

CHS Public Board Meeting

Wed 25 March 2026, 10:00 - 12:00

Thistle House, Edinburgh

Agenda

10:00 - 10:00 **1. Welcome & Apologies**

0 min

verbal Sean Austin

To update

 0. Board Meeting Agenda MARCH 26.pdf (2 pages)

10:00 - 10:05 **2. Declarations of Interest**

5 min

verbal Sean Austin

To update

10:05 - 10:10 **3. Approval of the Minute from the Meeting on 10 February 2026**

5 min

paper Sean Austin

To approve

 3. CHS-2526-45 CHS Board DRAFT Minute 28.01.26.pdf (10 pages)

10:10 - 10:15 **4. Action Log Update**

5 min

paper Sean Austin

To update

 4. CHS-2526-46 Board Action Log - JAN 2026.pdf (1 pages)

10:15 - 10:25 **5. Chair Update**

10 min


verbal Sean Austin

To update

5.1. Ministerial Letter of Thanks to CHS Board

paper Sean Austin

To update

 5.1 CHS-2526-47 Ministerial letter of thanks to the CHS board - March 2026.pdf (1 pages)

10:25 - 10:35 **6. Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair Update**

10 min

verbal Sean Austin

To update

10:35 - 10:45 **7. People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Chair Update**

10 min

verbal Katie Docherty

To update

10:45 - 10:55 8. National Convener/CEO Update

10 min

paper *Elliot Jackson*

paper

 8. CHS-2526-48 National Convener CEO Update.pdf (7 pages)

ITEMS FOR NOTING

10:55 - 11:00 9. 2025/26 Finance Report

5 min

paper *Lynne Harrison*

To note

 9. CHS-2526-49 Finance Report 2025-26.pdf (2 pages)

11:00 - 11:05 10. Q4 Performance Report

5 min

paper *Lynne Harrison*

To note

 10a. CHS-2526-50 Q4 Performance Report 2025 26.pdf (4 pages)

 10b. CHS-2526-50 Q4 Appendix 1 - Performance Report 2025 26.pdf (9 pages)

11:05 - 11:10 11. Partnership Coordinator Network Paper

5 min

paper *Bethany Cunningham*

To note

 11. CHS-2526-51 Partnership Coordinator Network Board Paper 25 March 26.pdf (6 pages)


11:10 - 11:15 12. Panel Member Chairing Policy

5 min

paper *Carol Wassell*

To note

 12a. CHS-2526-52 Chairing Policy Cover Paper.pdf (3 pages)

 12b. CHS-2526-52 Appendix 1 - Final Chairing Policy 18.02.2026.pdf (7 pages)


11:15 - 11:20 13. Gender Pay Gap Report

5 min

paper *Joanne O'Leary*

To note

 13a. CHS-2526-53 Gender Pay Gap Report covering paper.pdf (2 pages)

 13b. CHS-2526-53 Appendix 1 Gender Pay Gap Report - 2026.pdf (18 pages)

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

11:20 - 11:20 14. Budget Approval 2026/27

0 min

paper *Lynne Harrison*

To approve


 14. CHS-2526-54 CHS Budget Approval 2026-27.pdf (5 pages)


11:20 - 11:25 15. Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026/27

5 min

paper Lynne Harrison

To approve

 15a. CHS-2526-55 CHS Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 26 27 Cover Paper.pdf (2 pages)

 15b. CHS-2526-55 Appendix 1 CHS Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 26 27.pdf (8 pages)

11:25 - 11:30 **16. Equalities Mainstreaming Outcome Report 2023-25**

5 min

paper Joanne O'Leary

To approve

 16a. CHS-2526-56 EDI Mainstreaming Report 2025-26 covering paper.pdf (2 pages)

 16b. CHS-2526-56 Appendix 1 - EDI Mainstreaming Report 2025-2026.pdf (14 pages)


11:30 - 11:30 **17. Update of Financial Regulations**

0 min

paper Lynne Harrison

To approve

 17a. CHS-2526-57 Review of Financial Regulations Cover Report.pdf (2 pages)


 17b. CHS-2526-57 Appendix 1 - CHS Financial Regulations (proposed) March 2026.pdf (20 pages)

11:30 - 11:35 **18. Update of Accounting Policies**

5 min

paper Lynne Harrison

To approve

 18. CHS-2526-58 Accounting Policies 2025-26.pdf (7 pages)

11:35 - 11:35 **19. Update to ARC Terms of Reference**

0 min

paper Sean Austin

To approve

 19a. CHS-2526-59 ARC Terms of Reference Cover Paper.pdf (2 pages)

 19b. CHS-2526-59 Appendix 1 - ARC TOR.pdf (5 pages)

11:35 - 11:40 **20. Update to People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Terms of Reference**

5 min

paper Joanne O'Leary

To approve

 20a. CHS-2526-60 PaCC Terms of Reference Cover Paper.pdf (2 pages)


 20b. CHS-2526-60 Appendix 1 - PaCC ToR 2026-27 DRAFT.pdf (5 pages)


11:40 - 11:45 **21. Communications Strategy**

5 min

paper Lynne Harrison

To approve

 21a. CHS-2526-61 Communications and Engagement Strategy cover paper.pdf (2 pages)

 21b. CHS-2526-61 Appendix 1 Communications and Engagement Strategy 2026-29.pdf (15 pages)


11:45 - 11:50 **22. CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Project**

5 min

paper Carol Wassell/Bethany Cunningham

To approve

 22a. CHS-2526-62 CHS Public Service Improvement Framework Project Paper.pdf (5 pages)

 22b. CHS-2526-62 Appendix 1 - Intro to PSIF 2025.pdf (2 pages)

11:50 - 11:55 23. Digital Priorities 2026/27

5 min

paper Lynne Harrison

To approve

 23a. CHS-2526-63 Digital Priorities 2026-27 cover paper.pdf (2 pages)

 23b. CHS-2526-63 Appendix 1 - Digital Priorities 2026-27.pdf (5 pages)

11:55 - 12:00 24. AOB

5 min

verbal Sean Austin

To update

12:00 - 12:00 25. Date of Next Meeting

0 min

verbal Sean Austin

17 June 2026, 10am - 12pm, Conference Room 2, Thistle House, Edinburgh

BOARD MEETING
25 March 2026
10.00am – 12.00pm, Thistle House/Teams Virtual
AGENDA

	Timings	Item	Lead	Paper Number	Purpose
1.	10:00	Welcome & Apologies	Chair	Verbal	
2.	10:00	Declarations of Interest	Chair	verbal	To update
3.	10:05	Approval of the Minute from the Meeting on 10 February 2026	Chair	CHS-2526-45	To approve
4.	10:10	Action Log Update	Chair	CHS-2526-46	To update
5.	10:15	Chair Update	Chair	verbal	To update
5.1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial Letter of Thanks to CHS Board 	Chair	CHS-2526-47	To update
6.	10:25	Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair Update	SA	verbal	To update
7.	10:35	People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Chair Update	KD	verbal	To update
8.	10:45	National Convener/CEO Update	EJ	CHS-2526-48	To update
ITEMS FOR NOTING					
9.	10:55	2025/26 Finance Report	LH	CHS-2526-49	To note
10.	11:00	Q4 Performance Report	LH	CHS-2526-50	To note
11.	11:05	Partnership Coordinator Network Paper	BC	CHS-2526-51	To note
12.	11:10	Panel Member Chairing Policy	CW	CHS-2526-52	To note
13.	11:15	Gender Pay Gap Report	JO	CHS-2526-53	To note
ITEMS FOR APPROVAL					
14.	11:20	Budget Approval 2026/27	LH	CHS-2526-54	To approve
15.	11:20	Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026/27	LH	CHS-2526-55	To approve
16.	11:25	Equalities Mainstreaming Outcome Report 2023-2025	JO	CHS-2526-56	To approve
17.	11:30	Update of Financial Regulations	LH	CHS-2526-57	To approve
18.	11:30	Update of Accounting Policies	LH	CHS-2526-58	To approve
19.	11:35	Update to ARC Terms of Reference	SA	CHS-2526-59	To approve
20.	11:35	Update to PaCC Terms of Reference	KD	CHS-2526-60	To approve
21.	11:40	Communications and Engagement Strategy	LH	CHS-2526-61	To approve
22.	11:45	CHS/Public Service Improvement	CW/	CHS-2526-62	To approve

		Framework (PSIF) Project	BC		
23.	11:50	Digital Priorities 2026/27	LH	CHS-2526-63	To approve
24.	11:55	AOB	Chair	verbal	To update
25.	12:00	Date of Next Meeting			
		17 June 2026, 10am – 12pm, Conference Room 2, Thistle House, Edinburgh			

Board Meeting
28 January 2026, Thistle House, Edinburgh 10:00 – 12:00

DRAFT MINUTE

Present	Katharina Kasper (KK)	Chair
	Sean Austin (SA)	Depute Board Chair/ARC Chair
	Katie Docherty (KD)	Board Member/PaCC Chair
	Claire Kettlewell (CK)	Board Member
	Ronnie Corse (RC)	Board Member
	Barbara Neil (BN)	Board Member
In Attendance:	Elliot Jackson (EJ)	CEO/National Convener, CHS
	Lynne Harrison (LH)	Director of Business and Finance, CHS
	Carol Wassell (CW)	Director of Positive Outcomes, CHS, (via Microsoft Teams)
	Bethany Cunningham (BC)	Interim Director of Tribunal Delivery, CHS
	Joanne O’Leary (JO)	Director of People and Culture, CHS
	Andrew Watson (AW)	Director of Children and Families, Scottish Government (Via Microsoft Teams), attending for item 6
	Nick Rougvie (NR)	Sponsor Team Lead, Scottish Government (Via Microsoft Teams)
	Stephen Edgar (SE)	Finance Manager, Scottish Government (Via Microsoft Teams), attending for item 6
	Frieda Cadogan (FC)	Governance Office, CHS (Note Taker)
Apologies:	Robert Dorrian (RD)	Board Member
	Taiba Ali (TA)	Legislation and Policy Leader, Children’s Hearings Sponsor Team, Scottish Government (via Microsoft Teams)

	Item	Decisions Taken
1.	Welcome & Apologies	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies received from RD, BN, and TA. AW and SE to join the meeting for item 6. 	
2.	Declaration of Interests	
	There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	Approval of the Minute from the Meeting on 10 December 2025	
	Minute from the meeting on 10 December 2025 was approved as an accurate record.	Minute Approved
4.	Action Log Update	
	Action log updated on a separate document with all actions noted as complete.	
5.	Chair Update	
	The Chair provided a verbal update on the following key points since the last Board meeting in December: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Stage 1 Report on the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill from the Education, Children and Young People Committee was published on 17 December 2025. This is an incredibly positive report and evidences a huge amount of scrutiny from the sector. 	

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	<p>Parliament agreed the general principles of the Bill and moved onto stage 2 from 15 January 2026. Amendments to the bill will now be submitted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Scottish Budget for 2026 to 2027 was published on 13 January 2026 and will have implications for CHS as a public body. This is being discussed in more detail under agenda item 6 below. • The public appointment of KK as the new Chair of NHS Lanarkshire was announced on 19 January 2026. KK reassured the Board of her continued commitment as Chair of CHS and that the new role should be beneficial for insight into national priorities. 	<p>The Board noted the update.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Budget Planning 2026/27</p>	
	<p>AW and SE joined the meeting to take part in discussion in relation to the CHS budget allocation, and both were welcomed by the Chair. LH introduced the paper to the Board with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the SG budget announcement on 13 January, CHS has been awarded a budget of flat cash for revenue against 2025/26 figures. This is the fourth year consecutively that CHS has received funding in this way. • The Board highlighted its disappointment at this, despite working hard with SG Sponsor Team colleagues on this. The current funding allocation results in a 60% gap and does not meet the CHS payroll costs. • This is particularly disappointing when CHS has worked hard to achieve £200k in savings which will be returned to the SG as part of the Public Service Reform (PSR) savings request. This has been achieved despite the difficulties of being a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB), which has always been acknowledged by SG colleagues. • The Board will be asked to approve the budget at the meeting on 25 March, however, will find this difficult to do without assurances from the SG that this huge funding gap will be met. As a result, a letter of comfort is requested from the SG, prior to the Board decision in March. <p>The discussion was opened by the Chair for comments and questions with the following points raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board thanked AW for attending and whilst recognising the financial constraints of the SG, the Board are extremely disappointed to be in the same position once again this year. The gap in funding is larger than previous years and the Board asked what assurances can be given that the funding gap will be met in full. • AW welcomed the invite and acknowledged the challenges faced by CHS in relation to the allocation. Following a letter to AW from EJ highlighting these challenges, AW has sent a response to offer initial assurance. The Sponsor Team submitted a strong case for change however despite this, the desired outcome was not achieved. It was highlighted that this position is the same across the whole portfolio and not unique to children and families. Ministers are however aware that CHS is in a period of reform and have been clear that costs from legislative changes will be met and there is cabinet support for this. The SG recognise that CHS has worked hard on efficiency savings against this backdrop of 	

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	<p>reform and will continue to have discussions with CHS over the financial year to give continued assurance that the gap in funding will be met.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair thanked AW for the assurances given and raised a question around why the funding for Childrens Care and Justice Acti (CCJA) has not made it into the GiA which will result in even more pressure. The Board understands that this funding is not required immediately however asked what assurances the SG can give in relation to this. • AW advised that primary legislation has received cabinet approval and Ministers have been clear that funding will follow. Once the conclusion of the Childrens (Care, Care Experiences and Services Planning) (CCCESP) Bill has been reached, a financial plan will be developed, therefore assurances can be given. • Following a request from the Board, AW agreed to include the commitment to meet CHS funding needs in full, including legislative implications and funding, within the letter of comfort. This should be achievable within the deadline of 25 March CHS Board date. AW acknowledged the importance of this for the Board to approve the budget. • The Board was clear that with the size of the organisation and budget required, CHS cannot meet the additional costs through operating cost savings if it is to meet Ministerial objectives. Additional funding will be required. AW offered reassurance on his confidence that this will be done and will add this to the letter of comfort. • AW commented that the Minister and Director General have been clear they also hold this position. The Director General is considering further engagement with all education and skills public bodies on this and information will follow on this in the coming weeks. • AW proposed that there would be a benefit to bringing a group together of NDPBs within this space over the coming financial year with a focus on the wider reform agenda and efficiencies and EJ agreed with this. EJ advised that there is already an NDPB Forum whereby SG colleagues provide updates on budgets for the upcoming three years and to work on moving to a more secure funding position. EJ highlighted the recent comment made by the Education Secretary, Jenny Gilruth to the budget evidence session that CHS is one area where savings should not be sought in the context of reform. This, together with the evidence submitted by the Sponsor Team should surely help influence Ministers that we cannot be in this financial position again going forward. • The Chair made a proposal to write a letter to the outgoing Minister for Children and Young People to outline CHS' position formally. CHS have relied on the good relationship with the Minister who has provided CHS with full support, however there will be no certainty of this with a change of Minister. The Board fully appreciate that the Sponsor Team has worked hard to change this funding position and a letter from the Chair will enhance this. The Board agreed this would be a good way forward from a governance perspective. Audit Scotland have highlighted the pressures issue in the CHS Annual Report and Accounts for the past two years and will be raised again. This makes it difficult for the Board 	<p>The Chair will write to the Minister for Children and Young People to outline CHS' position formally.</p>
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	<p>and EJ as Accountable Officer not to affect any change over the last five years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair asked for reassurance that the case presented was as robust as it could be. AW advised that it was and Ministers were clear that the evidence provided was strong and reflected the Cabinet Secretaries comments at the committee despite the outcome. AW highlighted that there will be an opportunity, early in the post-election period review the plan for Children and Families and will involve CHS. • The Board had three asks from the letter of comfort; that the SG will meet CHS full funding gap, that the SG will commit to include funding impacts from the legislative agenda and a commitment to continue to work with CHS for a longer-term solution. AW agreed to do this and highlighted that the SG have honoured that commitment over the past few years and is confident this will continue. • EJ offered commitment to continue to work with AW and the Sponsor Team on this going forward. • The Chair thanked AW and SE for attending and they left the meeting. 	<p>CHS will be involved in review of Children and Families plan post-election.</p> <p>The SG agreed to provide a letter of comfort on funding gap prior to the next Board meeting in March.</p>
7.	Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair Update	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been no meeting of the committee since the last Board meeting on 10 December 2025, therefore there is no further update. • SA as Chair of ARC, has taken part in budget discussions with the Chair, EJ, and LH. 	
8.	People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Chair Update	
	<p>KD provided an update from the last meeting of the committee on 16 December 2025 as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee welcomed BN and RD to their first meeting as members. • The People Strategy Implementation Quarterly Report was presented and the enormous amount of work by JO and the team was acknowledged. Key focus areas include strategic workforce planning, management/leadership development and the organisations focus on becoming a trauma informed organisation with alignment to the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) agenda. All objectives from report are on track. • Annual Report on outcomes of staff appraisals was presented and observed similar themes coming through this year around strategic thinking, communication, workload, and project management. This is aligned to the results of the recent staff survey report. • A verbal update on Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) was provided, following the refresh of the EDI Strategy and the re-establishment of the Working Group led by JO. The group met in December with a focus on the strategy and deliverables. The mainstreaming outcomes reporting cycle begins again in March and looking to include clear measurable outcomes The group have been working with the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA) who have well established processes in place. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee received an update on the Employee Engagement Survey to say that this will be circulated for comments. Communication continues to be a common theme; however, work is already underway on communication with the appointment of a Senior Communications Manager. Work is well underway on improvements. • A verbal update on the Foundations for Learning Programme Phase 2 was provided, with consultation meetings ongoing at that time. The committee was reassured that the approach has been done sensitively and with care and consideration for colleagues affected. • Finally, the committee approved the Disciplinary and Grievance Policies, and an update was received by the co-chairs of the Team Forum. • The Chair thanked KD for the update which offers reassurance to the Board of the level of scrutiny that comes through the committees. • RC raised a question around the engagement survey and whether an overall score from the results is allocated. JO advised that the results include percentage breakdowns and scores but no benchmarking against sector partners at this time. • It was noted by the Board that communication is always highlighted as an issue within organisations of all types, however it is reassuring that CHS are focussing on this for continued improvements based on feedback. 	<p>The Board noted the update.</p>
9.	National Convener/CEO Update	
	<p>EJ introduced the paper to the Board for update and highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point 3.1 - Redesign Board and Non-Legislative Workstreams EJ continues to attend the Redesign Board meetings with a meeting taking place on 22 January. This was the first meeting following the CCCESP Bill being passed to stage two and was positive. The Redesign Board acknowledged the impressive level of debate in parliament. <p>EJ has asked the Redesign Board for more detail on the key milestones for the eight non-legislative workstreams and will share this with the CHS Board once received. There is a general view from partners that there is a lack of resource within the sector to undertake work required within the eight workstreams. CHS are or will be involved in all eight workstreams and EJ would like to highlight to the CHS Board that going forward decisions on priorities will need to be made to accommodate this. The CHS Corporate Parenting and Business Plan for 2026 will be presented at the Board in March for approval, however the Board is asked to note that following approval, due to changing priorities, this may need to be amended.</p> • A Redesign Board Stakeholder Engagement Session is planned for 25 February with circa sixty people from across the sector invited. The purpose is to engage partners to help shape the next five years in relation to planning for their view on what the future may look like. This is an essential piece of work for collective responsibility and EJ will feedback on this to the Board. • Point 3.2 Foundations for Learning 	<p>The Board agreed with the need for future prioritisation on objectives outlined in the Business Plan.</p> <p>EJ will feedback from the Engagement Session on 25/2</p>

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	<p>EJ took the opportunity to thank the Learning Team for their due diligence and professionalism since joining CHS from West Lothian College. Despite going through this current period of change regarding the consultation on the team restructure, colleagues remain focussed and dedicated to the progression of the preservice training whilst maintaining their high standards. This demonstrates the teams’ skills, quality, and integrity.</p> <p>The consultation process is progressing well and any risk associated to the programme diminishes as each milestone in the programme is reached. The focus has been on the wellbeing of those colleagues involved and the organisation is mindful of how important it is to celebrate the contributions of those who may choose to leave CHS following this process. The Board was assured that the Team are taking a person-centred approach and thanked them for the great care and consideration that has been taken throughout the process.</p> <p>The following comments/questions were raised by the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board highlighted the importance of having a clear overview of the risks involved for CHS in relation to the non-legislative workstreams. SA, as Chair of ARC asked that the People and Culture Committee (PaCC) highlight any concerns from any workstreams coming through the committee to ARC. The Board highlighted the need to look at resources across the whole programme when priority planning is done. Agreed that there is a need to wait until the Bill receives royal assent before priority planning begins. • RD raised a point via email prior to the meeting, to ask if the newly formed Strategic Planning Team, comprising of the former Change Team and Programme Management Office, has now been implemented. It was confirmed that it has and is being led by the former Change Manager, Claire Gibson. This change is timely in the context of reform. • RD asked what the interim arrangements are prior to the Learning Manager post being filled. It was advised that CW will lead on this until the post is filled. This will be done through a specialist recruitment consultant as unsuccessful on previous attempts to fill this post. Ambition for the new manager to be in place by the end of February/early March. Preparatory work is underway for the new manager coming into post for work to begin swiftly on a learning needs assessment and the future learning needs of the organisation. This will include digital transformation. • KK thanked CW for the update and emphasised the importance of treating people fairly and commended the team for ensuring this is being done. 	<p>The Board agreed to look at whole programme planning following royal assent of the Bill</p> <p>The Board noted the update.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Strengthening our Volunteer Leadership through the Panel Engagement Lead (PEL) Role</p>	
	<p>BC introduced the paper to the Board to update and highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC provided context for new Board Members which is also highlighted within the paper. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board welcomed the update, and a brief discussion took place on why this programme of work is required and on the reason for the inconsistency across the regions. • As outlined in the paper, the conclusion is that the national parameters for the role could have been clearer. This has limited the organisations' ability to assure consistency of experience, visibility, and connection across the volunteer community. In addition, many PELs reported a reduced sense of connection with the wider panel community compared to the previous role. The parameters were originally left flexible to highlight what was working well locally. There is now a good understanding of the service across each region, therefore now is a good time for a review. • The Board asked what is the expectation that the PELs who have found the transition difficult, will welcome future change. BC advised that the working group consisted of those who were new into the PEL role and those who held the previous post and moved into the role. There has been good honest feedback within the group, and this feedback will be incorporated into any new guidance or plan. Communication and dissemination of the new guidance will be done with consideration, and it is important for all PELs to feel included in the process and listened to. There will be a commitment for the opportunity for each PEL to have an individual space with the Tribunal Delivery Managers and/or Wellbeing Coordinators to further support. • EJ welcomed the question and highlighted that there is a risk that some colleagues will leave the roles once the new guidance is implemented and will look at each situation with sensitivity. It is however important to have that consistency across the regions going forward for equity and fairness for all panel members. • RD raised a question via email, out with the meeting on where responsibility for the standardised PEL Handbook, which is referenced under point 3.2 of the report. BC advised that this was drafted by a Panel Coordinator and should sit with the Wellbeing Coordinators going forward and will be included within the implementation plan. • The Chair thanked BC for the updated and supported the proposed approach. 	<p>The Board approved the proposals outlined in the paper.</p>
ITEMS FOR NOTING		
11.	Finance Update P9	
	<p>LH introduced the paper to the Board for noting with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following earlier budget discussion under item 6 of the agenda, LH asked the Board to note that SG fully met CHS pressures as promised and earlier than originally expected with the award of £4m at the Autumn Budget Review (ABR). CHS has been awarded a further £2,650k following work with the SG on the Spring Budget Review (SBR). • CHS continue to meet the savings requests from the SG and has offered a return of £200k of savings, based on there no longer being a need for two recruitment campaigns this year. There is however SG 	

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	<p>acknowledgement that savings are more difficult for Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team are engaging with Sponsor Team colleagues for any underspend to be carried forward into 2026/27, however acknowledge that within the context of Public Service Reform (PSR) savings this may be challenging. • The Chair thanked LH for the update and reassurance to the Board, and no further questions were raised. 	<p>The Board noted the update.</p>
12.	Quarter 3 Performance Report	
	<p>LH introduced the paper to the Board for noting with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI, line 86, Payment of Invoices, Appendix 1 – A new financial system, SAGE, will be implemented in quarter one of 2026/27 which should see efficiency savings. • EJ highlighted that the Board will be invited to challenge the business plan that is due for approval at the March Board, on whether objectives can be fulfilled based on resources. This may need a recalibration around quarter two of 2026/27 due to the current legislative and non-legislative landscape. • The Board fully support the Executive Team in this approach. The Board acknowledged the need to prioritise for the best outcome and reduce the risk of being over ambitious. • Following Executive Team Discussion at a meeting on 13 January, whereby the draft Business and Corporate Parenting Plan was reviewed, four key strategic objectives were highlighted; digital, leadership, learning for the future, and reform. This will be incorporated into the draft plan for approval at the Board in March. 	<p>The Board agreed with proposal to revisit the Business Plan following decision around legislation.</p>
13.	Quarter 3 Data Summary Report	
	<p>LH introduced the paper to the Board for noting with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board was asked to note that due to the secondment of Elaine Gray, CHS Data Analyst, in relation to the Digital Strategy work, discussed under item 15 below, a report may not be available for the next meeting. LH reassured the Board however that data and performance will continue to be monitored. • The Board raised a question on whether we currently measure inactive and active data. It was advised that this is measured however this is not pulled out into the report but can look at this going forward. Wellbeing coordinators look at this data to link in with panel members who are inactive to offer support. • The Board noted that the mean and median age of panel member continues to rise and the median age is currently 63 years of age. Need to be mindful of this within future recruitment planning to target younger cohorts. • The Chair thanked LH for the update. 	<p>The Board noted the update.</p>
14.	Legislative Update on the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill	

Agenda Item 3. CHS-2526-45

	<p>CW introduced the paper to the Board for update, with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board noted that this is a fast-moving landscape and since the Board report was published, some points have moved on. • The deadline for MSP amendments to the Bill will close on 29 January. The Committee is due to meet again on 4 February to look at the proposed amendments which is expected to be c200. • Sara Bird, CHS Policy and Practice Advisor, continues to be on secondment to the SG Sponsor Team to help shape and influence the way forward, along with the Sponsor Team. Stephen Bermingham, CHS Head of Practice and Policy is leading on this. • The outcome on whether the Bill passes to stage three should be known week beginning 23 March and will then move on to royal assent. The Board noted the very tight deadlines around this. • CW, EJ, and the team remain confident that the Bill will be successful, based on evidence so far. • The Board was reminded that the Minister for Children and Families has been invited to attend the CHS Board meeting on 25 March. This has still to be confirmed. • KK thanked CW for the informative update. 	<p>The Board noted the update.</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>Digital Update</p>	
	<p>LH introduced the paper to the Board for noting, with the following points highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper presented, contains more detail than is normally required in a Board paper, however, provides context to the new Board members. • The focus will be on a one-year Digital Strategy initially which allows future alignment to the new Strategic Outlook that will be developed in 2027. • This work will be led initially by LH along with Douglas Cameron from the Scottish Childrens Reporters Administration (SCRA) through our shared services. This is until it is established what is required in terms of leadership now that the current Digital Delivery Manager is leaving the organisation. LH will liaise with RC as this is his area of expertise for advice on this. • The Board highlighted that there is no cost or resource implications noted in the paper. It was advised that any costs sit within the joint investment budget therefore no additional funding is required. • SA, as Chair of ARC, highlighted the importance of any related risks to this programme, to be visible to the committee. SA asked for a before and after systems map to be produced for understanding of where the organisation is currently and the ambition going forward. LH will take this forward. The Board highlighted the importance to focus on the people aspect of the programme and not to solely focus on the technological part. • EJ proposed a future Board Development Session on digital, when the timing is right, as this is a key area of strategic focus for the organisation. The Board agreed this would be beneficial. 	<p>Agreed that any risks will be highlighted at ARC.</p> <p>The Board agreed to a future</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair thanked LH for the update and highlighted the importance that the organisation is ready for when new technologies are available to public sector organisations, therefore foundational work on this is extremely important. 	development session on digital for future planning.
ITEMS FOR APPROVAL		
16.	PaCC Annual Work Plan	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board approved the plan. 	The Board approved the plan
17.	ARC Annual Work Plan	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board approved the plan. 	The Board approved the plan
18.	AOB	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No further points raised. 	
19.	Date of Future Meetings	
	25 March 2026, 10.00am – 12pm, Conference Room 2, Thistle House/ Microsoft Teams.	

CHS Board Meeting Action Log



Ongoing	0
Overdue	0
Delayed	0
Complete	5
Not Started	0
Closed	0
TOTAL	5

Action No	Paper Ref (not for SLT)	Action Title	Action Details	Date Added	Due Date	Owner	Lead	Update	Status	Completion Date	Additional Comments
14		Chair to write to Minister for Children and Young People to outline CHS' funding position.	To be done before current Minister leaves office.	Jan-26	Mar-26	KK	KK		Complete	02/02/27	Letter sent by FC on behalf of KK 02/02/2027
15		Letter of Comfort from SG	To include 3 points; SG will meet full funding gap, include funding impact from legislative agenda and continue to work with CHS on longer term funding position.	Jan-26	Mar-26	EJ/KK	EJ		Complete		Received
16		Feedback from Redesign Board Engagement Session 25/2	EJ to feedback to the Board on this.	Jan-26	Mar-26	EJ	EJ		Complete		Update within CEO/NC Report
17		Digital 'before and after' systems map for Board	LH to provide this for SA for understanding of where we are currently and where we need to go.	Jan-26	Mar-26	LH	LH		Complete		Digital Priorities paper on agenda for March Board.
18		Board Development Session - Digital for future planning	To be added to Board Development Session Schedule.		TBC	EJ/KK	LH		Complete		Added to Board Development Session schedule.

Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise
Ministear airson Clann, Daoine Òga is An Gealladh
Natalie Don-Innes MSP
Natalie Don-Innes BPA

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Katharina Kasper
Chair
Children's Hearings Scotland

By Email:
katharina.kasperboard@chscotland.scot
CC: Board Members

17 March 2026

Dear Katharina and members of the CHS Board

LETTER OF THANKS TO THE CHILDREN'S HEARINGS SCOTLAND (CHS) BOARD

I have been taking some time to reflect on my time as Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise and I wanted to extend my thanks to you all for the dedication, passion and insight you bring to the children's hearings system.

It has truly been a privilege to work with you and to have your support during my time in the role. Even at this late stage in the parliamentary calendar, I have to attend to ministerial duties so unfortunately cannot attend your March board meeting to thank you in person for your commitment to Scotland's children and young people.

It has been an honour to be part of the transformative change taking place in children's hearings and I have no doubt that the changes we are making together will be hugely positive for the children and families who experience the system positive changes to the way children and families experience the system.

I would ask that you as a board pass on my thanks to the CHS staff for their service and unwavering commitment to supporting Scotland's children and young people.

Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,



Natalie Don-Innes MSP
Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise

Agenda Item 8. CHS-2526-48

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	National Convener/Chief Executive Board Update
Responsible Executive:	Elliot Jackson, NC/CEO
Report Author:	Elliot Jackson, NC/CEO

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note the update from the CHS National Convener/CEO on a range of organisational activity between the last Board in January 2026 and now.</p> <p>The report provides bite sized updates that can be expanded upon during the Board meeting. Other, more detailed reports on Legislative reform, resourcing, digital and strengthening our Volunteer Leadership through the Panel Engagement Leads are covered separately on the agenda.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the National Convener/CEO in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board are asked to note the paper and update provided by the CHS National Convener/CEO.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill
3.1.1	<p>CHS Board has been provided with regular briefings on the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill since its publication in June 2025. This update is an update to previous briefings.</p> <p>The Bill is the legislative arm of the redesign of the children's hearings system as part of the Scottish Governments Programme of Government and complements the other policy and practice development, through the Children's Hearings Redesign Board and the continuous improvement embedded within CHS' operating model.</p> <p>The Bill has now passed Stage 1 and 2 of the parliamentary process led by the Education, Children and Young People's Committee. CHS staff in the Practice and Policy Team are engaging with Scottish Government and partners to provide additional information and clarification on the key components of the redesign of the children's hearings system. This has required a great deal of focus and attention to detail, not least responding to the daily list of amendments submitted by MSPs and follow up information required by the Minister for Children and Young People.</p>

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	<p>Stage 3 debate is scheduled for the full Debating Chamber on 18 March 2026. At this stage MSPs can propose further amendments to the Bill. Amendments are debated and voted on, along with the substantive vote on whether to pass the Bill. If passed it will typically take 4-6 weeks to receive Royal Assent, and we would not anticipate any significant changes to the children's hearings system until April 2028 at the earliest.</p> <p>CHS is confident that we have provided a compelling case for the changes to the hearing system that will help improve outcomes for children and young people. If passed, our communications approach will ensure that the CHS community and colleagues are informed of the outcome of the vote and the content of the Bill in a considered and deliberate way.</p> <p>If passed, it will be vitally important to provide protected time for policy colleagues to dissect the implications of the Bill, engage with the Scottish Government around the regulations and second legislation and carefully consider the range of new statutory guidance and practice directions that will be needed to operationalise the legislation. Further updates will be provided to the Board after the vote on the 18 March 2026.</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Redesign Board Stakeholder Engagement Event Feedback – 25 February</p>
<p>3.2.1</p>	<p>The Children's Hearings Redesign Stakeholder Engagement session took place on 25 February 2026 and brought together 100 stakeholders over two events, with an interest in the Children's Hearings Redesign Board programme of work.</p> <p>The session opened with introductions from Brian Taylor, Deputy Director for Children's Rights, Protection and Justice, followed by the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) 20th anniversary message from the First Minister, which reinforced the programme's grounding in child centred approaches. Brian Taylor and COSLA's Laura Caven outlined the purpose, ambition, and governance of the Redesign Board, emphasising the central role stakeholders have in shaping the next phase of work.</p> <p>Workstream leads, provided focused updates on their work on culture, preparing for hearings and referrals, all highlighting early progress and key challenges. An open Q&A with the Redesign Board members enabled direct discussion of priority issues, before participants joined facilitated table sessions exploring three core themes: the voice of babies and infants, language and grounds, and the path to 2030. These discussions surfaced shared concerns, opportunities and areas requiring further clarity across the system.</p> <p>The session was highly interactive, and stakeholder feedback was positive. The Scottish Government and the Redesign Board committed to a second engagement session in the autumn of 2026.</p>

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3.3	Data Strategy/Update Work
3.3.1	<p>Using data and evidence to better enable decision making and drive improvement is a key ambition of Hearing Reform and for CHS. We have been working with Data Orchard to develop a Data Strategy for CHS that will drive this forward in line with our Quality Strategy. Data Orchard are an award-winning social enterprise who specialise in supporting organisations to use data to deliver their goals.</p> <p>We have just completed the discovery phase of this work through a series of interviews across our Senior Leadership team, a National Team Data Maturity workshop examining and discussing the assessment results, a visioning workshop with representatives from across the organisation, and a technical workshop with representatives from our Digital, Data and Information Governance Teams.</p> <p>Alongside our Data Maturity assessment, they have used this to fully understand our data vision, opportunities and challenges. They are now working with us to develop the strategy and roadmap that will enable us to deliver against these. The strategy will be completed in April 2026 with implementation taking place from 2026/27.</p>
3.4	Strategic Reference Group – Independent Review of Scotland’s Legislative Framework for Children’s Care
3.4.1	<p>The Scottish Government has asked Professor Norrie and CELCIS to undertake a comprehensive, independent review of Scotland’s legislative framework affecting children, young people, families within the children’s care system.</p> <p>The Review will provide Scottish Ministers with clear, evidence-based, and practical recommendations, focused on the structure, coherence, and accessibility of the existing legislative framework, that aim to improve outcomes and experiences for children and families, and support those who work with and alongside them.</p> <p>I have agreed to become a member of the Strategic Reference Group which is due to conclude and report within 12-months, February 2027. I will share the Terms of Reference and full membership once approved by the group at the first meeting later this month.</p>
3.5	CHS Learning Team Update
3.5.1	<p>To ensure CHS and the National Convener can continue to meet statutory duties over the next decade, the Board approved a business case in November 2024 to bring the learning function, previously delivered by West Lothian College (WLC), in-house. This enables CHS to deliver learning that is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible and future-proof • High-quality and evidence-driven • Delivers best value • Ensure alignment of learning and skill development across CHS • Be responsive to, and engaged in, public sector reform

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	<p>We are now in the process of closing the Foundations for Learning Programme that has delivered the change required to enable us to do this, now and in the future. The programme has seen us:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End the contract with West Lothian College and bring the skills and knowledge of the operational staff in-house • Consult with the staff team and manage roles within the new structure, and support those who wish to seek opportunities elsewhere • Launch the new structure whilst maintaining delivery of 25/26 preservice • Communicate widely with our volunteer community (particularly those who support the delivery of learning), staff team, and relevant stakeholders <p>We are currently recruiting to the Learning Transformation Manager role to engage with an experienced learning professional and proven leader who can drive the pivot to a digital first approach to learning.</p>
3.6	<p>Pre Service Training Update</p>
3.6.1	<p>Pre-service training continues to be positively received nationwide, and our early efforts to extend delivery into harder-to-reach areas such as Dumfries and Orkney have been especially welcomed. Both new trainees and existing members have valued the sense of inclusion that comes from being supported within their own communities.</p> <p>Although withdrawals have been higher than we would normally expect at this stage of the programme, the overall calibre of volunteers has once again improved, reflecting the strength of our recruitment approach. We are undertaking a review of the leavers to inform any changes required moving forward.</p> <p>We have experienced some challenges with the online elements of our tutorials and the Day 5 digital learning sessions, but with support from the digital team we've been able to resolve them effectively.</p> <p>We have also drawn on the contingency set aside for training resources, which has allowed us to maintain full support for delivery across all cohorts.</p>
3.7	<p>Communications Forward Look</p>
3.7.1	<p>Planning for Reform</p> <p>The Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) is due to complete its journey through Parliament on Thursday 18 March. It will then be presented for Royal Assent allowing it to become law. This will be an important step in improving the hearings system for children and families and delivering the Promise by 2030.</p>

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Meanwhile the Redesign Board, which oversees eight non-legislative workstreams, continues to move forward at a steady pace and is due to launch its fifth workstream on Language and Communication in children's hearings in the Spring.

To prepare the organisation for the changes ahead, CHS is developing a Roadmap to structure our approach to reform of the children's hearings system which will include a process of engagement with the Board and our key stakeholders.

Digital Reform

A Digital Strategy has been developed outlining how we will strengthen our infrastructure and leverage both data and artificial intelligence to build strong foundations that better serve our stakeholders and deliver reform. The strategy focusses on a single year of activity during 2026-27. This will enable the development of a longer-term strategy aligned to reform; the new CHS Data Strategy and our new Strategic Outlook.

Having successfully updated our content management system we have taken the decision to delay ISO. This will allow us to focus on more immediate priorities including a transformational programme to improve our data, making it easier for staff to store, access, manage and analyse important information and easier for volunteers to find the information they need to prepare for their hearing.

Learning for the Future

The review of the Learning team is now complete, and we have shared the conclusions of the consultation with volunteers and staff. A 'lessons learned' exercise will be completed in March to inform our approach to change in the future. A recruitment agency has been appointed to support the recruitment of the Learning Transformational Manager who will work with the new team to ensure our learning provision can meet future needs and legislative developments.

Strengthening Leadership Capacity

A programme of work to strengthen our leadership capability commenced in January and we will hold the second of these sessions with SLT and our Senior Managers in April.

Post Election Relationship Building

Following the election CHS will work with our Sponsor team to build relationships with the Minister who has portfolio responsibilities for the children's hearings system. We will also seek out opportunities for our Experts By Experience group to meet the new Minister.

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4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Develop a 5-year learning strategy to maximise learning impact across CHS. • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront of what we do, and those rights are well understood by our people. • Theme 2 - Driving Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Work with partners and stakeholders to lead and influence change. • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation. • Objective 3 - We will make effective use of technology, capitalising on its potential for enhancing performance and delivering efficiency. • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Implement a three-year People Strategy that attracts and retains top talent and committed individuals and drives the success and sustainability of the organisation. • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable, and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation. • Objective 3 - To become a more inclusive and diverse organisation and create a culture where everyone feels valued, included, and engaged. • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	No risks identified in relation to the paper. Any risk in relation to any specific areas detailed in the paper have been considered and reflected in the CHS Strategic Risk Register.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	As above.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	Not required for this specific paper, however any requirements for an impact assessment in relation to the individual areas outlined in the paper will have been considered separately.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	Not required for this specific paper, however any requirements for engagement in relation to the individual areas outlined in the paper will have been considered separately.

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9.	Resource Implications
9.1	None in relation to this specific paper, however any resource implication in relation to the individual areas outlined in the paper will have been considered separately.
10.	Appendices
	None

Agenda Item 9 CHS-2526-49

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Finance Report 2025/26 P11
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance and Depute CEO
Report Author:	Klaus Berchtenbreiter, Finance Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note the stated financial position per P11 2025/26. This was presented at the Senior Leadership Team meeting on 17 March and endorsed prior to presentation at the Board.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board is asked to note the report.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	25/26 P11 update
3.1.1	CHS has been awarded budget as 'flat cash' for revenue, £4.576k and an increase to our capital budget which is now £803k (this includes cash and non-cash elements). This results in CHS having a funding gap on revenue of £6,798k, but capital will be fully funded.
3.1.2	SG has committed to fully support CHS to meet the funding gap and this has been addressed in year: At ABR, CHS was awarded £4,035k reducing the existing pressures to £2,681k against the latest available forecast per the end of P5 Following detailed work with SG on the SBR, CHS has been awarded £2,650k, which has closed the funding gap and met pressures.
3.1.3	The forecast spend for the year is £10,897k revenue and £803k capital. The revenue underspends capture in year savings and agreement in line with PSR to return £300k savings from moving to a single Panel Member recruitment in year.

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3.2.5	Actual YTD Period 11	2025/26 Annual Budget	forecast @ P11	variance to forecast
		£000		
Staff	5,421	6,230	6,388	158
+ Board	45	69	69	0
+ Training, travel and subsistence	120	125	150	25
+ Property	81	145	145	0
+ Other Operating Costs	327	265	340	75
+ ICT Costs	634	1,079	1,095	16
+ Corporate Costs	268	28	295	267
+ Panel and AST Expenses	227	540	350	-190
+ Panel and AST Training	873	1,444	1,152	-292
+ Support for hearings	132	412	280	-132
+ Volunteer recruitment	270	665	458	-207
+ PVGs	23	0	25	25
+ AST Devolved Funding	25	372	150	-222
= Total	8,444	11,374	10,897	-477
4.	Key Risks			
4.1	No new risks have been identified following this report. The budget for 2025/26 has gone through the approval process and is subject to the already established risks that are being managed via the agreed processes.			
5.	Risk Register			
5.1	Already exists as a risk on the risk register. No Update to risk register required.			
6.	Impact on Inequality/Rights			
6.1	No impact assessment required			
7.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)			
7.1	Financial position has been discussed with Director of Business and Finance and after sign-off reported to SG			
8.	Resource Implications			
8.1	no known resource implications			
9.	Appendices			
	none			

Agenda item 10a. CHS-2526-50

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Q4 Performance Report 2025/26
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison – Director of Business and Finance
Report Author:	Karen Griffin, Corporate Governance Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note on the Q4 Performance Report that monitors the delivery of the objectives in the CHS Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2025/26.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board are asked to review and note Appendix 1 - CHS Performance Report and the following summary and key points.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Q4 Summary
3.1.1	<p>During the period there were six milestones to be completed. Four were completed and the remaining two had their timescale/target dates updated</p> <p><u>Completed</u></p> <p><i>Milestone 1.1 - Deliver year 1 of the implementation plan for the Quality Strategy, identifying and progressing key milestones and priority objectives</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year one (measure October 2024 publication) priorities delivered. Year two planning has commenced, and year two plans have been shared with SLT and ARC <p><i>Milestone 1.2. - Develop tools and approach to evaluation and audit, reviewing the national guidance, developing cohesive approaches to evaluation, self-assessment, and audit at national and regional levels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two separate outputs. 1) Audit executive summary and recommendations in place 2) evaluation framework identified and now in flight <p><i>Milestone 1.3 - Develop the resourcing and retention plan for PPAs increasing understand of the role and enhancing the efficacy of deployment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with colleagues to plan recruitment campaign and priority actions for retention infrastructure. Recruitment campaign closing mid-March, early indications of successful campaign. Further review and improvement work post campaign

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	<p>Milestone 5.2 - Review of CHS recruitment campaign to support attraction of diverse volunteer applicants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Capacity Programme, new approaches to the delivery of recruitment & selection were implemented following workshops with key stakeholders. Equalities monitoring data has been captured to analyse the reach of the campaign once appointment of new Panel Members in May 2026. <p><u>Timescale/target dates re-assessed</u></p> <p>Milestone 11.1 - Establish our future data needs and develop a pathway to meet those needs / Milestone 11.2 - Identify the required structure to deliver the data strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a successful procurement exercise of obtaining the services of Data Orchard, a specialised data consultant, the delayed development of a dedicated CHS data strategy has now commenced. A series of engagement has taken place (interviews with SLT, a workshop with all staff, a visioning workshop with Business Owners, and a data & tech workshop with specialist staff) for Data Orchard to produce a discovery report detailing the opportunities and challenges. The draft Data Strategy and roadmap will be completed by end of April 2026.
3.2	<p>Milestones progressed throughout 2025/26 (up to Q4)</p>
3.2.1	<p>Under the CHS Strategic Outlook 2024/2027 there were several business objectives with milestones/deliverables that were progressed throughout 2025/26. Most of these milestones remain on track and in budget. Timeframes have been updated for the digital strategy which will now form part of CHS strategic business plan for 2026/27 and the timeframe for the second stage audit of the ISO 27001 certification process has been pushed back until Q3 of 2026/27 due to level of work and resource involved to ensure all necessary requirements are in place and documented to ensure a successful outcome.</p>
3.3	<p>KPI's</p>
3.3.1	<p>As per the Q3 Performance Report, the Board are asked to note the following reasons once again for the KPI for “% invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations” calculated at 43% falling below the set target of 95%:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech issues with e-financials (SCRA and CHS finance operating system) Internal authorisation delays Supplier’s invoices not matching with their support docs (mainly local authority invoices) Late receiving invoices from suppliers but have much early date on invoice New Suppliers invoices require Verification Checks (mandatory requirement to prevent fraud) often causes delay due to supplier not responding in timely manner.

Agenda item 10a. CHS-2526-50

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional pressure points with Finance Year End workload – some deadlines in April for reporting <p>The finance department continue to actively look at various ways to manage and monitor the situation monthly and are recruiting for a temporary finance administrator, to provide cover for a staff member currently on long-term absence.</p> <p>The issues regarding e-financials are being addressed with the implementation of “Sage” a new accounting software (joint with SCRA) that will support streamlined processes and promote efficiencies.</p> <p>It should be noted that the KPI target set is in-line with SG requirements and not as set out in the invoice payment terms.</p>
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Develop a 5-year learning strategy to maximise learning impact across CHS • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront of what we do, and those rights are well understood by our people • Theme 2 - Driving Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Work with partners and stakeholders to lead and influence change. • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation. • Objective 3 - We will make effective use of technology, capitalising on its potential for enhancing performance and delivering efficiency. • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Implement a three-year People Strategy that attracts and retains top talent and committed individuals and drives the success and sustainability of the organisation. • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable, and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation. • Objective 3 - To become a more inclusive and diverse organisation and create a culture where everyone feels valued, included, and engaged. • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks

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5.1	No material risks identified.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the strategic Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	N/A
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – CHS Performance Report

Children's Hearings Scotland: Quarterly Performance Report
 QUARTER 4 (January, February, March 2026)

Quarter Summary - Milestones:

	Q4 Milestones				
	B	G	A	R	-
Theme 1 - Outcomes	4				
Theme 2 - People					
Theme 3 - Transformation		2			
Critical Enablers					
TOTAL	4	2	0	0	0

Key:
Blue = Objective completed
Green = Objective on track to be completed on time / budget
Amber = Objective at risk of not being delivered on time / budget, partially descoped, or whole objective re-timed
Red = Objective at serious risk of not being delivered on time / budget - or Objective has been descoped
Dash (-) = Not yet due for reporting / update

Milestones:

	Number of Milestones at End Q4
Planned to Complete in this quarter*	6
Completed in this quarter - Actual	4
Still to Completed/Progressed	2
Overall number completed in year to date	tbc
Ongoing as part of the 2024-2027 Strategic Outlook	23
Descoped	

* as published in the Business Plan

Theme 1: DELIVERING POSITIVE OUTCOMES

	Business Objective and Owner	Status				Actions / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Target	% Complete	Update
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
1	Implement year 1 of the Quality Strategy	Green	Green	Green	Blue	1.1 Deliver year 1 of the implementation plan for the Quality Strategy, identifying and progressing key milestones and priority objectives	Complete/progress through Q4	100%	Year one (measure October 2024 publication) priorities delivered. Year two planning has commenced and year two plans have been shared with SLT and ARC
		Green	Green	Amber	Blue	1.2 Develop tools and approach to evaluation and audit, reviewing the national guidance, developing cohesive approaches to evaluation, self-assessment and audit at national and regional levels	Complete by end Q3	100%	Two separate outputs. On track, 1) audit project as at 4.2; 2) evaluation framework - discussions are in progress to identify options/potential framework. Audit findings shared with QRG and Self-evaluation framework in design and phase one project kick off stage
		Green	Green	Green	Blue	1.3 Develop the resourcing and retention plan for PPAs increasing understand of the role and enhancing the efficacy of deployment	Complete by end Q4	100%	On track. Working closely with colleagues to plan recruitment campaign and priority actions for retention infrastructure. Recruitment campaign closing mid March, early indications of successful campaign. Further review and improvement work post campaign

					1.4	Review and align the approach to quality-supporting data including establishment of baseline data	Complete by Q2	60%	Review complete. On-going Work to streamline/align data is progressing. Observation base line data will be established with the new digitat observation template. Timescales for this template yet to be confirmed but dialogue progressing	
2	Enhance practice and standards across all areas					2.1	Implement and operationalise the agreed plans for participation at CHS through a refresh of our participation activity aligned with the revised Children's Rights and Participation Strategy	Progress/complete end of Q4	95%	On track. Outreach work being delivered. Range of new partnerships developed. Approaches being embedded in organisational culture as illustrated in impact report. Annual evaluation complete - excellent feedback from young people. Expert by Experience Group established, collaboration with OHOV. The Feedback and Participation Group now operational and a significant increase in participation work. Partnership Coordinators have responsibility for participation work regionally and still embedding this on a consistent basis.
						2.2	Enhance intelligence sharing, information and learning between regional and national teams and improving governance and reporting of complaints and feedback	Progress/Complete by end of Q4	75%	On track. Regular meetings and structured information sharing between regional national complaints team and regional. Developing thematic log reporting to ensure regional issues are shared with complaints team to progress thematic issues. Practice and Policy Team is meeting regularly with regional staff and is working collaboratively to identify priority topics for resource development in 2026-2027. Still need to improve consistent sharing of data from regional team to national team to ensure all complaints/feedback is shared.
						2.3	Develop the P&P team as the subject-matter experts on all aspects of practice, standards and policy, increasing communications with volunteer community and enhancing levels of engagement with the practice bank	Progress through to Q4	95%	On track. Regular briefings and training/Town Hall events to the community will be leading on topic-focused resource development. Developing expertise of the team in relation to specific policy/practice areas whilst ensure cross-cover. For example secured placement to develop a staff members expertise in the CCCSE Bill.
3	Fulfil our obligations and prepare our people for the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024.					3.1	Deliver the second module of Care & Justice Act Learning to ensure our Panel Community understand the specific needs and impact of trauma and legislation on older young people	Progress through Q4	50%	The build of the second part of C&J e-learning offer is complete, quality assurance and peer review has been completed with CYCJ. Slight delays incurred due to people resource pressures with contractors, however this is not expected to impact CHS objectives or operational plans as SG have delayed enactment of Part 1 March 2027 and CHS are very well prepared to deliver on statutory training requirements but has been delayed due to the Scottish Government enacting Part 1 later than originally anticipated.
4	Build on existing mechanism to capture experience of children and families in the hearings system to drive					4.1	Implementation and operationalisation of the Experts by Experience group	Complete by Q2	100%	Group fully operational and engaging in operational and strategic issues. High quality and robust support structures in place. Looking to double membership in 2026/27 to ensure high levels of engagement of young people that a variety of competing demands in their lives and therefore their availability is limited, in particular during working hours. The focus now is investing in the development of the young people and empowering them to have greater reach in their influence in CHS and with partners.

	Hearings system to drive quality at all levels.	Green	Green	Blue		4.2 Appeals data used to create a feedback loop to panel members to inform practice	Complete through end Q3	100%	Audit executive summary and recommendations in place. Feedback will progress after reports reviewed by SLT and AR.C. Executive summary shared with QRG and a SLWG to coordinate next steps will be established Q1
		Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	4.3 Creation of Quality Measures and improvement plans aligned to key priorities	Progress through end Q3	50%	Projects in place to shape Quality Measures but further development work needed to clarify quality measures
5	Continue to support and retain our Panel Community through the embedding of regional support structures that promote engagement and provide meaningful opportunities for our volunteers	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	5.1 Review recruitment application process to improve volunteer experience and attract diverse volunteers to join our Community	Progress through to Q4	90%	<p>In preparation for the autumn 2025 campaign, the overall volunteer experience was reviewed from initial promotion targeting specific areas, information sessions delivered nationally with previous Panel Members sharing their own experience candidly and proactively putting in place reasonable adjustments to encourage a greater diversity to the Panel Community.</p> <p>The digital recruitment solution building upon previous analysis, evaluation and feedback has been developed in readiness for the autumn 2026 campaign.</p>
		Green	Green	Green	Blue	5.2 Review of CHS recruitment campaign to support attraction of diverse volunteer applicants.	Complete by Q4	100%	As part of the Capacity Programme, new approaches to the delivery of recruitment & selection were implemented following workshops with key stakeholders. Equalities monitoring data has been captured to analyse the reach of the campaign once appointment of new Panel Members in May 2026.
		Green	Green	Green	Green	5.3 Develop an internal department plan to manage Capacity across the volunteer community	Progress through Q4	100%	On track, the Capacity Programme hosts key projects related to our volunteer community capacity including collaborative scheduling work with SCRA, rota optimisation and changes to preservice to deliver new chairs to practice sooner. For 2026/7 this programme will be integrated throughout our key functions at CHS.
		Green	Green	Green	Green	5.4 Continue to improve approaches to rota and resource allocation to improve the volunteer experience and enable more effective panel deployment processes	Progress through Q4 and into Q1 2026	60%	We have met with our colleagues in SCRA and are working towards delivering the implementation plan regarding scheduling of hearings work. This work has been delayed due to competing priorities and illness on SCRA side but should be completed by Q1 2026. SCRA have now implemented their new scheduling model in 5 Regions which will be reviewed jointly in January. 2 Regions are scheduled to go live in Q4 with the remaining 2 Regions scheduled to go live in Q1 of 2026. 5 regions are complete but the other 4 have been paused due to competing priorities in SCRA but complete by Q1 2026. There are 4 regions still to go live as the roll out was paused by SCRA but should complete in Q1 2026. We continue to work on developments in CRM with Brightwire to ensure our communications are targeted to right Panel Members at right time. An update to CRM is expected to be completed in Q4 which will integrate Texting tool and an advanced search tool. A test of change is being implemented in the Ayrshires and Moray to hopefully reduce cancelled hearing sessions and swaps in Q1 2026.

Theme 2: VALUING OUR PEOPLE

	Business Objective and Owner	Status				Actions / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Target	% Complete	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
6	Ensure an effective learning offer is in place to support Panel Member training for the year	Green	Green	Blue		6.1 Restructure of delivery of an effective learning offer to support Panel Members and the wider volunteer Community	Complete with ongoing analysis for improvements	100%	Restructure of pre service successfully delivered in each cohort about a third of trainees qualified as chairing panel members adding almost 200 newly qualified chairs to the rota in 2025. The new 'Chairing with confidence' course is focused on supporting those not chair qualified from pre service to reach this aim. MOH work has concluded, with all eligible PMs being given the opportunity to complete their PDA and process of PMs receiving this certificates ongoing. Those outstanding in MOH have been supported into an enhanced training offer of attending chairing with confidence courses. SLT decision is that those outstanding MOH people must attend this course in their reappointment year, if PMs don't attend they can not be reappointed.
		Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	6.2 Design and deliver high quality learning offer aligned to the Learning Strategy	Progress through Q4	50%	Ongoing improvements to learning delivery and quality have been made in relation to 'Chairing with Confidence' courses, and a review of our learning topics and method of delivery is underway. This will be further developed with the recruitment of the Learning Transformation Manager'
7	Progress our ambition to become a Trauma Informed Organisation	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	7.1 Deliver the 2nd phase of Trauma training modules and resources to all volunteers and colleagues	Progress through Q4	94% Staff 84% volunteers	Language guide embedded in training materials with animation that has been nominated for a national award. CHS working with OHOV and language leaders to progress this work across the sector.
		Green	Green	Green	Green	7.2 Continue to embed trauma informed language through the Language in the Hearing Room project	Progress through Q4	100%	In 2025, Trauma Skilled training was launched to the volunteer community and colleagues with a workshop held with SLT and NHS Education for Scotland to review trauma-informed ambitions in line with strategic plans. The plans for roll-out will be aligned to C&J plans in 2026/27 - this work requires capacity and alignment.
8	Build on our existing approach to how we support our Volunteers	Green	Green	Green	Green	8.1 Implement a nationally consistent approach to wellbeing, recognition and volunteer support.	Progress through Q4	80%	National and local wellbeing and retention efforts continue to support current and new PMs with reasonable adjustments, times of absence, and reflective debriefs after challenging hearings. A consistent approach to check-ins for new PMs was implemented. National work to embed wellbeing and retention through revised processes, policies, and communications routes in place and refreshed communications in Q4 underway. Digital CRM tool improvements delayed and separate work with H&S to pick up risk assessments and next-of-kin details to support volunteers which will continue in 2026/27
		Green	Green	Yellow	Green	8.2 Implement processes to ensure expectations are communicated to volunteers in a transparent and timely manner	Progress through Q4	80%	Volunteer Commitments incorporated into recruitment campaign communications and in new PM materials (i.e. Welcome Booklet and induction material). Refreshed communications and Hub pages to reflect feedback continues to progress. Joint work with Learning to support expectations of new PMs also underway and to be built upon in 2026/27. Training and process development to continue into 2026/27.

9	Implement Year 2 of the People Strategy					9.1	Deliver management and leadership training and development	Progress through Q4	100%	Sm@rt working programme training delivered to line managers across Q1 and Q2. Work to implement Sm@rt Working principles across the organisation from this training to commence in Q4 and 26/27. Core management skills training to be scheduled for Q4. Q3 marked as amber as initially core management skills were intended to be scheduled for Q3 but this has been pushed to Q4 due to capacity concerns in Q3. Senior manager development session delivered in early Q4. Managing people sessions confirmed for Q4 of 2026. Development during 2025/26 will be built on in 2026/27.
						9.2	Continuous workforce planning to support organisational design activities	Progress through Q4	100%	Monthly WFP meetings continued. The group has further introduced a biannual strategic workforce planning meeting to ensure that it also considers long term workforce planning aligned with CHS vision and strategic ambitions.
						9.3	Improve offering and promotion of CHS Total Reward package to support our approach to attract, retain and reward colleagues	Progress through Q4	100%	CHS benefits summary updated in April 2025 to include increase volunteer leave allowance and better highlight car benefit scheme. Promotional webinars planned throughout 2025/26 with focused CHS benefits webinar held for team in Q2. The annual Employee Engagement Survey was conducted in Q3 with feedback shared and to be discussed with teams in Q4 to drive retention. The EAP contract procurement will commence in Q4 and into 2026/27. Employee benefits summary refreshed in Q4.
						9.4	Review and publish CHS approach to EDI	Q1	100%	Reviewed EDI strategy completed and approved by CHS Board. Strategy published in Q2 on CHS website. EDI working group re-established to implement EDI Strategy and Equalities Outcomes monitoring.

Theme 3: DRIVING TRANSFORMATION

	Business Objective and Owner	Status				Actions / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Target	% Complete		
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4					
10	Deliver year 1 of the Hearings Redesign 2030 programme					10.1	As a member of the Children's Hearings Redesign Board, agree governance and delivery structures with partners for delivery of the agreed recommendations	Progress through Q4	100%	CHS have strong representation on the Redesign Board and SG Planning Group. Governance and delivery structures are maturing in collaboration. CHS have developed links between external governance and our Hearings Redesign 2030 Programme. This critical reform work will continue throughout 2026/7
						10.2	Develop productive, equitable partnership relationships with our stakeholders nationally and regionally, focused on children and young people's outcomes that drive hearings improvement	Progress through Q4	100%	On track. Established partnership structures with key organisation in the sector including SCRA. Work closely with national CHIP and work has started to establish equivalent regional structures. Representation on a number of national leadership groups in the sector.
						10.3	Develop an implementation plan for the agreed reforms for CHS incorporating the key strategic, practice and operational changes to the hearing system	Progress through Q4	100%	We have developed a Route Map for 2026/7 that will create the planning space needed for strategic thinking and action ahead of 2030. The Route Map will be a critical element of 2026/7.

11	Develop new Data Strategy 2025-30	Green	Green	Yellow	Green	11.1	Establish our future data needs and develop a pathway to meet those needs	Complete by end of Q4- Updated Complete by end of April 2026	40%	A series of engagement has taken place (interviews with SLT, a workshop with all staff, a visioning workshop with Business Owners, and a data & tech workshop with specialist staff) for Data Orchard to produce a discovery report detailing the opportunities and challenges. The draft Data Strategy and roadmap will be completed by end of April 2026
						11.2	Identify the required structure to deliver the data strategy	Complete by end of Q4 - Updated Complete by end of April 2026		See 11.1 - this is part of the Data Strategy
						11.3	Work with partners to develop effective data-sharing practices	Complete by end of Q4- Updated Ongoing		This is ongoing
12	Develop new Digital Strategy 2025-30	Green	Green	Blue	Yellow	12.1	Establish our future digital ecosystem and develop a pathway to deliver it	Complete by end Q3	100%	Excellent partnership and collaborative engagement has taken place over recent months with proposals tabled at CAB on 17th December for the CSAS/@chscotland ecosystem and roadmap which were approved. Implementation has commenced with Discovery work being initiated in January 2026 across three separate tranches which are progressing well, with hard deadlines of April 2026. The outcomes will be the starting blocks for clearer pathways for the remaining year and will contribute positively to streamlined digital activity within CHS during the remainder of 2026-27.
						12.2	Identify the required structure in the digital team to deliver the digital strategy	Progress /Complete by end Q4 - Updated Q1 2026/27	75%	A number of work streams are in progress (Data strategy development; ISO27001 compliance; understanding of reform requirements) which will influence future digital resource requirements. These are not due to complete until the end of 25/26 and into early 26/27 which will mean this milestone will not be met in year and will require to carry forward to early 2026/27.
						12.3	Drive digital transformation through the Digital Lab taking a systematic approach to planning and delivering digital change initiatives	Progress through Q4 - Updated Q1 2026/27	50%	Digital Lab continues to evolve. Joint working to identify and agree the @chscotland /CSAS digital ecosystem have reduced the pipeline discussions to date with this activity being the main focus. This will re-start early 26/27 once this work has been delivered enabling future development to be prioritised. Work has continued to develop supporting infrastructure and documentation to enable Business Leads to work with the Digital Team to articulate and elaborate needs to aid in prioritisation discussions.

ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND CRITICAL ENABLERS

	Business Objective and Owner	Status				Actions / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Target	% Complete	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4				
13	Further develop and build on CHS's change architecture to support the delivery of critical programmes of improvement					13.1 Continue to evaluate how change is delivered to continually improve practice and process	Progress through Q4	100%	Q4 seen the launch of a new Strategic Planning and Delivery Function at CHS. The creation of this new team and function is the conclusion of the Change Team and PMO team review that took place across Q2 and Q3
						13.2 Adhere to good change governance practices, recognising and understanding risks at every stage	Progress through Q4	100%	Risk and issue logs for each programme kept by the change manager, programme group continuation and governance within the change board cycle from PMO. A recent audit of a closed programme gave high levels of assurance
						13.3 Review and enhance the structures around change to ensure we have the skills and knowledge to deliver successful programmes	Progress through Q4	100%	Q4 seen the launch of a new Strategic Planning and Delivery Function at CHS. The creation of this new team and function is the conclusion of the Change Team and PMO team review that took place across Q2 and Q3
14	Fortify and strengthen our cyber and digital security measures					14.1 Gain ISO27001 certification and ensure that our security practices and governance are fit for purpose	Updated - Complete by end Q3 2026/27	25%	Successfully completed Stage 1 of the certification process in November 2025. After extensive assessment of Stage 2 requirements it has been agreed that due to level of work and resource required to ensure certification, Stage 2 audit has been re-scheduled for Q3 2026/27
						14.2 Formalise and standardise the use of process maps and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) across the organisation to enable clearer understanding of processes and fulfilment of services	Updated - Complete by end Q3 2026/27	80%	Business and Finance SOPs remain near completion. Additional SOPs being prepared under ISO requirements as set out in 14.1
						14.3 Deliver the Business Contingency Plan and Digital Disaster Recovery Plan testing to ensure CHS is prepared to manage unforeseen critical business impacts	Updated - Complete by end Q1 2026/27	75%	Desk top testing of the Digital Disaster Recovery Plan was successfully carried out in Q4 and findings reported to ARC. Planned joint testing with SCRA was planned for Q4 but has been pushed to Q1 of 2026/27 at the request of SCRA.
15	Build on our established communications channels and approaches to adequately reflect our growth and meet needs of our people and communities					15.1 Respond to the recommendations of the internal communications audit	Complete by end Q4	100%	A Communications and Engagement Strategy has been completed and shared with SLT. The actions recommended by the BDO Audit have been incorporated into the milestones within the Communications and Engagement Strategy.
						15.2 Improve and enhance the communications and engagement platforms and mechanisms.	Progress through Q4	75%	Following the launch of our Regional Sharepoint hubs in Q3 we have now begun an internal review to identify future improvements to the Hub. Work on communication and engagement platforms will continue next year.
						15.3 Deploy management information to enhance communications to improve and support the volunteer community	Progress through Q4	60%	Strategic updates were shared with the volunteer community in November and January and a Volunteer Community Communications Strategy is planned for next year. Strategic messages are also going in the National Conveynor report.

Strategic Theme	Objective	Performance Measure	Baseline	2025/26 Target	2025/26 Performance
Positive Outcomes – Feedback and Complaints	Objective 2, 4	# Number of feedback items received from children and young people	2023/24: 12 2024/25: 49	100 % increase on last year	Currently 87% of KPI with 85 feedback items received this year should achieve target by end of March 26. The original target of 98 was predicated on the postcard pilot being replaced by SCRA hearing letters containing the QR code becoming available in Spring last year. This would have resulted in a national invitation to children and young people to provide feedback following their hearing, however the planned launch has been delayed until the summer of 2026 due to the delay in automating SCRA letters. As of March 2026, we have agreed to develop a new project for the reintroduction of the postcards in collaboration with SCRA and using a shared platform
Positive Outcomes – Learning	Objective 3, 6,7	% of required volunteers and colleagues who have completed trauma-informed training	2024/25: 91%	100%	99.5% Volunteers 96% Staff (NOTE: all outstanding completions chased on an ongoing basis)
Positive Outcomes – Learning	Objective 3, 6,7	% of required volunteers and colleagues completed trauma skilled training	New Measure	100%	
Valuing our people – Learning	Objective 5,6	% of pre-service trainees who felt that the learning objectives were met	2020/21: 98% 2021/22: 99% 2022/23: 98% 2023/24: 99% 2024/25: 98%	99%	98%
Valuing our people - Learning	Objective 5, 6, 8	% of recommended applicants appointed as Panel Members	2020/21: 83% 2021/22: 75% 2022/23: 84% 2023/24: 83% 2024/25: 79%	90%	76% for January 2025 cohort and 73% for summer cohort (to 31/12/25)
Valuing our people – Learning	Objective 6	% of active and eligible Panel Members who are Chair-qualified	2024/25: 70%	75%	75% (to 11/03/26; data will change as year goes on)
Positive Outcomes – Participation	Objective 4, 5	% of regions involving young people in the design or delivery of the recruitment of panel members	2024/25: 100%	100%	Experts by Experience contributing to the new campaign with our creative agency . For our selection of new Panel Members, Experts by Experience and OHOV shape and contributed to interview questions, including scenario set for candidates to prepare in advance of interview.
Valuing our people	Objective 5,6 ,8, 19	% of all Panel Members due for reappointment within the year who were successfully reappointed	New Measure	55%	51% (to 11/03/26, only includes those who have been through reappointment or have ended service; data will change as year goes on)
Valuing our people	Objective 5,6 ,8, 19	% of Panel Members retained during the year	2021/22: 86% 2022/23: 78.5% 2023/24: 83% 2024/25: 84%	85%	84% (to 11/03/26; data will change as year goes on)
Critical Enablers		% CHS employee attendance keep	2020/21: 99% 2021/22: 85% 2022/23: 97% 2023/24: 97% 2024/25: 98%	96%	96% (to 06/03/2026)

Critical Enablers		% invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations as per set target (not payment terms)	2020/21: 85% 2021/22: 85% 2022/23: 89.3% 2023/24: 87% 2024/25: 84.3%	95%	43% (to 16/03/26)
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Record of Changes to Planned Delivery

Milestone(s) Changed	Date of Change	Details of Change	Rationale for Change
Objective 6	Jun-25	Removed C&J from overall objective as it is covered separately in objective 3	Already covered in prior objective
Objective 6.1	Jun-25	Changed timescales to ongoing	Milestone relates to overall function deliverables which are ongoing
Objective 7.1	Jun-25	Completion date changed to Q4	Deadlines extended in agreement with SLT due to current mandatory learning
KPI line 76	Jun-25	Owner changed to Feedback and Complaints	Team who has access to feedback data
KPI line 82	Jun-25	To match last years KPI	To enable accurate reporting
Theme 2	Sep-25	Added owners	To enable accurate reporting
Objective 12.2	Sep-25	Completion date changed to Q4	Final audit assessment due to be carried out in Feb 2026
Objective 5.1	Sep-25	Completion date changed to Q3	Being managed under the capacity programme (Change Architecture)
Objectives 11.1, 11.2, 11.3	Nov-25	Completion date changed to Q4. Completion changed to end of April 2026.	Deadline extended due to timeline for finding a consultant. Deadline extended to give SLT adequate time to effectively feed back on draft strategy before it is finalised.
Objective 14.1/14.2	Dec-25	Date of stage 2 audit for certification changed to Q3 2026/27	Due to volume of work to be completed and increase of hours required by BSI auditors for certification, dates changed to Q3 2026/27
Objective 5.1	Dec-25	Date changed to ongoing through to Q4	Due to changes in digital solutions see 5.1 narrative
Objective 12.2	Dec-25	Completion date changed to progress through to 2026/27	Changes due to a number of work streams require completion first

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Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Partnership Coordinator Network Paper
Responsible Executive:	Bethany Cunningham, Interim Director of Tribunal Delivery
Report Author:	Laura Conachan, Tribunal Delivery Manager – Southeast

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the development of the Partnership Coordinator Network over the past 12 months, including the Network's current priorities and to consider any opportunities which the Network may provide in delivering CHS's programme of reform.</p> <p>This was presented at the Senior Leadership Team meeting who endorsed the paper prior to presentation at the Board.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board is asked to note the report.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	<p>The Partnership Coordinator Network continues to grow in confidence and ability to deliver, currently leading four projects in addition to developing the nine Partnership Coordinators own skills and knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair Greeting the Child • Panel Member Profiles • Reduced Deferrals • Length of Time on Orders
3.2	Background
3.2.1	The Partnership Coordinator Network was established in February 2024 and was integral in bringing all nine Partnership Coordinators together to build a strong, collaborative team who are based across the country. It is led by a Tribunal Delivery Manager (TDM) and meets each month for a full day, rotating meetings between Glasgow, Edinburgh and online.
3.2.2	The monthly meetings feature a mix project work and collaborating with other roles across CHS. Teams which have a close cross over with the Partnership Coordinators' role (Hearings Redesign/Change, rota) attend every second meeting to discuss progress and ensure consistent national and regional messaging. Other roles have committed to attending twice a year to allow relationships to develop and to allow time for work to progress before the next update (recruitment, complaints, participation).

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	<p>In addition, a weekly Stand Up keeps project work on track, creates an opportunity for Partnership Coordinators to ask questions of the TDM Lead who also provides strategic and directorate updates to the group. The TDM leaves the call after 30 minutes to provide a space for Partnership Coordinators to share regional issues and problem-solve using each other's experiences locally.</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>Current Project Work</p>
<p>3.3.1</p>	<p>Chair Greeting the Child Throughout 2025, the Partnership Coordinators successfully rolled out the Chair Greeting the Child across Scotland. This has resulted in children now meeting the Chair of their hearing in the waiting room before their hearing, to introduce themselves, explain their role and put the child at ease.</p> <p>Using a Toolkit approach with consistent partner and community comms, training materials and evaluation, they were able to locally deliver and embed a national change in practice benefitting children and young people's experience in hearings. The evaluation showed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 89% of advocacy providers and 61% of Social Workers had seen positives from the Chair Greeting the Child. • 65% of advocacy providers and 72% of Social Workers thought it made the start of hearings more child-friendly. • A Panel Practice Advisor audit in October showed the Chair met with the child in 87% of appropriate hearings. <p>Coordinators have recently shared a short Partner Summary of the national evaluation with partners to thank them for their support and to encourage continued feedback.</p>
<p>3.3.2</p>	<p>Panel Member Profiles Utilising the same successful Toolkit approach, Partnership Coordinators have begun rolling out Panel Member Profiles across all Local Authority areas. Children and young people have asked for profiles for many years yet, historically, implementation was inconsistent under a volunteer leadership model. Now, with a consistent approach, with updated materials, it is expected that children in all areas will be able to see which Panel Members will be on their hearings when they arrive at the hearing centre.</p> <p>Panel Member Profiles were evaluated in Aberdeen prior to the pandemic and 76% of children, young people and families told us that they found the Panel Member profiles to be helpful. This was especially pronounced with children aged under the age of 12.</p> <p>While these are referred to as Panel Member Profiles, children should know all CHS attendees who will be in their hearing in advance, therefore profiles are also being sought from Panel Practice Advisors, trainee Panel Members and any regional staff who are observing. They are accompanied by a child-friendly</p>

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	<p>briefing which informs them of their rights to object to observers in their hearing. This allows the child and family time to consider their views on this rather than being asked on the spot in the hearing.</p>
<p>3.3.3</p>	<p>Reducing Deferrals A Partnership Coordinator priority for 2026 is reducing the number of hearings which are deferred unnecessarily across Scotland. Last year, 23% of all hearings were deferred which equates to 4,914 hearings.</p> <p>High deferral rates mean that additional sessions are constantly being added to the rota to cope with the additional hearings, impacting capacity. Deferrals also provide a far poorer experience for children and families as they have to attend multiple hearings and re-tell their story again and again. They take up valuable additional time for professionals and create larger Hearing Information Packs which can frustrate Panel Members.</p> <p>Deferrals are a multi-faceted issue with no single cause therefore the deferrals strategy is focussed on three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National approach: Certain deferral reasons will be tackled by national guidance to all Panel Members, such as the clarification of the process around short notice Panel Members which was shared in November. • Local approach: The data shows that there are regionally specific reasons for deferrals which impact some areas but not all. Furthermore, some areas have significantly high deferrals while others are consistently low. Therefore, a suite of practice materials are being produced to allow regional newsletters to utilise the ones which are relevant to their deferral reasons. In addition a training slide pack on all deferral reasons is being developed for local use with Partnership Coordinators encouraged to only utilise the sections which are relevant to each area. • Partnership approach: Many of the reasons for deferrals are outwith CHS's control therefore Partnership Coordinators are having local conversations with social work colleagues about late reports, for example, to reduce the number of deferrals for these avoidable reasons. Deferrals also impact the work of SCRA and early discussions are taking place to work jointly on deferrals, focusing on more accurate data recording from SCRA (an unexpected amount of deferrals are recorded as Other rather than one of the 21 specified reasons) and the influential impact of Reporters' interjections in hearings regarding deferrals. <p>Throughout 2026, the Partnership Coordinators aim to reduce deferrals by 5%, the equivalent of approximately 1,300 unnecessary hearings each year.</p>
<p>3.3.4</p>	<p>Length of Time on Orders Partnership Coordinators recently undertook Discovery work to understand where CHS can help reduce the length of time children spend on Compulsory Supervision Orders.</p>

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	<p>After analysing data provided by SCRA, Local Authorities with highest and lowest percentage of children on orders for five years or longer were approached with a consistent set of questions to allow for comparison of responses.</p> <p>The local relationships between Partnership Coordinators and partners enable work such as this to be undertaken easily in a way which CHS has not benefited from before.</p> <p>As expected, many of the blockers to early permanence do not sit within CHS's remit, such as social work staffing levels, however it identified both high and low levels of confidence with Panel Member decision making around contact and permanence across different Local Authority areas. These can be addressed through targeted training. A high level of deferrals leading to drift and delay was also identified.</p>
<p>3.4</p>	<p>Partnership Coordinator Role Development</p>
<p>3.4.1</p>	<p>A development session in June 2025 focussed on the role of the Partnership Coordinator and what they would need to thrive in their role and deliver meaningful change for children, young people and volunteers.</p> <p>It looked at the Partnership Coordinator role under four constituent parts: Influencer, Gatekeeper, Connector and Collaborator. Since June, significant progress has been made under each part, including:</p> <p>Influencer In order to be seen as leaders in the hearings space they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have built skills and knowledge working with the data CHS holds, including the limitations to sharing, interpreting the data and being able to challenge assumptions and anecdote with fact. • Are kept up to date on developments within the redesign space thanks to regular briefings by the Practice and Policy team, Change team and TDM Lead. They are given space to discuss and consider how this could impact the community before speaking to the community. • Have increased their own sector and practice knowledge by holding regular practice sessions led by a Partnership Coordinator and have instigated a monthly Research Hour where Coordinators take turns to share, summarise and discuss a piece of research from the wider sector. <p>Gatekeeper To be able to consistently hold and embed CHS positions they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have worked with the Rota team and SCRA colleagues to ensure agreements and positions are clear, in writing and are implemented consistently across the country. • Have attended training on Volunteer Management to effectively uphold standards across the Panel community.

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	<p>Connector To bring the experience of volunteers in the regions together collectively across Scotland they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have reviewed and implemented a new Thematic Log to track concerns and issues arising locally, regionally and nationally. • Have implemented a consisted Feedback Form for all Panel Members to be able to contact their Partnership Coordinator and share feedback easily and effectively. • Have utilised regional feedback to inform Area Support Team Plans. • Have identified and presented their region’s strengths and weaknesses to support development of local improvement plans. <p>Collaborator To work effectively across regions, share successes, and remove the need to duplicate work they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have piloted ways of working in one area which they have adapted and adopted in others, such as Knowledge Exchanges between Panel Members and Social Workers. • Have lent on each other’s strengths and experience, delivering training sessions in other Coordinators’ areas (for example on Domestic Abuse in Hearings) and have shared materials from local successful learning sessions. • Have collated key information such as mapping out all current CHIPs, including attendees, whether strategic or operational and their priorities.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <p>Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront of what we do, and those rights are well understood by our people <p>• Theme 2 - Driving Transformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Work with partners and stakeholders to lead and influence change. • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	No risks identified.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.

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7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	No impact assessment is required.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper however Partnership Coordinators' capacity to deliver improvements can be impacted by their involvement with Area Support Team work such as recruitment, reappointment and local learning throughout the year.
10.	Appendices
	None

Agenda Item 12a. CHS-2526-52

Meeting:	CHS Board meeting
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	CHS Panel Member Chairing policy
Responsible Executive:	Carol Wassell, Director of Positive Outcomes
Report Author:	Nicola Hadden, Policy Advisor

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note the CHS Panel Member Chairing Policy
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	<p>We would like the board to note the Chairing Policy. This was approved by SLT on 13 January 2026.</p> <p>The policy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides clarity about CHS’s expectation that all Panel Members will chair hearings, • provides clarity about the approach to becoming an experienced chair (recognising CHS’s improved wellbeing support for Panel Members and the changes to pre-service training that were implemented in 2025), • clearly identifies the approach for Panel Members seeking temporary or permanent exemptions from chairing. <p>There is guidance that accompanies the policy that has also been finalised. The guidance document lays out more detailed information about several key areas of the policy including Panel Member support, rota management, record keeping and exemptions processes.</p>
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	As above
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Develop a 5-year learning strategy to maximise learning impact across CHS • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront

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	<p>Theme 3 - Valuing Our People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Implement a three-year People Strategy that attracts and retains top talent and committed individuals and drives the success and sustainability of the organisation. • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation. • Objective 3 - To become a more inclusive and diverse organisation and create a culture where everyone feels valued, included and engaged. • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	<p>We believe there are two key risks. We have included details below along with a risk assessment/mitigation information.</p> <p>1. Implementing the policy may lead to an increase in people applying for permanent exemptions.</p> <p>Risk assessment/mitigation: Following detailed discussions across the organisation, we do not believe this should be a significant concern. The policy clarifies the existing approach rather than altering CHS's approach to exemptions.</p> <p>2. Panel Members upset, angry or disillusioned because they feel chairing is being forced upon them.</p> <p>Risk assessment/mitigation: The policy makes it clear that chairing hearings has always been an expectation for Panel Members. We have also outlined the significant learning and wellbeing support Panel Members receive to help them become an experienced chair. When we launch the policy, we will ensure there is positive communication about the updated policy highlighting the increased support and reinforcing the message that the policy does not introduce any significant changes. Having reviewed the data relating to Panel Members who have not completed Management of Hearing training, the numbers are relatively small (346 Panel Members as of 27/11/2025 - 20 of these Panel Members have temporary or permanent exemptions).</p>
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	No assessment required. This is an update to an existing policy with no significant changes.

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8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	<p>Various CHS staff have been involved in drafting this policy including Tribunal Delivery Managers, Resource Allocation, Wellbeing Coordinators, Learning and Quality.</p> <p>Tribunal Delivery and Learning colleagues have been able to share experiences and perspectives of volunteers from our Panel Community. This has helped to inform the development of the updated policy and related guidance.</p>
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	<p>As noted above, CHS staff have been involved in drafting this policy and are aware the implications of implementing the policy. The position has always been that Panel Members will chair, however, to implement the updated policy there will be an implication on Learning as they will be required to deliver chairing workshops. The Learning Team are aware of this, and we understand it has been factored into team planning.</p>
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – CHS Panel Member Chairing Policy



Chairing Policy

Document Version Control

Version	Change/Update	Author/Owner	Date
V4		Practice and Policy	February 2026
V3		Practice and Policy	April 2023

Date Approved:

Next Review Date:

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Owner:

Version:

Chairing Policy

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1. Background & Purpose

Sharing the responsibility of chairing has always been at the heart of Children’s Hearings Scotland’s chairing policy. This aligns to our values of fairness and respect. Chairing skills enable effective running of hearings and decision-making, which is the core function of the Panel Member role.

Since the children’s hearings system was established in 1971, the role of the Panel Member has included the requirement to chair hearings. The chairing role has been a consistent feature offering direction, support and guidance throughout the hearing. It is important that all Panel Members understand the role and responsibilities of the chair, even if they are not chairing a child’s hearing themselves. This ensures Panel Members can effectively support one another and achieve the best outcomes for the child. At key points, Children’s Hearings Scotland has reviewed and revised our chairing policy to make sure we continue to respond to the evolving needs of the children’s hearings system and the Panel Community.

In 2025, the training for chairing hearings was restructured and incorporated into Pre-Service training for all new Panel Members. Prior to this, Panel Members were required to undertake the Management of Hearings (MoH) training which was a separate chairing course. Typically, the training pathway from trainee to practicing chair took twelve months to complete. Children’s Hearings Scotland’s new approach ensures Panel Members gain the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage and chair hearings from the beginning of their journey, enabling them to fully undertake their Panel Member role and grow confidence as experience builds over time.

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The purpose of this updated policy and the related guidance is to provide clear and consistent information to Panel Members about:

- the importance of chairing and our expectations of volunteers to undertake the chairing role;
- the support in place for Panel Members to become confident and highly-effective Chairing Panel Members;
- Children's Hearings Scotland's approach to both temporary and permanent exemptions from chairing when there are exceptional circumstances.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the associated guidance document which clearly outlines the Panel Member's chairing journey and the relevant processes and procedures.

2. Principles of the Chairing Policy

- All Panel Members are required to chair hearings, unless a temporary or permanent exemption is granted.
- Chairing should be rotated in each session to ensure that all chair qualified Panel Members take a turn, not leaving the responsibility of chairing to one person.
- All Panel Members will work together to support the chair, ensuring the meeting is collaborative and focused on the child's needs.
- Under the 2011 Act, the National Convener can make training mandatory. This applies to both Pre-Service training and chair training.
- Children's Hearings Scotland will support Panel Members to be capable, competent and confident chairs.
- Panel Members will continue to receive high-quality training to equip them with the skills to chair hearings effectively and improve outcomes for children.
- Area Support Teams will support Panel Members to undertake their chair training and fulfil their role as effective chairs.
- Our approach to chairing will be evaluated and quality assured by the Children's Hearings Scotland's National Team, Panel Practice Advisors, feedback from the Panel community, and children's hearings participants.
- Exemptions from chairing hearings can be granted in exceptional circumstances to support the wellbeing of our Panel Members, ensure the best experiences for children and families, and to meet our equality duties.
- This policy will be subject to regular review.

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3. Definitions

The definitions below are to help with the understanding of this policy and the related guidance documents.

Newly Qualified Panel Member	Panel Members that have completed Pre-Service training from 2025 or later but have not met the chairing competencies. They will be expected to attend our Chairing with Confidence workshop to become Chairing Panel Members
Newly Qualified Chairing Panel Member	Panel Members who have completed chair training ¹ and satisfied the competencies but chaired fewer than 15 hearings
Experienced Chair	Chairing Panel Member who has chaired 15 hearings or more
Chairing Panel Member	Any Panel Member who has met the chairing competencies and is able to chair a children’s hearing
Chairing Panel Member but exempt	Chairing Panel Members who meet the criteria for a temporary or permanent exemption (see section 5)
Temporary exemption	Chairing Panel Members who have been granted an exemption from chairing for up to one year by their Tribunal Delivery Manager
Permanent exemption	Chairing Panel Members who have been granted a long-term/permanent exemption from chairing by the National Convener

¹ This includes Panel Members recruited between 2014-2024 who have successfully completed Management of Hearings or Chairing with Confidence workshop and related coursework. It also includes Panel Members recruited since 2025 who have completed pre-service training and have met the chairing competencies or successfully completed the Chairing with Confidence workshop and coursework.

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4. Chair training

Panel Members will be provided with appropriate training and personalised support from Children’s Hearings Scotland to undertake chair training and meet the chairing competencies.

Chair training is mandatory training for all Panel Members and will be made available through a range of routes, including online and in-person training sessions.

5. Support and quality assurance

Children’s Hearings Scotland will provide support for Panel Members to undertake their chair training, meet the chairing competencies, and to develop their skills and experience to function as confident and highly effective chairing Panel Members. These processes include self-evaluation opportunities and personalised support from members of the Children’s Hearings Scotland National Team.

Panel Members are part of a unique volunteer community. As a Newly Qualified Chairing Panel Member gains experience in their role, peer support from fellow Panel Members will also provide important encouragement and support as they develop their skills and confidence.

As part of our quality assurance processes, Panel Member practice observations conducted by Panel Practice Advisors (PPAs) provide valuable insight into how hearings are conducted, how decisions are made and how Panel Members demonstrate Children’s Hearings Scotland’s values through their behaviours. Observations and feedback are an important part of continuous development and offer a key opportunity for Panel Members and Chairs to reflect on their practice.

Feedback and complaints from participants at children’s hearings will also form an important part of our quality assurance processes.

6. Serving as a Chairing Panel Member

There is an expectation that Chairing Panel Members will regularly sit on hearings as the chair. When this is not possible, Panel Members are responsible for contacting their Area Support Team to discuss their circumstances and possible exemptions.

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Chairing should be rotated in each session to ensure that all Chairing Panel Members take a turn. This ensures the responsibility of chairing is not left to one person.

If a Panel Member declines to undertake the mandatory chair training and provides no reason for this, they will not be recommended for re-appointment as Panel Members.

7. Exemptions from chairing hearings

Children’s Hearings Scotland’s expectation is that Panel Members will successfully meet the chairing competencies and will regularly chair hearings. This helps to ensure a sustainable and developing Panel community. However, Children’s Hearings Scotland understands that not everyone may be able to chair hearings. In these exceptional circumstances, Panel Members may decide to request a temporary or permanent exemption.

Notwithstanding the granting of any exemption, all Panel Members will be expected to complete chair training to support their understanding of the role and be able to support the chair during a hearing.

7.1 Temporary exemptions

Temporary exemptions of up to one year can be requested when a Panel Member feels unable to chair hearings for a short period of time. This could be for a variety of reasons including a change in personal circumstances, health and wellbeing factors or learning needs.

A request for a temporary exemption can be made at any time. Chairing Panel Members should contact their Wellbeing Coordinator to discuss.

If a Panel Member is returning to their chairing duties after a temporary exemption, support will be provided from the Children’s Hearings Scotland National Team.

7.2 Permanent exemptions

There are certain personal circumstances that may impact a Panel Member’s ability to fulfil the chairing role, but not their ability to serve as a Panel Member. This can include a disability, a long-term health condition or other circumstances. In these cases, an application for a permanent exemption should be made to the National Convener.

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A permanent exemption means an individual can continue to fulfil the role of Panel Member, but without the expectation of having to chair hearings. Any individual circumstances, needs, and protected characteristics will be taken into account in the decision-making process when considering a request for a permanent exemption.

If the request is successful, the individual will continue to sit as a Panel Member but will not be required to chair hearings. If the request is unsuccessful, the Panel Member will be provided with clear reasons for this in writing.

A request for a permanent exemption can be made at any time. A Panel Member does not need to have a temporary exemption before applying for a permanent exemption. Where possible, any requests for a permanent exemption should be made prior to the commencement of the reappointment process.

At reappointment, the Tribunal Delivery Manager will alert the National Convener of the Panel Member's exemption.

8. Record keeping

Children's Hearings Scotland's volunteer management system will be used to record an individual's chairing status (e.g. Newly Qualified Chairing Panel Member, Experienced Chair, etc) and will be kept up to date by Children's Hearings Scotland staff.

The volunteer management system will also be used to record exemptions.

In line with our data protection and information governance policies, relevant information will only be visible to those with a legitimate business need to access it, and will be handled in accordance with our information governance policies and guidance.

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Agenda Item 13a. CHS-2526-53

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Gender Pay Gap Report
Responsible Executive:	Joanne O'leary, Director of People and Culture
Report Author:	Elina Takala and Umar Malik

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note the attached Gender Pay Gap People Report.</p> <p>The report was approved at the People and Culture Committee (PaCC) meeting on 10 March.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
	The Board is asked to note the report following PaCC meeting and prior to publication on the CHS Website.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	<p>CHS is required to report on the gender pay gap every two years with reports on the disability and ethnicity pay gaps every four years. The report includes an Equal Pay statement which outlines CHSs commitment to equal pay.</p> <p>This year's report has seen the mean gap reduce and the median gap staying a similar size but being in favour of women. Both the mean and median pay gaps within CHS are lower than the Scotland pay gaps.</p>
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outlook 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 3 - To become a more inclusive and diverse organisation and create a culture where everyone feels valued, included and engaged.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	NA
6.	Risk Register
6.1	NA
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights

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7.1	NA
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	NA
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	NA
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Gender Pay Gap Report

Gender Pay Gap Report

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Background

The specific equality duties in Scotland were created by secondary legislation in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations in 2012 as amended. Further new regulations were introduced in 2015 when CHS became a listed authority, and in 2016, the employee threshold for gender pay gap reporting was reduced from 150 to 20 employees and further introduced the requirement to publish Equal Pay Statements. CHS published its first Gender Pay Gap report and Equal Pay Statement in April 2018 and continues to publish a report every two years.

CHS' Gender pay gap is reported as follows:

Median	-1.50%
Mean	0.67%

The mean gap has decreased since the 2024 report while CHS staff headcount has increased by 28%. At the same time, the median gap has become to be in benefit to women at -1.5%. The proportion of male and female staff has changed by 1% since 2024 with 74% of the workforce being female in 2026. This suggests that CHS male and female staff are now on average paid more equally compared to two years ago. However, CHS notes the benefit of the mean gap for men and benefit of the median gap for women.

CHS Equal Pay Statement

CHS is an equal opportunities employer and all colleagues should be treated equally irrespective of their sex, marital/civil partnership status, age, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, employment status, gender identity (transgender), or caring responsibility. CHS commits to operating a pay and reward system which is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from bias.

As a public body, CHS is required to take steps to proactively address gender, race and disability inequality by examining the ways in which inequality impacts the organisation and its employees and taking steps to remove any inequalities found.

At CHS we are committed to complying with all legal duties under the Equality Act (2010) and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.

The law gives women the right to be paid the same as men (and vice-versa) for:

- Like Work – two employees doing the same or very similar roles;
- Work rated as equivalent – different jobs which have been given the same rating as the result of an analytical job evaluation scheme;
- Work of an equal value – different jobs that the employee claims require a similar level of skill and ability.

Our Equal Pay policy is incorporated into Section 5 of our Equal Opportunities policy and commits CHS to reviewing equal pay in the development of annual pay awards and to monitor pay regularly in partnership with our employees.

Our commitment to Equal Pay

CHS is committed to the principles of equal pay for work of equal value and operates a pay system that is based on objective criteria. We have a clear reference to Equal Pay in our Recruitment and Selection Policy and have consistently followed Scottish Government guidance on Equal Pay. CHS' pay awards are in line with the Scottish Government Public Sector Pay Policy for Staff Pay Remits.

Since CHS became operational it has used an incremental pay structure. The current pay remit and pay structure are underpinned by job evaluation. Equal pay for work of equal value is the cornerstone of job evaluation and CHS uses the Hay Job Evaluation process. All CHS roles when developed or amended go through the job evaluation process, which is administered by an independent expert Job Evaluation panel at our sister organisation, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), supported by a member of the CHS People Operations team. An employee appeal process is also built into the process.

CHS' Chief Executive's pay is determined by the Scottish Government Senior Appointments Pay Policy but while CHS does *not* determine this pay, the Chief Executive's pay details have been included in the calculation of our equal pay figures.

When developing annual pay awards, CHS remains cognisant of the impact on all protected characteristics of any pay offer, ensuring that we improve the equalities position year on year i.e. by reducing the journey times from minimum to maximum level within each pay band.

Pay Progression within CHS

We review progression within the pay structure annually, in line with our pay policy, to ensure they match our expectations to pay the target rate for the role. In addition, we collect market rate data as required to support our pay structure and role rates. Any changes to our pay structures require approval from the Scottish Government and must comply with the pay policy guidance.

Equal Pay Review

CHS makes every effort to ensure that there is equal pay for work of equal value. Every job description within CHS is evaluated through the Hay Job Evaluation methodology, analysing the know-how, problem solving and accountability required for the job. The evaluated jobs are plotted onto the CHS job evaluation structure, which then determined the pay grade for the role. As the principles of equal pay underpin the Hay Job Evaluation methodology, CHS is confident that all its current roles have been fairly and objectively reviewed with regards to equal pay.

CHS is committed to reviewing any roles that undergo significant change to ensure that their job descriptions accurately reflect the requirements of the role at that time while having also been fully evaluated to ensure equal pay. Employees may also request a re-evaluation of their role through the Job Description and Evaluation Policy.

Equalities in recruiting

We carefully review our person specifications for each role we advertise to ensure we remove any essential or desirable criteria that may unintentionally dissuade women or individuals with protected characteristics from applying for our roles.

While good practice, due to the small size of our organisation it is often not possible to have a gender balance on our recruitment panels, however, we ensure this is the case where practically possible. Additionally, all employees at CHS will have completed equality, diversity and inclusion training as a part of their induction and continuous development.

Embedding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at CHS

CHS has an EDI working group sponsored by Senior Leadership. This is an internal voluntary staff group to help shape the design and delivery of how EDI objectives will be brought into meaningful action. The group has representation from across the organisation to ensure diverse membership.

CHS is also a member of Onvero (formerly known as the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion), a not-for-profit organisation that helps employers create truly inclusive workplace cultures.

Training

CHS provides regular training to all staff regarding equality, diversity and inclusion. An introductory online learning module is available to all colleagues on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. It focuses on EDI within Children's Hearings.

Additional bespoke training is also delivered by external providers as a part of continuous development.

Flexible working arrangements

CHS operates a flexible working culture and does not endorse presenteeism. It provides staff a flexi time scheme where core hours are between 10:00 and 12:00 and 14:00 to 16:00. CHS also operates a hybrid working policy which provides guidance to colleagues regarding working location with most colleagues working 40% of the time in a relevant physical CHS location.

In addition, CHS has a clear Flexible Working Policy and encourages all employees to follow the procedure for flexible working requests.

Pay ranges are determined by role and not working patterns and CHS is committed to ensuring equal pay for equal work, regardless of the hours within which this work is completed.

Gender Pay Gap Executive Summary

All data contained in this report refers to salary figures only, as CHS does not operate a bonus scheme. The data is accurate as at 13 February 2026 but for direct comparison, the data from the 1 February 2024 is included.

CHS had 109 employees on the 13 of February 2026. This is a 28% increase in headcount since 2024. Our workforce is 74% female (increase of 1% compared to 2024) with CHS employed females now accounting for 80% of our senior management team.

There are two suggested methods to calculate our overall pay gap, for reasons that are explained more fully within the report – Calculating the Gender Pay Gap for CHS. While there is no general consensus on which method is better and there are disadvantages in using either method, particularly for an organisation as small as CHS (due to vulnerability of data to be skewed in even the addition or deletion of one earnings figure), we have provided headline figures using both methods. In line with guidance from Close the Gap (Scotland's main research organisation looking at women's participation in the labour market), we have given preference to using the mean average in the rest of our pay gap analysis as it can give a deeper understanding of any pay gaps.

When using the mean to calculate, our overall pay gap between male and female salaries is now 0.67% (in favour of men), compared with 2.03% two years ago.

When using the median to calculate, our overall pay gap between male and female salaries is now -1.50% (in favour of women) compared with 1.45% (in favour of men) two years ago.

Analysis of these figures is found in the below sections of the report. Note that for ease of comparison, the figures from the 2024 Gender Pay Gap report are also included.

Both the mean and median pay gaps have changed during the past two years at CHS, with mean gap reducing and the median gap staying similar in size but becoming in favour of

women, while the percentage of female and male employees has remained similar (1% difference compared to 2024) despite a 28% increase in total number of staff. This suggests that that CHS now has a more even distribution of salaries between male and female staff. However, as CHS still only consists of 109 employees (at the time of the report), this means that the smallest of differences in structure can impact the final data significantly. This is highlighted by the quartile distribution table which shows that women are still slightly more clustered at the middle quartiles compared to men despite mean pay gap reducing and the median pay gap becoming in benefit of women.

Gender Pay Gap Reporting

The Equality Act 2010 describes nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex (male or female); and sexual orientation. Since 2020, CHS recognises care experienced as the tenth protected characteristic.

The specific duties in Scotland were created by secondary legislation in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations in 2012 as amended. Further new regulations were introduced in 2015 when CHS became a listed authority, and in 2016, reducing the employee threshold for gender pay gap reporting and the publication of equal pay statements from 150 to 20 employees. As CHS has 109 employees, the organisation is required to be fully compliant with the regulations and undertake the required specific duties for reporting every two and four years.

Two yearly reporting requirements:

- percentage of men and women in each hourly pay quarter;
- mean (average) gender pay gap using hourly pay;
- median gender pay gap using hourly pay;
- percentage of men and women receiving bonus pay (CHS does not offer bonus pay and therefore does not report on this);
- mean (average) gender pay gap using bonus pay (CHS does not offer bonus pay and therefore does not report on this);
- median gender pay gap using bonus pay (CHS does not offer bonus pay and therefore does not report on this).

In addition, every 4 years CHS must include:

1. Published statement on equal pay.

-
2. For an authority on reporting schedule 'B', as CHS, from April 2022 the report should include sex, ethnicity and disability every four years. The 2024 report was the first one to include ethnicity and disability pay gaps. Updated figures will be provided in the next 2028 report.

Calculating the Gender Pay Gap for CHS

The methods for determining any pay gap is outlined in Close the Gap's publication, Close Your Pay Gap: <https://www.closeyourpaygap.org.uk/>

The gender pay gap is the difference in average hourly earnings between men and women.

CHS has used both the *mean* and *median* average figure for its headline pay gap figure. The mean average is calculated by adding all individual CHS employees' hourly rates of pay and dividing by the total number of employees. The median average is calculated by listing all the male and female salaries in order of amount and then finding the mid-point of each list.

The mean is considered by many organisations, including Close the Gap, to be a more useful measure as it includes the highest and lowest rates of pay and because those on the highest rates of pay tend to be men and those on the lowest are more likely to be women, it is an important measure of women's experience of labour market disadvantage as compared to men.

The median pay gap is considered more representative of "typical" pay. Those who advocate the use of the median, such as the Office of National Statistics (ONS) feel that the very high earners are the exception to the norm but can disproportionately skew the pay gap figure.

As CHS does not have a large employee base, our figures are easily skewed regardless, by the inclusion of even one additional high salary figure. This means that by aligning with the Close the Gap preference and using the mean to calculate the average of a skewed distribution, such as ours, the calculations are highly influenced by those values at the upper end of the distribution and thus may not be truly representative.

Who is included in our analysis?

All workers engaged in a contract of employment with CHS are included in the analysis of gender pay gap analysis including CHS' Chief Executive, even though CE pay is determined by the Scottish Government Senior Appointments Pay Policy.

Exclusions and exceptions

Salary data for employees on long-term career breaks/secondments (and so are not currently on payroll) are *not* included in this report, however data for any employees on maternity or other absences, who are on payroll, *is* included in this report.

Our gender pay gap findings

Our pay gap findings are reported in the tables below and each table has an explanatory narrative to accompany the findings.

Quartile Salary Figures (2024 figures in grey)

The table below shows all the salary figures ranked into quartiles. The gender comparisons for each quartile are shown as gender against total own gender, and as gender against total CHS employee group.

Quartile 1 = lowest quartile 4 = highest quartile	Male as % of all CHS employees	Male as % of all male employees	Female as % of all CHS employees	Female as % of all female employees
1	5%	18%	20%	27%
2	6%	21%	19%	26%
3	8%	32%	17%	22%
4	7%	29%	19%	26%
1	5%	19%	20%	28%
2	7%	29%	17%	25%
3	6%	23%	17%	25%
4	7%	29%	23%	22%

The 2020 and 2022 reports had males more clustered in the lower quartiles. Similar to the 2024, this 2026 report shows a relatively equal distribution of both female and male employees across the quartiles. However, women are slightly more clustered in the middle two quartiles, compared to men who are slightly more clustered in the upper two quartiles.

CHS National Team Headcount as of 13 February 2026 (2024 figures in grey)

Female part-time	Female full-time	Male part-time	Male full-time	Total Headcount
17	64	3	25	109
74%		26%		
6	51	1	20	78
73%		27%		

Overall pay gap figure for CHS

The single/overall pay gap figure includes all CHS employees, including those in senior leadership grades. It also includes all full-time and part-time employees and employees on permanent and fixed term contracts and provides the most complete picture in relation to gendered pay inequalities and is presented as both mean average and median average figures. As noted in the Equal Pay Statement, CHS CEO salary is determined by Scottish Government.

Mean overall pay gap (2024 figures in grey)

MEAN female hourly rate (£)	MEAN male hourly rate (£)	Scotland Mean Pay Gap
25.31	25.48	3.5% (2025)
$\frac{25.48 - 25.31}{25.48} \times 100$	CHS Pay Gap = 0.67%	
22.64	23.11	2.0% (2024)
$\frac{23.11 - 22.64}{23.11} \times 100$	CHS Pay Gap = 2.03%	

CHS mean gender pay gap has decreased from 5.85% in 2022 to 2.0% in 2024 to 0.67% in 2026. Since the last pay gap report, the CHS headcount has increased and it is likely that the recruitment for the new posts has supported the decrease in the CHS pay gap.

Median overall pay gap (2024 figures in grey)

MEDIAN female hourly rate (£)	MEDIAN male hourly rate (£)	Scotland Median Pay Gap
22.79	22.45	9.4%
$\frac{22.45 - 22.79}{22.45} \times 100$	CHS Pay Gap = -1.5%	
19.02	19.30	9.2%
$\frac{19.30 - 19.02}{19.30} \times 100$	CHS Pay Gap = 1.45%	

CHS median gender pay gap has changed from 1.45% in 2024 to -1.5% in 2026. Since the last pay gap report, the CHS headcount has increased and it is likely that the recruitment for the new posts has supported the change in the pay gap. CHS notes that the gap is currently in benefit of women.

Addressing our overall equal pay gap through recruitment

From our recruitment data and employee headcount figure (74% female), CHS can demonstrate that it is an organisation that attracts, appoints and promotes females at all organisational levels. However, the data highlights that further improvements are required in relation to attracting candidates from diverse backgrounds such as candidates with disabilities and candidates with BME ethnicity. We will continue to ensure that CHS continuously improves robust, fair and transparent recruitment processes that provides equality of opportunity for all protected characteristic groups.

Summary

During the past two years, CHS has experienced a decrease in the mean gender pay gap from 2.03% to 0.67%, meaning that at a headline level, while less than in 2024, men still receive only marginally more in average pay across the organisation compared to women. In terms of median gender pay gap figures, which for a smaller organisation like CHS, can produce skewed results, the gender pay gap has moved to -1.50% from 1.45%. This change in the median pay gap shows that median pay is now in benefit of women although the gap is very similar.

The obvious factor impacting this reduction in the pay gap, as has been noted at several points in the previous table narratives is the significant increase in CHS headcount since 2024 (28%), with male and female employees now more equally distributed across the organisation. However, CHS does note that the gender pay gap remains in favour of men.

CHS is not complacent in the need to continue to monitor gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps (the two latter to be reported on in 2028) and will work to ensure that its pay awards and flexible working policies in particular are managed fairly and equally for all staff, regardless of gender, ethnicity or disability. It will take into account all the commitments it made in its Equal Pay Statement as well its statutory general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Agenda Item 14 .CHS-2526-54

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Budget Approval 2026/27
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/Depute Chief Executive
Report Author:	Klaus Berchtenbreiter, Finance Manager
1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the CHS budget for 2026/27.</p> <p>The Budget was presented and discussed at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting on 17 March and approved prior to final Board approval.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board is asked to approve the CHS Budget 2026/27, following SLT approval at their meeting on 17 March.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	2026/27 Budget position and SG published budget
3.1.1	<p>The Scottish Government budget was announced on 13th January 2026.</p> <p>Following publication, we can confirm that we have been awarded budget as 'flat cash' for revenue against 2025/26 figures, and an increase to our capital budget: GIA of £5,301m revenue (including cash and non-cash elements and adjustment to support National Insurance contributions) and a capital budget of £836k. The difference between our capital need of £780k and the awarded £836k is the recognition of Thistle House rent via IFRS 16 as a non-cash element.</p> <p>This results in CHS having a forecast funding gap on revenue of £6,414 million, but capital will be fully funded. This reflects a continuation of the position CHS has been operating under for the past 4 years.</p>
3.2	CHS 2026/27 budget post publication actions
3.2.1	<p>Following the budget announcement CHS have taken the following actions to ensure SG colleagues and Ministers are fully aware of the risks to CHS planning for reform; ongoing operations; contribution to PSR and overall financial governance of the published GIA position and pressures of 55% of total budget requirement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive met with Andrew Watson, Director for Children and Families, SG Finance and Sponsor Team colleagues. • The Chief Executive has written formally to Andrew Watson

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair has written to The Minister for Children and The Promise • The Chair of Audit & Risk has updated Audit Scotland (CHS External Auditors) of the funding position and actions taken. <p>SG recognise the challenge of carrying pressures and have committed to continue working with Executives to address this during 2026/27 for future budgets, given the potential of increased financial pressures should the Children's Care, Care Experience Services Planning Bill achieves Royal Ascent as expected.</p> <p>CHS have received strong assurances from Andrew Watson to support CHS' proposed full 2026/27 forecast budget through Autumn and Spring Budget review process, as has been completed in previous years. On 11 March 2026 CHS received a Letter of Comfort from Andrew Watson that recognises pressures on the CHS budget and confirms SG is committed to working with us to manage the budgets in year.</p> <p>Due to the delayed budget timings following UK budget announcement delays, a formal BAM letter might not be received at the time of the board meeting, but SG will provide this as a priority to give the board assurances on the funding for 2026/27.</p>
3.3	2026/27 Budget
3.3.1	<p>The forecast budget is shown below for approval. As agreed with SG, to support Public Service Reform savings and congruent with the decision to move to a single Panel Member recruitment campaign in 2026/27 this has been adjusted down by £200k revenue vs the forecast approved within the CHS 5-year financial plan approved in September 2025. Should the bill achieve royal ascent additional funding in line with the financial memorandum may come forward to support implementation.</p>

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	2026/27 Annual Budget
	£000
= Resourcing total	6,877
+ Board	72
+ Training, travel and subsistence	130
+ Property	152
+ Other Operating Costs	276
+ ICT Costs	1,205
+ Corporate Costs	29
+ Panel and AST Expenses	562
+ Panel and AST Training	736
+ Support for hearings	400
+ Volunteer recruitment	200
+ AST Devolved Funding	386
= Total operational costs	11,025
+ Capital	780
= Budget requirements	11,805

4.	Key Risks
4.1	<p>The resulting risk of a 'flat cash' funding settlement leaves CHS with unfunded pressures amounting to 55% of established revenue budget. If not funded this would put the delivery of the statutory services that CHS delivers at risk.</p> <p>Assurances have been given to resolve the existing funding gap earlier than in previous years via the established process of ABR and SBR budget reviews and realignment during the year.</p>
5.	Risk Register
5.1	No update to the risk register required, as this risk is already captured.
6.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
6.1	<p>Impact Assessment Screening Tool Form 1 has been completed, and the following Impact Assessments have been undertaken and are saved on file:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection • Childrens Rights • Equalities • Islands
7.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
7.1	The proposed and established need that informs the presented budget for 2026/27 has been discussed with the board in previous meetings and is also fully supported by the CHS SLT.

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8.	Resource Implications
8.1	N/A
9.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Impact Assessment Screening Form 1

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Appendix 1

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS FORM 1



CHS Budget 2026/27 - Will the project/work plan...



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Yes</u> (delete as appropriate) • <u>Summarise</u> the data processing taking place <p>The budget supports CHS agreed business planning activity at a high level which will impact CHS systems and data. Individual project implementation will detail exact impact and assessments should be completed for each individual project. <u>DPIA</u> has been approved by DPO</p>	<p>involve/create a way of processing (collecting, analysing, using, sharing, removing) personal data (information that can identify a living person) that is new for CHS?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Yes</u> (delete as appropriate) • <u>Summarise</u> any direct and/or indirect impacts <p>The budget supports CHS agreed business planning activity at a high level which may impact CHS policies. Individual project implementation will detail exact impact and assessments should be completed for each individual project</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Yes</u> (delete as appropriate) • <u>Summarise</u> any direct and/or indirect impacts <p>The budget supports CHS agreed business planning activity at a high level which may impact CHS policies. Individual project implementation will detail exact impact and assessments should be completed for each individual project</p>	<p>result in new and significant impact on children and young people under 18, either directly or indirectly?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Yes</u> (delete as appropriate) • <u>Summarise</u> any direct and/or indirect impacts <p>The budget supports CHS agreed business planning activity at a high level which may impact CHS policies. Individual project implementation will detail exact impact and assessments should be completed for each individual project</p>

Attach this completed form to SMT Papers/PID

Answered YES to any area? Complete the relevant Screening Tool (Form 2)

(Data Protection, Equality, Children's Rights, Islands)

Agenda Item 15a CHS-2526-55

Meeting:	CHS Board Meeting
Meeting Date:	25 th March 2026
Title:	Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026-27
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance
Report Author:	Claire Gibson, Strategic Planning and Delivery Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to discuss and approve the proposed Business and Corporate Parenting Plan for 2026-27.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board are asked to review and approve the attached Business and Corporate Parenting Plan for 2025/26.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	<p>The Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026-27 sets out our organisational priorities for the coming year, the final year of our current Strategic Outlook 2024-27.</p> <p>This year's plan reflects the Boards previous feedback to build a plan that is flexible and agile to respond to any emerging need from the Scottish Government around our legislative and non-legislative reform agenda.</p>
3.2	<p>The plan identifies four priority Areas: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for Reform • Strengthening Leadership • Driving Digital • Learning Transformation. <p>These Priority Areas connect our Strategic Themes and provide the focus for our work in the coming year.</p> <p>Our Priority Areas will be balanced alongside the delivery of our key statutory functions to recruit, train and support volunteers, delivered across our regions in Scotland.</p>

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3.3	<p>We've sharpened the objectives and outcomes, so they are clear, cross cutting and measurable. They will flow in to more detailed operational plans that will track our pace and performance across the year.</p> <p>At the time of writing, we await the decision from the Scottish Parliament on the future of the CCCESP Bill. In this context, a critical focus for 2026-27 will be to 'plan to plan', as we digest the detail of the reform and begin to plan our next Strategic Outlook.</p>
3.4	<p>In an unorthodox move but given the proximity of the Board meeting and the Parliamentary recess before the election, it has been necessary to share this draft with the Scottish Government and the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise ahead of the Board. Board members will be aware that she must note the plan, rather than having to approve it.</p> <p>We will be able to verbally update the Board on the Ministerial noting on 25th March 2026.</p>
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This Plan represents the final year of our current Strategic Outlook and uses Priority Areas to bring alive our Strategic Themes in 26/27.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	No risks identified.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	No Impact Assessment have been undertaken.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper. The Board may note our objective focused on <i>Strengthening Voice in all that we do</i> with outcomes focused on further strengthening voice in our governance and decision making.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	This Plan represents the final year of our current Strategic Outlook and uses Priority Areas to bring alive our Strategic Themes in 26/27.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026-27

Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026-27

Foreword

By Elliot Jackson
National Convener and Chief Executive

The Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 2026-27 sets out how we will deliver the final year of our Strategic Outlook 2024-27.

(BILL DEPENDENT) We enter the new business year just as the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) Scotland Bill passes its final hurdles before becoming law, and we are full of hope and expectation for what it will mean for the Children's Hearings System. Children's Hearings Scotland, our Panel Members and children and families with experience of hearings have played an important role in shaping the legislation, and we will continue to work with the Scottish Government and our partners across the sector to ensure that the expected Act and subsequent secondary legislation deliver the reforms that have long been sought.

This legislation heralds the biggest changes to the hearings system since it was established more than 50 years ago, and although it holds few surprises for CHS, it is only its passage into law that enables us to start preparing in earnest for its implementation. These changes will ultimately improve the experience and the outcomes for infants, children, young people and their families who need us most.

Our plan for 2026-27 is partly a 'plan to plan', as we digest the detail of the reforms that we need to prepare for, and the work that lies ahead to enable them.

All of this has driven us to put forward a tightly focused set of objectives for the year that fit into four priority areas: Planning for Reform, Strengthening Leadership, Driving Digital and Learning Transformation. And as always, they will all help us to optimise the recruitment, training and support of our volunteers whose job it is to make decisions in the best interests of Scotland's infants, children and young people.

2025-26 in review

In the second year of our three-year strategic outlook, we made changes at CHS and helped to shape reform of the wider system that will enable the fulfilment of the Promise.

- In September 2025 we recruited **XXX** new Panel Members, and in [month] we reappointed **YYY** Panel Members at the end of their terms. In late 2025 we learnt that the Children (Care and Justice) Scotland Act 2024 would not be implemented in full until 2027, changing our capacity requirement, so we decided not to run a spring 2026 recruitment campaign.
- We appointed our first nine Experts by Experience – care experienced people aged 14 to 25 from all over Scotland who will shape the work of CHS. They met the Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise at the Parliament, and presented at the Rise Up conference hosted by Our Hearings Our Voice. They met the Senior Leadership Team and the Board, and inputted into our latest volunteer recruitment campaign.
- CHS continued to shape the 'Promise Bill', both before and after it was introduced to Parliament. We provided written and in-person evidence to the the Education, Children and Young People Committee responsible for scrutinising the Bill. We have kept volunteers and staff informed about the proposed changes and the progress of the legislation.

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- We continued to design and deliver non-legislative changes to the hearings system, to improve the experience of children and families. For example, the 'chair greeting the child' project was implemented across Scotland between March and November 2025, and we worked with SCRA to change the Hearings Information Pack.
- A strengthened Practice and Policy team provided new guidelines to support Panel Member practice, 'Responding to the Needs of Older Children', drafted in partnership with CYCJ, and 'Responding the Needs of Infants, Babies and Very Young Children', developed in partnership with CELCIS and NHS Infant Mental Health Teams.
- We successfully implemented re-structured Pre-Service Training, with 30% of our newly recruited volunteers appointed as Chair qualified.
- We improved support for new Panel Members, through self-evaluation surveys after three and six months of service, and wellbeing check-in conversations.
- We enhanced the online Community Hub, bringing many more resources and tools into a single place for a better volunteer experience.
- We celebrated our volunteers throughout the year, including with regular recognition events, through Volunteers' Week, and at the Royal Garden Party, at which 38 members of our volunteer community were guests.
- We conducted a series of 'Quality Conversations' with volunteers, revealing how highly valued observations of hearings are, and gaining insights into how we can improve our quality assurance.
- As part of Year 2 of the People Strategy, we published our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

- In looking to the future needs of the hearings system, and our ambitions for our learning provision, we brought learning in-house when the contract with our external provider came to an end in autumn 2025. A restructure of the new in-house Learning Team was also completed in 2025-26, following full consultation with the team.
- After our planned review of the Change and Innovation team and our Programme Management Office, and in full consultation with the teams, we restructured them into a single Strategic Planning and Delivery team, within the Business and Finance Directorate.

Context for 2026-27

- The Children (Care and Justice) Scotland Act 2024 is expected to come fully into effect in early 2027, extending the Children's Hearings System to embrace all 16- and 17-year-olds for the first time. We have been enhancing our learning and support for our volunteers to ensure they are all equipped and confident to deliver hearings for older children.
- The Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill is expected to become law in 2026-27, which will bring change to the care and justice sector, including hearings. The changes we need to design will depend on the final provisions of this legislation. We will also continue to play a key role in the sector-wide Redesign Board, shaping non-legislative reforms to the hearings system.
- We will begin delivering our new Learning Strategy, with our in-house Learning Team and Learning Transformation Manager in place.
- We will develop and begin delivery of a new Digital Strategy, which will bring efficiencies for CHS and improvements to the volunteer journey.

No	Strategic Theme	Priority Area for 2026 - 2027	Headline	Objective	Outcome
1	Driving Transformation	Planning for Reform	Lead and Collaborate on the Transformation of Hearings	We will improve the hearings experience for children, young people and their families by implementing a programme of non-legislative reform.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Working in Collaboration – Reporting progress quarterly, we will continue to be key members of the Redesign Board, driving and delivering a multi – year programme of work focused on collaborative changes that are not dependent on legislative change Shaping our Future – Throughout 2026 (Q3) we will be intensively reform planning, creating a blueprint for our future, whilst developing our next Strategic Outlook for 2027-2030.
2	Driving Transformation	Strengthening Leadership	Strengthen Voice in all that we do	We will shape our organisation through the voice of lived experience, by placing our Experts by Experience at the heart of organisational decision-making.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening Voice– by the end of Q2, we will have further strengthened our Experts by Experience involvement with governance and decision making, creating a direct relationship between 1. Voice and reform planning and 2. Voice and CHS Board governance.
3	Driving Transformation	Planning for Reform	Implement new legislation	We will implement the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 across Children’s Hearings Scotland and	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Learning for our Panel Community - By the end of Q4, our Panel Community will be fully trained and ready to welcome the new legislation through a training programme focused on the changes and requirements

				ensure our compliance with all provisions.	2. Supporting Good Practice – By the end of Q4, our Panel Practice Manual will be full updated and re-released to reflect and uphold the legislative changes within the Care and Justice Act.
4	Driving Transformation	Driving Digital	Delivering our Digital Ambitions	We will publish a digital strategy and data strategy for CHS that meets the needs of Children’s Hearings aligning to our reform planning and strategic outlook	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Digital Ambitions - A one year digital strategy will be developed by Q1 with an accompanying one year implementation plan outlining our digital delivery to Q4 2. Data Ambitions – A data strategy will be published by Q1 with an accompanying one year implementation plan outlining delivery to Q4.
5	Delivering Positive Outcomes	Planning for Reform	Quality Hearings for Children	We will improve the quality and consistency of Panel member decision-making at Children’s Hearings, by strengthening our observation practice and process.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening our Observation Practice and Process - By the end of Q4, we’ll have created new practice guidance for observations at Hearings, and commenced the implementation of the new guidance for our Panel Practice Advisor Community. 2. Evidence Driven Quality Improvement - By the end of Q4, we’ll have used the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) to implement a robust improvement framework focused on strengthening our quality across our regional delivery.
6	Delivering Positive Outcomes	Learning Transformation	Continue to Transform Learning for everyone at CHS	We will continue to transform and strengthen our learning	1. The Evolution of CHS Learning for all People – By the end of Q2, we will have a transition plan that

				offer to volunteers and staff, through the provision of high-quality learning that meets the evolving needs of Children’s Hearings	<p>brings all learning for all people at CHS, volunteer and staff, under one function</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Creating a Baseline for Learning – By the end of Q1 we will have conducted a learning needs analysis of our volunteer community and a review of learning provision, including the delivery methods across CHS, creating a baseline on which further development can be built. 3. Increased Digital Learning – By the end of Q2 we will publish a digital learning plan, outlining how we will deliver a greater percentage of pre-service training digitally by January 2027 and the percentage target we intend to achieve.
4	Valuing our People	Planning for Reform	Drive our Communication and Engagement Ambitions	Through a programme of clear communications and effective engagement around hearings system reform, we will inspire understanding among all of our people and empower them to play their part in shaping and delivering change.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining our Communications Strategy – By Q1 develop and start delivery of a refreshed Communications and Engagement Strategy that ensures our people are informed and engaged with the reform of Children’s Hearings
7	Valuing our People	Strengthening Leadership	Continue Delivery of our People	We will further progress our ambition to be an employer of	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further Strengthen our Leadership at CHS – By the end of Q3 we will have delivered a learning programme of enablement and coaching for our

			<p>Strategy and its ambitions</p>	<p>choice, securing and retaining top talent with a package of employee focused, values driven policies and plans</p>	<p>senior managers, further strengthening the foundations for Children’s Hearings reform.</p> <p>2. Bringing our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy alive – By the end of Q1, develop an implementation plan for our strategy to be achieved by the end of Q4. This will include awareness raising, training, and improvements to policy and design, including a focus on inclusive and values based recruitment.</p>
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Agenda Item 16a. CHS-2526-56

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Report 2025/26
Responsible Executive:	Joanne O'leary, Director of People and Culture
Report Author:	Elina Takala and Umar Malik

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the attached Equality Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Report 2025/26.</p> <p>The paper was presented at the People and Culture Committee (PaCC) meeting on 10 March 2026 and endorsed by the committee for onward travel to the Board.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
	The Board is asked to approve the report prior to publication on the CHS Website.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	<p>CHS is required to report on the progress made mainstreaming the general equality duty every two years. CHS is also required to publish new equality outcomes every four years with a progress report after two years. New equality outcomes for 2025-29 are introduced in this report.</p> <p>This report is more concise than previous reports and provides progress made towards the new outcomes since the last mainstreaming report in 2024. The report aligns with the CHS Strategic Outlook 2024-27 and the CHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.</p>
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outlook 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 3 - To become a more inclusive and diverse organisation and create a culture where everyone feels valued, included and engaged.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	NA
6.	Risk Register
6.1	NA

Agenda Item 16a. CHS-2526-56

7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	NA
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	NA
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	NA
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Equality Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Report 2025/26

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Report 2025/26

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National Convener / Chief Executive Foreword

<To develop for final version; messaging about equalities and unique position of CHS in the stakeholder group of volunteers and the overall system improvements>

Introduction

The [Equality Act 2010](#) requires public authorities to adhere to the general [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), which Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) is firmly committed to fulfilling. This duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

CHS continues to uphold this requirement and aims to continue our progress in demonstrating the vision and values of the Equality Act. To assist the performance of this and to ensure transparency of progress towards meeting these equality objectives, CHS is required to publish equality outcomes at least every four years alongside information that demonstrate progress toward this duty.

The general equality duty applies to the nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership, with regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination in employment

Since 2020, CHS has also recognised care experience as a tenth protected characteristic and seek to ensure continuous review of our practice, policies and procedures to incorporate this commitment in all we do.

The CHS values enables the National Team and Panel Community volunteers to drive improvement, hold each other accountable, and ensure everyone is treated with dignity and respect.



As set out in the CHS [Strategic Outlook 2024-27](#), our purpose is to ensure hearings make child-centred decisions which respect and protect children’s rights and support them to thrive. This cannot be achieved without a strong culture that views and upholds commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Culture improvement is a journey and taking deliberate steps to change behaviours and norms will take time, but we are committed to leading, learning, and improving as an organisation. Progress against our commitments seek to result in a more inclusive experience for Panel Community volunteers, for colleagues, and for the children, young people, and families in the hearings system.

Cross-functional collaboration

The [CHS Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#) is strategically aligned to the organisational plans and vision. In this strategy, a transformed CHS is acknowledged with new teams established in 2023-2024 to focus on raising voices of those with lived experience, fostering a culture that leads to positive outcomes, and developing our colleagues and volunteers in how they support the hearings system. CHS’ Equality Outcomes highlight alignment to organisational aims and areas of focus in creating safe, respectful, inclusive environments.

Equality Outcomes 2025-2029

Children’s Hearings Scotland’s Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029 serve as a commitment and action plan to drive forward the EDI agenda. The Equality Outcomes seek to build upon the foundation of the CHS values while striving to embed and mainstream EDI.

The Equality Outcomes for 2025-2029 are:

1. Training and development

- i. We will implement appropriate training and development for our Panel Community and staff in line with their responsibilities to ensure they are able to conduct their duties to a high standard in supporting children, families and our people.
- ii. We want to ensure that everyone who engages with CHS, especially children and young people, can fully engage and participate.
- iii. Recognising that accessibility challenges exist for marginalised groups, we will promote inclusive language and provide accessible communication to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics.

2. Inclusive culture and increased awareness of EDI

- i. We will build an inclusive culture based on respect by increasing awareness of EDI across our community through engagement with stakeholder advisory groups and EDI networks.
- ii. We will continue to review internal policies and practices with the input of young people and volunteers to assess the impact on protected characteristics and ensure EDI is considered in all our work.
- iii. We will invite feedback from children, volunteers and National Team colleagues to monitor our drive towards an inclusive culture in line with the CHS values.

3. Inclusive recruitment and involvement at CHS

- i. We will review our recruitment and selection processes for volunteers and National Team colleagues, aligning these processes with best practice in order to tackle barriers and promote inclusivity.

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- ii. We will seek to understand the barriers and challenges that are faced by people with protected characteristics from volunteering in our Panel Community and take steps to address these. We will be data-driven in analysing under-representation within our Panel Community.
 - iii. We aspire to be an employer of choice and recognise that in doing so we seek to attract a diverse range of candidates for employment roles with our National Team.

Progress (2024-2026)

In 2023/24, CHS underwent extensive change to operational practice and organisational team make-up and have progressed the equality outcomes and work across Scotland, building on previous years development and achievements. This progress is summarised below, focused on each of the outcomes.

Outcome 1: Training and development

Training

Mandatory training signals the relevance that CHS places on various topics and over time, the expectation for all employees and volunteers to have an understanding of diversity, inclusive practices, and trauma-informed approaches have grown.

With the growth of CHS, the expectation of all CHS employees, Board Members, and Panel Community volunteers to complete introductory online training on EDI has remained. This training forms part of the induction for National Team colleagues when they join CHS and is mandated to be completed on an annual basis. Mandatory online EDI training is also incorporated into the PreService Training programme for all new Panel Members. Additional training is provided to Panel Members involved in recruitment processes, via the Inclusive

Recruitment and Selection training, which includes topics related to EDI and unconscious bias.

Going Further: EDI training

In 2026/27, the EDI training modules will undergo a review to ensure that content is of high quality for team and volunteer learning. To support this, a confidence baselining assessment will also be shared with the National Team to support appropriate topics for EDI training as well as evaluation of impact of learning.

In recent years, our commitment to being trauma-informed has also strengthened and is now considered a fundamental pillar of training and development programmes. We have partnered with NHS Education Scotland (NES) in integrating the NHS National Trauma Transformation Programme modules for ‘trauma-informed’ and ‘trauma-skilled’ into training for all Panel Members and for our National Team. Furthermore, the Senior Leadership Team engaged with NES in a bespoke session to explore organisational approaches to being trauma-informed.

Going Further: Trauma-informed training and support

In 2026/27, the trauma training will develop to be aligned to the Care and Justice Act learning and development of Panel Community volunteers and National Team colleagues. Additional training to strengthen support to the volunteer community will also be provided to enable safer spaces for those who are impacted by their role.

Trauma-informed hearings

As part of the recognition of care-experienced as a tenth protected characteristic, CHS is committed to ensuring that the language used in a hearing is child-centred and trauma-informed. Since 2022, CHS has collaborated with Our Hearings, Our Voice as part of the multi-agency Children’s Hearings Improvement Partnership group, [Language Leaders](#), to develop the ‘Language in the Hearing Room’ guide. This guide supports Panel Members in using language in hearings that is personalised, balanced, non-stigmatising, and inclusive and was launched as a learning module in 2025. Additionally, in 2025, an animated video, “Articulate”, commissioned in partnership with SCRA and co-produced with these groups won a gold award at the Scottish Design Awards.

CHS' involvement in the Language Leaders is to garner environments that helps children to feel safe, respected, and empowered to be part of the decision-making process.

The group continues to influence the recognised importance of language and how it can support the experience of children and families at hearings.

Lastly, we also issued a small but impactful change in practice with 'Chair greeting the child'. Supported by [Our Hearings, Our Voice \(OHOV\)](#), Panel Members have been stepping out of the hearing room to greet children before their hearings, enabling children to feel more comfortable and at ease as they go into their hearing room.

Outcome 2: Inclusive culture and increased awareness of EDI

Experts by Experience

CHS demonstrates our value of being child-centred and intend to design and deliver our work for volunteers that lead to positive outcomes for children and young people of the hearings system. We remain committed to creating opportunities for children and young people with lived experience of the hearings system to share their views to make a meaningful impact, and to help us improve outcomes for children and young people.

In 2024-25, CHS launched Experts by Experience, a structured, supported and remunerated national participation group made up of young people, aged 14 and 25 from across Scotland, with lived experience of the hearings system. Supported by the Participation team, Experts by Experience seek to drive forward improvements in practice and standards across CHS.

Engagement with partners

To support our commitment to learning and increasing awareness of EDI across the organisation, we continue to engage with stakeholders around inclusive and fair work practices. In 2025/26, we:

- retained our membership of Onvero (formerly known as the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion - ENEI), which enable us to collaborate and share best practice in EDI matters

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- continued to participate in the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration’s (SCRA) Inclusion and Diversity Steering Group for more inclusive hearings
 - re-launched the CHS EDI Working Group, an internal voluntary staff group to help shape the design and delivery of how EDI objectives will be brought into meaningful action
 - participate in Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) Equality Forum and other networking opportunities to contribute to and learn from others

Additionally, the CHS National Team have continued our external promotion and awareness raising of inclusive hearings through our external partnerships via an annually nominated charity. The selected charities are those who align with our own values and are voted on by members of the National Team. Each year, CHS colleagues organise fundraising activities such as bake sales, sponsored runs, book swaps and other events in aid of our chosen charity.

In 2024, [Who Cares? Scotland](#), Scotland's only national independent membership organisation for Care Experienced people, was the chosen charity by CHS staff and fundraising activities and events by the National Team raised a total of £750. In 2025, [Child Poverty Action Group \(CPAG\)](#) was our chosen charity, who works to understand what causes poverty, the impact it has on children’s lives, and how it can be prevented and solved. Through the fundraising activities and events by the National Team in 2025, we raised a total of £1600 for CPAG.

Furthermore, since 2023, CHS has participated in Care Experienced week celebrating with the care experienced community by raising awareness, sharing information and participating in events such as the Love Rally.

Outcome 3: Inclusive recruitment and involvement at CHS

Reducing barriers and strengthened accessibility support

CHS aims to ensure all trainees and appointed volunteers are provided with inclusive, equitable access to recruitment, training, and volunteering activities. CHS supports Panel Community volunteers in a variety of ways, including through wellbeing support, practical and reasonable adjustments, and digital support services - all of which help CHS meet diverse needs and enables accessible volunteering involvement. Some ways that we have made progress in reducing barriers include:

- Strengthening digital capabilities assistance, with personalised one-to-one digital support sessions over the phone and in-person engagement sessions across the country to ensure volunteers with protected characteristics – including age or disability – could access what they need to volunteer well.
- We continue to work in partnership with SCRA to better support Panel Members in hearing rooms, from physical changes (i.e. mobility changes and ergonomic chairs in rooms), to technology (i.e. upgrading outdated loops that prevented volunteers hard of hearing to use their hearing aids effectively) and continue to understand and take action on removing barriers to Panel Members attending in-person hearings.
- In 2025, CHS commenced the first phase of replacing Chromebook devices with upgraded devices, focused on providing support for those who require additional software and digital tools as part of a reasonable adjustment.
- In 2025, digital support and training was integrated as part of the renewed Pre-Service training programme and Induction sessions for new volunteers to receive face-to-face support in getting set up right.

Going Further: Reducing barriers

In 2026/27, we will improve processes to better identify learning support needs and adjustments so that we strengthen the available support for volunteers. We will refresh recruitment and onboarding resources to increase awareness of our inclusive practices.

We will also refresh internal processes for digital support, particularly for those with reasonable adjustments due to a disability or those with less exposure to computers (due to age, profession, or socio-economic background)

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- With the 2025 organisational changes and the CHS Learning Academy operating in-house, a nationally coordinated effort to identify, understand, and take swift action steps to support reasonable adjustments was also put in place for all trainees.

Inclusive recruitment and diversity of our Panel Community volunteers

CHS strives to have a community of volunteer Panel Members and Panel Practice Advisors that represent Scotland's communities and have diverse views and experience that garner an empathetic Panel Community in supporting children's hearings.

An unwavering aim is to continue to strengthen the diversity of volunteers who join CHS so that the decision-makers on children's panels are more representative of the communities they serve. To support this, we have made progress in recent years by:

- Continue inclusive recruitment practices, including running information sessions to strengthen candidate understanding, offering support with applications and adjustments for interview, redacting personal data from applications for impartial selection, and limiting bias through a recruitment panel of at least two people.
- Continued to use equalities data to enable targeted recruitment campaigns for our underrepresented groups. This has further been supported by engagement and collaboration with partners, such as CEMVO, and specific Gaelic campaigning in Island communities.
- Continue supporting adjustments for prospective volunteers, through to trainees and appointed volunteers via support in applying, digital adjustments, physical enhancements, and supportive, honest discussions about reasonable changes that can be made in the hearing space that enable an inclusive experience where appropriate.
- Continued involvement with lived experience recruiters across the country who have been partnered with CHS colleagues to support the selection of Panel Members.
- In 2025, a trauma-informed and inclusive approach was taken in how the involvement of young people with lived experience were involved in every interview whereby the Experts by Experience group reviewed questions and designed and

recorded a scenario for each candidate to respond to. This enabled greater impact of the group resources in a supportive setting while also allowing for a more consistent interview process that centred the voice of young people.

- In 2025 and part of our continuous improvement, we have strengthened our volunteer expectations and commitments in our communications, training, and induction materials which centre on CHS values and how we implement a fair, inclusive environment through expected behaviours in and around hearings, within the framework of the National Standards.
- Continue to aim to implement mixed-gender panels, as far as practicable.

Going Further: Developing a diverse and inclusive Panel Community

In 2026/27, we will continue to engage via employers partnerships to increase breadth of applications from members of the public. We will review and issue new EDI modules relating to recruitment processes. Lastly, we will develop our data monitoring methodology to influence recruitment and development opportunities, including where it relates to activity on sitting on hearings

Driven by data

It remains an objective to improve our equality data collection to help us ensure our activities to recruit, train, and support Panel Community volunteers is impactful. To support this, we have made the following progress in recent years:

- In 2024, reviewed and revised our data capturing form for volunteers on our digital system to align with the Scottish Government Equalities Monitoring questions.
- From 2025, commenced an annual request from CHS to volunteers to share equalities data with us, particularly to understand demographic of volunteers who were appointed prior to 2019.

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- From 2025, we have begun asking about hearings experience of prospective volunteers as part of our equalities monitoring and to enable greater understanding of the demographics of our volunteers.

Diversity of our Panel Community volunteers

Collection of such data helps to aid our planning, better understand the needs of our people and allow us to benchmark against Scotland's census 2022. From our collection of equalities monitoring information and that of newly appointed volunteers we know that as of March 2025:

- **Sharing data:** 44.9% of our Panel Community volunteers completed the equalities, an increase of 11.5% from 2023.
- **Age of volunteers:** The Panel Community who responded is made up of a majority over the age of 55 years old (31.7% aged 55-64, 24.9% aged 65+). 20.4% of respondents were aged 45-54, followed by 13.4% 35-44 years old, 8% aged 25-34 years old, and 1.7% aged 18-24 years old.
- **Gender:** We have a higher proportion of Panel Members who identify as female (74.1%), followed by male (24.4%) and non-binary or other (1.5%).
- **Disability:** 8.5% of Panel Members consider themselves to have a disability. Non-disclosure rates have decreased from 64.6% in 2023 to 53.2% in 2025.
- **Ethnicity:** 8.5% of our Panel Members are from minority ethnic backgrounds. This is less than Scotland overall (12.9%).
- **Sexual orientation:** The vast majority of Panel Members identify as heterosexual/straight (91.1%). Panel Members who identify as gay, lesbian and Bisexual has increased from 1.6% in 2020 to 5.8% in 2025.
- **Religion:** Similar to the national trend across Scotland, Panel Members who identify as having no religion was 48.6% in 2025, comparable to the 2022 census (51.1%). Other respondents who declared religious beliefs that were not Protestant, Christian, or Catholic were c. 1% per category.
- **Marital status:** Since 2023 we have seen a slight increase in those with a status other than married/civil partnership (64.9%), with 13.3% single, 8.6% separated/divorced, 8.4% in partnership, and 3.2% widowed. Non-disclosure rates have decreased from 64.8% in 2023 to 52.7% in 2025.
- **Caring responsibilities:** We have seen a slight increase in caring responsibilities, with 27.2% caring for child/children, 6.3% caring for an adult, and 2.9% caring for an adult and child/children. Non-disclosure rates have decreased from 64.8% in 2023 to 54.8% in 2025.
- **Experience of the Hearings System:** 8.4% of Panel Community volunteers who responded declared having experience of the hearing system, an increase of 1.2% since 2023.

Agenda Item 17a. CHS-2526-57

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Update to Financial Regulations
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/ Depute Chief Executive
Report Author:	Ross MacKenzie, Head of Finance and Resources, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the update of the Financial Regulations and suggested updates, if required.</p> <p>This was presented at the Audit and Risk Committee on 24 February 2026 for endorsement prior to final Board approval.</p> <p>The Committee endorsed the report.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Board is asked to approve the updates to the Financial Regulations on an annual basis.</p> <p>The document has been reviewed; however, the recommendation is that there are no changes required to this from February 2025. The Committee is therefore asked to approve that no changes are made for this year.</p>
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	The recommendation is that no changes are made to the Financial Regulations for 2026 following review by Ross MacKenzie, Head of Finance and Resources, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA).
4.	Key Risks
4.1	None.
5.	Risk Register
5.1	No additional risk have been identified by updating the Financial Regulations
6.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
6.1	No Impact assessment is required
7.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)

Agenda Item 17a. CHS-2526-57

7.1	N/A
8.	Resource Implications
8.1	N/A
9.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Financial Regulations March 2026

Financial Regulations

Version	Date	Owner	Summary of Changes
v2.0	20.03.2018	Head of Finance	Minor changes, such as updating job titles and changing references to CHS's "Director of Finance and Corporate Services" to the appropriate member of the Senior Management Team
v2.1	19.03.2019	Head of Finance	Corrected numbering within section 6.6
v2.2	12.02.2020	Head of Finance	Cosmetic change to wording 5.3.2 Added 12-month proviso to 6.3.6 Added overpayments to 6.5.6
v2.3	07.02.2022	Head of Finance	Updated Document Location Updated Senior Management Team role titles Corrected numbering within 6.3
v2.4	14.02.2025	Director of Business and Finance	Updating job titles in line with new CHS structure and responsibilities across all Financial Regulations

Approvals	ARC 27.02.2018 Board 20.03.2018 ARC February 2019 Board March 2019 ARC Feb 2021 ARC Feb 2022 ARC Feb 2025 Board March 2025 Board March 2026
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1 Introduction

This document sets out Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS)’s financial regulations. This document was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARC) on 25 February 2025 and subsequently approved by CHS Board on 25 March 2025. These financial regulations are subordinate to the [Children’s Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) and to any restrictions within CHS’s Framework Document. The purpose of these financial regulations is to provide control over the totality of CHS’s resources.

The financial regulations are a key element in CHS’s system of internal financial control. The financial regulations, which are supplemented by other documents such as the Petty Cash Guidance note, link directly to the [Scottish Public Finance Manual \(SPFM\)](#), the Schedule of Delegated Authority and Procurement Policy. The financial regulations set out the key controls which apply to each core financial process.

Compliance with the financial regulations is compulsory for all employees of CHS. Any member of staff who fails to comply with the financial regulations may be subject to disciplinary action under CHS’s disciplinary procedures. It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that their staff members are made aware of the existence and content of CHS’s financial regulations.

The ARC is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the financial regulations, through the Director of Business and Finance, and for advising the Board of any additions or changes necessary.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 Financial Responsibilities

2.1.1 The Board will be responsible for setting the overall policies to be followed by CHS and for ensuring that all actions undertaken by officers of CHS are in accordance with procedures determined by the Board.

2.1.2 Under the terms of reference approved by the Board, CHS's ARC is responsible for general oversight of audit-related matters. The Internal Audit function reports to the Accountable Officer and the ARC on CHS's system of internal control and recommends improvements to the systems, as necessary.

2.1.3 The National Convener/Chief Executive of CHS is formally designated as CHS's Accountable Officer by the Principal Accountable Officer of Scottish Government's Children and Families Directorate (sponsor Directorate). The role of the Accountable Officer is defined in the Framework Document.

2.1.4 In the short-term absence of the National Convener/Chief Executive, for a period not exceeding four weeks, the Deputy Chief Executive may be nominated as the Deputy Accountable Officer and be responsible for providing support to the National Convener/Chief Executive in carrying out the Accountable Officer responsibilities.

2.1.5 The National Convener/Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Tribunal Delivery, Director of People and Culture, Director of Positive Outcomes, and Director of Business and Finance, referred to in these Regulations as "Budget Holders", are responsible for the resources under their control. It will be for them to ensure that such resources are managed in accordance with the provisions of the financial regulations and any procedures or other instructions, as may be approved from time to time, by the Board and/or the National Convener/Chief Executive.

2.1.6 The Board may delegate certain powers to Budget Holders and other specified officers. Except for the Accountable Officer function, these officers may further delegate the powers they have been given, within the limits of the Schedule of Delegated Authority, but they retain ultimate responsibility for the exercise of the delegated authority.

3 Planning and Authorisation

3.1 Planning and Budgeting

3.1.1 The Board is responsible for determining, monitoring, and approving the medium/long term policy and resource framework for the future development of CHS's policies and programmes. The Board will provide guidance as may be considered appropriate on the policies to be followed in the preparation of CHS's Corporate and Business Plans and estimates of revenue and capital expenditure.

3.1.2 In each financial year the Board will, following receipt of advice from the National Convener/Chief Executive, determine the detailed procedural arrangements for the ensuing financial years as may be considered appropriate for the preparation of the annual revenue and capital estimates to be followed by Budget Holders.

3.1.3 Budget Holders will prepare detailed estimates in respect of both capital and revenue expenditure for the ensuing financial year in accordance with the procedural arrangements approved from time to time in terms of paragraph 3.1.2.

3.1.4 The National Convener/Chief Executive will submit draft revenue and capital estimates to the Board with such recommendations as appear to be necessary. After considering the overall estimates and any recommendations, the Board will revise the estimates as it may consider appropriate, approve them as so revised, authorise the expenditure and the delegated budgets to Budget Holders and pass such resolutions as may be required.

3.1.5 The final budget requirement as approved by the Board will be in line with the annual cash limit as notified by the Scottish Ministers.

3.1.6 The detailed form of the capital and revenue estimates will be determined by the CHS Finance Manager after consultation with the Budget Holders, the form to be consistent with statutory requirements.

3.1.7 New developments or initiatives which have not been included in the level of grant in aid agreed by the Scottish Government, and which cannot be accommodated within the agreed level of funding will be considered by the National Convener/Chief Executive. A business case will be prepared which may form the basis of a bid for supplementary funding to the Scottish Government. In this event the Board should be notified.

3.2 Authority

3.2.1 The inclusion of items in approved revenue budgets will constitute authority to the Budget Holders to incur such expenditure subject to any reservations put in place by the Board and the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

4 Monitoring and Control

4.1 Budgetary Control

4.1.1 The CHS Finance Manager will inform Budget Holders of their financial allocation for the forthcoming year once the Board has approved this.

4.1.2 It will be the duty of each Budget Holder to monitor and control expenditure within the financial allocation provided in the Revenue and Capital Budgets.

4.1.3 The CHS Finance manager will provide Budget Holders with all financial information necessary to manage budgets and will provide statements of expenditure for each Budget Holder and the Board.

4.1.4 It will be the duty of each Budget Holder to inform the Director of Business and Finance, within agreed timescales, where it is forecast that the total expenditure within their control is likely to be out with agreed parameters. The Director of Business and Finance will, if necessary, advise the National Convener/Chief Executive and prepare a report for the Board.

4.1.5 The Director of Business and Finance and National Convener/Chief Executive will promptly inform the Board and the Scottish Ministers if it becomes apparent that expenditure is likely to exceed the level of grant in aid. The Board and the Scottish Ministers must also be informed if CHS is likely to underspend its total grant in aid.

4.2 Incurring Capital Expenditure

4.2.1 When the capital estimates for any year have been appraised and formally approved, projects included may proceed on the authority of the Budget Holder i.e. the project sponsor, provided that:

- the scope of the project is consistent with the original capital estimates
- should the recommended tender for a project exceed the sum contained in the Capital Estimates by the lesser of 10% or £10,000, approval of the Board will be obtained before the tender is accepted. The recommended tender may be accepted up to that limit provided that sufficient budget or virement (transfer) is available. Board approval will be obtained in other cases. Notwithstanding, in an emergency the Chair and/or National Convener/Chief Executive may take such steps as are necessary to safeguard life, health or property or safeguard the interests of CHS
- should a new project be substituted for an approved project, approval of the Board will be required

4.2.2 It will be the duty of each Budget Holder to monitor and control expenditure within the financial allocation for each project under their control.

4.3 Supplementary Estimates and Virement

4.3.1 Regulation 4.1 states that the Budget Holder is responsible for ensuring that the approved expenditure under each heading is not exceeded. Where, however, an expenditure code is or is likely to be exceeded, the Budget Holder, must:

- attempt to make good the deficiency from other savings
- where that cannot be achieved, the extent of the over/underspend should be submitted to the National Convener/Chief Executive as part of the budget monitoring process, detailing the reasons for the budget variance and outlining the corrective actions to be taken

4.3.2 Variance from original approved budget plans including the introduction of a new policy or a variation of existing policy, which may have a significant impact upon the corporate plans of CHS, will be subject to the approval of the Board.

4.3.3 In exceptional circumstances, some virement of budget may be submitted to the Board for approval provided:

- the virement is greater than £5,000
- the level of virement is no more than 10% of the prescribed expenses heads (i.e. staff, property, travel etc.)
- the virement does not create an additional financial commitment into the future financial years which cannot be accommodated within existing grant in aid levels

4.3.4 Transfer of budgetary provision between revenue budget and capital budget requires prior approval from the SG Finance Directorate.

4.4 Provision of Monitoring Information

4.4.1 The Director of Business and Finance will quarterly, or at intervals determined by the Board, provide the Board with a monitoring report on revenue and capital expenditure and forecasts of outturn figures.

4.4.2 The National Convener/Chief Executive shall provide the sponsor Directorate with a financial statement at agreed intervals showing for each main budget heading the payments made and receipts in the previous month, accumulated payments to date and the balance of cash remaining available to CHS for the year. The statement shall also contain an analysis of monthly outturn against forecast and details of the outturn for the year for each main budget heading.

4.5 Reports to Board and Management Groups

4.5.1 All reports to the Board, management group or sub-group must identify and explain the financial implications of any commitment, action or change to policy proposed.

4.5.2 Reports must include a comprehensive costing of financial implications, and an outline of options considered.

4.5.3 Financial implications should differentiate between capital expenditure and revenue expenditure.

5 Assets

5.1 Register of Assets

The SCRA Finance Manager with the help of the CHS finance team will maintain a comprehensive and up-to-date record of fixed assets.

5.2 Asset Security

5.2.1 Each Budget Holder is responsible for always maintaining proper security for all CHS assets under their respective control including buildings, stocks, furniture, equipment, cash, records, and information. The appropriate officers shall consult with the Director of Business and Finance in any case where security is thought to be defective or where it is considered, or it has been advised that security may be inadequate or that special security arrangements may be required.

5.2.2 Maximum limits for cash holdings shall be agreed with the Director of Business and Finance and shall not be exceeded without the prior approval of the Director of Business and Finance.

5.3 Stores and Equipment

5.3.1 The safe custody of stocks, furniture, fittings, plant, and equipment shall be the responsibility of the Budget Holder concerned.

5.3.2 Budget Holders will perform physical inventories in a form and frequency agreed by the Director of Business and Finance. The Budget Holder will supply the CHS Finance manager with such information relating thereto as may be required for the financial records of CHS.

5.3.3 The Budget Holder will report any physical differences to the Director of Business and Finance and CHS Finance Manager, and after consultation with the Director of Business and Finance, take the necessary action in relation to such.

5.3.4 The procedure for Losses and Special Payments must be adhered to for the treatment of any losses.

5.3.5 CHS's property will not be removed otherwise than in accordance with the ordinary course of CHS's business or used otherwise than for CHS's purposes except in accordance with specific directions issued by the Budget Holder concerned.

5.3.6 Where an item on an inventory is surplus to operational requirements, the appropriate Budget Holder will, before disposing of the item, consult the Director of Business and Finance who will provide disposal guidelines.

6 Income and Expenditure

6.1 Income

6.1.1 The Finance and Business Support Assistant will raise the appropriate invoice for all accounts for services and income upon notification by Budget Holders. The CHS Finance Manager shall issue the necessary detailed instructions regarding the issue of these accounts, the use of credit notes and the collection of the income.

6.1.2 All money received by an employee on behalf of CHS will, without delay, be paid intact to the Finance Manager as may be directed, to the CHS bank account. No deductions may be made from such money unless specifically authorised by the Director of Business and Finance.

6.1.3 Personal cheques will not be cashed out of the money held on behalf of CHS.

6.1.4 Every transfer of official money from one member of staff to another shall be evidenced in the records of the office concerned by the signature of the recipient.

6.1.5 Irrecoverable income or other debt due to CHS to be written off must be done in accordance with the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

6.2 Banking Arrangements and Control of Cheques

6.2.1 Subject to compliance with SPFM and agreement from Scottish Government's Treasury and Banking Branch, the National Convener/Chief Executive shall be authorised to operate such bank accounts as may be considered necessary.

6.2.2 Two signatories are required to authorise payments from CHS bank accounts. For this purpose, there will be a panel of signatories of not less than three persons, including the National Convener/Chief Executive.

6.2.3 Bank reconciliations must be performed monthly, at least. Bank reconciliations should be reviewed and approved by the SCRA Finance Team via the shared service agreement.

6.2.4 Payments should be made by the most economical and secure method available. For most purposes, the preferred payment method should be BACS. Where remittance advices should also be sent electronically.

6.2.5 All cheques and other forms enabling payment to be made from any CHS bank account will be ordered only on the authority of the Director of Business and Finance, who will ensure that proper arrangements have been made for their safe custody and that adequate controls exist over the usage and production of cheques.

6.3 Orders for Goods and Services

6.3.1 The Budget Holder as designated by the National Convener/Chief Executive, shall be responsible for all goods and services ordered and shall also be responsible for ensuring that the approved expenditure under each heading of the budget is not exceeded.

6.3.2 The purpose of procurement is to meet the user's requirements. CHS's Procurement Policy requires that all purchases of works, equipment, goods, and services are based on value for money, i.e. the optimum combination of whole-life cost and quality (or fitness for purpose) and other issues such as delivery against price, to meet the user's requirements. It would not be consistent with value for money, or the equal treatment of supplies, for procurement to be used to pursue aims unrelated to the subject of the contract. As far as possible, requirements should be expressed in terms of output and performance to provide scope for innovation solutions and avoid suggestions of favouritism.

6.3.3 Contracts for goods and services should be awarded following competition unless there are convincing reasons to the contrary to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in public expenditure. Contracts of an ongoing nature should be regularly reviewed and subjected to competition at appropriate intervals (usually no more than every three years unless economic arguments clearly justify a longer contractual relationship). The form of competition chosen should be consistent with any legal requirements and appropriate to the value and complexity of the goods or services being acquired.

6.3.4 Potential contractors should be assessed on grounds of suitability, for example in respect of their financial standing and ability to perform the contract (i.e. technical expertise). CHS should, wherever possible, seek opportunities to collaborate with others in respect of common requirements. This will help avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and gain the benefits of aggregation of requirements and economies of scale. If CHS wishes to enter into contracts under framework agreements put into place by others, it must seek advice as to whether the framework agreement has been awarded in accordance with the EU rules on behalf of other potential users.

6.3.5 Before entering any lease CHS must demonstrate that the lease offers better value for money than purchase and all agreements exceeding 12 months must be approved by the National Convener/Chief Executive.

6.3.6 Official orders will be issued for all work, goods, or services, including consultancy services to be supplied to the CHS except as follows:

- work, goods, or services which are covered by a prior written agreement which prescribes that payments will be made at certain intervals or under certain conditions
- the metered element of telephone, gas, water, and electricity services but not the installation, alteration, or repair of such services
- periodic payments such as rates
- purchases in cash for which reimbursement is made through a petty cash account
- where the specific written approval of the Director of Business and Finance has been obtained

6.3.7 Except as specifically agreed in writing with the Director of Business and Finance, all orders will be given to the supplier in advance of any work, goods or service being provided to CHS. However, in an emergency arising from circumstances outside the control of CHS, a verbal order may be given which will be confirmed in writing as soon as possible thereafter.

6.3.8 All orders for goods and services must be on authorised order forms and signed by an authorised signatory. Orders for goods and services must be checked against central contracts before being issued to suppliers. Where appropriate orders shall be placed in accordance with any central purchasing arrangements but in all cases, all prospective purchases must be in accordance with the Procurement Policy.

6.3.9 The Director of Business and Finance will maintain a register of authorised signatures and additions and deletions must be notified by Budget Holders to the Director of Business and Finance.

6.3.10 The person authorising any orders will ensure that the expenditure to be incurred is not "ultra vires" and that funds have been provided in the budget to cover such expenditure. The order should clearly indicate the nature and quantity of goods etc. to be supplied, any contract or agreed price relating thereto, and the budget head (cost centre and account code) to which it is to be charged.

6.3.11 The limits for the ordering of goods and services shall be those stated in CHS's Schedule of Delegated Authority.

6.4 Payment of Accounts

6.4.1 The Budget Holder is responsible for certifying revenue and capital expenditure. This covers:

- correctness of prices, discounts, and arithmetic
- receipt of goods as in accordance with the order
- non-duplication of payments
- ensuring expenditure is within the estimates
- accurate coding in terms of cost centre, expenses, and job code where appropriate
- invoice is in the name of CHS
- the charge is a proper liability of CHS

6.4.2 Such certification will be a signature or email by or on behalf of Budget Holders in accordance with the Schedule of Delegated Authority. Requests for amendments to the Schedule of Delegated Authority should be made to the Director of Business and Finance.

6.4.3 Certified invoices will be passed without delay to an appropriate Budget Holder for payment and may be examined to the extent that is considered necessary. For this purpose, the Budget Holder shall be entitled to make such enquiries and to receive such information and explanations as may be required.

6.4.4 The Director of Business and Finance shall issue to all Budget Holders detailed instructions for the certification and passing of accounts for payment to ensure that payments are made within contracted terms or within ten working days in line with Scottish Government policy.

6.5 Payment of Salaries, Wages and Pensions

6.5.1 The Director of People and Culture will keep records regarding salaries, wages, and other emoluments. Budget Holders will be responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of such information.

6.5.2 The Director of People and Culture is responsible for payment of all salaries, wages, pensions, compensations, and other emoluments to all employees of CHS and all other payments made to employees because of their employment by CHS. Payments will be in accordance with arrangements made by the Director of People and Culture, after consultation with Budget Holders. All payments will be made at the rates approved by CHS after making all appropriate deductions for income tax, national insurance, superannuation, agreed voluntary deductions and other statutory or contractual deductions.

6.5.3 Budget Holders are required to operate within approved establishment headcount controls. The establishment headcount can only be exceeded in accordance with an approved policy on establishment controls.

6.5.4 Any proposal by CHS to move from the existing pension arrangements, or to pay any redundancy or compensation for loss of office, requires the approval of the Scottish Government and where appropriate the agreement of the Scottish Public Pensions Agency to promote the necessary amending legislation.

6.5.5 The Scottish Government Finance Pay Policy Team should be consulted prior to the implementation of any non-salary reward scheme.

6.5.6 Each Budget Holder will notify the Director of People and Culture or appropriate delegate as soon as possible, and in a prescribed form, of all matters affecting the payment of such emoluments, and in particular:

- appointments, including temporary and casual appointments, resignations, dismissals, suspensions, overpayments, secondments, and transfers
- absences from duty for long term sickness or other reason, apart from approved annual leave or flexi-leave
- information necessary to maintain records of service for superannuation, income tax, national insurance, and sick pay
- in all cases, payments to employees must be consistent with prevailing statutes as regards tax, national insurance etc

6.5.7 The Director of People and Culture is responsible for the payment to the appropriate bodies of sums deducted from salaries and wages.

6.5.8 The Finance Manager will keep all Budget Holders informed as to changes in conditions of service, superannuation benefits and other matters relative thereto.

6.5.9 Appointments of all employees will be made in accordance with the procedure approved by CHS and the approved establishments, grades, and rates of pay.

6.5.10 The Director of People and Culture or appropriate delegate will determine the form of flexi-time sheets and other documents which form the basis of a payment to an employee of CHS.

6.5.11 The Director of Business and Finance will maintain a register of authorised signatures and Budget Holders must notify the Director of Business and Finance of any additions and deletions.

6.6 Travel and Subsistence

6.6.1 The certification by or on behalf of the Budget Holder, shall be taken to mean that the certifying officer is satisfied that the claim is in accordance with the approved policies of CHS and the approved terms and conditions of staff. This means that journeys were authorised, the expenses properly and necessarily incurred and that the allowances are properly payable by CHS.

6.6.2 Employees' claims submitted more than 3 months after the expenses were incurred will not be considered for reimbursement unless there were exceptional circumstances which prevented the submission of the claim.

6.6.3 The Director of Business and Finance will make payments to Board Members who are entitled to claim travelling or other allowances upon receipt of the prescribed form duly completed and checked by the Corporate Governance Manager and authorised by the Director of Business and Finance. The claim must be in accordance with Scottish Government policies and procedures and will be paid at the Scottish Government rate. Board members should submit expenses timeously to ensure payment in the correct accounting period.

6.7 Petty Cash Accounts

6.7.1 The CHS Finance Manager shall make appropriate Petty Cash arrangements for CHS.

6.7.2 The Petty Cash holder will draw from CHS's bank account subject to such control limits as the Director of Business and Finance may from time to time determine.

6.7.3 The Director of Business and Finance shall arrange to his/her satisfaction the proper security of money advanced in this way.

6.7.4 An officer responsible for Petty Cash shall account on a regular basis, as determined by the Director of Business and Finance, for the amount advanced. The Director of Business and Finance will retain a formal record of this accounting.

6.7.5 All Petty Cash accounts will be maintained in accordance with the Petty Cash Guidance Note.

7 Special Provisions

7.1 Gifts and Hospitality

7.1.1 It is the duty of all Budget Holders to notify the Director of Business and Finance, or appropriate delegate of all gifts given and received.

7.1.2 The Director of Business and Finance or appropriate delegate will maintain a register containing details of gifts given and received, along with estimates of value in each case in accordance with Scottish Public Finance Manual.

7.1.3 Except for modest hospitality associated with a working lunch or dinner, the presumption should be against accepting offers of hospitality. For the avoidance of doubt all cases falling out with this category should be referred to the National Convener/Chief Executive.

7.2 Losses and Special Payments

7.2.1 It is the duty of all Budget Holders to obtain the approval of the Director of Business and Finance for all losses and special payments. Payments may only be authorised in accordance with delegated authority levels after careful consideration of the facts. All reasonable action must have been taken to affect the recovery of losses.

7.2.2 The Finance Manager will maintain a record of all losses and special payments (as categorised in Scottish Public Finance Manual) notified by Budget Holders.

7.2.3 The Director of Business and Finance will report all losses to the National Convener/Chief Executive who may write off such losses up to a maximum amount specified in the framework documents and Schedule of Delegated Authority. Thereafter cases will be reported to the Board and, if necessary, sponsor Directorate permission will be sought to write off.

7.3 Fraud, Theft, Corruption, and other Irregularities

7.3.1 It is a responsibility of Budget Holders to establish and maintain internal control so that CHS's activities are conducted in an efficient manner. Internal control comprises the entire system of controls and methods, both financial and otherwise, which are established by management to:

- Achieve organisational objectives
- Safeguard its assets
- Ensure reliability of records
- Promote operational efficiency
- Encourage adherence to policies and directives

7.3.2 Any employee of CHS who believes that an irregularity may have occurred involving any property or funds of CHS, or for which CHS has responsibility, must follow the procedures set out in CHS's Fraud Prevention Policy.

7.3.3 The National Convener/Chief Executive must report any cases or suspected cases of fraud or theft to the sponsor Directorate as soon as they become known in accordance with the Schedule of Delegated Authority.

8 Accounting and Audit

8.1 Accounting Procedures

8.1.1 The Director of Business and Finance will determine all accounting procedures and all accounting and related records of CHS and its Officers. The Budget Holder is responsible for the maintenance and supervision of those accounting records in their control under the accounting procedures specified by the Director of Business and Finance.

8.1.2 All accounts and accounting records of CHS will be compiled by or under the direction of the Director of Business and Finance.

8.1.3 The SCRA Finance Manager submit to the Board and the sponsor Directorate not later than 30 June of each year the draft Accounts for CHS for the previous financial year. The Accounts will comply with the requirements placed upon CHS in the Financial Memorandum, FReM, Companies Acts, and the Accounts Direction issued by the Scottish Government on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

8.1.4 The Auditor General Scotland audits, or appoints auditors to audit, CHS's annual accounts and passes them to the Scottish Ministers who shall lay them before the Scottish Parliament before 31 December, together with the annual report. The Director of Business and Finance shall instruct its auditors to send copies of all management letters and correspondence relating to those letters to the sponsor Directorate.

8.2 Internal Audit

8.2.1 The National Convener/Chief Executive shall commission an internal audit service to conduct a continuous and effective internal audit of the accounting, financial and other operations of CHS. The Internal Audit Service shall conform to the procedures and standards of the Government Internal Audit Manual.

8.2.2 The internal audit service shall be an independent appraisal function serving all levels of management. It shall not be involved in, or responsible for, normal line management activities.

8.2.3 The Internal Auditor shall have authority, on production of identification, to:

- enter at all reasonable times CHS premises or land
- have access to all records, documents and correspondence including any data held on computer storage media, which relate to financial and other transactions of CHS
- require and receive such explanations which are considered necessary concerning any matter under examination; and
- require any employee of CHS to produce and account for cash, stores or any other CHS asset under their control or to which they have access

8.3 Rights of Access

8.3.1 The National Convener/Chief Executive, Director of Business and Finance, other designated staff and Internal and External Auditor shall be given access on demand, to all records, documents and correspondence including any data held on computer storage media, which relate to financial and other transactions of CHS.

8.3.2 The records, accounts, and papers of CHS shall be open to inspection by the Scottish Ministers.

Agenda Item 18. CHS-2526-58

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Accounting Policies 2025/26
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/ Depute Chief Executive
Report Author:	Ross MacKenzie, Head of Finance and Resources, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the accounting policies to be applied and published within CHS's statutory annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2026.</p> <p>This was presented at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 24 February 2026 for endorsement prior to final Board approval.</p> <p>The Committee endorsed the update.</p>
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	CHS is required to publish audited annual accounts each year. These must be prepared in accordance with the Government Financial Reporting Manual (the FReM), International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and UK Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (UK GAAP). These accounts must include a list of accounting policies being adhered to, and these policies are approved annually by CHS's Audit and Risk Committee.
2.2	The Accountant and Interim Director of Business and Finance invite scrutiny of these policies and recommend that Committee reviews and approves these policies.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Aside from rolling forward dates and correction of typos, the only changes proposed from the 2024/25 policies are:
3.1.1	Rewording the treatment of pension scheme finance costs in note 6 for clarity
3.1.2	Adding a paragraph at the end of note 15 confirming that pension assets are accounted for in accordance with IFRIC 14.
3.2	To note, the triennial valuation being carried out as at 31 March 2026 will only be used from 2026/27 onwards, therefore the date of 31 March 2023 at the end of note 6 is correct.
3.3	To note, some information within the policies will be confirmed by the Fund actuary in May/June 2026.

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4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront of what we do, and those rights are well understood by our people • Theme 2 - Driving Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	No risks identified.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	No impact assessment is required.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1: Accounting policies for 2025/26

Accounting Policies

1. Basis of Accounting

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting principles and disclosure requirements of the 2025/26 Government Financial Reporting Manual (FReM). The accounting policies contained in the manual follow International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) as adopted by the European Union and the Companies Act 2006 to the extent that it is meaningful and appropriate in the public sector context and in accordance with the Accounts Direction given by the Scottish Ministers. Where the manual permits a choice of accounting policy, the accounting policy which is judged to be most appropriate to the particular circumstances of CHS for the purposes of giving a true and fair view has been selected. The accounting policies selected have been applied consistently in dealing with items that are considered material in relation to the accounts.

2. Accounting convention

These accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention modified to account for the revaluation of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets to fair value as determined by the relevant accounting standard.

3. Property, plant and equipment

The threshold for capitalisation of property, plant and equipment is £5,000, including non-recoverable VAT. Individual items of plant and equipment whose cost falls below the threshold, but are of a similar nature, are grouped and capitalised.

Expenditure on furniture, fixtures and fittings is charged to the statement of net expenditure in the year the cost is incurred and is not capitalised.

Given the short useful economic lives and low values of property, plant and equipment and intangible assets, these assets are disclosed on a depreciated historical cost basis, which is used as a proxy for fair value.

Depreciation is provided on all property, plant and equipment on a straight line basis, at rates calculated to write-off the cost, less estimated residual value, of each asset over its expected useful life as follows:

- ICT equipment – three years
- Office equipment – five years
- Leasehold improvements – five years (expected length of lease term)
- Right of Use assets – end of the useful life (or lease term if shorter)

Depreciation is ordinarily charged from when the asset was ready for use, rounded to the nearest whole month, up to point of disposal.

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4. Intangible assets

Intangible assets are stated at historic purchase cost less accumulated amortisation. Acquired computer software licences, developed software and developed ICT infrastructure environments are capitalised on the basis of the costs incurred to acquire and bring to use the specific software. These costs are amortised using the straight line method over the shorter term of life of licence and its estimated useful economic life.

5. Assets under construction

Where expenditure is incurred in creating an asset (tangible or intangible), but that asset is not ready for use by the end of a financial year, it is deemed as an asset under construction. Depreciation is not ordinarily charged on such assets although they will be reviewed for potential impairment or obsolescence, with any write-down charged to the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure if appropriate.

6. Employee benefits

CHS has an agreement with Edinburgh City Council under which all staff are eligible to enter the Local Government Pension Scheme managed by the Council in accordance with scheme rules. It is a defined benefit scheme providing pension benefits and life assurance for all staff members.

The defined benefits pension scheme's assets are included at market value and this is compared to the present value of the scheme liabilities using a projected unit method and discounted at a rate in accordance with the FReM and consistent with International Accounting Standard (IAS) 19. The increase in the present value of the liabilities of the scheme expected to arise from employee service in the period is charged to net expenditure. The expected return on the scheme's assets and the increase during the period in the present value of the scheme's liabilities arising from the passage of time are **disclosed as "pension scheme finance cost" in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure** ~~included in other finance income~~. Actuarial gains and losses arising from experience adjustments and changes in actuarial assumptions are charged or credited to reserves and are recognised in the Statement of Changes in Taxpayers' Equity.

The contributions are determined by a qualified actuary on the basis of triennial valuations using the projected accrued benefit method. The valuation used was at 31 March 2023. Details of this valuation were included in a report published by Lothian Pension Fund.

7. Short-term employee benefits

Salaries, wages and employment-related payments are recognised in the year in which the service is received from employees. The cost of annual leave and flexible working time entitlement earned but not taken by employees at the end of the year is recognised in the financial statements.

8. Income

CHS recognises income in the year to which it relates.

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9. Leases

For any new contracts entered into, CHS considers whether a contract is, or contains, a lease. A lease is defined as 'a contract, or part of a contract, that conveys the right to use an asset (the underlying asset) for a period of time in exchange for consideration'.

To apply this definition CHS assesses whether the contract meets two key evaluations:

- whether the contract contains an identified asset, either explicitly identified in the contract or implicitly specified by being identified at the time the asset is made available to CHS;
- whether CHS has the right to obtain substantially all of the economic benefits from use of the identified asset throughout the period of use, considering its rights within the defined scope of the contract.

Measurement and recognition of leases

At lease commencement date, CHS recognises a right-of-use asset and a lease liability in the Statement of Financial Position. The right-of-use asset is measured at cost, which is made up of the initial measurement of the lease liability, any initial direct costs incurred by CHS, an estimate of any costs to dismantle and remove the asset at the end of the lease, and any lease payments made in advance of the lease commencement date (net of any incentives received). CHS depreciates the right-of-use assets on a straight-line basis from the lease commencement date to the end of the useful life of the right-of-use asset, or the end of the lease term if earlier. CHS also assesses the right-of-use asset for impairment when such indicators exist.

At the commencement date, CHS measures the lease liability at the present value of the lease payments unpaid at that date, discounted using the HM Treasury discount rate promulgated in the Public Expenditure System (PES) papers: 5.32% from 1 January 2026, 4.81% from 1 January 2025, 4.72% from 1 January 2024, 3.51% in calendar year 2023, 0.95% in 2022. Subsequent to initial measurement, the liability will be reduced for payments made and increased for interest. It is remeasured to reflect any reassessment or modification. When the lease liability is remeasured, the corresponding adjustment is reflected in the right-of-use asset.

In line with the FReM, CHS has elected to account for short-term leases and leases of low-value assets using the practical expedients. Instead of recognising a right-of-use asset and lease liability, the payments in relation to these are recognised as an expense in the Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure on a straight-line basis over the lease term. The costs relating to these in the year to 31 March 2026 was £[tbc] (2025: £nil).

10. Government grants

It is CHS policy to credit all government grants and grant-in-aid to the General Reserve in line with the FReM.

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11. Financial Instruments

Cash requirements for CHS are met through the Scottish Government and therefore financial instruments play a more limited role in creating and managing risk than would apply within a non-public sector body. The majority of financial instruments relate to receivables and payables incurred through the normal operational activities of CHS. CHS is therefore exposed to little credit, liquidity or market risk.

12. Value Added Tax (VAT)

CHS has no chargeable activities within the scope of VAT. Irrecoverable VAT is charged to the relevant expenditure category or included in the capitalised purchase cost of non-current assets.

13. Provisions

Provision is recognised in the Statement of Financial Position when there is a present legal or constructive obligation as a result of a past event and it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation.

14. Related Party Transactions

Material related party transactions are disclosed in line with the requirements of IAS 24.

15. Review of Accounting Policies and Estimation Techniques

These financial statements have been prepared under IFRS. Areas of judgement in how CHS's accounting policies are applied include pension estimation technique.

The most significant financial impact arises from assumptions used to calculate the pension deficit/asset. The sensitivities regarding the principal assumptions used to measure the scheme liabilities are set out below:

Changes in assumptions at 31 March 2026	Approximate increase to Defined Benefit Obligation %	Approximate monetary amount £000
0.1% decrease in real discount rate	[tbc by actuary]	[tbc by actuary]
1 year increase in member life expectancy	[tbc by actuary]	[tbc by actuary]
0.1% increase in the salary increase rate	[tbc by actuary]	[tbc by actuary]
0.1% increase in the pension increase rate (CPI)	[tbc by actuary]	[tbc by actuary]

The principal demographic assumption is the longevity assumption (i.e. member life expectancy). For sensitivity purposes, the actuary estimates that a one year increase in life expectancy would approximately increase CHS's Defined Benefit Obligation by around 3-5% [tbc by actuary]. In practice the actual cost of a one year increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival rates predominantly apply at younger or older ages).

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In order to quantify the impact of a change in the financial assumptions used, the actuary has calculated and compared the value of the scheme liabilities at the accounting date on varying bases. The approach taken is consistent with that adopted to derive the accounting figures provided in this report, based on the profile (average member ages, retirement ages etc.) of CHS as at the date of the most recent valuation.

The approach taken in preparing the sensitivity analysis shown is consistent with that adopted in the previous year.

At 31 March 2026 [tbc by actuary], at 31 March 2025 and at 31 March 2024, the fair value of plan assets exceeded the estimated present value of liabilities. In accordance with International Financial Reporting Interpretations Committee Interpretation 14 (“IFRIC 14”), CHS did not recognise this excess as a net asset in its Statement of Financial Position.

16. Accounting standards not yet adopted

As at the date of authorisation of these financial statements, no key standards were not yet adopted.

Agenda Item 19a CHS-2526-59

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Terms of Reference 2026 (ToR)
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/ Depute Chief Executive
Report Author:	Karen Ferris, Corporate Governance Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the ARC ToR 2026. The document was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 24 February 2026 whom approved the update, prior to final Board approval.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board is asked to review the contents of the ARC ToR and approve the document for the year 2026.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	The contents of the ToR for 2026 remain unchanged from the ToR for 2025 previously approved by the committee in February 2025. As two new Board members have been appointed to ARC in recent months, it is suggested that the contents be reviewed to ensure the terms remain fit for purpose.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation. • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	No risks identified.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	N/A

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8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – ARC Terms of Reference

**Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)
Terms of Reference (ToR)
2026-2027**

1. Constitution

- 1.1 The Board hereby resolves to establish a committee of the Board to be known as the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).

2. Membership

- 2.1 The ARC comprises a minimum of three non-executive members appointed by the Board, not including the Chair of the Board.
- 2.2 The Board appoints one of its members to serve as the chair of the committee. Details of the current members, including the committee Chair, are shown in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 All members are appointed for the length of their current Board appointment which may be extended in line with any Board re-appointments. The Board must approve all re-appointments.
- 2.4 The ARC may co-opt independent members who are not members of the Board for a period (not exceeding a year) to provide specialist skills, knowledge, and experience subject to budgets agreed by the Board.
- 2.5 The Committee may appoint a substitute drawn from the membership of the Board of CHS, except for the CHS Board Chair, in line with the requirements at 2.1.
- 2.6 A committee substitute may participate at a committee meeting in place of a member.
- 2.7 When a committee substitute attends a meeting (or other committee activity), he or she assumes the full rights of an ordinary member of the committee. In particular, the substitute can vote and is entitled to receive all committee papers.

3. Authority

- 3.1 The ARC is authorised by the Board to review and approve any activity within its terms of reference.

4. Meetings and Quorum

- 4.1 The ARC meets at least four times a year. The Chair of the committee may convene additional meetings as he/she deems necessary. Meetings may be held virtually if required.

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- 4.2 The Chair of the Board may also ask the ARC to convene further meetings to discuss issues on which he/she seeks the Audit and Risk Management committee's advice.
- 4.3 A minimum of two members of the ARC must be present for the meetings to be deemed quorate. In the absence of the Chairperson, one of the other non-executive members will assume that role for the duration of the meeting. To ensure that the meeting is quorate, committee substitute(s) may be required to attend.
- 4.4 The National Convener/Chief Executive Officer and the Director of Business and Finance are required to attend each meeting.
- 4.5 The Audit and Risk Management committee may ask any other officials to attend, to assist with discussions and offer expertise on a particular matter.
- 4.6 The CHS Governance team will provide the ARC with secretarial support services.
- 4.7 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee will attend one meeting of the CHS People and Culture Committee Meetings, per year and vice versa.
- 4.8 The agenda and meeting papers are issued to members at least seven calendar days prior to the meeting, unless agreed otherwise.
- 4.9 The CHS Governance team minutes the proceedings and resolutions of all committee meetings including the names of those present and in attendance.
- 4.10 Minutes of every committee meeting are circulated to the committee for approval and approved minutes referred to the Board for noting as soon as practical.
- 4.11 The internal and external auditors attend all meetings.
- 4.12 The ARC may ask any or all of those who normally attend, but who are not members, to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of matters.
- 4.13 An Action Log is maintained to monitor progress on key issues raised at meetings.

5. Reporting

- 5.1 The Chair of the committee reports back to the Board, verbally or in writing, after each meeting. The committee takes directions from the Board on general or specific actions.
- 5.2 The ARC provides an Annual Report, timed to support preparation of the Governance Statement, summarising its conclusions from the work it has done during the year.

6. Responsibilities

The Audit Committee advises the Board and the Accountable Officer on:

- 6.1 The strategic processes for risk control and governance.
 - 6.2 Corporate and information governance arrangements.
 - 6.3 The accounting policies, the approval of the Unsigned Annual Report and Accounts following completion of the audit and Management's Letter of Representation to the external auditors.
 - 6.4 The planned activity and results of both Internal and External Audit.
 - 6.5 The adequacy of management response to issues identified by audit activity, including external audit's report to those charged with governance.
 - 6.6 The annual and longer-term operating plans for internal audit and the resourcing of the internal audit to deliver these plans.
 - 6.7 Monitoring the implementation of approved recommendations.
 - 6.8 The external audit reports and, where appropriate, reports to the Board of any issues from the external audit of CHS, and any matter that the external auditors bring to the attention of the committee.
 - 6.9 The adequacy of the arrangements for the management of CHS' compliance with legislation and regulation focusing on data security, freedom of information, health and safety and equality.
 - 6.10 Fraud and Corruption prevention policy, Whistleblowing policy, and arrangements for special investigations.
 - 6.11 Quality Strategy Monitoring.
- 7. Information Requirements**
- 7.1 Agree a work programme at the start of each financial year for the year ahead.
 - 7.2 For each meeting, the ARC is normally provided with:
 - 7.3 a report on performance relating to risk management, including a summary of any key changes to the risk register.
 - 7.4 Information Governance reports.
 - 7.5 a report from Internal Audit detailing, as appropriate:
 - 7.6 audit performed.
 - 7.7 key issues emerging from internal audit work.

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- 7.8 management responses to audit recommendations.
- 7.9 the current internal audit plan including proposed changes.
- 7.10 any issues affecting the delivery of internal audit objectives.
- 7.11 progress on the implementation of agreed recommendations.

8. As and when appropriate, the Committee:

- 8.1 Annually reviews its Terms of Reference. Proposals for amendment to the terms are submitted to the Board for formal approval.
- 8.2 Annually reviews its own effectiveness.
- 8.3 Considers the Draft Annual Report and Accounts prior to submission to the Board and reviews the compliance check list and draft Governance Statement.
- 8.4 Reviews any changes to accounting policies.
- 8.5 Reviews the Management's letter of Representation.
- 8.6 Reviews the effectiveness of CHS' financial and other control systems.
- 8.7 Monitors CHS' arrangements to secure Value for Money, whether these are made via internal or external audit or other means.
- 8.8 Monitors the effectiveness of Internal and External Audit, reviews the Internal Audit Annual Report and the ISA 260 from External Audit.
- 8.9 Alerts the Board and, where necessary, Scottish Ministers to factors which might affect the ability of CHS to conduct its statutory functions and achieve its strategic objectives.

Appendix 1 - Membership of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

Name	Term	Term	Term
	1 st Appointment	2 nd Appointment	3 rd Appointment
Sean Austin ARC Chair	06/21-06/24	07/25-06/29	
Claire Kettlewell	09/2025-09/2029		
Ronnie Corse	09/2025-09/2029		

Agenda Item 20a CHS-2526-60

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Terms of Reference 2026 (ToR)
Responsible Executive:	Jo O'Leary, Director of People and Culture
Report Author:	Jo O'Leary, Director of People and Culture

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the PaCC ToR 2026. This was presented at the PaCC meeting on 10 March and endorsed prior to Board approval.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board is asked to review the contents of the PaCC ToR and approve the document for the year 2026. The ToR was presented at the PaCC meeting on 10 March and endorsed prior to final Board approval.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	The review of the ToR is due annually in line with CHS governance arrangements.
3.2	The contents of the ToR for 2026 remain mostly unchanged from the ToR for 2025 previously approved by the committee in March 2025. There has been one minor update to section 8.13 to reflect the recent Learning Team restructure. The reference to the CHSLA report has been removed as this is no longer relevant as Learning now sits within CHS rather than external.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation. • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	No risks identified.

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6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	N/A
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – PaCC Terms of Reference

People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Terms of Reference 2026/27

1. Constitution

- 1.1 The Board of CHS hereby resolves to establish a committee of the Board to be known as the **People and Culture Committee**.

2. Membership

- 2.1 The members of the committee are appointed by the Board from its membership. There is a minimum of three members of the committee, including the Chair of the committee and the deputy Chair. Details of the current members are shown in Appendix 1.

The Board appoints one of its members to serve as the Chair of the committee. The committee determines the procedure to appoint its Deputy Chair. If the Chair of the committee is absent from the meeting, his/her Deputy chairs the meeting and assumes all the functions and authority of the Chair.

- 2.2 All members are appointed for the length of their current Board appointment which may be extended in line with any Board re-appointments. All re-appointments must be approved by the Board.
- 2.3 The Committee may appoint a substitute drawn from the membership of the Board of CHS.
- 2.4 A committee substitute may participate at a committee meeting in place of a member where a committee member:
- (a) is unavailable for a committee meeting (or any committee activity taking place other than at a meeting) because of illness, family circumstances, adverse travel conditions beyond the member's control, a requirement to attend to other urgent business; or
 - (b) has ceased to hold that office and a replacement committee member has yet to be appointed.
- 2.5 When a committee substitute attends a meeting (or other committee activity), he or she assumes the full rights of an ordinary member of the committee. In particular, the substitute can vote and is entitled to receive all committee papers.
- 2.6 The Chair of the Board is not a committee substitute.

- 2.7 The PaCC may co-opt independent members who are not members of the Board for a period (not exceeding a year) to provide specialist skills, knowledge, and experience subject to budgets agreed by the Board.

3. Authority

- 3.1 The committee is authorised by the Board to review and approve any activity within its Terms of Reference (ToR). In so doing, the committee is authorised by the Board to obtain outside legal or other independent professional advice and to secure the attendance of outsiders with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this is necessary, subject to budgets agreed by the Board.

4. Meetings and Quorum

- 4.1 The PaCC meets at least three times a year subject to the possibility of cancelling a meeting should it not be required. The Chair of the committee may convene additional meetings as he/she deems necessary. Committee meetings are held in private and may be held virtually if required.
- 4.2 The Chair of the Board may also ask the Chair of the committee to convene further meetings to discuss issues on which he/ she wants the People and Culture Committee's advice.
- 4.3 A minimum of two members of the committee must be present for the meetings to be deemed quorate. To ensure that the meeting is quorate, committee substitute(s) may be required to attend.
- 4.4 If any matter falls within the remit of more than one committee, the committees concerned may, if they wish, seek the agreement of the Board to meet jointly.
- 4.5 The People and Culture Committee may ask any other officials to attend to assist with discussions and offer expertise on a particular matter.
- 4.6 The Chair of the People and Culture Committee will attend one meeting of the CHS Audit and Risk Committee Meeting, per year and vice versa.
- 4.7 The Governance Officer will provide the PaCC with secretarial support services.
- 4.8 The agenda and meeting papers are issued to members at least seven calendar days prior to the meeting, unless agreed otherwise.
- 4.9 The Governance Officer minutes the proceedings and resolutions of all committee meetings including the names of those present and in attendance.
- 4.10 Minutes of every committee meeting are circulated to the Chair for approval and approved minutes referred to the Board for noting as soon as practical.

4.11 An Action Log is maintained to monitor progress on key issues raised at meetings.

5. Decisions and voting

5.1 Where consensus on a decision is not arrived at and a vote is necessary, members should refer to, and apply, the procedure laid out in CHS Board Standing Orders.

6. Attendance

6.1 The National Convener/Chief Executive Officer and the Director of People and Culture are required to attend each meeting.

6.2 The People and Culture Committee may require any other officials to attend to assist it with its discussions on any matter.

6.3 The committee may ask any or all of those who normally attend and who are not members of the committee, to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of matters. No attendee should be present for discussion of his/her own remuneration and conditions of service

7. Reporting

7.1 The Chair of the committee reports back to the Board, verbally or in writing, after each meeting. The committee takes directions from the Board on general or specific action it should take.

7.2 The committee reports on its activities, to the extent that it can, without breaching confidentiality, in the CHS Annual Report and Accounts.

8. Responsibilities

The committee has the following responsibilities:

8.1 Approves and reviews procedures/policies and any changes in procedure/policies for CHS colleagues for:

- the setting of performance objectives for the National Convener/ CEO.
- the appraisal of performance for CHS colleagues.
- the pay and reward structure within CHS.
- the employee life cycle process.
- and any other people strategies, policies and guidance as applicable.

8.2 Approves and reviews applicable people related procedures/policies and any changes in procedure/policies for CHS community.

- 8.3 Notes and/or approves CHS' employment policies and their revision from time to time, including the Pensions Discretionary Policy.
 - 8.4 Approves the annual pay remit for submission to the Scottish Government.
 - 8.5 Approves the recruitment/reappointment process for the NC/Chief Executive when a vacancy arises.
 - 8.6 Formulates proposals for the Chief Executive's salary progression and other aspects of their remuneration for recommendation to the Scottish Government.
 - 8.7 Notes the Remuneration report in the CHS Annual Report and Accounts and seek assurance it fulfils disclosure requirements.
 - 8.8 Considers the redundancy, early retirement or severance arrangements in respect of all CHS colleagues, excluding retirement on grounds of ill-health, and approve these or refer to CHS Board as it sees fit.
 - 8.9 Considers/approves reports on progress against the People Strategy. This will include links across other organisational strategies such as the Learning and Development Strategy, EDI Strategy etc.
 - 8.10 Approves any Employment Tribunal settlement.
 - 8.11 Engages directly with representatives of the CHS Team Forum at PaCC meetings.
 - 8.12 Where a question arises about whether a matter is within the committee's Terms of Reference, it is for the Board, after consultation with CHS Senior leadership Team as appropriate, to decide.
 - 8.13 Learning, including the annual prospectus and any monitoring performance against the Learning Strategy and Implementation Plan.
 - 8.14 Participation including any updates to the workstreams within the Children's Participation and Rights Strategy.
 - 8.15 Wellbeing including updates on the delivery and implementation of the Wellbeing and retention approach for paid colleagues, as well as volunteers, in-line with the People and Culture Strategy.
- 9. Review**
- 9.1 The committee reviews its Terms of Reference annually. Proposals for amendment to the terms are submitted to the Board for formal approval.

Chair

Date

1

Membership of the People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Committee

Name	Term	Term	Term
	1 st Appointment	2 nd Appointment	3 rd Appointment
Kathryn Docherty (Chair)	06/21- 06/25	07/25-06/29	
Barbara Neil	02/19 – 01/21	02/21 – 01/25	02/25 – 01/27
Robert Dorrian	09/25 – 08/29		

Other Attendees

Name	Designation
Jo O’Leary	Director of People and Culture
Elliot Jackson	National Convener/CEO
Katharina Kasper	CHS Chair
Frieda Cadogan	Governance Officer (note taker)

Agenda Item 21a. CHS-2526-61

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Communications and Engagement Strategy
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/Depute CEO
Report Author:	Miranda Banks, Senior Communications Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
	<p>The purpose of this report is to share the Communications and Engagement Strategy 2026-2029 for approval.</p> <p>The paper was presented at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting on 17 March for approval, prior to final Board approval. This was approved at SLT.</p>
2.	Recommendations
	<p>The Board is asked to approve the Communications and Engagement Strategy 26-29. This is an updated strategy following the arrival of our new Senior Communications Manager.</p>
3.	Key Points for Discussion
	<p>The Communication vision, goals and objectives and their alignment to CHS's strategic priorities</p>
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Develop a 5-year learning strategy to maximise learning impact across CHS • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront of what we do, and those rights are well understood by our people • Theme 2 - Valuing Our People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Implement a three-year People Strategy that attracts and retains top talent and committed individuals and drives the success and sustainability of the organisation. • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation. • Objective 3 - To become a more inclusive and diverse organisation and create a culture where everyone feels valued, included and engaged. • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities. • Theme 3 - Driving Transformation

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 - Work with partners and stakeholders to lead and influence change. • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation. • Objective 3 - We will make effective use of technology, capitalising on its potential for enhancing performance and delivering efficiency.
5.	Key Risks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of milestones is significant given the size of the team. In the event of any major pieces of unplanned work we will need to review the timings of the milestones in place
6.	Risk Register
	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage. A risk register will be done for individual communications projects
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
	An Impact assessment will be completed in due course.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
	<p>As part of the strategic planning process three planning sessions were held with the Communications team. Following this we held two workshops with 17 members of the National Team, including the Participation Team, to gather views and feedback on the Comms strategy.</p> <p>Once the final strategy is approved we will share it with the National team and Experts By Experience and meetings will be held with all teams to secure understanding and engagement. Volunteer engagement with the strategy will focus on the areas that have direct relevance to our volunteers.</p>
9.	Resource Implications
	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – CHS Communications and Engagement Strategy

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2026-2029

1. Foreword

CHS has gone through a period of significant growth and structural change and is now preparing for major reform of the children's hearings system.

As the organisation has grown so has the volume of communications and the number of different channels used. The language used by the National Team has also changed, becoming more corporate and technical in style. The result can feel overwhelming for volunteers and staff, making it difficult to distinguish between the 'need to know' and 'nice to know' information and more challenging to understand and trust the information they do engage with.

In the changing and uncertain environment ahead of us, a communications strategy that drives clear communications and engagement will be critical. It will connect our people to our strategic priorities, ensuring they understand where we are going, why it matters and the part they must play in making it happen. It will help focus efforts on the areas that will deliver the most impact and ensure people feel recognised and valued for the individual and collective improvements they are making to the children's hearings system.

Engagement will be two-way ensuring that we are listening to our volunteers, staff and experts and using their insights to shape our decisions and direction.

CHS will have a critical role in delivering the reforms needed to deliver the Promise by 2030. Communications will support this work by helping to amplify the voice of lived experience and ensure the needs of infants, children and young people are at the heart of reform.

Looking to the future, as CHS adapts to transform the hearings system, communications will play its part in reinforcing and preserving our culture and values and maintaining the commitment of our volunteers and staff.

2. Strategic alignment

CHS Purpose	Our purpose is to ensure our hearings make child-centred decisions which respect and protect children’s rights and support them to thrive.			
CHS Vision	Our vision is for all infants, children, young people and their families to be safe, loved, and supported to realise their full potential.			
Communication Vision	<p>Communications are the core of CHS, placing the voices and needs of children at the heart of everything we do</p> <p>Communications that create clarity and trust, ensuring that people feel heard, informed, valued, and connected to our strategic direction so that they are inspired to support it and empowered to lead their part in it.</p>			
Communication Themes	Inform	Engage	Empower	Influence
Communication Goals	Inspire people to join CHS, as volunteers or staff by raising awareness of CHS and the difference we make to infants, children and young people	Influence, collaborate and engage with our key stakeholders by strengthening our brand.	Connect, inform and engage our people so they are empowered and aligned with our culture and values	Build understanding and engagement around hearings system reform, empowering people to play their part in shaping and delivering change

3. Our communication principles

- **Strategic and consistent:** Every communication has a clear purpose with messaging aligned to our strategic themes, our values and our principles, ensuring consistency across all channels of communication.
- **Empowering:** Our communications help volunteers, staff and partners understand our vision, our goals and our strategic priorities and feel confident about their own role in achieving them.
- **Trauma informed:** Our language is trauma informed and we proactively seek the views of those with lived experience to inform our approach.
- **Child centered:** We put children at the heart of our communications, focusing on needs not deeds and using language that encourages understanding, respect, and support for children and families.
- **Clear and accessible:** We communicate in plain language that is inclusive, accessible and easy to understand for all our audiences and follows the guidance set out in the CHS language guide.
- **Honest and transparent:** We are open about our plans, our challenges and our decisions.
- **Evidence based:** Our communications are evidence-based and data informed.
- **Compelling storytelling:** Our content is compelling, engaging and persuasive.
- **Compliant and responsible:** We uphold the highest standards of safeguarding, consent and confidentiality in how we gather and share information and stories and we adhere to all relevant SG communications standards and policies.

4. Communications strategic goals, objectives and milestones

Goal	Objective	Difference we'll see in year 1	Difference we'll see in year 2	Difference we'll see in year 3
Inspire people to join CHS, as volunteers or staff, by raising awareness of CHS and the difference we make to infants, children and young people.	Support the recruitment of volunteers and staff through effective communications and marketing that provide a compelling case for joining CHS	A multimedia national recruitment campaign for Autumn 2026	A multimedia national recruitment campaign for Autumn 2027 Review of the design and content of adverts and recruitment materials	A multimedia national recruitment campaign for Autumn 2027
Inform Engage Empower Influence	Strengthen our brand so that it supports CHS goals by making it clear, credible, consistent and accessible	A CHS Key Message House for CHS for use by the Board, volunteers and staff Content review of social media Raise awareness of the complaints and feedback process among children, young people and families A targeted recruitment campaign for PPAs for Feb 2027	Update Message House to reflect new Strategic Outlook Tone of voice and language training for staff Content review of website to ensure it is delivering against requirements A targeted recruitment campaign for PPAs for Feb 2027 Undertake a review of CHS content to ensure staff are	Review Message House Tone of voice and language training for new staff Content review of website to ensure it is delivering against requirements A targeted recruitment campaign for PPAs for Feb 2027 Undertake a review of CHS content to ensure staff are

		<p>A recruitment campaign for our Experts By Experience Board</p> <p>Comms support around remunerated chairs if Bill goes through</p> <p>Review of recruitment content on the website</p>	<p>following brand, language and accessibility guidelines</p> <p>Assess the need for a review of our brand identity and if it is required develop a delivery plan</p>	<p>following brand, language and accessibility guidelines</p> <p>Review of our Brand (if required).</p>
<p>Connect, inform and engage our people so they are empowered and aligned with our culture and values</p> <p>Inform Engage Empower</p>	<p>A programme of clear and compelling comms and engagement that make our internal stakeholders feel valued, heard, informed, supported, and more connected and invested in the work of CHS.</p>	<p>Launch a clear and consistent process for sharing strategic messages from SLT and Board with volunteers and staff. This includes agreement on message formats and how we use our Regional Teams for comms and engagement</p> <p>Improve understanding of the communication needs of volunteers and their day to day experience of CHS comms (from strategic messages to rota comms). Use this insight to develop a Volunteer Communications Strategy that will give volunteers what</p>	<p>Review the internal communications experience for staff and develop a set of recommendations for improvement</p> <p>Comms support to strengthen the onboarding process for volunteers and staff</p> <p>Complete implementation of the changes set out in the Volunteer Communications strategy.</p> <p>Review of our approach to communicating impact and celebrating efforts and</p>	<p>Review the communications and engagement strategy</p>

		<p>they want and need, in a manageable way, increasing engagement and providing a clear route for volunteers to feedback to shape decisions and direction. This will include guidance over which channels to use, who should use them, when and how.</p> <p>Provide comms support to ensure that volunteers and staff have the information and tools they need to comply with organisational requirements and best practice.</p>	<p>achievements of volunteers and staff.</p> <p>Provide comms support to ensure that volunteers and staff have the information and tools they need to comply with organisational requirements and best practice.</p>	<p>Provide comms support to ensure that volunteers and staff have the information and tools they need to comply with organisational requirements and best practice.</p>
	Comms and engagement support to support the planning cycle for 2027-2030	Help shape and develop the Strategic Outlook 2027-30, engaging staff, volunteers and Experts By Experience.		
	Provide communications support to ensure the organisation meets its	Showcase how the voices of children and young people are influencing Practice and Policy through the design of	Showcase how the voices of children and young people are influencing Practice and Policy through the design of	Showcase how the voices of children and young people are influencing Practice and Policy through the design of

	<p>statutory reporting obligations by helping to produce, design and share required reports in a clear, accurate, and accessible way.</p>	<p>the Children's Participation and Rights Report Support the production, design and communication of the Impact report</p> <p>Create a child friendly version of the impact report</p> <p>Support the design and publication of the Annual report and Accounts</p> <p>Support the communication of the Feedback Loop Report</p> <p>Support the design and communication of the Business and Corporate Parenting Plan</p> <p>Create a child friendly version of the Business and Corporate Parenting Plan</p>	<p>the Children's Participation and Rights Report Support the production, design and communication of the Impact report</p> <p>Create a child friendly version of the impact report</p> <p>Support the design and publication of the Annual report and Accounts</p> <p>Support the communication of the Feedback Loop Report</p> <p>Support the design and communication of the Business and Corporate Parenting Plan</p> <p>Create a child friendly version of the Business and Corporate Parenting Plan</p>	<p>the Children's Participation and Rights Report Support the production, design and communication of the Impact report</p> <p>Create a child friendly version of the impact report</p> <p>Support the design and publication of the Annual report and Accounts</p> <p>Support the communication of the Feedback Loop Report</p> <p>Support the design and communication of the Business and Corporate Parenting Plan</p> <p>Create a child friendly version of the Business and Corporate Parenting Plan</p>
	<p>Strengthen the communications function, making it more strategic,</p>	<p>Communication Strategy shared with volunteers. staff and Experts By Experience</p>	<p>Communications strategy reviewed in line with the new Strategic Outlook.</p>	

	consistent, and effective	<p>Group to ensure engagement and understanding</p> <p>Conduct a comprehensive review of the organisation's existing communications policies to address any gaps</p> <p>Establish a consistent, data-driven approach to evaluating and improving communications effectiveness across CHS.</p> <p>Support Digital to improve accessibility of content on the website.</p>		
<p>Influence, collaborate and engage with our key stakeholders by strengthening our brand</p> <p><i>Inform</i> <i>Engage</i> <i>Influence</i></p>	Support CHS to influence the reform and policy landscape	<p>The Influencing and Engagement strategy is updated and shared with the National Team</p> <p>Comms support for influencing hearings reform</p>	<p>Update and deliver against the Influence and Engagement Strategy</p> <p>Comms support for influencing hearings reform</p>	<p>Update and deliver against the Influence and Engagement Strategy</p> <p>Comms support for influencing hearings reform</p>

<p>Build understanding and engagement around hearings system reform, empowering people to play their part in shaping and delivering change</p> <p><i>Inform</i> <i>Engage</i> <i>Empower</i> <i>Influence</i></p>	<p>A clear communications and engagement strategy to support hearings reform, ensuring our people are informed and engaged with the reform of children’s hearings</p>	<p>Define and deliver the communications and engagement strategy to support hearings reform</p>	<p>Deliver the communications and engagement strategy to support hearings reform</p>	<p>Deliver the communications and engagement strategy to support hearings reform</p>
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Appendix

CHS Stakeholder Mapping (Internal and External)

Internal Stakeholders

i. Board and SLT

Their comms role:

- To act as a positive ambassador for CHS and advocate on behalf of CHS, sharing organisational messages accurately and consistently
- To reinforce strategic messages among internal stakeholders
- To safeguard the reputation of CHS by providing early challenge on high level communication strategies
- Refer media/social media requests to the Communications team
- Act as a spokesperson for the organisation when required
- To ensure all comms follow brand, language and accessibility guidelines
- To ensure all comms shared with volunteers and staff adhere to comms principles and guidelines (to be developed).

What Communications will provide:

- Clear messages around strategic priorities, their rationale and how they align with our strategic themes
- The CHS Brand, Language and Accessibility Guidelines and clear set of Comms Principles
- Messaging House to enable Board members to advocate on behalf of CHS
- Media training for Board members and SLT who may be expected to represent CHS in the media
- Manage all media/social media requests on behalf of the organisation

ii. Senior Managers

Their comms role:

- To act as a positive ambassador for CHS and advocate on behalf of CHS, sharing organisational messages accurately and consistently
- To share strategic updates with their team/volunteers and invite questions and discussion to facilitate understanding and engagement
- To provide feedback from staff to support communications approach

-
- To ensure all comms shared with volunteers and staff adhere to comms principles and emerging guidelines regarding content, channels and approval process.

What Communications will provide: (in addition to the bullets in the staff section)

- Verbal and written strategic briefing from the National Convenor following Board meetings with the opportunity for questions and discussion
- Advance notice of high-level communications before they go to National Team/volunteers with Information to help support them to facilitate discussion
- Feedback mechanism for senior managers to raise questions and suggestions

iii. All staff

Their comms role:

- To act as a positive ambassador for CHS and to advocate on behalf of CHS, sharing organisational messages accurately and consistently
- To ensure all comms follow brand, language and accessibility guidelines
- To ensure all comms shared with volunteers and staff adhere to comms principles and guidelines (to be developed).
- Refer all media/social media requests to the Communications team

What Communications will provide:

- Information and communications that is easy to access and meets their needs, clearly signposting/differentiating between “need to know” and ‘nice to know”.
- The CHS Brand, Language and Accessibility Guidelines and clear set of Comms Principles
- A Message House with clear, ready to use key messages setting out CHS’s purpose and our strategic priorities
- Proactively gather and respond to feedback from staff and adapt our approach in response
- Social media guidance
- New practical guidance on content, which channels to use, frequency and approval
- Mandatory training and awareness on guidance
- Tools and Resources (branded templates, an Intranet, a simple comms planner)
- Feedback mechanism for staff to raise questions and suggestions
- Manage all media/social media requests on behalf of the organisation

iv. Volunteers (Panel Members, Panel Practice Advisers, Panel Engagement Leads, Learning Academy Facilitators, Learning Champions)

Their comms role:

- Act as a positive ambassador for CHS, sharing organisational messages accurately and consistently
- Follow agreed communication principles and guidelines (to be developed)
- To ensure all comms follow brand, language and accessibility guidelines
- Use approved channels when communicating on behalf of the organisation
- Refer all media/social media requests to the CHS Communications team, copying in their TDM

What Communications will provide:

- Communications that meet their needs, clearly signposting/differentiating between “need to know” and ‘nice to know”.
- A fully developed Community Hub to allow easy access to all their information needs
- A short accessible comms guide with comms principles and brand, language, accessibility and comms guidelines
- A Message House with clear, ready to use key messages setting out CHS’s purpose and our strategic priorities
- Branded templates
- Social media guidance
- Volunteers with enhanced roles will often need advanced sight of volunteer communications to enable them to support their discussions with volunteers
**review all of the above when developing the Internal Comms strategy*
- Manage all media/social media requests on behalf of the organisation

External stakeholders

v. Prospective volunteers and staff

What Communications will provide:

- Clear, compelling information about CHS and the role that encourages them to find out more
- Case studies and content that persuades them to apply
- Clear information about the process and how to apply
- A campaign of ongoing prospective communications to people who have expressed interest but not yet applied to keep them warm.

vi. Experts By Experience Group

Their comms role:

- Provide advice to Communications Team to ensure our comms represent the voice of children and young people appropriately
- Take part in different opportunities to drive forward improvements in practices and standards across the children’s hearings sector and within CHS.
- Act as a positive ambassador for CHS, sharing organisational messages accurately and consistently as appropriate
- Ensure all comms follow brand, language and accessibility guidelines
- Follow agreed communication principles and guidelines (to be developed)
- Refer all media/social media requests to the Communications team

What Communications will provide:

- A Message House with clear, ready to use key messages setting out CHS’s purpose and our strategic priorities
- Branded templates
- Social media guidance
- A short accessible comms guide with comms principles and brand, language, accessibility and comms guidelines

vii. Children and Families

What they need:

- Information about CHS, corporate parents, panel members, children’s hearings and UNCRC, presented using language and a format that is child-friendly.
- The voice of lived experience incorporated into our communications

viii. Partners

What they need:

- Information about CHS and its purpose
- A clear understanding of the objectives of the partnership and the actions we want it to take
- A shared, concise, clear, evidenced based narrative about the reforms we want to achieve together, explaining what needs to change, why it needs to change, what change will look like and the benefits it will bring for infants, children and young people. This should include relevant data and case studies showing the perspective of those with lived experience.

-
- Clarity over roles within the partnership
 - Consistency of language and messaging in relation to partnership communications

ix. Influencers and Decision makers

What Communications will provide:

- Information about CHS and its purpose
- Concise, clear, evidenced based narrative about the reforms we are advocating for, explaining what needs to change, why it needs to change, what change will look like and the benefits it will bring for infants, children and young people. This should include relevant data and case studies showing the perspective of those with lived experience
- A clear ask from CHS on the action we want them to take
- Verbal and written briefings from CHS at key points during the reform process

Agenda Item 22a. CHS-2526-62

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	CHS/PSIF project - evidence informed organisational evaluation and action planning
Responsible Executive:	Carol Wassel, Director of Positive Outcomes
Report Author:	Estelle Carmichael, Quality Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve phase one of introducing an adapted version of the Public Service Improvement Framework model of organisational self-evaluation (OSE).
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Board is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorse PSIF as the phase-one model for organisational self-evaluation across regional teams. • Approve the governance and resource arrangements necessary to deliver the pilot. • Support regional engagement and readiness to ensure effective implementation. <p>This initial phase will test and refine a CHS-adapted PSIF model with tribunal delivery support teams, supported by the Improvement Service. It introduces a repeatable, evidence-driven evaluation process that strengthens practice locally and allows CHS to produce its first national self-evaluation overview. Delivering this work fulfils a core commitment within the Quality Strategy and strengthens CHS's ability to support assurance and continuous improvement.</p>
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.2	Background and case for change
3.2.1	<p>CHS regions currently undertake evaluation activities with differing levels of consistency and maturity. A unified model is required to ensure comparable evidence, strengthen local reflection and action planning, and enable national aggregation of insight.</p> <p>The adapted PSIF model ensures evaluation is rights-respecting, proportionate, and focused on outcomes for children and young people, volunteers and partners. Statements have been designed with consideration of our current</p>

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	National Standards and learning from the Promise on what areas are important to measure.
3.3	Expected outputs and outcomes
3.3.1	<p>Key Outputs (2026–2027)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strengthened and aligned evidence baseline on how CHS supports high-quality hearings. • Regional PSIF self-evaluation findings and associated improvement action plans. • National thematic and trend analysis, with governance reporting. • Learning and evaluation of the PSIF model to inform future phases. <p>Expected Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased regional capability and confidence in structured evaluation and improvement. • Greater consistency and maturity in how CHS understand, analyses and improves services
3.4	Approach
3.4.1	<p>Delivery is organised around five core enablers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership, Governance and Culture • A Consistent OSE Framework and Tools • Evidence, Data and Insight • Capability, Training and an Improvement-Focused Culture • Successful Delivery of OSE Cycle
3.4.2	<p>Delivery Phases (Indicative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 (Jan–Mar): Design quality statements, readiness assessment and regional engagement. • Phase 2 (Mar–Apr): Finalise quality statements; establish minimum dataset; scheduling; awareness sessions. • Phase 3 (Apr–May): All areas will complete the self-evaluation at the same time and the PSIF team will complete an analysis across the regions. This should give us a national picture, highlighting inconsistencies. • Phase 4 (June): Agree improvement plans; commence delivery; provide coaching support. • Phase 5 (Jul–Oct): Evaluate process and outcomes; undertake national thematic analysis; agree next-phase roadmap.
3.5	Governance and roles
	The project will be delivered within existing CHS quality and programme structures.

Agenda Item 22a. CHS-2526-62

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Quality Team - will coordinate delivery, provide assurance, support regions, and lead evaluation of phase one. • A cross-cutting project team - will provide oversight and ensure alignment with wider organisational activity. • The Improvement Service - will contribute expertise on design, survey development, analysis and action planning. • Regional leads will own the delivery of their action plans ensuring findings fit local context. • Change Team – discussions are underway to explore programme office support. • Progress will be reported to the Quality Reference Group.
3.6	Measures of success
3.61	<p>Phase 1 will be assessed on the value and insight it generates, rather than the completion of milestones alone.</p> <p>Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tribunal Delivery directorate completes a PSIF cycle. • Strong attendance at required workshops and training. • Regions identify clear, evidence-based priorities. • Relevant colleagues trained in PSIF facilitation <p>Quality of Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent, high-quality self-evaluation outputs. • Effective use of quality statements and establishing minimum dataset • Timely submissions and positive participant experience. <p>Improvement Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions progressing or completed at 6 and 12 months. • Demonstrated follow-through on agreed improvements. <p>Outcome Trends and Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear cross-regional themes in experience and practice. • Trends in timeliness, decision quality and follow-through. <p>Sustainability and Assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved maturity and consistency of reporting. • OSE embedded into BAU cycles and repeatable without external support. • Reduced duplication and improved coordination. • Increased confidence in evaluation and improvement capability.
	Conclusion
	<p>The CHS–PSIF project establishes a coordinated, evidence-driven self-evaluation system that strengthens practice, improves assurance and builds a culture of continuous learning. It will offer a credible national picture of how regions support volunteers and deliver high-quality hearings for children and</p>

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	young people, while identifying opportunities for consistent improvement across Scotland.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	<p>This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Objective 3 - Upholding and promoting children's rights is at the forefront of what we do, and those rights are well understood by our people • Theme 2 - Driving Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional capacity - Variations in regional workload may affect delivery, participation, and the quality of insights generated. • Data quality - Incomplete or inconsistent data may limit the reliability of self-evaluation and insight generation. • Standards alignment - Current evaluative statements may not fully meet evaluation or insight needs during early stages of implementation. • Process uncertainty -As a Phase One project, elements of the process, including steps and timelines, may continue to evolve. • PSIF scalability - Achieving consistent application of PSIF across a nationwide, volunteer-based CHS model may be challenging
5.1.2	<p>Mitigations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness assessment- Assess regional readiness and plan tailored support before implementation begins • Phased, learning-focused approach -Use an iterative approach and evaluate outcomes at the end of Phase One • Strengthen dataset standards - Review and enhance national dataset standards to support improved consistency and usability. • Capacity building: Provide training, guidance, and peer support from the Quality Team to build capability and confidence. • Structured reporting: Maintain clear reporting processes to support oversight, identify risks early, and enable timely escalation
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage'
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	DPIA is being completed

Agenda Item 22a. CHS-2526-62

8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	Engagement has taken place through year-one Quality Strategy design and implementation activities, including targeted early discussions with the Tribunal Delivery Directorate in summer 2025. A proportionate number of volunteers will participate through the PSIF survey process
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	<p>There are significant resource implications for delivery of this pilot.</p> <p>The project will require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Team capacity to coordinate, facilitate and assure all stages of the pilot. • Project team support to manage planning, scheduling, communication and monitoring activities. • Regional colleagues' time to participate in self-evaluation sessions, workshops and surveys. <p>These demands will need to be factored into existing workloads and programme commitments to ensure successful delivery</p>
10.	Appendices
	<i>Appendix 1 - Intro to PSIF</i>

Introduction to the Public Service Improvement Framework



What is it?

The Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) is a self-assessment approach to support improvement in organisations, using a comprehensive review of their own activities and results. It promotes a robust approach to continuous improvement and is mapped to a number of established organisational improvement tools.

The PSIF checklist provides a framework of statements to challenge existing performance through a structured process, which is developed to suit organisational needs and drivers. The standard PSIF statements can be adapted for use at a service, corporate or organisational level to support continuous improvement.



Who uses PSIF?

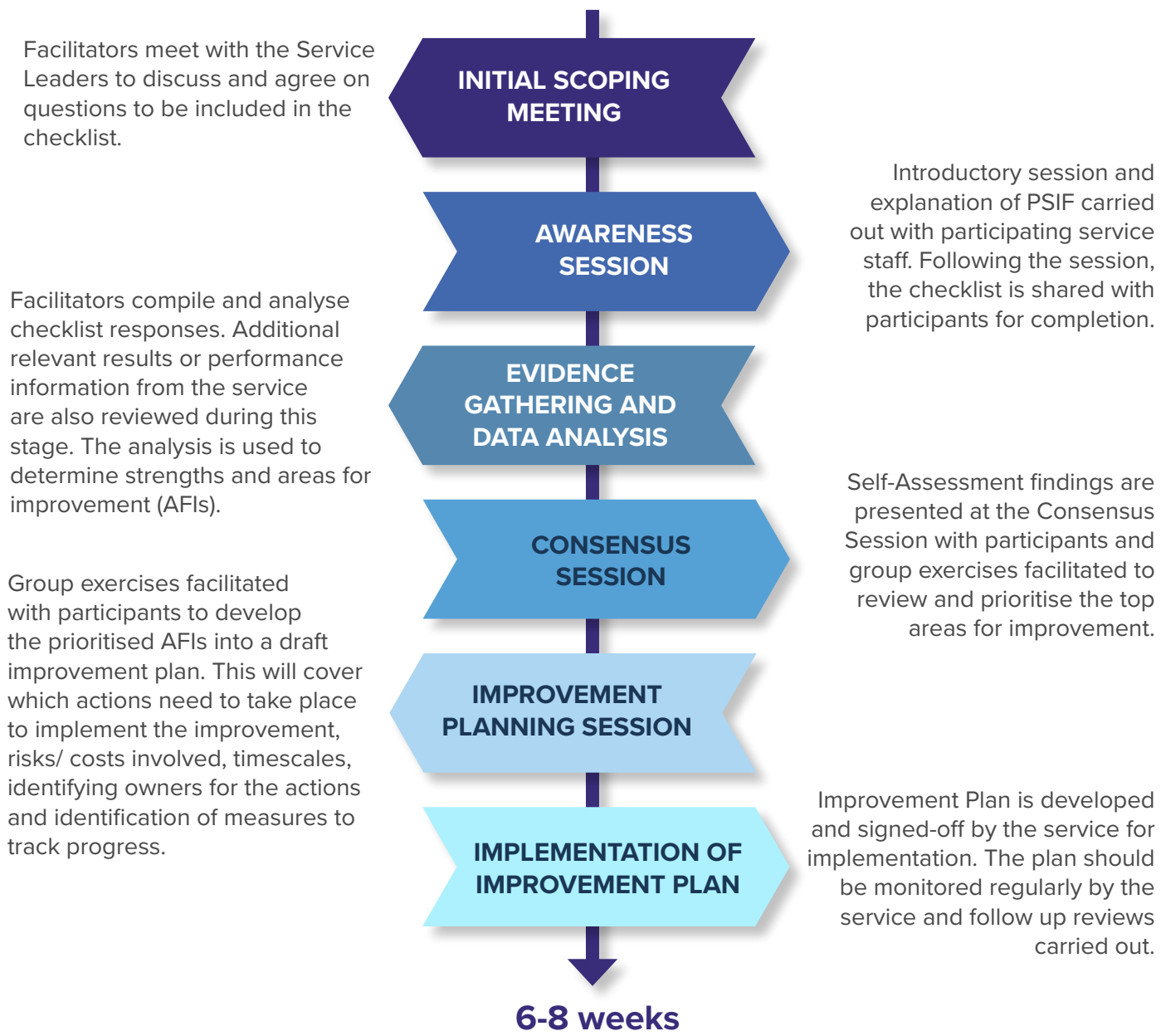
PSIF is currently the most utilised self-assessment approach within Scottish Local Government with the majority of local authorities using the approach to varying degrees. As well as local authorities, PSIF has been adapted over the years to support a wide range of public sector organisations. In recent years, Integration Joint Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and others have all used the framework to support improvement within their organisations.

In 2024, PSIF was the framework behind the first National Community Planning Self-Assessment. Over 240 strategic board members took part in the self-assessment, representing 20 Community Planning Partnerships.





The PSIF Process



Support with PSIF

The Improvement Service provide a wide range of support for implementing the framework. This includes training and facilitation support, sharing of learning through various channels, facilitating networking across the PSIF community and an annual learning event for those who use the framework.

If you are interested in PSIF and would like more information or to discuss its use within your organisation, please contact Thomas Boyle (PSIF Programme Manager), thomas.boyle@improvementservice.org.uk



PSIF

Agenda Item 23a. CHS-2526-63

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	25 March 2026
Title:	Digital Priorities 2026/27
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/Depute Chief Executive
Report Author:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/Deputy Chief Executive
1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to approve the CHS Digital Priorities for 2026/27. The report was presented at the Senior Leadership Team meeting on 17 March and endorsed for final Board approval.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The Board are asked to approve the CHS Digital Priorities 2026/27
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	CHS are in a period of transformational legislative and non-legislative reform which will be understood in detail through 2026/27. This document therefore focusses on single year priorities for 2026-27 to enable development of a longer-term strategy aligned to reform; the new CHS Data Strategy, and CHS' longer term strategic outlook, which will all be developed in 2026/27.
3.2	The priorities are aligned to CHS' Strategic Outlook 2024 – 27 and reflects the significant engagement through 2025/26 with SCRA which enabled an agreed approach to 'rebalancing' and the use of CSAS and @chscotland tenancy moving forward.
3.3	A separate Data Strategy is in development and work will be undertaken through 2026/27 to ensure the digital and data strategies are aligned and implementation plans captured appropriately.
4.	Key Risks
4.1	The strategy is dependent on identification of appropriate leaderships and resources, and these will be determined once the impact of legislative reform has been identified. The 2026/27 captured a requirement for Digital/Data resourcing.
5.	Risk Register
5.1	No update to the risk register required
6.	Impact on Inequality/Rights

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6.1	Impact Assessment Screening Tool Form 1 has been completed, and the following Impact Assessments have been undertaken and are saved on file: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection • Childrens Rights
7.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
7.1	The priorities have been developed following extensive engagement with SCRA in 2025/26. The direction of travel has been endorsed by the Board (January 2026). The CHS digital team have had the opportunity to review and input into the strategy.
8.	Resource Implications
8.1	Review of resource requirements will take place in 2026/27 and the budget reflects a requirement for Digital leadership and investment to support data strategy implementation.
9.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – Digital Priorities 2026/27

CHS Digital Priorities 2026 - 2027

Foreword

CHS are in a period of transformational legislative and non-legislative reform which will be understood in detail through 2026/27. This priority document therefore focusses on single year activity in 2026-27 to enable development of a longer-term strategy aligned to reform; the new CHS Data Strategy, and CHS' longer term strategic outlook, which will all be developed in 2026/27.

The digital landscape is evolving and continually transforms the potential for how organisations work. As we look to the future, our digital journey must accelerate to enable CHS to fulfil its statutory functions; take forward reforms to meet the needs of the Promise, providing systems and tools that enable life-changing decisions for children every day through the Children's Hearings System. We are committed to building a resilient, user-centred, and innovative digital organisation. The priorities for 2026/27 outlines how we are developing our capabilities, strengthening our infrastructure, and leveraging both data and artificial intelligence to build strong foundations that better serve our stakeholders and deliver reform. Our focus will be on achieving Best Value, in line with expectations of Public Service Reform.

Successful digital transformation requires more than technological investment, it requires understanding of stakeholder needs, streamlined organisational processes, and a focus on creating integrated platforms that facilitate engagement, learning, and preparation. These priorities address the foundations of these dimensions through a user centred approach which continues to build organisational capability and value.

Strategic Alignment

This single year digital priorities are aligned with the Children's Hearings Scotland Strategic Outlook 2024 – 2027:

Our **purpose** is to ensure our hearings make child-centred decisions which respect and protect children's rights and support them to thrive.

Our **vision** is for all infants, children, young people and their families to be safe, loved, and supported to realise their full potential.

Our **Strategic themes**:



Our **priorities** in 2026/27:

Strengthen leadership capability/capacity
Delivering innovation in learning

Shaping our digital future
Planning for reform

Our Aims 2026/27

1. Invest in Digital Architecture that provides flexible, cost-effective foundations for future reforms

We will strengthen our digital infrastructure to support the effective implementation of reforms:

- We will continue to develop CSAS, the data platform we share with SCRA to consolidating this as our core data centre for hearings information.
- We will further develop our @chscotland tenancy to maximise potential for cost effective and flexible development more closely connected to CSAS services and our core data centre.
- We will strengthen security and compliance of our @chscotland platform to enable us to transfer digital information between our systems, to ensure our data is accurate and easy to use and analyse.
- We will work with Learning colleagues to identify the technology and systems we need to put in place to meet our digital learning ambitions

2. Embrace new technology to enable Insight, Innovation, and Efficiency

Aligned to the CHS Data Strategy (in development), we will transform how we use data and artificial intelligence tools and machine learning to drive evidence-based decision-making, improve services and efficiency by:

- Working with SCRA to widen and maximise CHS access to hearings system data that will enable us to drive improvement and efficiency
- Utilising people skills and technological tools to analyse CHS core hearings data to drive improvement and efficiency.
- Exploring use of AI tools and Machine Learning to support Quality Assurance and process driven operational activity i.e Rota Management
- Exploring use of AI tools such as Co-pilot to drive business efficiency
- Exploring AI-powered support to provide 24/7 assistance while reducing staff workload

3. Build Strategic Digital Capacity

We will develop the organisational capabilities needed to deliver effective digital services and manage our own platforms by:

- Building Digital Leadership and resources required to meet current and future digital and data requirements.
- Continuing to build skills and processes that support compliance such as ISO27001
- Establishing robust product management frameworks aligned with government digital standards
- Building user research and engagement capabilities

4. Continue to develop our digital offer to staff and volunteers

Drive security, efficiency and improvement through provision of hardware and software that meets user needs:

- Work with ITECs to maximise use of SCOTs available tools to drive National Team efficiency
- Expand Windows device offer to CHS community, enabling inclusive secure, user friendly, access to CHS systems and driving efficiency through centralised security and controls.
- Enable a pipeline of continuous improvement of CHS digital services based on user feedback

5. Strengthen Governance, Security and Support

We will enhance our ability to protect information assets and support users while optimising resources:

- Achieving ISO27001 certification by strengthening our ability to keep systems and data safe in a structured, organised way.
- Implementing comprehensive automated device management across Windows devices
- Building internal capabilities to support and manage our connected system of Microsoft tools
- Creating automated workflows for common support tasks and device custody changes
- Aligned to the Strategic Planning and Delivery function, review current governance approaches and develop proportionate, business integrated governance structures for technology, data, and AI oversight

6. Create a Digital Strategy Fit for a transformed Hearings System

Develop a Digital Strategy aligned to CHS Strategic outlook from 2027 onwards that will enable CHS to deliver against required reforms utilising transformational tools and technology that will derive Best Value for the hearings system:

- Considering Digital Leadership and resources required to meet current and future digital and data requirements.
- Work with SCRA and Hearing System Partners to identify opportunities for joint strategic planning and development to maximise ROI and impact of reforms

Our Principles

Our digital priorities are guided by five high-level, core principles that shape our approach and decision-making:

FIRST, DO NO HARM

- We ensure that any digital changes or implementations protect the integrity of the Children's Hearings System and never compromise CHS' staff and community ability to fulfil their vital role. We will carefully assess potential impacts before making changes, prioritising continuity of essential services and volunteer support.

USER-CENTRED DESIGN

- We place users at the heart of everything we do, designing services based on genuine understanding of user needs and continuously improving them based on user feedback.

SECURITY BY DESIGN

- We embed security considerations from the start of any digital initiative, ensuring that protecting information and maintaining privacy are fundamental aspects of our approach.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

- We make decisions based on evidence and insights derived from data, building the capabilities to collect, analyse, and act on data responsibly.

SUSTAINABLE CAPABILITY BUILDING

- We focus not just on implementing technologies but on building the skills, processes, and culture needed to sustain digital transformation for the long term.

These principles will guide our implementation approach, helping us make consistent decisions aligned with our strategic direction.