



**Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership Meeting  
Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022**

**Note of Meeting**

**Attendees:**

Tom McNamara, SG, Acting Chair <b>(TM)</b>	Janine McCullough, Education Scotland <b>(JMc)</b>
Elaine Adams, CHIP L&D Lead <b>(EA)</b>	Fiona McFarlane, The Promise <b>(FMc)</b>
Lisa Bennett, SCRA <b>(LB)</b>	Craig Milne, SG <b>(CM)</b>
Stephen Bermingham, CHS <b>(SB)</b>	Paul Mulvanny, SCRA <b>(PM)</b>
Liz Cuschieri, SLAB <b>(LC)</b>	Deborah Nolan, SG <b>(DN)</b>
Julie Duncan, SG <b>(JD)</b>	Susan Orr, SWS <b>(SO)</b>
Fiona Dyer, CYCJ <b>(FD)</b>	Hazel Robertson, SWS <b>(HR)</b>
Helen Etchells, SCRA <b>(HE)</b>	Brendan Rooney, SG <b>(BR)</b>
Bryan Evans, Children 1st <b>(BE)</b>	Nick Rougvie, SG <b>(NR)</b>
Alistair Hogg, SCRA <b>(AH)</b>	Pam Semple, SG <b>(PS)</b>
Jenny Hamilton, COPFS <b>(JH)</b>	Joanne Smith, NSPCC <b>(JS)</b>
Neil Hunter, SCRA <b>(NH)</b>	Alison Todd, Angus CPC <b>(AT)</b>
Elliot Jackson, CHS <b>(EJ)</b>	John Urquhart, COSLA <b>(JU)</b>
Tamar Jamieson, Police Scotland <b>(TJ)</b>	Carol Wassell, CHS <b>(CW)</b>
Gordon Main, OHOV <b>(GM)</b>	
Selwyn McCausland, Partners in Advocacy <b>(SMc)</b> ,	

**Apologies:**

Donald Henderson, SG  
Colin Convery, Police Scotland  
Sheriff Susan Craig, Judiciary

Agenda Item	Action Points
<p><b>1. Welcome and apologies</b></p> <p><b>TM</b> welcomed CHIP partners to the group, apologies were noted and brief introductions made. <b>TM</b> advised the group that Lesley Sheppard has now retired, and thanked her for her work as Chair.</p>	
<p><b>2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Action Points</b></p> <p>Minutes of previous meeting were agreed and the actions reviewed. <b>LB</b> advised an update on Action 4 can be circulated now. <b>AH</b> advised this should be read in light of the fact that some Covid emergency</p>	

<p>provisions on attendance are still live. All other actions were either complete or covered in substantive agenda items.</p>	
<p><b>3. Hearings System Recovery – Children’s Hearings Covid Recovery Group and related work</b></p> <p><b>TM</b> gave an update on this work, with reference to the tabled fourth update report from the Recovery Group (CHCRG). That included January 2022 data, and therefore the impact of Omicron variant. He asked CHCRG members to comment on highlights/data points. <b>EA</b> thanked members of the group for staying committed through the entire pandemic, particularly the latest challenges posed by the Omicron outbreak and all were looking towards a return to hybrid and face to face hearings. <b>NH</b> agreed that delivery/operational improvement potential within the recovery group going forward could be helpful. A group focussed on delivery could be an asset to the oversight of CHIP.</p> <p><b>AH</b> discussed the need for constant rebalancing of operations in the face of changing circumstances. He also highlighted concerns regarding a significant build-up of delay for proofs. <b>BE</b> raised the impact on safeguarders, and the pressures that delays and deferrals can have on the safeguarder panel. This illustrated the ripple effect of delays and the need to adapt to changing circumstances as the impacts of the pandemic on the full range of system partners, and families, feed through.</p> <p><b>CW</b> emphasised the importance of the work of the Recovery Group, and how the recently announced lifting of restrictions will shift focus to the complexities of recent and forthcoming legislative changes. The future for the group should be a focus on continuity and implementation of immediate changes in the spirit of The Promise, and responding to the OHOV calls. This will need high level representation from Social Work.</p> <p><b>BE</b> expressed his view that the Safeguarder Panel Team from Children 1st needed to be involved with CHCRG, although he will need to consider capacity within the team. That offer was welcomed by the Partnership.</p>	<p><b>ACTION 1 – SWS reps to consider representation arrangements for the group.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION 2 – TM and BE to consider SPT representation.</b></p>
<p><b>4. Hearings System Working Group</b></p> <p><b>AH</b> gave an update on the progress to date – focus is on meeting the explicit expectations, and implications, of The Promise, but also looking wider to determine the focus of redesign. They agreed early that the redesign work would use the Scottish Approach to service design working with the Office of the Chief Designer. A workplan is under development, including a research element mapping evidence base for</p>	

<p>change in a “contextual framework”. Partner engagement to be phased in to the workplan imminently. <b>CW</b> discussed the need for continuous engagement to develop a new operational model.</p> <p><b>FMc</b> gave an update from The Promise perspective. Comms will be coming from the HSWG group very soon to begin the process of hearing from people and interests across the system. At a recent meeting with Sheriff Mackie, SCRA and CHS chairs discussed the focus of the work. They are cognisant of the coming Care and Justice Bill, and the need to map and consider the changes coming under that.</p> <p><b>JU</b> questioned if there was anxiety among panel members about the scale of potential change. What discussions with panel members are being undertaken?</p> <p><b>EJ</b> advised that there has been a significant amount of engagement over the last year around what this might mean for Panel Members. Panel Members are cautious about new expectations, as the current capacity within the system is stretched. CHS are very conscious that the uncertain environment was unsettling for volunteers. Consultation with panel members would ongoing into the Spring, then analysis of the outcomes. Discussions with chair of the HSWG have taken place and members have been asked to consider the views and feelings of panel members. <b>TM</b> agreed - we all need to keep panel members ( and all current contributors) motivated, valued and supported through perceived uncertainty.</p>	
<p><b>5. Our Hearings Our Voice</b></p> <p><b>GM</b> gave an update from OHOV. He discussed the development of training with Children 1st and others, and that OHOV are looking to be involved in the Youth Justice Conference in the Summer. He raised the live, and rolling, recruitment for the board, which will be open to all eligible young people. He would also be bringing in another member of staff to support and facilitate young people’s involvement and partner engagement. The young people have also been involved in recent recruitment for SCRA, and the CHS Board.</p> <p>Strategically, the 40 calls have been mapped by the HWSG, and the young people would be meeting Sheriff Mackie in March. <b>GM</b> hopes there will be significant involvement in the HSWG engagement programme. OHOV want to connect with wider children and young people, but also with key decision makers and strategic groups in the system.</p> <p>There have been explorations of the questions around the OHOV evaluation, on how it aligns with The Promise, and what model will help it carry out its role. Alignment will clarify as the work with HSWG progresses, but the willingness to engage with OHOV is apparent.</p>	<p><b>ACTION 3 – Meeting to be arranged between NR and GM to discuss how SG can support.</b></p>

<p>There are challenges in engaging with all Local Authorities and acknowledgement that closer links with COSLA and others are required.</p> <p><b>TM</b> expressed thanks to the young people and those supporting them for their ongoing work.</p>	
<p><b>6. CHS Update</b></p> <p><b>EJ</b> gave CHS update. Running 22 areas through 22 volunteer teams through the pandemic has been challenging, with consistency on implementation of new expectations difficult to achieve given the operating environment and the voluntary nature of the roles. He is extremely grateful for the efforts of volunteers.</p> <p>Capacity wise, there is a normal annual loss of 300-350 panel members. This attrition had probably doubled in the last two years, primarily to do with the various impacts of Covid – home schooling, caring commitments, work demands etc. Recruitment last year had been successful with young people involved in the campaign throughout. This year, the campaign ran on similar lines, with a focus on recruiting more men. There have been 1100 applications received, however approximately 75% had been from women.</p> <p>CHS and SG are therefore looking at the gender balance requirements in the legislation. One of the key issues is how maintain standards – anxious not to have to lose very valuable and capable women from children's panel service.</p> <p><b>EJ</b> expressed his thanks to all those who helped to prompt colleagues towards recruitment.</p> <p>Quality and diversity are high amongst applicants, and they are looking to recruit around 500 from the 1100 by 31 March 2022.</p>	
<p><b>7. Care and Justice Bill</b></p> <p><b>TM</b> gave an introduction to the Bill and the content. The focus is on 16 &amp; 17 year olds as consulted on last year, consequential reforms for that older cohort, and the needs of victims clearly a high priority. Wider areas will be covered, but Ministerial signoff is still required so we are limited in terms of communicable detail at this time.</p> <p><b>BR</b> gave further information on the current position. Consultation is close to launch. He is aware there are review groups and others working – as Government officials instruct and introduce, anxious to make sure we're not stepping over that work. This Bill takes the opportunity to make early changes that we know need to be made. We</p>	<p><b>ACTION 4 – SG to alert partners to the consultation as</b></p>

<p>can't be categorical about timescales due to the need for sign off, and subsequent parliamentary planning, but we will be establishing links for engagement when the consultation is live.</p>	<p><b>soon as it is launched.</b></p>
<p><b>8. SG Updates</b></p> <p>Feb saw new justice vision published, and it is clear how influential the WSA has been in their thinking. This work synergies with the SSC framework on sentencing for young people.</p> <p>We are also looking further at the recommendations in the recent Lady Dorrian review of sexual offending which made specific recommendations for the hearings system. Questions on whether all are for CHIP Partners to implement, but some certainly are and we have an interest in all of them.</p> <p><b>TM</b> discussed engagement on how to regulate cross-border placements. SG had received a range of responses from key partners in late January, and some have expressed strong concerns about the proposal for parts of the hearings system to offer scrutiny and advice to High Court in England. We hope that structural issues will be addressed and resolved in the C&amp;J Bill, however there is now necessity to introduce a legal mechanism to regulate these placements due to the Supreme Court ruling on the matter last July. Ministers will take a view soon on how to deal with this in the intervening time between now and any legislative changes being enacted.</p>	<p><b>ACTION 5 – TM to circulate bullet points on those recommendations which will be item on next agenda.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION 6 – TM to get agreement on publication of responses, and advise on a Ministerial steer.</b></p>
<p><b>9. AOB</b></p> <p><b>HE</b> raised a SCRA paper on research on virtual and hybrid hearings in terms of participation and rights. SCRA want to raise awareness of the online survey for foster and kinship carers. Members are asked to promote the survey in their own networks.</p>	
<p><b>10. Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>10.00am Thursday 19 May 2022</p>	