end Q4

OUR PLANS - THEME 3: CONTINUE TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE, EMPATHETIC PANEL, THAT IS WELL-SUPPORTED



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
20	Promote the contribution of our volunteers through a dedicated volunteer recognition campaign - <i>Communications</i>	Volunteer recognition campaign during Volunteers Week (1st - 7th June)	Complete by end Q1
21	Continue to work with the CHS Learning Academy to offer innovate solutions for learning during restrictions and beyond - <i>Training</i>	Development and delivery of the CHS Learning Academy contract and training provision	Progress to end Q4
22	Connect and include our volunteer community by running a programme of engagement events across Scotland – <i>Communications; Area Support</i>	First wave of events	Complete by end Q1
		Second wave of events	Complete by end Q2
23	Work with our community to implement Area Plans that identify key activities for each area based on national and local priorities – <i>Area Support; Quality & Performance</i>	Support ASTs to develop local Area Plans	Complete by end Q1
		Support ASTs to monitor and review the plans	Progress to end Q4
24	Understand recruitment activities needed that respond to recovery and longer-term requirements of hearings – <i>Recruitment & Retention</i>	Review the changing volunteer situation, and take recruitment action as necessary	Progress to end Q2
25	Deliver on our equality and diversity ambitions through the implementation of our Equality Diversity & Inclusion Strategy – <i>HR & OD; ED&I</i>	Identify activities from strategy for delivery through the year	Complete by end Q1
		Undertake appropriate actions	Progress to end Q4




OUR PLANS - THEME 3: CONTINUE TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE, EMPATHETIC PANEL, THAT IS WELL-SUPPORTED continued



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Milestones / Activities	Timescales / Targets
26	Assess the device support needed to undertake volunteer roles and engage with digital tools effectively - <i>Digital</i>	Carry out evaluation of devices pilot	Complete by end Q3
27	Retain Panel Members by ensuring they are reappointed in an efficient and effective way – <i>Recruitment & Retention</i>	Carry out necessary reappointment processes	Complete by end Q1
28	Retain AST Members by ensuring they are reappointed in an efficient and effective way - <i>Recruitment & Retention</i>	Carry out necessary reappointment processes	Progress up to Q4

OUR PLANS - THEME 4: BE WELL-INFORMED AND INFLUENTIAL IN OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES



	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Activities / Milestones	Timescales / Targets
 29	Active contribution to the improvement and recovery of the sector through strategic and advisory groups – <i>SMT; Area Support</i>	Involvement with key national strategic groups e.g. CHIP; YJIB	Progress to end Q4
		Involvement with key local groups e.g. Corporate Parenting boards; GIRFEC groups	Progress to end Q4
30	Embed our new digital systems across our community and identify on-going improvements and developments to support the needs of CHS volunteers and staff - <i>Digital</i>	Develop and improve management information reports at a variety of operational levels	Progress to end Q4
		Begin to develop future strategy for using digital in hearings, with partners	Complete by end Q2
 31	Contribute to driving change in the sector through collaboration with The Promise , as required – <i>SMT</i>	Undertake engagement and collaborative work as required and appropriate	Progress up to Q4
 32	Connect with, and influence, knowledge development in the sector by being involved in research – <i>Quality & Performance; Practice</i>	Participate in external research advisory groups as appropriate	Progress up to end Q4
		Advertise research recruitment opportunities within the CHS community as they arise	Progress up to end Q4

OUR PLANS – ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STAFF SUPPORT



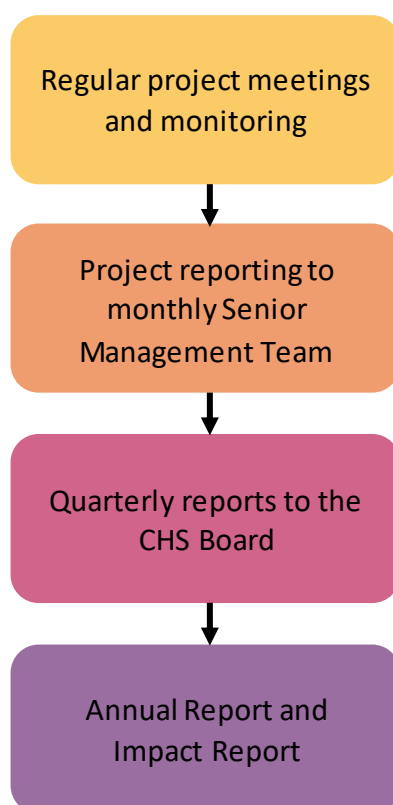
	Objective and <i>Owner</i>	Activities / Milestones	Timescales / Targets
33	Support and enhance our staff through a new People Strategy – <i>HR & OD</i>	Launch strategy	Complete by end Q1
		Implement appropriate actions from strategy, focussing initially on wellbeing approaches	Progress up to Q4
34	Establish a system of programme management to effectively manage and monitor delivery of projects and programmes – <i>Area Support; Quality & Performance</i>	Select software as appropriate	Complete by end Q1
		Implement software across the Promise Programme delivery	In line with Promise Programme
		Scope use of software across the rest of the organisation, and implement as appropriate	In line with above milestone
35	Fulfil our equality and diversity responsibilities through the delivery of our Equalities Outcomes – <i>HR & OD</i>	Identify activities from Equalities Outcomes for delivery through the year	Complete by end Q1
		Undertake appropriate actions	Progress to end Q4

MONITORING OUR BUSINESS PLAN



Owing the unprecedented circumstances in which this plan is being developed, we have chosen to adopt a more flexible approach to our planning and monitoring. Each of the activities, milestones and deliverables above have been assigned a timescale in which, to the best of our current knowledge, we anticipate they will be completed, or a target specific to that activity. They may, however, have to change in response to our environment.

To manage this process, CHS operates a well-established process of monitoring and reporting:



Our quarterly performance reviews to the CHS Board will not only take in to account work delivered in the past quarter, but also reflect on upcoming work and whether alterations will be required (e.g. change of timescales, or change of scope of work) in order to adapt to the environment at the time.

MONITORING OUR WORK: KPIs



To monitor the performance of the organisation through the year, we have set the following Key Performance Indicators:

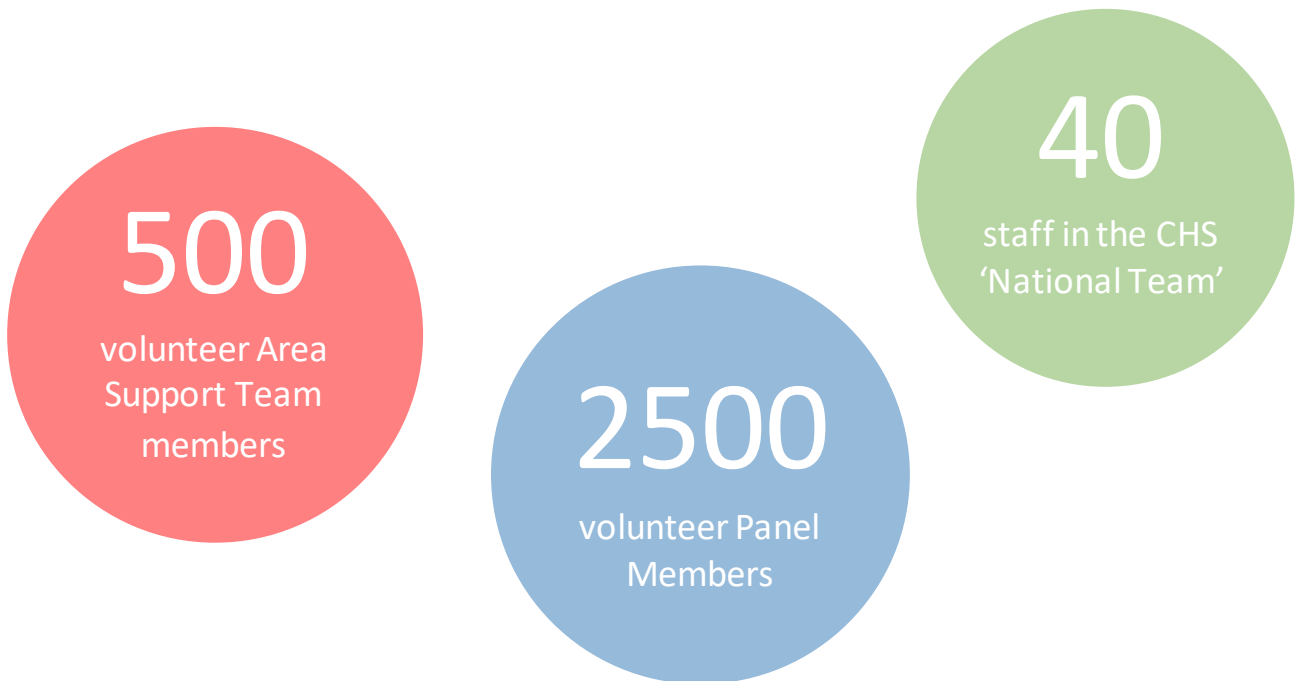
Performance Measure	Baseline	2021/22 Target
% of complaints resolved within SPSO guidelines, during normal operations	2017/18: 100% 2018/19: 92% 2019/20: 100% 2020/21: 100% target	100%
% CHS employee attendance	2017/18: 96% 2018/19: 95% 2019/20: 97% 2020/21: 96% target	96%
% invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations	2017/18: 80% 2018/19: 92% 2019/20: 85% 2020/21: 90% target	90%
% of pre-service trainees who felt that the learning objectives were met	2019/20: 98%	98%
% of applicants put forward for preservice training who complete the full training	2017/18: 89% 2018/19: 92%	92%
% of Panel Members successfully reappointed	2017/18: 83% 2018/19: 68%	70%
% of Panel Members retained during the year	New Measure	86%
% positive staff survey feedback on opportunities for learning and development	2018/19: 33% 2019/20: 52% 2020/21: 65%	70%

OUR RESOURCES FOR 2021-2022

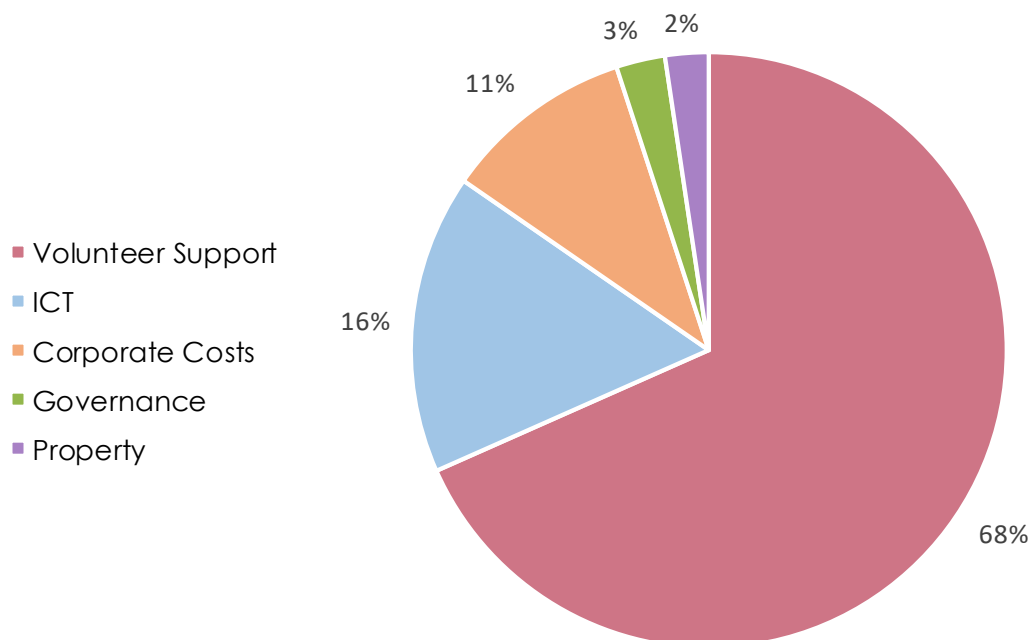


We are funded through an annual grant in aid under a framework agreement with the Scottish Government.

For 2021/22, our grant in aid is £5.129m. These resources are allocated across CHS' functions to ensure that we can recruit, train and support our volunteers.



Our Expenditure

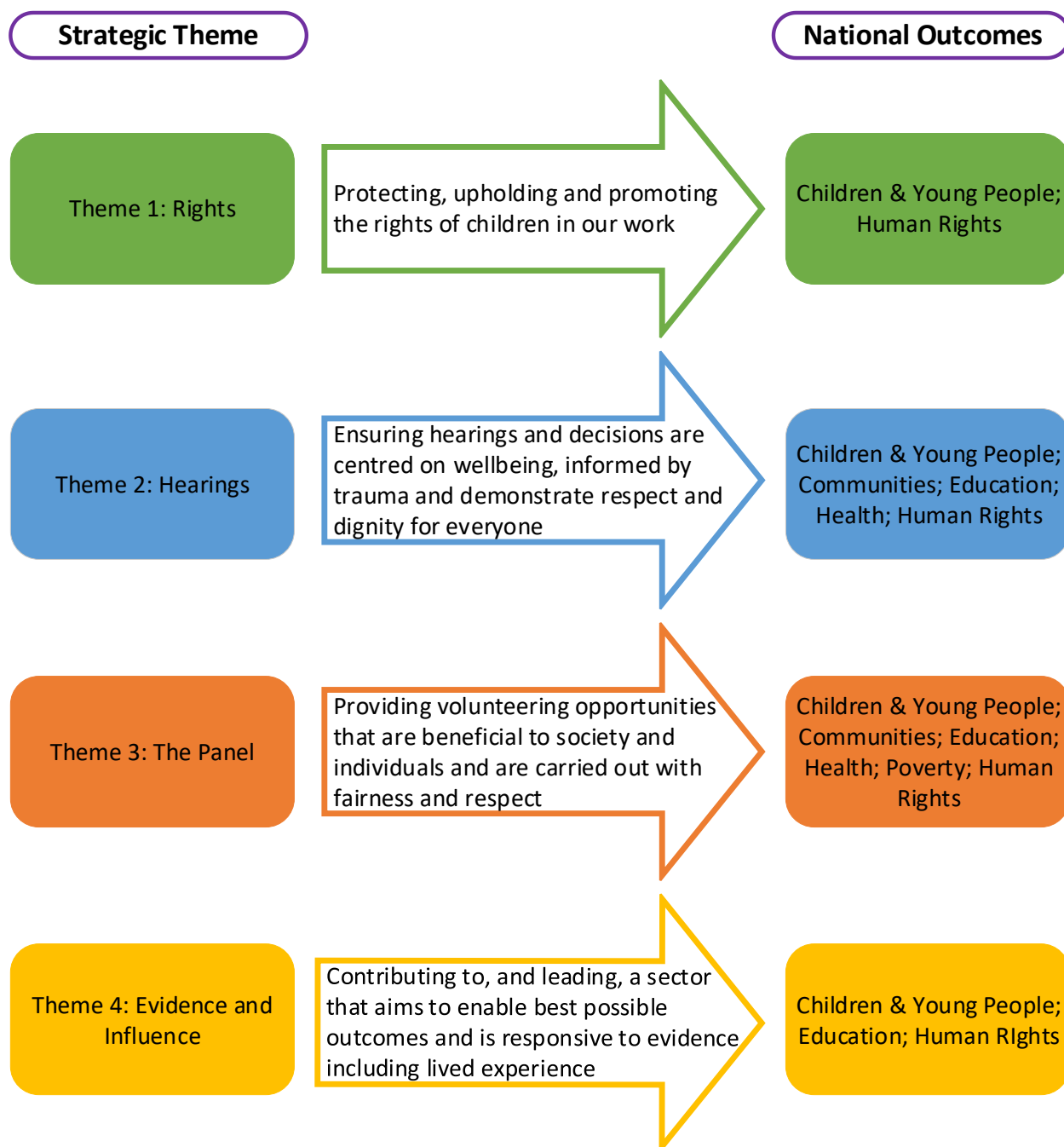


CHS AND THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK



In our 2020-23 Corporate Plan, we set out how our Strategic Themes are aligned to Scotland’s National Performance Framework.

A summary is given below:





children's
hearings
scotland

3rd Floor Thistle House | 91 Haymarket Terrace | Edinburgh | EH12 5HE
t: 0131 244 4743 | www.chscotland.gov.uk

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