



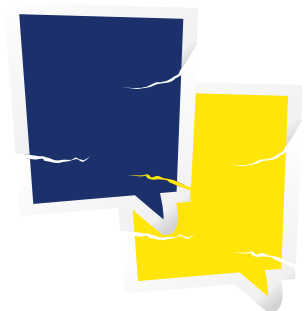
Children's Hearings  
Improvement Partnership

Helping me  
make choices  
about how  
best to take  
part in my  
Children's  
Hearing



Based on what children and young people have said about the Children's Hearings System the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) has prepared this guidance note for adults working with and caring for children and young people who are involved in the Children's Hearings System.

Professionals and decision makers can use this note and share it with other people to help children and young people understand what will happen before, during and after their Children's Hearing.



My voice should be at the centre of my Children's Hearing. Please make it your responsibility as the adults involved to ensure that this happens. I need to understand what is happening before, during and after my Children's Hearing.

## Preparing me well

Getting the letter from Children's Reporter asking me to attend my Children's Hearing (notification letter)

**My thoughts:**

**What will happen?**

**Who can I speak to?**

**What do I need to do?**

**Who is going to be there?**

**My feelings:** confused, anxious, scared, worried and unsure. Needing reassurance to understand what's happening.

### What should happen:

- I am asked by the Reporter if I would like to visit the Hearings Centre before my Hearing
- I can ask for a Pre-Hearing information pack
- My Lead Professional\* talks to me about why I have been asked to go to a Hearing (ideally before I receive my letter), what the Hearing is about, who is likely to be there, and what happens at a Hearing
- My Lead Professional and SCRA tell me where I can find more information and show me where I can read about this if needed
- If my first language is not English, my Lead Professional makes sure I can understand the verbal and written information given to me, or lets SCRA know that interpretation and translation services are needed for my Hearing

\* Sometimes I may want someone other than my Lead Professional to speak to me (e.g. my parent, foster carer, key worker, teacher or Named Person) or the Lead Professional may not be able to do it. The team around me should discuss and agree who is best to speak to me and ensure that the person identified knows what they should cover.

## Getting Hearing papers

**My thoughts:** What does that mean? What are my rights? What are my options? What's going to happen? How can I be supported before the Hearing and helped to understand what's going on.

**My feelings:** confused, anxious, scared, worried and unsure. Needing help to understand what's happening.

## What should happen:

The Reporter sends me the [All About Me form](#) so I can give my views to Panel Members if I want to. There is one for children and one for young people.

### Lead Professional or other identified person explains to me:

- If I am going to a grounds Hearing - What the 'grounds' mean - That the Hearing will go through the grounds with me (and my parents and sometimes carers) and I will be asked to say if I agree with what is written or not
- That I have the right to take someone with me to the Hearing to support me (called a representative) and that this could be anyone – guidance teacher, advocate (e.g. Children's Rights Officer, advocacy worker), my own solicitor, relative, or a friend
- That I can speak to someone independent who can help me decide if I would like some support at the Hearing
- That I can ask to speak to the Panel Members on my own
- What's in the reports and the recommendations made to the Hearing. All professionals who have given a report to a Hearing should make sure that what's in their report is explained to me, either by them or by someone else
- That I can also give my views how I want, not just in the All About Me form (letter, recording, email, etc.)
- That my parents or carers could have a solicitor or other representative with them at the Hearing, and why

## Who's involved in my Hearing and why ?



**My thoughts: Who are they? What do they do? What are my rights? What are my options? What's happening? Why are you in my life?**

**My feelings: Needing reassurance and help to understand what's happening.**

### What should happen:

- I should be told who is involved and be able to ask questions and say how I feel about this
- all professionals explain to me:
  - who they are
  - what they do
  - how they fit in with other workers and agencies
  - what they will do

# During my Hearing ?

**My thoughts: What's going to happen? What are the roles of Panel Members and Reporter? What are my rights? What are my options?**

**My feelings: Worries about confidentiality and privacy. Needing help to understand what's happening.**

Please remember that by the time of my Hearing I may have forgotten about getting the letter and papers as other events in my life have taken over.

**What should happen:**

- I am the focus of my Hearing and what is talked about. Everyone there should make sure this happens, even if I am not there
- It is **everybody's responsibility** to support me through my Hearing. For example, if someone who knows me well sees (through body language or other sign, for example) that I do not understand then they should make sure that the person chairing the Hearing knows this
- Only people who need to be at the Hearing are there

**At the start of the Hearing, the person chairing should welcome everyone and clearly explain:**

- Who the Panel Members are
- That Panel Members are specially selected and trained volunteers
- Why everyone is here today, including the Safeguarder if he or she is at the Hearing, what is going to be talked about and the decisions the Hearing will think about

**During the Hearing, everyone should:**

- Speak to me, not about me, and use words I can understand - but don't patronise me
- Ask clear, open questions and give clear answers
- Make sure that I have the chance to take part as much as I want to
- The person chairing should make sure that there are not too many people in the Hearing room at the same time
- Ask what I think about where I live and contact plans with my parents, siblings, friends, family
- If Panel Members decide to speak to me on my own, explain what is happening. Do not ask me to choose, but make sure I am ok to speak to Panel Members on my own, or with someone I choose to support me
- Summarise what has been talked about before moving on so that I am clear about what has been discussed and agreed

## **At the end of the Hearing, the Panel Members should:**

- Give a clear decision to me and explain why they have made the decision stating clearly that they have heard and understood my views, even if they don't agree with them
- Make sure that I understand the decision and that someone will talk to me about the decision after the Hearing
- Clearly explain that I can appeal a decision if I don't agree with it and how I can do this
- Make sure I know that I can ask for a review Children's Hearing after three months, if there has been a decision to make or continue a compulsory supervision order

## **After my Hearing ?**



Explaining to me clearly what happens next

**My thoughts:**

**Who do I go to for advice?**

**What is a proof?**

**What is an appeal?**

**How do I appeal?**

**What does a compulsory supervision order mean?**

**How does this impact on my life?**

**Who follows through on the decision?**

**What are my rights?**

**What are my options?**

**Who can I trust?**

**My feelings:** Needing help preparing me for changes in my life – where I will live, relationships with my family. Needing reassurance to understand what's happening.

**What should happen:**

- As soon as possible after the Hearing, the Lead Professional sits down with me to explain the decision and what happens next, answers my questions and helps me to get legal or other advice if I want to
- The Reporter sends a letter to me, if appropriate, as soon as possible after the hearing with the decision of the Hearing and the reasons for that decision and any related information such as the leaflets explaining Compulsory Supervision Orders, Going to Court leaflet and film, Your Rights flyer, and contact details of organisations who can help or advise me

Referral Letter  
Notification from Reporter

### Thoughts and feelings

- What will happen?
- Who can I speak to?
- What do I need to do?

Confused anxious, scared, worried, unsure



Agencies/support/Social services/  
School/nurseries Polices/Health  
visitors/Children rights officers/  
Who Cares? Scotland/other  
advocacy workers

### Thoughts and feelings

- What's going to happen?
- What are my options?
- Who are they?
- What do they do?

Reassurance, helped to understand  
what's happening, given their rights



Letter of decisions-  
To go to (grounds) Hearings

### Thoughts and feelings

- What does that mean?
- What are my rights?
- What are my options?
- What is going to happen?
- Who is going to be there?
- Forgotten about papers and other  
life event have taken place

Confused, anxious, scared, worried, unsure



Grounds and Hearing papers

### Thoughts and feelings

- What are they?
- What do they mean?
- What's going to happen?

To be supported before the hearing  
and helped to understand what's going on.

Worried, anxious, scared, unsure, reassurance

## Hearing

### Thoughts and feelings

- Information on what's going to happen?
- What are my rights?
- What are my options?
- Who's going to be there?
- What are the roles of the e.g. Reporter, Panel Member, Safeguarder?
- Being kept informed?

## Next steps/what happens next ?

### Thoughts and feelings

- Who do I go for advice?
- What is a proof?
- What are my rights?
- What are my options?
- How do I appeal?
- Who follows through with the decision?
- What does a compulsory supervision order mean?
- How does this impact on my life?

Preparation for change in life (environment, relationships, trust etc) reassurance

## Safeguarder

### Thoughts and feelings

- How do they engage with young people?
- How useful are they to young people and Panel Members?

Reassurance, worried, anxious, scared

## Need any more information?

If you require any further information contact:

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

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





# Glossary



**Advocacy:** When someone goes to a meeting with you, speaks for you or helps you to say what you want to say, or writes things down for you.

**Advocate:** A person who provides advocacy. This can be someone who you already know and trust like a friend, family member or someone who volunteers or is paid to make sure that your voice is heard. They can go to meetings with you, help you to say what you want to or write down things for you.

**Children's Reporter:** A person who decides if a child or young person needs to go to a children's hearing, provides information about the hearing, makes a record of who attends and what decisions are made and helps to ensure that the hearing is fair.

**GIRFEC:** Getting It Right For Every Child is the way all children's services work together to support children and young people, and their families.

**Statement of grounds:** The formal reasons the Children's Reporter has decided you should come to a hearing.

**Lead Professional:** The person who is the main contact for you, your family and all the people working with you on your Child's Plan. Their job is to make sure that you are involved in decisions, that everyone involved knows what is happening and that you get all the help and support set out in your Child's Plan.

**Named Person:** The person who can help you and your family by giving you information, advice and support. They can share any concerns about your wellbeing with other professionals and agencies if needed, so that you get the right help at the right time.

**Panel Member:** A specially trained volunteer who will ask questions, listen and make decisions at children's hearings.

**Person chairing:** the panel member who makes sure everyone has their say at the hearing and that the procedures are followed by the panel members.

**Safeguarder:** An independent person that can be appointed by the children's panel members or a sheriff and who is there to make sure that your rights are protected, your views are represented properly at a hearing and that any plans being made are in your best interests.

**SCRA:** The organisation that employs children's reporter.

**Sheriff:** A person who makes decisions in court.

**Social Worker:** A person who works with you and your family to give you support and help to protect you from harm, neglect or abuse.

**Solicitor:** A legally qualified person who can represent you or family member at a children's hearing or in court.

