

Impact Report

2022-23



CONTENTS

Foreword	4
1. The Promise Programme	5
1.1 Improving Reasons	5
1.2 Trauma Informed Practice	5
1.3 UNCRC	5
1.4 Hearings Redesign	6
1.5 Participation, Engagement and Consultation	6
1.6 Upholding Siblings' Rights	7
2. Focus on: children and young people	8
2.1 Progressing UNCRC throughout the CHC Promise Programme	10
2.2 Consultation with children and young people	12
2.3 Co-design with children and young people	15
2.4 Involving children and young people	18
3. Focus on: volunteers	21
3.1 Supporting Panel Member decision making	23
3.2 Training our community	25
3.3 Consulting and engaging with our Panel Member community	28
4. Focus on - Improving the system	32
4.1 Collaborative Redesign Project	33
4.2 Care and Justice Bill	35
5. Thematic conclusions	36
6. Glossary	37



FOREWORD

By Elliot Jackson, National Convener and Chief Executive

In this annual Impact Report, we highlight our achievements in 2022-23 and how we have delivered on our duty as a Corporate Parent. The report necessarily includes descriptions of the work we've undertaken, but the most important sections are those headed 'impact', where we aim to show the concrete positive outcomes of our activities.

A relatively short written document will always struggle to do justice to the lasting human impacts of the hard work and dedication of our Panel Members, Area Support Teams and CHS National Team over the course of a year. But the details in this report are nevertheless testament to the variety and volume of good work being done across Scotland by our volunteers and my colleagues who support them.

Although the effects will not be felt immediately, among our most impactful activities of recent years is the contribution we made in 2022-23 to the Hearings System Working Group (HSWG), and our response to the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill. In both these areas we took our rightful place in representing the interests of Scotland's young people to help shape national policy proposals.

We have also made important progress in developing the knowledge base of our Panel community through, for example, new training on siblings' rights, trauma-informed practice and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

But as in every year, the biggest direct impact we had was on the infants, children and young people who come before hearings, and their families. In 2022-23 we worked with our partner organisations to ensure that 22,340 hearings took place to support and protect 10,980 children.

My sincere thanks go to our volunteers and staff for their work in achieving all of the impacts described in this report.



1



The Promise Programme

1. The Promise Programme

The CHS Promise Programme was established in 2021 following the publication of the Independent Care Review to ensure that CHS was driving change for infants, children and young people across Scotland.

Through collaboration, engagement and consultation CHS worked alongside its partners to deliver a

programme of improvement. Below is an overview of what was achieved by its projects, which you can read more about throughout this report.



1.1 Improving Reasons

The aim of this project was to identify how we could support Panel Members in writing reasons for decisions, to improve how reasons are articulated.

What did we achieve?

- Developed a framework tool to help us assess the quality of reasons written
- Explored the future of auditing of reasons across Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)
- Identified training opportunities for Panel Members based on these audits

1.2 Trauma Informed Practice

This project was the first phase of our long-term journey to improve our understanding of trauma and community practice in response to it. In this first phase we set out to deliver trauma-informed learning for our volunteers and evaluate its impact on our community.



What did we achieve?

- Trauma learning has been embedded into existing learning materials and is now part of all pre-service training
- A new trauma learning module has been created and rolled out across the CHS Community and made accessible to CHS staff
- A trauma survey was launched to understand the impact of training in order to inform the next phases of our trauma training and upskilling

1.3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The goal of this work was to provide tools for staff and volunteers to develop skills and knowledge on children's rights ahead of the incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots law.

What did we achieve?

- Created a Rights Map which matches UNCRC rights with CHS duties and the decisions of Panel Members
- Created a training plan and material for staff and the CHS Community on UNCRC
- Created a child-friendly complaints and feedback system with children's rights at its heart
- Shared information on children's rights through public-facing forums

1.4 Hearings Redesign

For this project we worked collaboratively on the redesign of the Children's Hearings System through participation in the Hearings System Working Group and Collaborative Redesign Project alongside The Promise Scotland, SCRA and the Scottish Government.

What did we achieve?

- Co-produced more than 20 proposals to redesign the Children's Hearings System
- Submitted proposals to the Hearings System Working Group, which fed into the ['Hearings for Children'](#) report published in May 2023
- Ensured that the voice of people with lived experience was included in the work we did

1.5 Participation, Engagement and Consultation

We set out to develop a consistent approach to enhance participation, engagement and consultation with our volunteer community and those with lived experience across CHS. The project team worked to embed the voices of these groups within our Hearings Redesign project with the Hearings Systems Working Group as well as CHS's operational delivery.

What did we achieve?

- Lived experience people and the CHS Community were given the opportunity to contribute to the development, redesign and improvement of hearings
- Established a stakeholder reference group to critically evaluate what works well in the hearings system and identify areas for improvement

- Played a key role in influencing recommendations of the ‘Hearings for Children’ report

1.6 Upholding Siblings’ Rights

Siblings’ Rights was a two phased project to improve knowledge and implementation of sibling rights, and ensure best practice, in line with the Children’s (Scotland) Act 2020, across our community.



What did we achieve?

- Rolled out a new mandatory learning module on Siblings’ Rights
- Updated our practice guidance
- Created the Practice & Policy Bank to get feedback from Panel Members about rights in the hearing room
- Created the Sibling Toolkit to support multi-agency learning sessions, ensuring everyone is supporting brothers and sisters

2.

FOCUS ON: Children & Young People



FOCUS ON:

Children and Young People

Progressing children's rights and our duties as corporate parents

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 safeguarding and upholding the rights of, and promoting the wellbeing of, Scotland's looked-after children and care leavers. CHS and the National Convener deliver and monitor these duties together.

In December 2022 we published a report on the progress we have made during the year against our Children's Rights and Inclusion Strategy.

Participation of people with lived experience of hearings was central to that work, which saw our CHS Participation Group (a group of young people with lived experience of the hearings system) work with our Children's Rights and Inclusion Coordinator on a number of projects, including:

- Further development of our participation framework for the involvement of lived-experience young people in CHS's work
- The recruitment of Panel Members, Area Support Team volunteers and CHS staff
- Co-designing training and support materials for volunteers and staff

The following pages detail our activities to progress children's rights within hearings and engage with those with lived experience to inform our work.



2.1 Progressing UNCRC throughout the CHS Promise Programme

Ahead of the anticipated incorporation of the UNCRC into Scots law, CHS continues to uphold, promote and raise awareness of the rights of children and young people in contact with the Children’s Hearings System.



We launched the UNCRC project as part of our Promise Programme. The goal of this project was to incorporate the UNCRC into all CHS functions and help enhance the Children’s Hearings System as an international exemplar of children’s rights in practice. In order to do this, we embarked on a two-year programme to ensure that all of our current and future work streams are fully compliant with UNCRC terms and aspirations, and to upskill staff and volunteers so that every CHS function is undertaken in a way that respects and better children’s rights.

The following are highlights from this project. You can read more about our progress to embed the UNCRC within the co-design and training sections of this report.

2.1.1 UNCRC Rights Map

Our UNCRC Rights Map was developed by an intern who joined us from the [Robertson Trust](#). They analysed the 54 articles of the UNCRC and mapped them across to Panel Members’ and CHS’s statutory obligations. Their work to create this map provides CHS and our community with a comprehensive understanding of our UNCRC duties, and highlights where training and practice materials should focus to make the biggest impact on children’s rights in hearings.

The Rights Map groups the 54 UNCRC articles into a traffic-lights system. 26 Red rights are those directly relevant to Panel Members’ and CHS’s statutory obligations; six amber rights are relevant to the wider role of CHS in the hearings system; and 22 green rights are relevant to children and young people’s rights in Scotland in a broader sense.

IMPACT: the Rights Map

The Rights Map was shared with young people with lived experience, who said they liked the fact it shows which UNCRC articles are likely to be addressed during hearings. They were keen for the Rights Map to become a tool which Panel Members use when reading their papers and forming questions specific to the child's circumstances. We used the priorities set out by these young people to help develop a survey of our volunteer community. The results showed that our Panel Members had firm knowledge of the key principles of children's rights and helped us develop further training.

2.1.2 Children's Rights Impact Assessment

As part of our progress to embed the UNCRC, we identified the need for a robust tool to aid our project planning and determine if new initiatives would have an impact on children's rights. We developed the Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) by pulling on resources and information from the Scottish Government and the office of the Children and Young People's Commissioner to inform its design and accompanying screening tools. We carried out training with our staff team on how to use the screening tools and carry out the full assessments when required. The Children's Rights Impact Assessment sits alongside our Data Protection, Islands, and Equality and Diversity impact assessments and is firmly embedded in our way of working as an organisation.

IMPACT: the Children's Rights Impact Assessment in action

A full Children's Rights Impact Assessment was undertaken for the Child-Friendly Feedback and Complaints project as part of the CHS Promise Programme. This involved the Children's Rights and Inclusion Coordinator talking to the CHS Participation Group about our UNCRC project and processes, and asking them for suggestions on how they may impact children in a positive or negative way.



The group identified two additional impacts that had not been previously considered. Potential mitigations were discussed and included within the assessment. This impact assessment is now used as an example of good practice in both involving young people in this process and the benefits this can bring to project planning.

“People with lived experience of hearings have a **unique understanding** of what it's like to enter a room where decisions about your life will be made, often by people you've not met before.”

Jennifer Smith,
Children's Rights and Inclusion
Coordinator

2.2 Consultation with children and young people

2.2.1 Mixed gender legislative change consultation

Over the course of 2022, CHS worked with the Scottish Government to secure an amendment to the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Act 2022, in order to make the requirement that both men and women serve as Panel Members on every children's hearing more flexible. This change was based on our learning from the coronavirus emergency legislation where this flexibility helped ease capacity issues for our Panel Members. In some areas of the country, a few male Panel Members had been over-relied-upon, placing significant pressure on those Panel Members and those members of the Area Support Team responsible for allocating them onto hearing sessions. While the change was welcomed by the CHS Community, it was important that we took the views of children and young people into account before progressing any changes.

IMPACT: consultation on mixed gender panels

CHS consulted children and young people from Our Hearings Our Voice and the CHS Participation Group. Of those who participated in the consultation, half were aware of the requirement for gender-mixed panels. Most said that they didn't mind the requirement or that it wasn't important, but some said it should depend on the wants and needs of the child in the hearing.

By consulting with young people on gender mixed panels and gaining their views, we were able to progress with our recommendations to amend the legislative requirement, secure in the knowledge we had taken the views of those most affected into account.

Young people's comments:

"If possible it should be tailored to who the **young people feel comfortable around.**"

"I think it should be lenient and not so black and white - for some people sorting themselves into either male/female can be uncomfortable. And **both the young person and the panel deserve to be comfortable.**"

"I think it might be good to think about steps taken to ensure the panel remains a **safe space for those with trauma** that might associate a certain gender with a traumatic event that might make them uncomfortable."



2.2.2 Child friendly feedback and complaints consultation

Throughout the year, we worked closely with the CHS Participation Group on a number of projects and consultations. When it came to designing a child friendly feedback and complaints process, they told us it was important for children and young people to have an accessible way to provide their feedback. We took this advice and used it throughout 2022-23 when developing our child-friendly complaints process in line with the principles of the UNCRC.



Working alongside the CHS Complaints Management Officer, the Children’s Rights and Inclusion Coordinator facilitated a workshop with a group of young people with lived experience to hear their ideas on improving how children and young people can offer feedback or make a complaint to us. A consultation survey was sent out to members of the CHS Participation Group, OHOV Board Members, Kibble residents, and various Champions Boards. The survey sought to gather information about how young people would prefer to interact with a feedback process, and what should be included. The results of the survey were used to design the service and its new webpage.

IMPACT: child friendly feedback and complaints consultation

Overwhelmingly, the feedback highlighted the importance of keeping it as simple as possible, with ideas such as symbols or talking head instructions being suggested. The young people also said social media should be used to signpost to the webpage but not to convey feedback itself. There was enthusiasm for a quarterly report back from CHS in a ‘you said, we did’ style.

The feedback received has been used to design the webpage and processes, including the creation of a ‘feedback loop’ to young people on what improvements have been made as a result of their feedback or complaint.

“The **importance of feedback** cannot be stressed enough. It is how we learn what works well and it helps us improve what happens in hearings.”

Mel McDonald,
Complaints Management Officer

2.2.3 Siblings' Rights



Significant new rights for brothers and sisters were set out in the Children (Scotland) Act 2020. As part of our Promise Programme, a project team was put together to identify the changes and training needs to ensure Panel Members were equipped to meet these new rights for children in hearings. As part of this project, the Area Support and Improvement Partner for Central & West Lothian worked with young people with lived experience of the hearings system to identify what was needed to address siblings' rights within the system from their perspective. These young people from Quarriers and

Falkirk Champs Board shared their thoughts, feelings and experiences on siblings' rights to inform our planning and approach to implementing the legislation with our community.

IMPACT: sharing views on siblings' rights

The project team incorporated the feedback from these young people into their work to raise awareness and improve practice in relation to siblings' rights within the hearing. Actions included:

- Adding a new module to the Learning Academy and including the changes to legislation in the Learning Academy's Refresher course
- Delivering in-person and online training sessions to highlight the new siblings-focused legislation and how to implement it
- Surveys for Panel Members to assess their understanding of siblings' rights before and after the project work was implemented



“(We need) thoughtful placements - don't place me with other brothers and sisters when you have separated me from my own.”

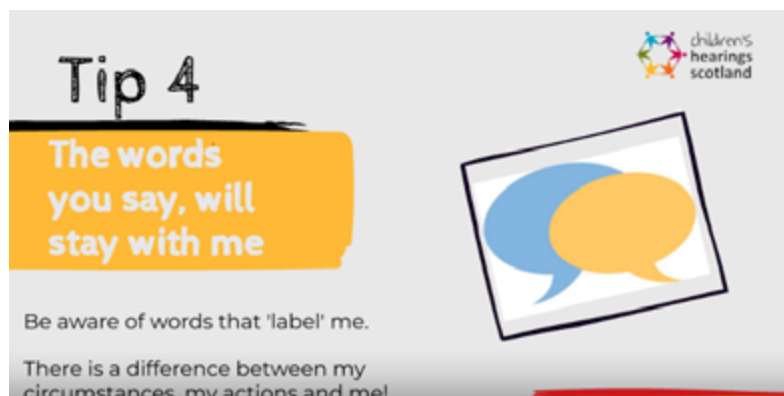
Young Person

“By the end of the project, Panel Members reported a significant increase in their awareness of, and confidence in, **the rights of brothers and sisters** in relation to contact and potential participation in hearings. By knowing these rights, they can **uphold these rights.**”

Laura Conachan,
Practice and Policy Lead

2.3 Co-design with children and young people

2.3.1 Pre-service training – top tips from children and young people



In December 2022 our Children's Rights and Inclusion Coordinator facilitated a co-production session with members from Our Hearings Our Voice (OHOV) and the Voice and Inclusion Project (VIP) to create short animations delivering key messages they wanted to share with the Panel Community.

From 'Top Tips For Panel Members'

They created three animations: [Ways to Make a Hearing Positive](#), [What we want Panel Members to Remember](#) and [Top Tips for Panel Members](#). Each of the animations shares direct feedback and advice from young people with lived experience on how Panel Members can make a hearing more inclusive, accessible and less traumatic for the children involved.

IMPACT: creating learning material for Panel Members

These three animations are a powerful example of how we can amplify the voice of those with lived experience. They are used to remind Panel Members of what is important to people with lived experience and how they can adapt their

language and approach to better meet their needs. They form part of a larger offering of online learning and are invaluable tools for keeping our community members engaged directly with the voice of lived experience.



From 'ways to Make A Hearing Positive'

"[The animations] are just brilliant! Really engaging, easy to watch and listen to and with such **clear messages from young people to Panel Members.**"

Gordon Main (OHOV Project Lead)

2.3.2 Primary School Project

The Childrens Rights and Inclusion Co-ordinator went “back to school” to lead a collaborative design project on the UNCRC with a local primary school class. An Introduction to Children’s Rights is a video offering foundational knowledge about the UNCRC, children’s understanding of it in practice, and its role in the hearing room. It was created to enhance Panel Member training and bring the voice of children into Panel Member learning. It is viewed as part of Panel Members’ pre-service training in preparation for conducting a mock hearing, which forms an integral part of their final assessment.

IMPACT: Creating pre-service content for Panel Members

To date, the video has been seen by 1,014 people who have benefited from the important message presented by young people, about young people.

“Wonderful use of language, driven by the children themselves. Even more pertinent as we **focus on the voice of the child** within the hearings system, both outside and inside the actual hearing space.”

Panel Member

“I like that it is Scottish, contemporary and it’s good to have children involved and to **hear their voices directly.**”

Panel Member

“I think it has more of an impact because it’s **children explaining their own understanding of rights** rather than adults just saying what the rights are and why children should have them.”

Panel Member

2.3.3 The Better Meetings Project

This project was initiated to increase the voice, choice and participation of children and young people in their meetings and hearings in the Highlands and Moray Council areas. The group was made up of members of the Better Meetings Group of Care Experienced Young People, Who Cares? Scotland, Moray Council, Highland Council and SCRA. As a group, they developed Practitioner Guides for Panel Members, Social Workers, Reviewing Officers and Reporters that included a checklist of things they can do before, during and after a hearing or meeting to increase the voice, choice and participation of young people. The group launched the guides in January 2023 to practitioners across Highland and Moray and they are now being implemented.

IMPACT: changing behaviours in meetings

Feedback from those involved in the project has been that the guides are working well to change behaviours and put the young person at the centre of their meeting or hearing. Below are quotes from young people and Panel Members involved, showing just how beneficial this project has been.

“I read the Practitioner Guide a few times before the hearing and found it a **useful reminder** as to how we should approach hearings, particularly the Chair, but parts apply to all Panel Members.”

Panel Member

“**This hearing felt much better than my last one.** It was easier because there weren’t so many issues to talk about and they were talking to me more and I said more than I usually do. Contributing to my assessment before the hearing was really good because if the child is too anxious to speak at the hearing, they have the **child’s views** in the report.”

Child at a hearing



“The good thing about meeting the child before the hearing was that I knew that she was very anxious, so **I was able to reassure her** that I was very aware of her concerns which definitely helped her to get involved.”

Panel Member

2.4 Involving children and young people

2.4.1 Lived experience recruiters for Panel Members and staff

As in previous years, CHS supported our Area Support Teams (ASTs) to recruit local people with lived experience to select and appoint new Panel Members as part of our recruitment campaign. Having those with lived experience as part of our recruitment and selection team is integral to the work we do to select compassionate, empathetic and dedicated Panel Members.

In order to prepare for selection, bespoke welcome sessions were commissioned by CHS. Who Cares? Scotland hosted the sessions, which were delivered via the CHS Learning Academy. Before going on to participate in the recruitment and selection of new Panel Members, all our lived experience participants received training and support from the CHS Learning Academy and the Children's Rights and Inclusion Coordinator, alongside their local AST members.

In August 2022 we made a number of improvements to our processes, ahead of our autumn 2022 Panel Member campaign in order to further build on our relationships with young people with lived experience of the hearing system and provide more dedicated support to those who wish to participate in recruiting and selection activities:

- Updated our AST Best Practice Guidance for including lived experience recruiters based on feedback and evaluations from previous lived experience recruiters as well as from those who supported them.
- Created a dedicated information pack to attract young people with previous experience of the hearing system clearly outlining the remit, expectations and benefits.
- Held a dedicated session with our Panel Practice Advisor (PPA) forum on Top Tips for PPAs when supporting lived experience recruiters. The presentation was co-produced by two lived experience recruiters who were able to share their views about the role and highlight the mutual benefits which motivated them to become recruiters.

IMPACT: Lived experience recruiters

In the autumn 2022 campaign, 75% of our Area Support Teams had people with lived experience of attending hearings fully involved in selecting new trainee Panel Members.

“The hardest part is being confident. I’m shy with strangers so I was nervous about asking questions. Practising beforehand helped, and after the first couple of interviews, **I felt much better.**”

Lived experience recruiter

“I felt that **I made a difference** being part of the interview panel along with other volunteers. I really believe by me and others all over Scotland being part of the selection panel shows candidates that we are serious about putting lived experience at the heart of the Children's Panel community.”

Lived experience recruiter

“I’ve had experience interviewing in other jobs but having a buddy was useful and **we worked well as a team.**”

Lived experience recruiter

2.4.2 Engaging on the Collaborative Redesign Project

As part of our Promise Programme, we collaborated with the Hearings System Working Group (HSWG) on a project to discover what a redesigned hearings system could look like and how it could improve the hearings experience and outcomes for infants, children and young people. As part of our Hearings Redesign Project it was essential we consulted and worked with those with lived experience to ensure their voice was embedded in future design models.

Actions included the following:

- Two young people with lived experience sat on the panel recruiting CHS Community members to the project teams, representing half of the recruiting panel.
- Design-led days were held with The Promise Scotland, the Scottish Government’s Office of the Chief Designer, Sheriff David Mackie as independent chair of HSWG, and Our Hearings Our Voice. These days enabled people with lived experience to connect directly with the chair of the HSWG and have their views heard.
- We engaged with families with lived experience as part of the ‘As Is’ mapping of the hearings system, including birth parents, adoptive parents, kinships carers and foster carers to ensure their experience was represented.
- A submission was made to the young people of Our Hearings Our Voice outlining the impact the consultation with young people had on the design process, as well as including them in a prototyping day in October 2022.

IMPACT: Collaborative Redesign

The impact of those with lived experience lending their voice to the collaborative redesign project is immeasurable.

“The voice of people with lived experience of the hearings system was a **vital part** of the Collaborative Redesign Project. We sought to find opportunities throughout the work to listen to those who had already shared their story and voice in the Independent Review of Care and also create new opportunities for people to influence the design of a new system. Young people and the adults important to them, all with lived experience of the hearings system, **influenced and shaped the work from end to end.** During the Collaborative Redesign Project, the time we spent with young people and the relationship the project built with young people was **invaluable.** The work would have been lacking without their voice.”

Claire Gibson, CHS Project Manager for the Collaborative Redesign Project

2.4.3 Local events

Tending the Light in the North festival

The Tending the Light in the North festival took place across the weekend of Care Day in February 2023. It provided an opportunity for care experienced young people and Corporate Parents from across the north of Scotland to work and learn together. It was organised and supported by Who Cares? Scotland, care experienced young people, the University of Highlands and islands, Highland Council, Inspiring Young Voices, the Care and Creativity Programme, The Promise Scotland and CHS. The invitation for the festival was extended to care experienced young people and Corporate Parents, including Panel Members, from across all four CHS AST areas in the north: Highland and Moray, Shetland, Orkney and Eilean Siar.

The Light in the North festival built on the connections and collaborations of three previous Festival of Care events that took place in Shetland over the previous three years, led by care experienced young people known as the #Shetlandcrew. The programme included workshops for professionals and leaders alongside the care experienced community, a Home and Belonging exhibition of mixed medium artwork, and a celebratory prom to close the event hosted by Highland's Care Experienced CHAMPS group.

IMPACT: the Light in the North

The Light in the North event was a huge success receiving positive feedback from those who attended. Vicky Strange, Highland and Moray Area Support and Improvement Partner, says:

“The aim was for people to leave feeling energised, better connected and better equipped in their work to #Keepthepromise alongside the care experienced community and I believe it did that. The opportunities it created were incredibly positive and support our strategic aims as an organisation and how we work alongside the care experienced community. It also provided great opportunities for us to build the relationships with our local partner organisations.”

“Talking and listening to the care experienced youngsters was the highlight for me. I would recommend such opportunities to learn to everyone.”

Panel Member

“At Tending the Light in Inverness we met young people from all across the north. It was a neutral space not owned by any of the groups of young people, an entirely new environment. It was a chance to speak about important stepping stones for care-experienced young people. Since the Festival of Care and Tending the Light, more people in all organisations and systems seem to be **more open to listening.**”

Young person attending Tending the Light

3

FOCUS ON: Volunteers



FOCUS ON:

Volunteers

In every children’s hearing, Panel Members serve with professionalism and compassion to make the best decision for the wellbeing of the child. This important contribution to public life has a positive impact on our wider society, helping Scotland to be the best place to grow up and helping its children and young people to thrive. We remain grateful to our volunteers for the work that they do and their steadfast commitment to improve the outcomes for Scotland’s infants, children and young people.

Volunteers’ week



We estimate that every year, our volunteers put 500,000 hours into volunteering with us. Recognising the profoundly important work our volunteers carry out is important to us, and among the communication activities we undertook in 2022-23 was our participation in Volunteers’ Week in June when we devoted our social media coverage to telling our volunteers’ stories and celebrating their role.



“Our lay tribunal members make some of the most important decisions in public life today. Volunteers Week is a time to focus on how important volunteers are in every walk of life, but at CHS, we make a conscious effort to celebrate our volunteers all year round to show our appreciation for all they do.”
Elliot Jackson, National Convener

“The input of ordinary people with a range of different experiences and backgrounds is important in upholding the ethos of the panel system, keeping it accessible, relevant, reflective and open.”
Helen, Highland and Moray.



"Because I want to make a difference to children and young people when they really need it most, and to listen to their voices being heard when they want them to be heard the most."

Beth, Panel Member
Central and West Lothian



#VolunteersWeek

“I’m forever in awe of the passion, commitment and compassion our volunteers show on a daily basis. Thank you just doesn’t seem enough. But, from someone who once sat at the other side of the table, your decisions make a difference.”

Beth-Anne Logan, Board Member and care experienced young person.

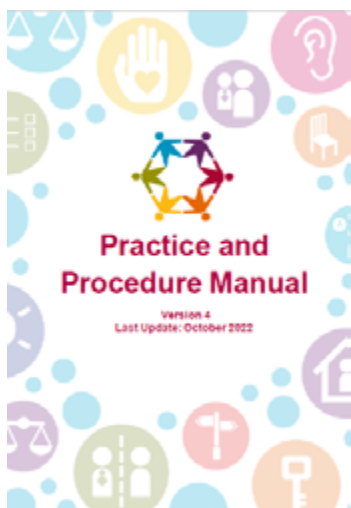
“I have always enjoyed the rewards of volunteering which enhances your own engagement with society and helps make a difference to people’s life experience. It is challenging but also so rewarding as one is contributing to hopefully enhancing children and young people’s lives.”

Iain Burns, Fife.

3.1 Supporting Panel Member decision making

Our key statutory duty, alongside recruiting Panel Members and Area Support Teams, is to train, support, and prepare them, ensuring they have the professional skills, knowledge and expertise required to make some of the most difficult and transformative decisions with and for the children of Scotland. Every year, not only do we evolve and adapt in response to changes in the policy and practice context in which we operate, but we drive improvement and lead change ourselves with our Panel Community.

3.1.1 Supporting decision-making: our practice guidance



The Practice and Procedure Manual (PPM) is our key advice and guidance document for volunteers. It tells them what they need to know about practice and keeps them up to date with the latest legislation and guidance.

In 2022-23 there were a number of updates and changes made to the Practice and Procedure Manual focused on current legislation, practice guidance and policy updates to ensure Panel Members had the knowledge needed to aid their decision making. The PPM is updated regularly throughout the year, and supported by the Practice and Policy team’s engagement with our volunteer community.

Topics updated in 2022-23 included:

- Guidance on non-attendance and excusals
- Minimising attendance
- Guidance on agreeing decisions and reasons (‘I agree’), and the recording of ‘non-decisions’
- Independent Reports, following the introduction of a new duty to consider the need for an independent report when deferring a hearing
- Guidance on types of non-disclosure, to reflect developing case law

- Understanding poverty and its impact on those in the hearings system

IMPACT: the Practice and Procedure Manual

The updates in the Practice and Procedure Manual enabled Panel Members to be more informed about current practice, which ultimately results in better decisions being made for children and young people.

“Panel Members can only make the best decisions for children when they have the most up to date knowledge. This years PPM changes included giving Panel Members the freedom not to repeat their decision and reasons when it agrees with a decision which has already been vocalised. This prevents children and families from hearing the same difficult information several times which we know can be difficult to hear.”

Laura Conachan, Practice and Policy Lead

3.1.2 Independent Report Writers

When Panel Members do not have enough information to make a substantive decision one of the options available to them is to request a report from an expert with relevant knowledge. This is referred to as an Independent Report. CHS works with a bank of Independent Report Writers with significant knowledge and expertise in the fields of social work, psychiatry, educational psychology, clinical psychology and forensic psychology.

In 2022, the Practice and Policy team updated the guidance on Independent Reports for Panel Members following the introduction of a new duty to consider the need for an Independent Report when deferring a hearing. This guidance was followed with refresher training sessions carried out online and in person throughout 2022.

IMPACT: Independent Reports

The changes to the guidance and subsequent training resulted in 31 Independent Report requests being received in 2022-23, up from 24 in 2021-22. Requests were received from 14 locality areas with the most common requests for psychology-based reports. The second most common report requests were for independent social workers to carry out parenting capacity assessments or assessments relating to contact with family members. These Independent Reports gave the Panel Members the expert information they required to make better decisions in hearings and provide more positive outcome for infants, children and young people.

3.1.3 Policy and Practice team training events

Throughout 2022-23, the Practice and Policy team delivered refresher training across Scotland on the legislative and practice changes since 2020. For those who were unable to attend those live sessions, a video was made available on the Learning Academy website.

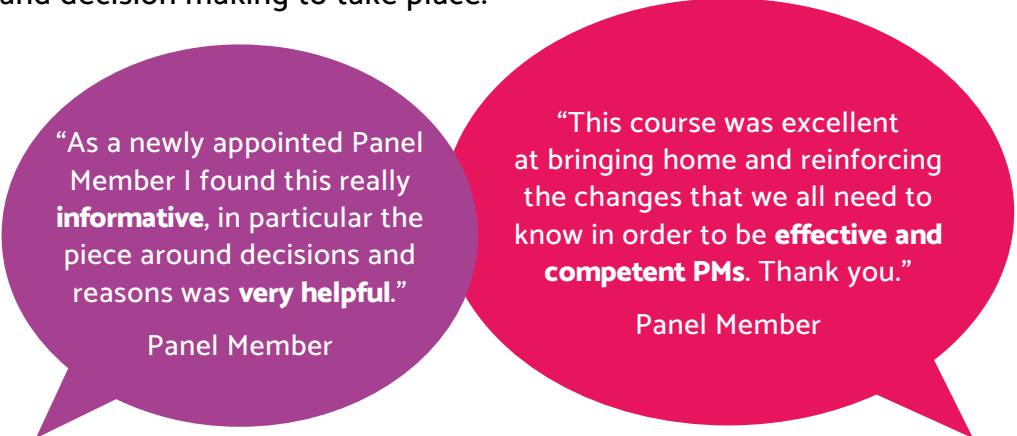
This course was requested by AST members and included different styles of learning, including slides, voiceover and practice examples to think about. It addressed the changing landscape in which Panel Members make decisions and ensured their knowledge and understanding of practice and policy remained current.

The video and training covered:

- The changes in the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 and rules such as siblings' rights, additional powers of exclusion and requiring individuals to only attend electronically
- Requesting independent reports
- Advocacy duties
- Minimising attendance
- 'Agreeing with' decisions and reasons

IMPACT: Practice and Policy training

This bespoke training course refreshed Panel Members' knowledge and allowed opportunities for discussion around practice issues. The training equipped Panel Members and Chairs with more understanding of legislation, allowing better management of hearings and decision making to take place.



"As a newly appointed Panel Member I found this really **informative**, in particular the piece around decisions and reasons was **very helpful**."

Panel Member

"This course was excellent at bringing home and reinforcing the changes that we all need to know in order to be **effective and competent PMs**. Thank you."

Panel Member

3.2 Training our community

3.2.1 Pre-service training

CHS's Panel Members undergo a rigorous and continuous training programme to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to make positive decisions that will affect the lives and futures of not only infants, children and young people, but also their families, communities and wider society in years to come. In 2022-23 we continued to improve our pre-service training approach and the ongoing training Panel Members receive.

Pre-service in 2022-23

We consistently look at feedback from previous trainee cohorts to deliver improvements on the previous year's pre-service training. In 2022-23 those improvements included:

- Extending the pre-service delivery model from four days to five days, ensuring more time was dedicated to skills practice, with more opportunity for face-to-face learning
- Embedding trauma-informed approaches around the use of language within the training environment
- Carrying out trauma-informed training for all frontline administration staff of the CHS Learning Academy to better support our trainees

Rights-based approach

Each of the pre-service training days incorporated the theme of Children’s rights within the hearing room, how to promote them, and understanding the rights of others in respect of that child. We enhanced our pre-service topics to include and improve the use of destigmatising language and behaviour, to understand and overcome unconscious bias, and to provide guidance on how to fully engage with everyone in the hearing room.

IMPACT: pre-service training

The CHS Learning Academy successfully delivered pre-service training for the latest Panel Member cohort, with 98% of candidates stating their outcomes for the course were met, a 2% increase on 2021. The measures put in place resulted in the highest retention figure we have seen since 2017 and a huge leap from last year, up by 6.7%.

“I thought Day 5 was **well structured** and was surprised how realistic the role play hearings were. Everyone involved was excellent and played their parts so well that it was easy to become immersed in the experience. The facilitators were knowledgeable and very helpful as usual. An **extremely useful**, if somewhat nerve-wracking, **training day** which pulled together our learning to date.”

Trainee Panel Member 2022

“I have learned a huge amount from the facilitators. It’s been a **hugely rewarding process so far** and I am amazed at how much information I have taken in from the training.

Trainee Panel Member 2022

Ongoing training in 2022

3.2.2 UNCRC training

In order to identify training needs within our community a baseline survey was undertaken in December 2022 of Panel Members’ awareness of the UNCRC and how these rights manifest in children’s hearings. Of the CHS Community sampled:

- 99% confirmed they are aware that children have specific rights under the UNCRC
- 85% either strongly agreed or agreed they are confident they understand the impact of UNCRC rights in the context of a children’s hearing

- 97% of were extremely or very confident in their understanding of the child’s best interests being paramount

IMPACT: UNCRC training survey

The survey highlighted the areas where Panel Members were less confident in their understanding. In partnership with Children in Scotland (CiS), CHS and CHSLA developed expert UNCRC training, which was presented by Dana Vreeswijk, Policy, Participation and Projects Officer at CiS. The online event was fully booked and recorded and is now hosted on the CHS Learning Academy where all pre-service cohorts and Panel Members are asked to view it as part of the UNCRC training module.

“I enjoyed the session and the two hours went by very quickly. I think it was a very good positioning of where the hearings system sits in the landscape of rights for children and adults and why we do a lot of what we do.”

Panel Member

3.2.3 Trauma

Building a trauma-responsive CHS is an ambitious aim, and is a short-, medium- and long-term commitment. We have embarked on a multi-year project creating a knowledge and skill framework which builds on four levels of practice:



- Trauma Informed
- Trauma Skilled
- Trauma Enhanced
- Trauma Specialist

We are at stage one, building a Trauma Informed community and organisation. We have ensured that trauma learning is grounded within our pre-service training and all new trainees from 2021 onwards have completed this. In addition, CHS Learning Academy administrative staff have undergone trauma training to support trainees as they are often ‘first responders’ in times of crisis. We have worked with NHS Education for Scotland to deliver **Developing Your Trauma Informed Practice** workshops, training modules and videos.

IMPACT: Trauma Informed Training

To date 1,615 active Panel Members have completed the training.

“The video helped show different reactions from the three children participating and how we need to be aware of different levels of support being needed to help promote participation.”

Panel Member

3.2.4 Sibling Rights

This course on siblings' rights focuses on how the changes in the Children (Scotland) Act 2020 will affect the Panel Member role and ways to meet the requirements to ensure their practice complies with the Act and that they have the skills they need to implement the legislation.



IMPACT: Sibling Rights Training

The learning outcomes achieved by participants of the course has been:

- To understand the definition of 'siblings' under the new legislation
- To understand the updated duty on Panel Members to consider contact with siblings and relevant persons
- To be aware of the new and updated duties on Local Authorities
- To understand the new participation rights introduced by the Act

3.2.5 Neurodiversity

The Independent Care Review, and subsequent reports issued by The Promise, identified a lack of suitable approaches and learning to support people experiencing neurodiversity. As part of our commitment to ensuring that we support neurodiversity in children's hearings, CHS invited two expert organisations, FASD Hub Scotland and Salvesen Mindroom Centre, to host an exclusive online learning event in June 2022.

IMPACT: Neurodiversity Training event

The event was attended by 120 Panel Members and a recording of it is hosted on the CHS Learning Academy as part of our ongoing training and development suite of resources. The course offered insight and skills to Panel Members to help them identifying what neurodiversity means, recognising and using key terminology, identifying key challenges and strengths associated with common neurodevelopmental conditions, and applying basic approaches which are known to support neurodiverse children in a hearing situation.

3.3 Consulting and engaging with our Panel Member community

3.3.1 Participation, Engagement and Consultation Project

CHS is committed to creating genuine opportunities for stakeholders to develop ideas and identify areas of innovation and change across the hearings system. The Participation, Engagement and Consultation Project, as part of our Promise Programme, sought to deliver consultation and engagement opportunities for CHS with the Panel Community

and its key stakeholders to inform the development and work of the Hearings Redesign Project and the HSWG.

We invited the CHS Community to contribute to the design process of our consultation. Working alongside CHS staff, they helped shape the focus and format of engagement with the wider community. More than 300 members of our Panel Community took part in a survey on the themes emerging from the HSWG's Issues List. The results fed into live and virtual engagement sessions, facilitated by The Lens, which were attended by more than 500 members of the Community.

A stakeholder reference group was established as part of the HSWG's Redesign Project with eight volunteers from our Panel Community (recruited by lived experience recruiters) influencing the Redesign Project across the Before, During and After a Hearing strands.

IMPACT: Participation and Engagement Project

The use of facilitated engagement and consultation across the HSWG Issues List was well received by those who engaged with the process. Many appreciated the opportunity to meet with fellow Panel Members from different areas. The work established a core group of participants who, alongside the Practice and Policy Bank, could contribute to communication and engagement that will be required as a result of the HSWG recommendations and the Tribunal Support Model.

3.3.2 Practice and Policy Bank

As part of our ongoing work to engage and collaborate with the Panel Community, the Practice and Policy team convened the Practice and Policy Bank. The Practice and Policy Bank includes more than 260 Panel Members who have signed up to take part in surveys, consultations, focus groups and feedback opportunities in relation to the hearings system. They offer the Practice and Policy team a sounding board for new ideas and offer valuable insight and understanding of how practice and policy issues are being addressed and how they can be improved. During 2022-23, the Bank offered insight into consultations such as the Children (Care and Justice) Bill and focus groups to help shape our updated Internal Complaints policy.

IMPACT: Practice and Policy Bank

Areas where the Practice and Policy Bank has had the most impact include the following:

Practice and Procedure Manual update

Four online focus groups were held with the Panel Community, which resulted in significant changes and amendments being made to the Practice and Procedure Manual.

Advocacy survey

This survey gathered feedback from 87 Panel Members on children's advocacy during hearings. The findings were shared with the national Advocacy Expert Reference Group on Children's Advocacy, a group that CHS is represented on; the CHS senior management team; and the CHS Board. Next steps include continual engagement with advocacy

providers and the national Advocacy Expert Reference Group to ensure Panel Members are kept updated on practice and policy developments.

Siblings survey

This was carried out in two stages: one survey in 2022 after new sibling legislation was introduced and one in 2023 to see the impact it has had. 87 Panel Members from 18 Area Support Teams completed the 2022 survey and 68 completed the 2023 survey. The survey provided a baseline to identify areas where further training, guidance and consolidation of knowledge are required.

3.3.3 Engagement/events

Local engagement

Across Scotland, Area Support Teams (ASTs) support Panel Members. They work with local partners to celebrate and improve the work of the Children's Hearings System. Here are a few of their stories from 2022-23.



AYRSHIRE

In September 2022, our Panel Community celebrated achievements across Ayrshire, coming together at the Park Hotel in Kilmarnock. Special recognition was given to Helen from South Ayrshire, who celebrated her retirement with a

long service award, having volunteered for 28 years in service of Scotland's children. 38 Panel Members and Area Support Team members received recognition for long service, totalling 350 years across East, North and South Ayrshire. Our team in Ayrshire are passionate about what they do and make a difference to lives every day.



INVERCLYDE

The Inverclyde Panel Community welcomed the then-Minister for Children and Young People, Clare Haughey, to Greenock in July 2022. Ms Haughey met children and young people from care-

experienced group Proud2Care and signed her pledge to KeepThePromise to all children and young people in Scotland. The Minister observed a mock children's hearing and pre-hearing discussion. She then made presentations to long-serving and recently appointed Panel Members. Ms Haughey's visit recognised how our Panel Community deliver the best outcomes for children and young people.



ABERDEENSHIRE

Our Aberdeenshire Panel Community enjoyed a reception at Beach Ballroom in Aberdeen in late 2022. They were joined by Katharina Kasper, Chair of the CHS Board, National Convener Elliot Jackson and Provost Judy Whyte. Panel Members and Area Support Team members of five to 30 years'

service received recognition and enjoyed good food and good fun. Every day, our Panel Community in Aberdeenshire put children and young people at the centre of decisions made, big and small, in our communities and we welcomed the opportunity to celebrate them.

EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

Our Panel Community in East Dunbartonshire hosted a training event with our Children's Rights and Inclusion Coordinator and a member of the CHS Participation Group. The care experienced young person from the CHS Participation Group prepared a session for the attendees, sharing her experience and demonstrating how, by being open and respectful, hearings make a difference.

“[Young person] is a great advocate for the children and young people involved with the Children's Hearings System and her presentation, about **ways to include young people in their hearings, was engaging and really enlightening**. Her personal experience is **invaluable** when considering how to **improve** our practice. It's given us a lot to think about for future hearings.”

Lynn, East Dunbartonshire Panel Member

4

FOCUS ON: Improving the system



FOCUS ON

Improving the system

To deliver better outcomes for infants, children, young people and their families

We are proud of Scotland's Children's Hearings System, but complacency is not an option. Along with our partners, we are driving the change that is needed to ensure the system delivers for infants, children and young people today, tomorrow and long into the future. In the following section we outline transformative development work we have been a part of to shape and improve the system.

4.1 Collaborative Redesign Project

The Collaborative Redesign Project was created to provide design-led proposals to the HSWG. Alongside other sources of information, the proposals informed the recommendations of 'Hearings for Children', the HSWG Redesign Report.

The focus of the project was on transformation. The intention was set to redesign the hearings system so that it prioritises the child, their experience and outcomes over the process. In order to do this, three areas of focus were identified: before, during, and after a hearing. The redesign project work involved objectively reviewing the structure and procedures of those spaces, including mapping the 'As Is' – how things are in the Children's Hearings System today – in order to identifying areas for transformational improvement.

As part of the Collaborative Redesign Project, three members of CHS staff led the before, during, and after reviews and were directly responsible for delivering the redesign recommendations for their parts of the process, which was a huge task. At all stages the voice of young people was sought, respected and amplified, with the focus always on their welfare and upholding the rights of the children in the hearings system.

Stakeholder engagement sessions were held to gather the input and views of our Community through our Participation, Engagement and Consultation project. The project team and The Lens worked together to design a bespoke programme of consultation and engagement which would enable CHS staff and volunteers to:

- Gain a better understanding of the Hearings System Redesign Programme
- Connect with their wider CHS volunteer community
- Share their views on how the Hearings System could be redesigned to #KeepThePromise and improve the lives of children and young people

To start this work, a survey was developed and results used to form the basis of our large scale consultation and engagement sessions, which included face-to-face and virtual sessions at flexible times, including evenings and weekends. The sessions were designed to encourage everyone to participate, no matter their experience and length of service.

Consultation questions were developed based on the five themes of the HSWG Issues List:

- Scaffolding of the Hearings System
- Avoiding the need for compulsory measures of supervision
- Children and their Hearings
- Meeting the needs of children after a Hearing takes place
- Relationship between the Children’s Hearings System and the Criminal Justice System

Themes and ideas from the consultation and engagement sessions were collated and delivered back to the Collaborative Redesign Project lead to support their input into the recommendations of the HSWG.

Our role in the co-design project was an opportunity to celebrate the CHS contribution to the transformation of the hearings system and our commitment to Keep the Promise.

IMPACT: Collaborative Redesign

The delivery of the Collaborative Redesign Project required highly collaborative working from all involved with a focus on the project aim, working across organisational boundaries. This relied on high levels of trust and focus, understanding of the design process, a strategic perspective and an ability to think and act systemically. The success of this project is a reflection on each person who contributed and supported it, understanding that its success would support our commitment to keep the promise made to Scotland’s children.

“CHS representatives on the collaborative redesign project entered this work with **passion and drive** to consider how the children’s hearings system should change. You could tell the reps were carefully selected for a combination of service design and system specific knowledge and experience. This added a lot to their contribution to the overall project. **Working relationships were strong** and this included the ability to disagree and challenge each other where necessary”

Partner in the Collaborative Redesign Project

“If the aim was to generate change that could **make the hearing system better for children**, then I think that aim was met.”

Panel Member involved in the Collaborative Redesign Project

“**The energy, positivity and investment in the collaborative approach from CHS staff was evident** throughout the work. They demonstrated a strong ability to shift approaches, adapt to change and be solution focused in challenging situations.”

Partner in the Collaborative Redesign Project

4.2 Care and Justice Bill

The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament in December 2022. The Care and Justice Bill will extend access to the Children's Hearings System to everyone under the age of 18. This Bill is an endorsement of the Children's Hearings System and a recognition that the principles the system was built on should be available to all young people.

It is a change that the CHS Community has been calling for, for a long time. Raising the age of referral to include 16- and 17-year-olds, as set out in the Bill, will see an anticipated annual increase of up to 2,415 hearings and 1,020 more young people being supported by the welfare-based system.

Our system recognises that when children and young people come into conflict with the law and authorities, it is often a reaction to the circumstances and experiences around them. Extending the system will ensure that all young people are given fair and equal opportunities to address the causes of behaviours and the problems they experience.

We welcome the Bill and look forward to working constructively with others to implement the legislation and continue to make decisions at the children's hearings that have positive outcomes for infants, children and young people – and those who love and care for them. We are ensuring that Panel Members are equipped to extend their important work to all young people under 18, and are able to uphold principles of justice, fairness and compassion, always.

Key activity in 2022-23 to prepare for incorporation of the Bill has included:

- Significant organisational resources have been put into planning and influencing. We have liaised with the Bill team, worked with a range of national partners, responded to the formal consultation, and presented evidence to the lead Parliamentary Committee. We have consulted and engaged with our Panel Community, organised briefing and learning sessions and published articles making clear our position.
- We have analysed the data and carried out financial modelling to secure appropriate levels of resources in the financial memorandum. In addition, we are recruiting additional staff and Panel Members in preparation for implementation.



Thematic conclusions

This report details the impact of our work over the year 2022-23, supported by quantitative and qualitative evidence. Taking a high-level view of that work and evidence produces clear themes to our impact over the year.

Valuing our Panel Members

CHS's primary duties are to the Panel Members we recruit, train and support. The decisions they make have profound effects for families across Scotland. We are immensely grateful to our volunteers and are focused on providing all they need to make the best decisions with and for infants, children and young people in hearings. In 2022-23, activities that delivered impact here included our engagement and consultation with volunteers, new and updated training and resources and expansion of our report-writing capacity service.

Involving people with lived experience

We work hard to put the young people within the hearings system at the heart of everything we do, and this report details the many ways we are proactively increasing our collaboration with young people who have experience of hearings. These efforts are delivering a wide range of outcomes, from recommendations for legislative change to practice in the hearing room.

Hearings redesign work

A standout impact in 2022-23 was our input into the Hearings System Working Group, whose work led to the publication of the 'Hearings for Children' Redesign Report in May 2023. Guided as always by those with lived experience of hearings, and the changes they have identified as necessary, CHS made an exemplary contribution to the HSWG.

UNCRC and children's rights

As incorporation of the UNCRC into Scottish law makes progress through Parliament, at CHS we can be proud of our work to ensure that the convention is embedded in our policies and practice. In 2022-23 we produced new tools and training, and carried out evaluations, that are ensuring the rights of the child are paramount in the hearings system.

Glossary

Area Support Teams (ASTs)

Teams who provide support and guidance to Panel Members at the local level. There are 22 of these across Scotland, with 400 volunteer members.

Corporate Parent

An organisation or person that has specific responsibilities and duties to people with care experience and their wellbeing. These responsibilities are defined in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland Act) 2014.

Deferring/Deferral

When Panel Members are unable to make a decision (for example due to missing information), so the hearing is stopped ('deferred') until a later date.

Hearings System Working Group (HSWG)

Group made up for partners from the hearings system established to facilitate the redesign of the hearings system. It was chaired by an independent chair.

(CHS) Learning Academy

Provides a range of training to ensure our volunteer community's learning is current and relevant for the role.

National Convener

This role leads and oversees the Children's Panel. He or she is responsible for recruiting people to serve as Panel Members across Scotland, and making sure they have the right training and support to make sound decisions in the best interests of infants, children and young people. The current National Convener is Elliot Jackson.

Panel Members

People who take part in children's hearings and make legal decisions about the care and protection of infants, children and young people. There are around 2,500 Panel Members in Scotland. Three Panel Members sit on each hearing.

Relevant Person

Someone who has been deemed to have, or to have recently had, significant involvement in the upbringing of a child.

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

The Children's Reporter works for SCRA; they decide if a child needs a children's hearing, arrange children's hearing and ensure all necessary documentation reaches the necessary stakeholders.