

CHS Public Board Meeting

Wednesday 23 September 2026, 10:00 - 12:00

Rossie Trust, Montrose

Agenda

10:00 - 10:00

0 min

1. Welcome and Apologies

katharina Kasper

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

10:00 - 10:05

5 min

2. Declarations of Interest

Katharina Kasper

To update

10:05 - 10:10

5 min

3. Approval of the Minute from the meeting on 17 June 2026

Katharina Kasper

To approve

 3. CHS-2627-13 CHS Board DRAFT Minute 17.06.26.pdf (9 pages)

10:10 - 10:15

5 min

4. Action Log Update

Katharina Kasper

To update

 4. CHS-2627-14 Board Action Log - JUNE 2026.pdf (1 pages)

10:15 - 10:25

10 min

5. Chair Update

Katharina Kasper

To update

10:25 - 10:35

10 min

6. Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair Update

sean Austin

To update - verbal

10:35 - 10:45

10 min

7. People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Chair Update

katie

To update - verbal

10:45 - 10:55

10 min

8. National Convener/CEO Update

Elliot Jackson

To update

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

10:55 - 11:00 **9. Finance Report - P3 2026/27**

5 min

Lynne Harrison

To approve

 9. CHS-2627-16 Finance Report P3 2026-27.pdf (3 pages)

11:00 - 11:05 **10. 5 Year Financial Plan**

5 min

Lynne Harrison

To approve

 10. CHS-2627-17 CHS Five Year Financial Five Plan DRAFT.pdf (6 pages)

11:05 - 11:10 **11. Feedback Loop 2025-26**

5 min

Elliot Jackson

To approve

 11a. CHS-2627-18 Feedback Loop Report 25-26 cover report.pdf (2 pages)

 11b. CHS-2627-18 Appendix 1 - Feedback Loop 25-26.pdf (13 pages)

11:10 - 11:15 **12. Impact Report 2025-26**

5 min

Elliot Jackson

To approve

 12a. CHSP-2627-19 Impact Report Cover Paper.pdf (2 pages)

 12b. CHS-2627-19 Appendix 1 CHS Impact Report 2025-26.pdf (31 pages)

11:15 - 11:20 **13. Involving our lived experience Experts in organisational decision making at CHS**

5 min

Elliot Jackson

To approve

 13. CHS-2627-20 Involving Experts in organisational decision making at CHS.pdf (8 pages)

ITEMS FOR UPDATE

11:20 - 11:25 **14. Q1 Performance Report**

5 min

Lynne Harrison

To update

 14a. CHS-2627-21 Performance Report Q1 2026-27 final.pdf (4 pages)

 14b. CHS-2627-21 Appendix 1 - Q1 Performance Report DRAFT.pdf (3 pages)

 14c. CHS-2627-21 Appendix 2 - Q1 KPIs _DRAFT.pdf (3 pages)

11:25 - 11:30 **15. Q1 Data Summary Report**

5 min

Lynne Harrison

To update

 15a. CHS-2627-22 Q1 CHS Data Summary Report.pdf (4 pages)

 15b. CHS-2627-22 Appendix 1 Q1 Data Summary.pdf (1 pages)

11:30 - 11:35 16. Wellbeing Report and Retention Plan

5 min

Joanne O'Leary

To update

 16. CHS-2627-23 Wellbeing & Retention Update.pdf (6 pages)

11:35 - 11:40 17. Retention Operational Plan

5 min

Joanne O'leary

To update

 17. CHS-2627-24 Retention Operational Plan.pdf (8 pages)

11:40 - 11:45 18. CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Phase 1 - Organisational Self-evaluation

5 min

Stuart Lamberton

To update

 18. CHS-2627-25 CHS PSIF Phase 1 Organisational Self-evaluation.pdf (4 pages)

11:45 - 11:50 19. Quality Strategy Update and Thematic Observations Report

5 min

Lynne Harrison

To update

 19a. CHS-2627-26 Quality Strategy Update and Thematic Observations Report.pdf (5 pages)

 19b. CHS-2627-26 Appendix 1 - Midpoint Quality Update.pdf (2 pages)

 19c. CHS-2627-26 Appendix 2 - Snapshot Analysis Report.pdf (19 pages)

ITEMS FOR NOTING

11:50 - 11:55 20. Resourcing Hearing System Redesign

5 min

Lynne Harrison

To Note

 20. CHS-2627-27 CHS Approach to Redesign Board Report final.pdf (5 pages)

11:55 - 11:55 21. Independent Report Writers (IRW) Annual Report

0 min

Elliot Jackson

To note

 21a. CHS-2627-28 IRW Annual Report Cover Paper.pdf (2 pages)

 21b. CHS-2627-28 Appendix 1 - IRW annual report 2025-2026.pdf (15 pages)

11:55 - 12:00 22. AOB

5 min

Katharina Kasper

To update

12:00 - 12:00

0 min

23. Date of Next Meeting

Katharina Kasper

To update

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

BOARD MEETING
Wednesday 23 September 2026
10.00am – 12.00pm, Rossie Young People's Trust, Montrose, Angus, DD10 9TW
AGENDA

	Timings	Item	Lead	Paper Ref	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 17 June 2026	Chair	CHS-2627-13	To approve
4.	10:10	Action Log Update	Chair	CHS-2627-14	To update
5.	10:15	Chair Update	Chair	verbal	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-2627-15	To update
ITEMS FOR APPROVAL					
9.	10:55	Finance Report – P3 2026/27	LH	CHS-2627-16	To approve
10.	11:00	5 Year Financial Plan	LH	CHS-2627-17	To approve
11.	11:05	Feedback Loop	EJ	CHS-2627-18	To approve
12.	11:10	Impact Report 2025-26	EJ	CHS-2627-19	To approve
13.	11:15	Involving our lived experience Experts in organisational decision making at Children's Hearings Scotland	EJ	CHS-2627-20	To approve
ITEMS FOR UPDATE					
14.	11:20	Q1 Performance Report	LH	CHS-2627-21	To update
15.	11:25	Q1 Data Summary Report	LH	CHS-2627-22	To update
16.	11:30	Wellbeing Report and Retention Plan	JO	CHS-2627-23	To update
17.	11:35	Retention Operational Plan	JO	CHS-2627-24	To update
18.	11:40	CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Phase 1 – Organisational Self-evaluation	SL	CHS-2627-25	To update
19.	11:45	Quality Strategy Update and Thematic Observations Report	LH	CHS-2627-26	To update
ITEMS FOR NOTING					
20	11:50	Resourcing Hearing System Redesign	LH	CHS-2627-27	To note
21.	11:55	Independent Report Writers (IRW) Annual Report	EJ	CHS-2627-28	To note
22.	11:55	AOB	Chair	verbal	To update

23.	12:00	Date of Next Meeting			
		2 December 2026, 10am – 12pm, Conference Room 2, Thistle House, Edinburgh			

Agenda Item 3. CHS-2627-13

Board Meeting
17 June 2026, Thistle House, Edinburgh 10:00 – 12:00

DRAFT MINUTE

	Katharina Kasper (KK)	Board Chair
Present	Sean Austin (SA) (Chair)	Depute Board Chair/ARC Chair
	Katie Docherty (KD)	Board Member/PaCC Chair
	Barbara Neil (BN)	Board Member
	Claire Kettlewell (CK)	Board Member
	Ronnie Corse (RC)	Board Member
	Robert Dorrian (RD)	Board Member
In Attendance:	Elliot Jackson (EJ)	CEO/National Convener, CHS
	Lynne Harrison (LH)	Director of Business and Finance/Depute CEO, CHS
	Joanne O’Leary (JO)	Director of People and Culture, CHS
	Stuart Lamberton (SL)	Director of Tribunal Delivery, CHS
	Taiba Ali (TA)	Legislation and Policy Leader, Children’s Hearings Sponsor Team, Scottish Government
	Frieda Cadogan (FC)	Governance Officer, CHS (Note Taker)
	Gemma Ferrie (GF)	CHS Expert by Experience (Observer)
	Angela Phillips (AF)	Participation Coordinator (Observer)
Apologies:	Carol Wassell (CW)	Director of Positive Outcomes, CHS
	Nick Rougvie (NR)	Sponsor Team Lead, Scottish Government

	Item	Decisions Taken
1.	Welcome & Apologies	
	- Apologies were received from NR and CW. - It was noted that SA would join the meeting later. - The Board welcomed Gemma Ferrie and AP as observers. - The Board welcomed Stuart Lamberton to his first Board meeting following his appointment as Director of Tribunal Delivery.	
2.	Declaration of Interests	
	No declarations of interest were made	
3.	Approval of the Minute from the Meeting on 25 March 2026	
	- The minute of the meeting held on 25 March 2026 was approved as an accurate record, subject to an amendment requested by RD. - The amendment related to page 2, fifth bullet point, should read ‘Deputy Chief Executive’.	The Board approved the minute subject to the amendment noted.
4.	Action Log Update	
	- The Board considered the action log and noted that the actions from the March 2026 meeting had largely been completed. - The CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework action remained in progress. It was noted that CHS had engaged the Improvement Service to support an evidence-based framework, using Tribunal Delivery to assess organisational performance and inform improvement planning.	

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	Initial results from the staff and community survey had been received, identifying four areas for improvement. The work will be brought back to the Board in September 2026.	FC
5.	Chair Update	
	- KK provided an update following the election period, noting that activity had been quieter during that time. - The Board noted that a meeting with the new Minister was scheduled for 25 June 2026 and that discussions from the Board meeting would inform that engagement. - KK reported that a meeting had taken place with Deputy Director Brian Taylor, and that the new Minister was enthusiastic about establishing relationships. - The Board discussed the opportunity to refresh relationships, build momentum and secure greater clarity on direction of travel in relation to reform and Public Service Reform over the coming months.	The Board noted the update.
6.	Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Chair Update	
	- SA provided an update from the Audit and Risk Committee. - The Board noted key matters considered by the Committee. - SA advised that correspondence had been issued to the Auditor General to express concern regarding the lack of continuity in the external audit lead. The response confirmed that the supporting audit team would remain the same and that arrangements would be put in place to support the new audit lead.	The Board noted the update.
7.	People and Culture Committee (PaCC) Chair Update	
	- KD provided an update from the People and Culture Committee. - The Board noted that the People Strategy remained on track, with priorities for the next 12 months aligned to Public Service Reform, reform activity and strategic planning. - The Committee had reviewed the Children's Participation and Rights Strategy Annual Update and noted the impact of the Experts by Experience group on recruitment, policy development and wider strategic decision making. Strong retention within the group was recognised, with plans to increase membership. - The Learning Strategy had moved into a new phase, with a focus on embedding new ways of working and digital development. - The Committee noted progress in the Health and Safety framework and approved the direction of travel for the Reasonable Adjustments Policy. - The Domestic Abuse Policy was approved by the Committee. - The Board noted the positive Team Forum update and the continued role of employee voice in improving connection across CHS. - SA, having attended the Committee, commended the quality and breadth of work across the people agenda, particularly the work with Experts by Experience. - FC will circulate the dates of the committees to other Board members, following an invitation from the committee chairs to attend any future meetings. - The Board thanked the Committee Chairs for their contribution.	The Board noted the update. FC
8.	National Convener/CEO Update	

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	• EJ introduced the paper and provided an update to the Board. • The Board welcomed Stuart Lamberton to CHS as Director of Tribunal Delivery. It was noted that his appointment comes at a critical time for CHS as the organisation moves further into reform planning and delivery. • EJ highlighted the secure care consultation response. The Board discussed the importance of learning directly from those with lived experience of secure care and noted that the Scottish Government response was expected in August 2026. • The Board noted that EJ and KK were working with Kevin Northcott from Rossie. A future Board visit to Rossie was proposed to support members' understanding of secure care. • EJ provided feedback from the Public Service Reform session attended by public sector leaders. The Board noted the strong ministerial messages on pace, simplification, fiscal challenge, working beyond organisational boundaries and the need to think differently about service delivery. • The Board discussed the relevance of Public Service Reform to CHS, including the opportunity to align reform and redesign work, use data and digital tools more effectively, and ensure that children, young people and families remain at the centre of any future operating model. • Members discussed the need for CHS to be clear and early in identifying any additional resource requirements arising from reform, while also recognising the wider financial context and expectations on public bodies. • The Board noted that, while CHS has statutory functions, the organisation is not insulated from Public Service Reform expectations and should use the reform agenda to focus on improving outcomes for children and families.	The Board noted the update.
9.	2025/2026 Data Summary Report	
	• LH presented the Annual Data Summary Report for noting. • The Board noted that community capacity was currently on track to support implementation of the Care and Justice Act. This was consistent with the attached Annual Data Report, which confirmed that the Panel Member forecast remained on track, subject to recruitment intake, implementation timelines and forecast assumptions. • The Board discussed the need to continue monitoring volunteer capacity carefully, recognising that capacity remained a strategic risk. This reflected the attached report's emphasis on monitoring recruitment, ends of service, unavailable rates, rota optimisation and future demand. • The Board discussed Panel Member retention and the impact of a high reappointment year. The attached report recorded Panel Member retention at 81.9%, below the 85% KPI, and noted that the high number of Panel Members due for reappointment had affected the number leaving service. • The Board noted that reappointment also provided an opportunity to remove inactive Panel Members from the system. This was linked to the	The Board noted the report.

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	attached report's analysis of reappointment trends and the proportion of Panel Members due for reappointment who were reappointed. • The Board discussed the pathway to chairing, including confidence, experience, support from experienced Panel Members, rota visibility, hearing cancellations and the time between becoming Chair-qualified and chairing a first hearing. The attached report noted that active eligible Chairs exceeded the 75% KPI, while also highlighting that the number of qualified Chairs did not directly translate into the number actively chairing hearing slots. • The Board discussed the impact of embedding chairing within pre-service training. The attached report noted that the impact of incorporating Chair training into pre-service was not yet fully realised and that it continued to take time for many Panel Members to become Chair-qualified and then chair their first slot. • The Board discussed retention during pre-service, the move to seven-day pre-service training and the opportunity to digitise elements of training to improve sustainability and trainee experience. The attached report noted that appointment rates from those recommended had decreased and that the team was considering digitisation and support to reduce the time commitment. • The Board noted the need for future KPIs to be more meaningful. This aligned with the attached report's proposed 2026/27 KPIs, including measures on Chair training, time to become Chair-qualified, time from Chair qualification to chairing, the number of Panel Members actively chairing, recruitment, PPA retention, PPA reappointment and observations. • Members discussed the need to continue careful management of assumptions, volunteer capacity, broader social and demographic factors and the connection to Public Service Reform and potential austerity pressures. • It was suggested that future learning could consider technology, AI and virtual reality, including role play, to support confidence and development.	Action: A future paper on chairing, including the issues raised by Board members, to be brought to the September or December 2026 Board meeting.
10.	CHS Data Strategy	
	• LH presented the CHS Data Strategy for noting. • The Board noted that the strategy aligned with the Board's ambition for CHS to become more data mature and more data informed. This reflected the attached Data Strategy, which set out a vision for staff to have access to high-quality data and the skills to use data confidently to inform decisions, evidence change and improve experiences for volunteers and children. • The Board noted that recent digital investment and the rebalancing work with SCRA had enabled CHS to move towards autonomous access to its data. This was consistent with the attached Data Strategy's focus on improving access to CHS data in CSAS and strengthening data infrastructure. • Members welcomed the progress made, describing it as a significant shift in CHS's data position and relationship with SCRA.	The Board noted the paper.

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	• The Board discussed the importance of developing more meaningful KPIs, including input, process and outcome measures. This aligned with the attached Data Strategy's focus on using data to improve CHS's work and developing trusted insights for decision making. • The Board discussed the need to build organisational data capability and confidence. This reflected the attached Data Strategy's principle on developing data skills, confidence and culture across CHS. • The Board discussed the need to consider specialist resource requirements to deliver the strategy effectively. This was consistent with the attached Data Strategy's identification of potential specialist resource needs in data governance, analysis, engineering and data literacy. • The Board emphasised that the strategy should support improved outcomes for children and young people, not just improved organisational reporting. • The Board expressed appreciation for the work undertaken and indicated support for appropriate future resource in this area.	
11.	Volunteer Workforce Sustainability and Recruitment Update	
	• JO introduced the update, highlighting work undertaken over the previous year and the contribution of Experts by Experience to recruitment planning and improvement activity. This reflected the attached paper's emphasis on lived experience and the voice of children and young people being central to the 2026 campaign. • The Board discussed workforce capacity planning in the context of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) Act and wider reform requirements, including whether recruitment in 2027 may be required. This was consistent with the attached paper's focus on future workforce scenarios, reform readiness and whether the 2026 campaign may provide sufficient resilience. • The Board noted planned improvements to reduce timescales within the pre-appointment process and between appointment and achieving active Panel Member status. This aligned with the attached paper's focus on improving the pre-appointment process and reducing the time to active Panel Member status. • Digital improvements to the candidate experience and applicant tracking journey were discussed. This reflected the attached paper's reference to developments in the digital recruitment applicant tracking system to improve application management, candidate communication and recruitment efficiency. • Members discussed the importance of data insight to workforce planning, attrition, recruitment targets, potential over-recruitment, regional capacity, cost implications, trainee support and the effect on existing Panel Members. This aligned with the attached paper's emphasis on using workforce planning data, trainee withdrawal data, volunteer attrition and projected service demand to inform recruitment assumptions.	The Board noted the update. Action: Options for future recruitment approaches, including assessment methods, to be developed for consideration.

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	- The Board discussed whether psychometric tools, assessment centres or other methods could support recruitment, retention and the development of an effective Panel Member profile. - JO confirmed that a range of options would be considered and brought together in an options paper.	
12.	Serious Case Learning Review	
	- EJ introduced the paper following publication of the Family C Learning Review in May 2026. - The Board discussed the serious and distressing nature of the case and the system-wide learning identified. This reflected the attached paper's summary of the review's findings and its thirteen multi-agency recommendations. - The Board discussed the delay in progressing the referral to a hearing and the need for joint learning with SCRA. This aligned with the attached paper's finding that a referral should have been concluded within 50 days but took 111 days, and that CHS would agree learning points with SCRA through existing partnership structures. - The Board noted that Panel Member decision making had not been identified as the source of failure and that, once a hearing was convened, legal measures protected the children from further harm. This reflected the attached paper's position that the hearing system was effective once engaged. - Members reflected on the need to address drift and delay, case grip, data, escalation routes, continuity and the need to prevent children and young people being retraumatised through repeated hearings. This was consistent with the attached paper's focus on referrals, the voice of the child, cumulative neglect, scrutiny and learning. - The Board discussed CHS's lack of formal role in learning reviews and agreed that this appeared to be a weakness in the current system. This aligned with the attached paper's section on inspection, scrutiny and learning, which noted that CHS does not have a formal role in learning reviews and should establish stronger communication channels in scrutiny functions. - The Board discussed whether technology could support the identification of patterns, red flags and complex risk information, enabling earlier intervention and stronger accountability. - The Board noted that a risk would be added to the Strategic Risk Register in relation to learning from Learning Reviews as an opportunity for organisational learning to help keep children safe. This reflected the risk register recommendation in the attached paper. - It was noted that CHS was reaching out to Panel Members involved in the case to offer emotional support. This was consistent with the attached paper's focus on vicarious trauma and the need for appropriate wellbeing support in hearings involving significant child harm. - The Board recorded thanks to Stephen Bermingham for the work undertaken on the report.	The Board noted the paper and endorsed the need for CHS to take learning forward with partners. Action: EJ to ask Stephen Bermingham to explore how learning from the review is incorporated by safeguarders and Independent Report Writers.

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	CK asked how learning from the review would be incorporated by safeguarders and Independent Report Writers. EJ agreed this should be followed up with Stephen Bermingham.	
13.	Children's Rights	
13.1	Children's Participation and Rights Strategy - Annual Update	
	- EJ presented the update on behalf of CW. - The Board noted that both the Children's Participation and Rights Strategy Annual Update and the Progressing Children's Rights Report had been reviewed by PaCC. - The Board recognised the significant impact of Experts by Experience on policy, recruitment, Board discussions and strategic decision making. This reflected the attached annual update's emphasis on embedding the voice of lived experience in organisational decision making. - The Board noted the growing reach of the Experts by Experience group across CHS and partner organisations, including SCRA, and the positive impact on recruitment materials and organisational practice. This was consistent with the attached annual review's examples of Expert involvement in recruitment, regional learning, policy work, quality activity and partnership with Our Hearings Our Voice. - The Board noted the intention to increase Expert numbers. This reflected the attached update's plan to recruit up to ten additional Experts, targeting the 14 to 18 age group, to increase capacity and ensure more recent hearing experience was represented. - The Board noted future priorities around participation in redesign. This aligned with the attached Three Pillars Implementation Plan for 2026/27, which focuses on children's hearings redesign, strengthening connections and opportunities within CHS for those with lived experience, and influencing Panel Community knowledge and behaviour.	The Board noted the update paper.
13.2	Progressing Children's Rights Report	
	- EJ introduced the Progressing Children's Rights Report, noting that the report is produced every three years and demonstrates significant progress since the previous reporting period. This reflected the attached paper, which set out CHS's statutory reporting duties under the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. - The Board noted that the report evidenced how CHS had further embedded children's rights across the organisation, including progress on previous commitments, action taken during the reporting period and future improvement activity. - The Board noted that alongside the main report, an executive summary and child-friendly version would be produced and published in September 2026 following submission to Scottish Ministers. This reflected the attached Board paper's planned publication approach. - The Board noted the contribution of Experts by Experience, including work with The Stand, input to recruitment, influence on the Children's Rights Report and their role in strengthening accountability and rights-based practice. This aligned with the attached report's sections on participation, recruitment and engagement with Experts.	The Board approved the report for publication, subject to finalisation of the executive summary and child-friendly version. Action: CHS to consider how best to celebrate, share and operationalise the learning from the report

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	- The Board discussed the value of the report as a comprehensive appraisal of CHS's work and as a tool for continuing the conversation on how children's rights are upheld across CHS. - Members commended the quality of the reports and discussed how the work could be celebrated and shared with partners, including through Town Hall sessions, conferences, awards activity and wider public and third sector networks. - GF reflected positively on the Experts by Experience journey and highlighted the opportunity to influence pre-service training and gather evidence through questions to trainees. This was consistent with the attached report's focus on Expert involvement in training, recruitment and future improvement activity - The Board congratulated AP and the Participation Team for the quality and reach of the work, including links to Human Resources, Scottish Government and public appointments	with partners and wider audiences.
14.	Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Annual Report	
	- The Board considered the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2025/26. - The Board noted that the report had been endorsed by ARC on 26 May 2026 and covered the work of the Committee from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. - The Board noted that the Committee had met its Terms of Reference during the reporting period. This reflected the attached report's summary of meeting attendance, workplan delivery and Committee effectiveness.	The Board approved the report.
15.	PaCC Annual Report	
	- The Board considered the People and Culture Committee Annual Report 2025/26. - The Board noted that the report had been endorsed by PaCC on 2 June 2026 and covered the work of the Committee from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. - The Board noted that the Committee had met its Terms of Reference during the reporting period. This reflected the attached report's summary of Committee attendance, workplan activity, policy approvals, people strategy oversight and Committee effectiveness.	The Board approved the report.
16.	2025-2026 Annual Accounts Governance Statement	
	- LH introduced the Governance Statement, noting that it would form part of the 2025/26 Annual Accounts to be presented in September 2026. - The Board noted the audit timetable. This reflected the attached cover paper, which set out key dates including ARC consideration in August 2026 and Board approval and signing on 23 September 2026. - The Board reviewed the draft Governance Statement for inclusion in the 2025/26 Accounts. This reflected the attached Governance Statement's summary of the Accountable Officer's responsibilities, CHS governance framework, Board and Committee arrangements and internal control assurance. - The Board noted the Governance Statement conclusion that CHS had effective corporate governance arrangements in place.	The Board approved the document.
17.	AOB	

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	- The Board noted the letter sent to the Minister congratulating her on her appointment. - The Board noted that the Minister wished to hold an early meeting with the Board, potentially in October 2026. EJ and TA were progressing arrangements.	EJ and TA to progress arrangements for an early meeting between the Minister and the Board.
18.	Date of Next Meeting	
	23 September 2026, 10AM -12 PM, conference Room 2, Thistle House, Edinburgh Montrose.	

CHS Board Meeting Action Log



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

Action No	Paper Ref (not for SLT)	Action Title	Action Details	Date Added	Due Date	Owner	Lead	Update	Status	Completion Date	Additional Comments
24		Data Report on Chairing	paper to be brought to September or December Board meeting.	17/06/2026	Dec-26	LH		Not Started			Add to agenda for December
25		Volunteer Workforce Sustainability and Recruitment	Options for future recruitment approaches, including assessment methods, to be developed for consideration.	17/06/2026	Dec-26	JO		Not Started			
27		Progressing Children's Rights Report	To consider how best to celebrate, share and operationalise the learning from the report with partners and wider audiences	17/06/2026	Dec-26	EJ		Not Started			
28		Board and Minister Meeting	Minister request to meet the Board potentially in Oct 2026. EJ progressing arrangements with the Sponsor Team.	17/06/2026	TBC	EJ		Ongoing			1 October proposed - ongoing liaison with Ministers office via Sponsor Team - TBC
22		CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework Project	KPIs and outcomes to be established to track progress and ensure measurable improvements.	25/03/2026	23/09/2026	BC		Complete			17.06.26 - EJ Initial results from staff and community survey received with 4 key areas identifies for areas for improvement. To be brought back to Sept Board. On agenda for September.
23		Board sub-committee Meeting Dates	Dates to be circulated to all Board members for information	17/06/2026	ASAP	FC		Complete			complete
26		Serious Case Learning Review	EJ to speak with Stephen Bermingham to explore how learning from the review is incorporated by safeguarders and the IRW.	17/06/2026	TBC	EJ		Complete			FC Emailed Stephen bermingham about this following discussion at Board. EJ to discussed with Stephen Bermingham.

Agenda Item 8. CHS-2627-15

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 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	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 June 2026 and now. 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.
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	Engagement with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI)
3.1.1	On the 27 July, Stephen Bermingham and I met with the Scottish The Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) as part of their formal investigation into historic child abuse. SCAI is a statutory judge-led inquiry established by the Scottish Government in 2015 under the Inquiries Act 2005. Its purpose is to investigate the abuse of children in residential care settings in Scotland, raise the profile of survivors, and identify lessons to improve child protection systems. The Inquiry primarily examines abuse occurring between 1930 and 2014, prior to the existence of CHS. As the investigation period pre-dates CHS, their locus is on whether any failure have been corrected and if further changes to the law, policy or procedures are needed. The Children's Hearing System has not been a focus of the investigation, and the Inquiry has not concluded that the system was institutionally abusive. However, our review of their evidence highlights a significant number of case studies where children's hearings should have done more to protect children – we have reviewed these and will make sure that we draw key learning points in relation to current panel practice. In preparation and as a follow up CHS has provided information to support the Inquiry, and we anticipate further requests for information. During our meeting with David Sheldon KC and his legal team they were particularly interested in

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	panel practice in relation to secure care, virtual hearings safeguards, trauma-informed approaches, observations and Panel Member training. They also have a locus on hearing redesign, system-wide data gathering; one of the likely conclusions is that there needs to be a more systematic approach to data sharing and collation in relation to allegations of in-care abuse. We have agreed to support the legal team to observe children's hearings. We expect that CHS will be cited to provide formal evidence to the Inquiry in early 2027. I will keep the Board updated on further developments.
3.2	Children's Care and Justice Act (CCJA)
3.2.1	On the 9 September the Scottish Government informed us that Ministers have decided that commencement of the Children (Care and Justice) Act will be postponed from the 1 March 2027 until the 24 June 2027. CHS is now considering the operational implications of this 16-week delay and the impact it will have on mandatory training and practice guidance. Significant work has been undertaken to ensure that CHS is well prepared for commencement. CHS has an internal working group to ensure that activities, guidance, and training requirements is coordinated and understood across the organisation. The work of the national Implementation Part 1 Working Group and the Implementation and Resourcing Group has gathered significant momentum over recent months. The groups have been focusing on organisational readiness and developing technical guidance on key practice and policy areas including the Psychological Harm Test, Movement Restriction Conditions, Non-Compliance, Single Point of Contact for Victim Information, Prohibitions and Remittals. CHS Practice and Policy Team are playing a key role in contributing to the development of the guidance alongside national partners. To support the commencement of the Act, the Practice and Policy Team are updating the Practice and Procedure Manual (PPM) for the Panel Community, which is scheduled for publication at the end of December 2026. The revised PPM will include all relevant information relating to the Act and will be aligned with completion of the mandatory online learning that the Panel Community undertake. CHS have also collated previous questions raised by Panel Members to be considered as part of a national publication Frequently Asked Questions that will be launched shortly.
3.3	Care and Justice Learning Programme
3.3.1	In collaboration with the Experts by Experience group, we created the first of our podcast series to support the Care and Justice course. This has been very positively received by both volunteers and staff who told us that their learning was enhanced by hearing directly from the experts who brought the subject matter to life.

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	Since the initial launch, more than 340 volunteers and staff have successfully completed the learning, demonstrating strong engagement with the programme and the value of a blended digital learning approach.
3.4	Learning Academy Facilitator (LAF) Progress Update
3.4.1	A comprehensive Learning Academy Recruitment Toolkit has been developed in collaboration with the TDMs. This toolkit provides consistent guidance, resources, and support materials to strengthen delivery and standardise practice across the Learning Academy Facilitators, (LAF). The LAF Role Descriptor has been reviewed and updated through collaboration with a dedicated LAF Working Group. The revised descriptor reflects current requirements, responsibilities and expectations, ensuring greater clarity and consistency for the role. A new LAF Forum is currently being launched on Learning Academy Online. The design and content have been developed in partnership with a further LAF Working Group to create a collaborative space for communication, sharing best practice and ongoing professional support. Recruitment activity for Learning Academy Facilitators will commence this month. This recruitment campaign will support the delivery of pre-service training requirements planned for 2027 and ensure sufficient facilitator capacity is in place.
3.5	Preservice – Pivoting to Digital: Progress Update
3.5.1	Significant progress has been made against the Preservice – Pivoting to Digital initiative. A number of eLearning modules have already been designed and developed, with several additional courses currently in progress. This demonstrates continued momentum towards a more digitally enabled learner experience and the delivery of a blended learning approach across the Preservice programme. All current Preservice activity has now been mapped and reviewed to identify opportunities for digital enhancement. This work has provided a clear roadmap for the development of digital learning interventions that support and enrich the learner journey. As a result, all viable opportunities for digital content have been incorporated into future planning and development activity. The appointment of a skilled Digital Learning Designer has enabled the Learning Team to accelerate the production and implementation of digital learning resources. This activity continues to be supported by volunteer Facilitators and internal subject matter experts, ensuring that the content is informed by operational expertise, reflects best practice and meets the needs of learners.

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	Overall, this initiative is progressing well and is expected to significantly improve the learner journey during Preservice training, creating a more engaging, flexible, and effective learning experience while maximising the impact of classroom-based learning. In addition to the preservice activity, the Learning Team have developed a new eLearning course in collaboration with the Recruitment Team for volunteer recruiters. This digital solution replaces the online training sessions previously delivered and provides a more flexible and scalable approach to recruiter development. The team have also created the first two of three new Information Governance eLearning modules in collaboration with the Information Governance team. These modules will be made available to staff as part of the organisation's Information Governance learning offer and support alignment with the ISO 27001 programme.
3.6	Board Visit to Rossie
3.6.1	The CHS Board remain committed to engaging key partners and stakeholders across the sector to learn from and inform thinking around the redesign of the Children's Hearings System. The September Board will be held at Rossie Young People's Trust in Montrose with the purpose of understanding the current and future needs of young people in secure. This visit will also explore 'Reimagining Secure Care' which is a transformative initiative and vision for young people in Scotland, centered around a report published by the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ).
3.7	Ministerial Engagement
3.7.1	Siobhian Brown MSP was appointed as Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise in May 2026. The Chair and I attended an introductory meeting in June in the Scottish Parliament where the Minister confirmed her commitment and priorities to the Redesign of the Children's Hearings System using legislative and non-legislative means. The Minister is keen to engage the Board, members of the CHS Community and staff in her first 6-months in office. Arrangements have already been made to observe a children's Hearing and to meet Panel Members, meet the Board and to be the keynote speaker at the CHS Staff event later in the year.
3.8	Programme for Government
3.8.1	The Programme for Government (PfG) was published on 1 September 2026, outlines what ministers want to achieve before the next Scottish Parliament election in 2031. This five-year PfG will be supported by an update each spring aligned to the Scottish Budget.

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	This programme, set out by the First Minister, focusses on: • eradicating child poverty • growing the economy • tackling the climate emergency • delivering a stronger NHS and public services Whilst we are taking time to understand all the implications for this programme on CHS, we are delighted that the Scottish Government restated their Vision to deliver The Promise by 2030. CHS will also play a significant part in Public Service Reform where we are committed to using its principles in the redesign of the Children's Hearings System; pursuing more shared services where we can; and leveraging technology to improve outcomes. Members of the CHS leadership team will attend the Public Service Reform Summit later this month, hosted by Ivan McKee MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform.
3.9	Partnership Engagement
3.9.1	Partnership and collaboration across the sector are key priorities for all colleagues across CHS both locally and nationally. Recent activity across the sector has centered around the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024; the development of a new Youth Justice vision; the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) Act 2026; Advocacy, work around Babies, Infants, and permanence planning. Meetings are also planned with the Joanna MacDonald, CEO of The National Social Work Agency (NSWA). The NSWA is an executive agency of the Scottish Government that officially launched on March 17, 2026, to strengthen, support, and champion the social work profession. Our collaboration with the NSWA across our work with Local Authority Social Workers will be critical and augment existing relationships with Social Work Scotland (SWS).
3.10	Recruitment Update
3.10.1	Our recruitment campaign for volunteer Panel Members is 'live' and well underway as we pass the halfway mark and approach the end of Week 3. Our new creative advert is attracting very positive feedback with the campaign reaching audiences through YouTube, social media, TV, Radio and for the first time, podcasts. We would also like to thank the new Minister for Children, young people and families, Siobhian Brown, for providing us with a clip to further promote this. A brief summary of activity so far is as follows: • an online Information Session week of 14 September, with over 500 people registered, the highest number ever; • over 700 people who have shown interest in the first step of applying; and

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	- over 400 applicants already received in our new application tracking system. - The campaign will be extended to the end of September. Our recruitment drive aims to bring in as many new Panel Members as possible throughout Scotland to join our community as we look ahead to the implementation of the Care and Justice Act in 2027.
3.11	Media Coverage Summary
3.11.1	Media coverage of children's hearings has increased in anticipation of forthcoming changes to the system. Former <i>Press and Journal</i> deputy editor David Knight wrote a couple of opinion pieces questioning whether the current level of confidentiality in the children's hearings system adequately serves the public interest. Referring to recent cases involving school violence and child sexual abuse, he argued for greater transparency around decision-making and outcomes in high-profile cases. At the same time, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) facilitated visits by <i>Press and Journal</i> journalists Jenni Gee and Bryan Rutherford to hearings in Aberdeen and Inverness to help improve understanding of how the system operates in practice. The resulting articles provided a largely positive and informative overview of the children's hearings system, including powerful examples illustrating the importance of confidentiality in supporting children and families. The <i>Press and Journal</i> also published a letter from a Panel Member explaining the need for private hearings and highlighting that most hearings do not involve children in conflict with the law. In response to this increased media interest, CHS is developing a programme of thought pieces for publication on the CHS website to help improve understanding of the children's hearings system as a child-centred, rights-based, and trauma-informed system that improves outcomes for children, families and society. Alongside this, we will also be supporting the work of the Media Short Life Working Group, which brings together partners from across the children's hearings system to promote understanding of how the system works.
3.12	Panel Member Recognition – King's Garden Party
3.12.1	At the end of June 2026, 28 current and former members of the Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) volunteer community, accompanied by their guests, attended His Majesty the King's Garden Party at the Palace of Holyrood House in Edinburgh. Volunteer Panel Members and Panel Practice Advisors from across Scotland were nominated by their respective Lord Lieutenants in recognition of their outstanding commitment and contribution to infants, children, and young people through their service with CHS. The invitations provided national recognition of the dedication, professionalism and significant voluntary contribution made by CHS volunteers in supporting Scotland's children's hearings system.

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Ahead of the Garden Party, CHS hosted a reception for attendees, providing an opportunity for volunteers and their guests to come together, meet fellow nominees from across the country, and celebrate their collective achievements. The reception also enabled volunteers to connect with colleagues from different regions and share experiences of their service within the hearings system.



Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many reflecting on the event as a memorable and meaningful acknowledgement of their contribution to children and young people across Scotland.

One Panel Member from Angus commented *"It was such a happy, warm experience and yes, we met the King! He came across to speak to some Ukrainian guests standing next to us, and as he left, the King had some good banter with my husband Tony about photographic skills. It was the highlight in a very special day. Though, like other Panel Members, I don't look for recognition, it was good to have acknowledgement of what it means to be a Panel Member and the important decisions made by us about the lives of children and young people."*

A Panel Member from Caithness said *"I was so delighted to receive an invite to the Garden Party at Holyrood. It was a complete surprise to hear I had been nominated and I was honoured and touched that my work for Children's Hearings Scotland had been acknowledged in this way. It's so lovely to have such an occasion to get dressed up in your finery for and to meet with other volunteers both from CHS and from other organisations throughout Scotland."*

The event provided an important opportunity to celebrate the exceptional contribution of CHS volunteers and to recognise the vital role they play in helping ensure that children and young people across Scotland have their voices heard and their rights upheld. The positive feedback received demonstrates the value of recognising volunteer service and reinforces the importance of creating opportunities to acknowledge and celebrate the commitment of those who give their time, skills, and experience in support of CHS's mission and strategic objectives.

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3.13	Strategic Planning Update
3.13.1	Over the summer, work has continued pro-actively on planning and designing our organisational approach to the redesign of Children's Hearings and the implementation of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act. Senior Managers and Senior Leaders from across Children's Hearings Scotland have come together to unpack and understand the leadership and collaboration needed to implement the legislative and non-legislative work needed to keep the promise. This has included mapping anticipated workstreams, building provisional timelines and considering our resource and capacity. On the foundation of our change delivery in recent years, we have designed a Redesign Programme proportionate and bespoke to our strategic and operational context, balancing the need to deliver change whilst delivering our core statutory responsibilities today. The programme will be delivered using the leadership, talent, and expertise we have throughout our national team, community, experts by experience and partners. We have now started to plan with the Scottish Government and partners with consideration for our existing operating context including the implementation of We will now start to plan in collaboration with partners with consideration for the connections between the existing operating context and the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024.
3.14	Communications Forward Look
3.14.1	Planning for Redesign We are making steady progress in preparing for hearings redesign by developing our planning, strengthening internal readiness, and developing our stakeholder engagement approach, creating a strong foundation for implementation of the changes by April 2028. SLT and senior managers have begun work to shape the CHS blueprint for hearings redesign, developing our approach and identifying the key workstreams we will need to progress before the Childrens (Care, and Care Experience and Services Planning) Act 2026 (CCCESP) comes into place. Over the summer, Tribunal Delivery Teams delivered regional update sessions across Scotland, providing an overview of the proposed changes to the hearings system and the benefits they will bring for children. Opportunities were provided for volunteers to ask questions and share feedback, and the community has responded well to this. Feedback on the sessions so far has shown that the engagement events increased understanding of hearings

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	redesign and were positively received by volunteers, who valued the opportunity for discussion. The Enhanced Chair role was the most significant area of interest and concern, particularly around recruitment, remuneration, equality within hearings, and how the arrangements will work in practice. Concerns were raised about preserving the volunteer ethos and Kilbrandon principles. Overall, the feedback was constructive, with volunteers expressing a strong desire to remain involved in shaping the changes.
3.14.2	Digital Reform in preparation for the significant system transformation ahead, we have commenced recruitment of a Director of Digital. The new post reflects the growing strategic importance of digital, data, and technology in supporting the future of the organisation and the wider Children's Hearings System. As part of our Data Strategy and building on the progress made with SCRA to improve our access to hearings data, we will now develop a National Dataset to strengthen our evidence base and support more data-driven decision-making.
3.14.3	Learning for the Future Our Learning Transformation Manager has been undertaking a process of discovery to inform the development of a learning programme that can be flexible to the changing needs of the hearings system. Digital learning resources to help volunteers prepare for the introduction of the Children's Care and Justice Act have been rolled out, including the first episode of a podcast series, which features our Experts by Experience discussing the changes and what they hope the impact will be for young people. Implementation of the Quality Strategy continues to progress well. A national analysis of hearing observations has been shared with volunteers and staff as the first report in a new Quality Insights Series. The report provides strong assurance from Panel Practice Advisers on the quality of practice across hearings, highlighting approaches that are consistently child-centred, respectful, inclusive, well prepared and collaborative. Effective Chair leadership was also identified as an important contributor to positive hearing experiences. The analysis highlights opportunities to further strengthen consistency and represents an important step in bringing quality evidence together to inform priorities, support improvement and strengthen organisational learning across CHS.
3.14.4	Strengthening Leadership Capacity We are continuing to strengthen leadership capability through targeted support for managers, including smart working development, clear management expectations, and coaching for our senior managers. Alongside this, we have established a cross-organisational delivery group to improve collaborative

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	working, strengthen oversight of dependencies, and support the early identification and resolution of emerging issues.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • 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 • 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 • 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)

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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.
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

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Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Finance report P3
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 report and the stated financial position per P3 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 note the report, in particular the provision of £5.03M at ABR to support CHS' budget pressures.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	26/27 P3 update
3.1.1	CHS has been awarded budget as 'flat cash' for revenue, £4.611k and an increase to our capital budget which is now £836k (this includes cash £783k and non-cash £53k). This results in CHS having a funding gap on revenue of £6,414k, but capital will be fully funded.
3.1.2	SG has committed to fully support CHS to meet the funding gap a letter of comfort has been received to confirm this. CHS will actively engage with SG to close the funding gap via the established processes and review points of ABR and SBR over the coming month. This has resulted in confirmation of £5.03M budget transfer to meet pressures at ABR, reducing the overall pressures by approx. 80%.
3.1.3	The forecast spend for the year is £11,025 for revenue. The revenue forecast is reported to budget as this is the first time the formal reporting is undertaken this year and spending patterns suggest that all allocated budgets will be spent.
3.1.4	The capital budget is also expected to be spent in full; the forecast therefore rests on budget at £53k.
3.1.5	Spend is slightly behind the curve. The YTD spend does not show any unusual spikes in spending, but all budget holders have been encouraged to allocate their budgets sensibly and with a view of spending out early in the year.

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3.2.5		Actual YTD Period 3	2026/27 Annual Budget	2026/27 Budget forecast	variance to last forecast
		£000	£000	£000	'£000
	Staff	1,628	6,877	6,877	0
	+ Board	7	72	72	0
	+ Training, travel and subsistence	98	130	130	0
	+ Property	14	152	152	0
	+ Other Operating Costs	99	276	276	0
	+ ICT Costs	217	1,205	1,205	0
	+ Corporate Costs	13	29	29	0
	+ Panel and AST Expenses	25	562	562	0
	+ Panel and AST Training	93	736	736	0
	+ Support for hearings	54	400	400	0
	+ Volunteer recruitment	0	200	200	0
	+ PVGs	3	0	0	0
	+ AST Devolved Funding	0	386	386	0
	= Total	2,251	11,025	11,025	0
	+ Capital	202	783	783	0
ICT Capital Budget split					Planned Cost
Development, Build & Configuration - Website/CSAS/CRM					£734,000.00
Laptops - CHS Windows Devices					£39,000.00
Laptops - SCOTS					£10,000.00
Grand Total					£783,000.00
4.	Key Risks				
4.1	No new risks have been identified following this report. The budget for 2026/27 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				

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Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Financial 5 Year Plan
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance
Report Author:	Klaus Berchtenbreiter, Finance Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide a 5-year financial forecast for approval by the Board. The forecast is premised on implementation of the Children (Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act (CCESP) in 2028/29 and the landscape of Public Service Reform. Current assumptions are articulated in the paper, but the forecast may be subject to review once we have a clearer understanding of CCESP implementation timescales.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	CHS Board is asked to approve the report.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	5 Year Plan Context
3.1.1	Current Context
	CHS is the largest Tribunal in Scotland and is required to deliver statutory functions to enable the provision of Children's Hearings. The role of the National Convener and CHS is to recruit, train and support Panel Members make some of the most important decisions in public life today for approximately 10,000 infants, children and young people in Scotland in over 21,000 Children's Hearings annually.
	CHS' most significant organisational risk is the ability to ensure that we can provide volunteer Panel Members for children's Hearings across Scotland. Post Covid has seen a reduction in Panel Member numbers; in line with the national drop in volunteering across all sectors, individual volunteer availability and the number of available Chair qualified Panel Members. This collectively has taken a significant programme of work including a flexible approach to recruitment; bringing Chair training into pre service; centralising Rota Management and deployment of the national panel to ensure hearings are resourced. Deployment of levers has effectively reduced risk and increased assurance of sufficient capacity to meet the planned implementation of the Children's Care and Justice

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	Act implementation in March 2027. Long term sustainability remains a key focus and the introduction of Enhanced Chair provision in the CCCESP Act will support sustainability.
3.1.2	Future Context
	<u>Legislative Instruction:</u> Following several years of significant review and analysis independent to and within Government, Children's Hearings are on the cusp of significant transformation redesign through a programme legislative reform. The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 (CCJA) and the Children's (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act (CCCESP), both bestow new and significant duties on the National Convener that will see CHS pivot to a new Tribunal Model that includes remunerated Chairs and Specialist Panel Members. Redesign implementation requires consideration, planning and investment within this service review period. <u>Programme for Government:</u> The Programme for Government (PfG) was published on 1 September 2026 and outlines what ministers want to achieve before the next Scottish Parliament election in 2031: • eradicating child poverty • growing the economy • tackling the climate emergency • delivering a stronger NHS and public services In addition, the Scottish Government restated their Vision to deliver The Promise by 2030. <u>Public Service Reform:</u> CHS will continue to play a significant part in Public Service Reform where we are committed to using its principles in the redesign of the Children's Hearings System; pursuing more shared services where we can; and leveraging technology to improve outcomes.
3.2	Workforce Planning
3.2.1	CHS will target FTE savings reductions through a programme of continued vacancy management; use of fixed term/flexible contracts to support flexibility and focussed input. We are shaping an approach to redesign delivery that maximises utilisation of knowledge, skills and experience across teams to deliver. This will require us to consider organisational capacity and adopt different ways of working to ensuring that we fulfil our current and future statutory duties. CHS has a strong record of Shared Service delivery with SCRA and we will look for opportunities with SCRA and other agencies/SG core service provision to utilise shared services or centrally available tools/resources. Given the nature of anticipated organisational growth, it should be noted that costs of shared services is likely to increase over time.

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3.3	Learning and Development
3.3.1	CHS has historically outsourced Panel and Volunteer Training through a contract to West Lothian College. In targeting a transformational change in learning for a future hearings system and targeting efficiency savings, CHS has brought the contract in house during 2025/26. The organisational design was reviewed and with the support of SG Voluntary Service policies and provision utilised from in year pensions savings, restructured in 2026/27 to enable a more flexible, cost effective and innovative approach to learning delivery. Learning and development of our Tribunal workforce is our largest single investment at £1.4m, after employee costs. Through a dedicated transformation programme of spend to save, we will reduce these costs by approx. £400K per annum by 2029/30. This will be achieved through bringing the provision in house; offering efficiency and flexibility of resources and re-balancing learning to a greater focus to high quality online provision. This provides savings through removal of contract management costs and enables a streamlined approach to the future staffing required to provide learning. This will require a spend to save approach in digital investment to support learning development.
3.4	Tribunal Workforce Planning
3.4.1	<u>Panel Member Recruitment:</u> CHS conducts national recruitment activity to ensure a Panel Member capacity. Traditionally this has been a single annual campaign; boosted in recent years to bi-annual to support capacity to meet implementation of CCJA. The current campaign runs in September 2026 with Panel Members being appointed into service end Spring 2027. This campaign benefits from a new campaign creative developed with The Stand. This would normally be expected to have a life span of 3 campaigns. CHS plan to stretch this to 5 years and undertake a campaign refresh in year 3 to reduce costs. To create capacity across Learning and wider teams during 2027/28 to support redesign implementation, we are working to optimise the output from the current campaign to enable flexibility in the recruitment approach taken in Autumn 2027. It is however recognised the volunteer recruitment landscape remains challenging and therefore approaches to recruitment will be finalised during Spring 2027. Beyond CCCESP implementation we will consider and review our approaches to recruitment to ensure we continue we can maintain a sustainable paid and volunteer delivered tribunal model. <u>CCCESP Implementation:</u> CHS face a considerable transition in its paid and unpaid workforce, over the next 2-5 years. A move to a new remunerated Tribunal Model will increase CHS' overall budget requirements but due to an anticipated overall reduction in tribunal member headcount, this will enable savings across support lines such as

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	expenses and devolved/AST budgets which are used to support local learning and volunteer recognition. Costs of £6.8 million in 2028/29 to enable recruitment, training and remuneration in year 1 of implementation and ongoing remuneration and training costs of £6.2 (assuming 3% inflation) from 2029/30 have been recognised in the CCCESP Financial Memorandum to enable the transition to an Enhanced remunerated Chair model. This has been premised on extensive financial modelling supported by CHS; Azets and SG Teams. An implementation assumption of April 2028/29 will however require seed funding to be brought forward in 2027/28 to enable recruitment, induction and on boarding of enhanced chairs; development of new learning programmes and discovery activity relating to scheduling and payment. This has been forecast at £1.7 million. The Financial Memorandum does not recognise costs required to support new ways of working the new model will require. These are anticipated to be met through utilisation of savings and efficiencies. This approach is aligned to principles of PSR and it is recognised that this will restrict CHS' ability to contribute to wider sector financial savings.
3.5	Savings Profile
3.5.1	The requirements of PSR ask for a targeted year-on-year reduction of 0.5% FTE and an average 20% over 5 years of Corporate Costs* across the Civil Service. CHS has considered this within forecast requirements to 2031/32 and have incorporated a 0.5% year on year FTE saving and identified potential savings of £733k over 5 years. It should be noted this is based on current assumptions as identified and provided adequate financial support to enable safe implementation of CCCESP is committed to CHS. *A clear definition of Corporate Costs has not been defined in this context beyond not frontline service delivery.

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	2026/27 Annual Budget	2027/28 Annual Budget	2028/29 Annual Budget	2029/30 Annual Budget	2030/31 Annual Budget	2031/32 Annual Budget
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Resourcing	6,877	7,122	7,234	7,349	7,466	7,585
+ Chairs and Specialist Panel Members'		710	6,160	6,283	6,409	6,537
= Resourcing total	6,877	7,832	13,394	13,632	13,875	14,122
+ Board	72	74	76	78	80	82
+ Training, travel and subsistence	130	134	138	142	146	150
+ Property	152	157	162	167	172	177
+ Other Operating Costs	276	284	293	302	311	320
+ ICT Costs	1,205	1,291	1,360	1,411	1,457	1,501
+ Corporate Costs	29	30	31	32	33	34
+ Panel and AST Expenses	562	562	500	500	500	500
+ Panel and AST Training	736	642	592	580	580	580
+ Support for hearings	400	400	400	370	370	370
+ Volunteer recruitment	200	206	272	280	288	297
+ AST Devolved Funding	386	398	380	381	388	400
+ Operational cost infrastructure to support new bill		830	30	31	32	33
= Total operational costs	11,025	12,840	17,628	17,906	18,232	18,566
+ Capital equipment and discovery	780	811	835	860	886	913
		173				
Revenue requirement	4,148	5,008	4,234	4,274	4,357	4,444
= Budget requirements	11,805	13,651	18,463	18,766	19,118	19,479
Total of seeding costs		1,713				
Operational cost net of paid chairs & supporting infrastructure	4,148	4,178	4,204	4,243	4,325	4,411
Year on year savings	-996	30	26	39	82	86
Cum. savings against 25/26 budget	-996	-966	-940	-901	-819	-733

3.5.2 Assumptions:

General

- 3% inflation
- Forecast Public Service Reform savings may be impacted if additional costs to support introduction of CCCESP are identified.

CCCESP

- Successful introduction of the CCCESP Act and provision of remuneration for Chairs and Specialist Panel Members commencing 2028/29. Costs identified as per current financial memorandum.
- Seed funding of £1.7m in 2027/28
- A reduction in support costs post implementation costs i.e. recruitment/expenses/independent reports

3.6 Digital Investment

- 3.6.1 Increased digital investment is anticipated in order to enable the ongoing safety and security of digital systems and enable CHS to embrace the opportunities technology may bring to support efficiency i.e. use of AI. CHS is currently embarking on gaining ISO27001 accreditation to support this ambition.
- A Digital spend to save approach will continue to be deployed to support the delivery of the new Tribunal Model and to enable organisational and to maximise the potential for efficiencies following reforms. In order to progress learning

Agenda Item 10. CHS-2627-17

	ambitions and reduce the cost of learning delivery (F2F), digital investment is required to develop and offer high quality, re-usable and engaging content.
3.7	Growth and Accountability
3.7.1	The new Tribunal Model necessitates increased resources across the organisation, substantively remunerated Chairs and Specialist Panel Members (approx. 120). These require additional internal resource to quality assure, recruit, process and pay and to ensure organisational accountability, whether sourced through shared services or substantive recruitment. These are anticipated to be met through utilisation of savings and efficiencies. This approach is aligned to principles of PSR and it is recognised that this will restrict CHS' ability to contribute to wider sector financial savings.
4.	Key Risks
4.1	No new risks have been identified following this report. The following risks are articulated and managed through our current strategic risk register and are being managed through agreed processes: • Should the CCCESP Act not be implemented on expected timelines, given the inherent fragility of a volunteer model, this may impact ability to sustainable tribunal member capacity in the medium to long term. • If CHS is not sufficiently financially supported to safely implement any new model. • Published GIA vs actual budget requirements current result in pressures of 58.2% of total expenditure in year. This will increase substantially through the introduction of CCCESP resulting in governance risks and impacting CHS' ability to medium term planning and PSR delivery.
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 11a. CHS-2627-18

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	The Feedback Loop Report 25-26
Responsible Executive:	Stephen Bermingham, Head of Policy and Practice (review and approval - Carol Wassell Responsible Executive
Report Author:	Sarah Weir, Policy Advisor/David Mackay, Policy and Practice Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of the Feedback Loop is to report to the Scottish Ministers and to all Panel Members: - the number of compulsory supervision orders in all implementation authorities across Scotland; - changes in the circumstances that led to the making of the orders; and - the ways in which the overall wellbeing of children who are subject to the orders has been affected by them. - such other information relating to the implementation of the orders as the National Convener may require.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	That the Report be reviewed and approved to be passed to the Scottish Ministers and all Panel Members.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	The report shows that over the 2025/26 financial year; there were two reported breaches of implementation duties (with only one of these being actionable). This number is very low, considering there was 6,301 CSOs in place at 31 March 2026 over Scotland.
3.2	The issue of data sharing had remained largely unchanged since the last Feedback Loop report however within the redesign of the hearing system there is an opportunity for better information sharing for the active monitoring of orders. This provides CHS with an opportunity, in this financial year, to explore how we can monitor the implementation of orders more closely, with the proposal of this being piloted within a Local Authority and included within the data sub-group of the Redesign Board.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes

Agenda Item 11a. CHS-2627-18

	- 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 3 - Driving Transformation - 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	Inadequate data sharing arrangement, mitigated by working with partners in the sector to pursue a better data sharing arrangement which has already begun, and we should see the impact of this in the next Feedback Loop Report (26-27).
5.2	Under-reporting of breaches of implementation duties which could be mitigated by more effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms, working with local authorities to further explore incidences of compliance.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	Medium – we have plans to address and mitigate these risks.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	A Data Protection and Children's Rights Impact Assessment will be completed as part of any future changes to data sharing, monitoring and reporting.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	Once approved, this report is shared with the Sponsor Team. The Scottish Ministers must lay the report before the Scottish Parliament and the National Convener must give a copy of the report to each member of the Children's Panel.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	Consideration must be given as to how this is shared with each member of the Children's Panel. This will be agreed with our Communications colleagues.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - The Feedback Loop Report 25-26

The Feedback Loop

A Report by the National Convener on the implementation of Compulsory Supervision Orders (under section 181 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011) for 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

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Foreword

The 12-months since the publication of our last Feedback Loop report has been an extremely busy period for Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) as we work hard to redesign the children's hearings system to improve outcomes for infants, children and young people.

We have worked closely with partners to prepare for the upcoming legislative changes that will be brought about next year by the full implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, and we have supported our volunteers to feel confident about how these changes will impact them in their roles. Preparations for implementation form an important part of how Children's Hearings Scotland will support and uphold children's rights over the year ahead.

Across 2025-26, CHS has also supported and influenced the development of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act 2026, providing evidence and working closely with the Scottish Government, young people with lived experience, the Panel Community and key stakeholders to support the new legislation that will pave the way for the redesign of the children's hearing system. As a key element of the children's hearings system redesign, we were pleased to see this legislation pass with unanimous support from MSPs. We believe the provisions included in the Act will be genuinely life-changing for many care-experienced children and adults. Over the next few years, we are focusing our attention on preparing for the commencement of this legislation as this is a generational opportunity to improve outcomes for children.

Children's rights continue to be integral to the delivery of the children's hearing system. We have reported on our work to progress children's rights since 2017, and we are delighted that this year will see the publication of our first report under the new reporting duties in the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. Our 'Progressing Children's Rights 2023-26' report will be available to read on the Children's Hearings Scotland website from October 2026.

The implementation of orders is an essential part of ensuring children's rights are upheld. We are cognisant that, in its current format, the Feedback Loop report provides a limited picture of how orders are currently implemented. Over 2026-27, working with our volunteers and our partners, we will develop new ways of monitoring the implementation of orders. We hope this will provide greater awareness of the experiences of children who are subject to an order, and a clearer understanding of how we evaluate the effectiveness of their orders.

I would like to thank SCRA for providing the necessary data required for the preparation of this report.

- Elliot Jackson, National Convener and CEO, Children's Hearings Scotland

Legislative Requirement

Section 181 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act') places a duty on the National Convener to prepare a report "about implementation of compulsory supervision orders" in Scotland as a whole and in each local authority area annually, as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year.

A copy of the report must be given to each member of the children's panel and Scottish Ministers must lay the report before the Scottish Parliament.

Developments of the Feedback Loop Report

The first two Feedback Loop reports published, covering the years 2014-15 and 2015-16, presented a range of data about children's hearings and the implementation of Compulsory Supervision Orders.

The third Feedback Loop report, covering four years (2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20) presented a smaller amount of more specific data than the previous reports, focusing

exclusively on decisions made in hearings and reported breaches of implementation of Compulsory Supervision Orders. The fourth Feedback Report covered the previous three years (2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23). Starting from 2024, the Feedback Loop report was drafted using data only from the most recent year.

As noted in previous reports, neither the National Convener nor CHS have access to information about children, either on an individual or aggregate basis on the implementation of Compulsory Supervision Orders. This information is held and controlled by Local Authorities, who are responsible for implementing Compulsory Supervision Orders. Data on decisions made in hearings is held by SCRA. This distance from the data makes collection for the purposes of publication challenging for CHS. In addition, information on the wellbeing of children is not collected consistently across Scotland.

The first two Feedback Loop reports used reported data on a yearly basis from September to August, in line with the data available from Local Authorities. This report, like the most recent Feedback Loop reports, uses financial years as specified in the 2011 Act.

Implementation of Compulsory Supervision Orders

If Panel Members are satisfied that compulsory measures of supervision are necessary for a child's protection, guidance, treatment or control, a children's hearing may make a Compulsory Supervision Order.

The Compulsory Supervision Order, by including measures setting out what specific arrangements should be made, and by specifying an 'implementation authority' (the Local Authority in whose area the child predominantly resides or with whose area the child has the closest connection), places a duty on a Local Authority to take action.

Under section 144 of the 2011 Act, the implementation authority has a general duty to give effect to a Compulsory Supervision Order and also a duty to comply with any specific requirements imposed on it by the measures attached to a Compulsory Supervision Order

(for example, a child is required to reside in a particular place or to undergo a specific assessment, or attend a particular school). The section states:

- (1) The implementation authority must give effect to a compulsory supervision order;
and
- (2) The implementation authority must in particular comply with any requirements imposed on it in relation to the child by the compulsory supervision order.

‘Implementation’ therefore concerns whether implementation authorities have carried out the actions required of them by measures in Compulsory Supervision Orders.

Implementation Breaches

It may become clear, for example at a review hearing, that something other than the measure of supervision directed at a hearing has happened. The implementation authority may have taken other action or taken no action at all. In these circumstances, a breach of the implementation duty may be considered to have taken place as the implementation authority has failed to carry out its duty, as described above. Section 146 of the 2011 Act allows a hearing to direct the National Convener to take action to enforce the authority’s duty.

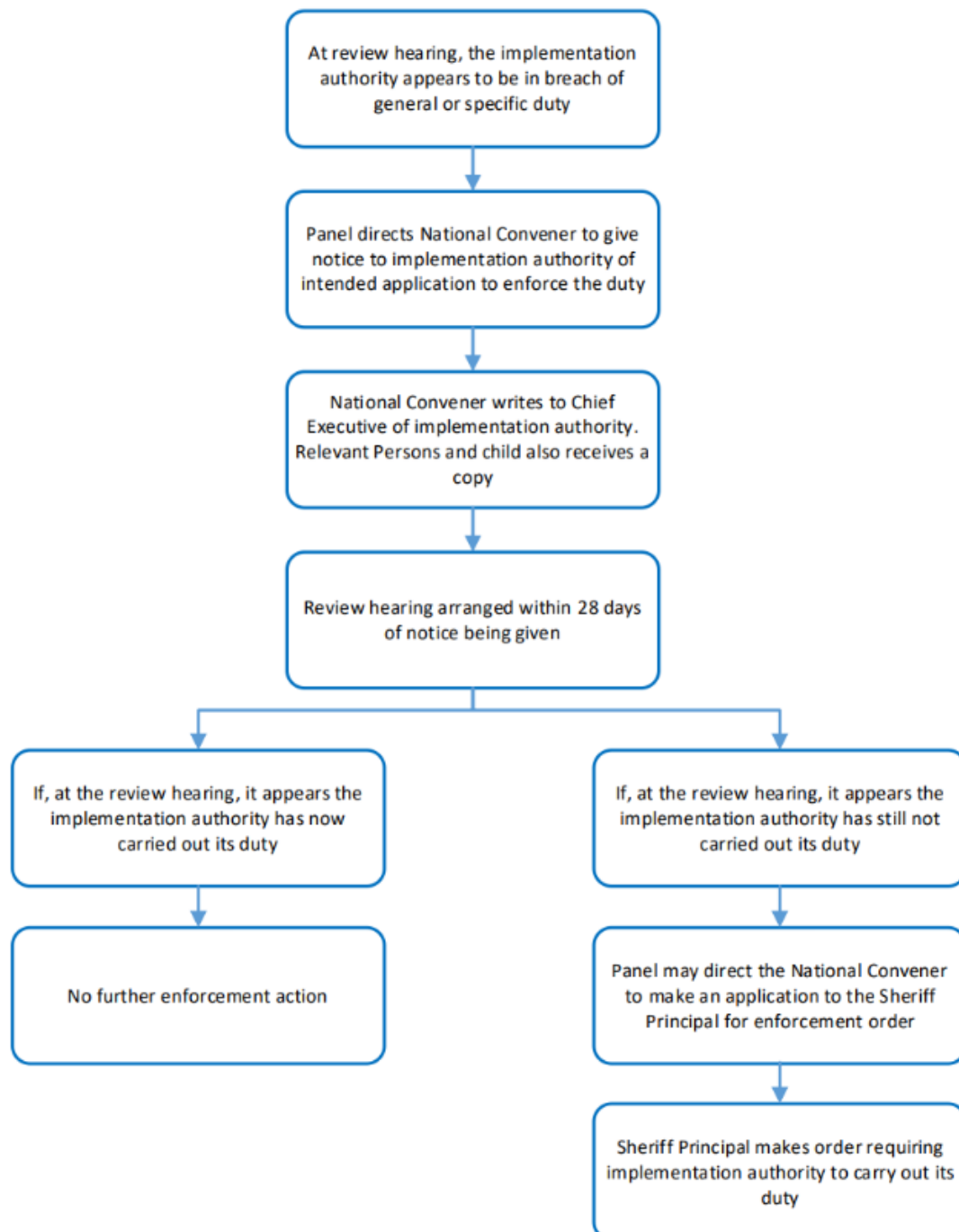
Any implementation breach is potentially serious. It may indicate that a child is not receiving the support that a children’s hearing has decided is necessary in their best interests. It is important to remedy that breach to improve outcomes for children. A children’s hearing is a legal tribunal and implementation authorities must implement their decisions accordingly.

The essential criteria for raising a breach of a local authority is:

1. The local authority duty which has been breached should be included in the child’s Compulsory Supervision Order;
2. The hearing which raises the breach must make a substantive decision in relation to a Compulsory Supervision Order: i.e. to continue or vary (or continue and vary) the Compulsory Supervision Order; and

-
3. The hearing must make a decision to hold a review hearing, which will take place 28 days after the notice is given to the Local Authority that says they are in breach, or as soon as reasonably practicable after that.

A summary of the process for raising a breach is provided below.



Implementation Data

This report focuses on the implementation of decisions made in hearings by bringing together and providing information on three areas:

- (1) A count of hearings in which particular decision types were made in a given year (1st April to 31st March) that place an implementation duty – through a Compulsory Supervision Order (CSO) - on an implementation authority. The relevant hearings decisions are:

Decision type	Description/definition
CSO continued	The hearing was satisfied that an existing CSO was still required and that no variation to any of the measures was needed.
CSO continued & varied	The hearing was satisfied that a CSO is still required but a change to the measures was needed.
CSO interim continuation	The hearing was satisfied that an existing CSO should remain in place short-term, until another decision can be made.
CSO made	The hearing was satisfied that a CSO was necessary for the child’s protection, treatment, guidance or control.
CSO varied	The hearing was satisfied that an existing CSO was still required, with a change to the measures needed, but the ‘relevant period’ remained unaltered.

- (2) The number and types of breaches of implementation duty (s.146) that were reported to the National Convener.
- (3) The enforcement actions taken by the National Convener, and their result.

This data is presented over the following pages, separated by Local Authority.
Notes on the data are given at the end of this report.

Report for 2025/26

(1) Implementable decisions made at hearings:

Local authority	CSO continued	CSO continued and varied	CSO interim continuation	CSO made	CSO varied
Aberdeen City	82	139	31	56	6
Aberdeenshire	47	95	15	36	6
Angus	78	105	15	61	17
Argyll & Bute	20	59	27	29	0
Clackmannanshire	43	80	25	26	15
Dumfries & Galloway	122	219	27	74	<5
Dundee	115	105	33	113	28
East Ayrshire	111	115	130	71	<5
East Dunbartonshire	32	33	8	12	0
East Lothian	37	54	9	40	<5
East Renfrewshire	38	24	12	25	0
Edinburgh, City of	184	309	52	148	12
Eilean Siar	19	15	<5	13	0
Falkirk	102	114	62	51	24
Fife	108	262	86	138	47
Glasgow	429	514	212	166	19
Highland	88	235	37	68	<5
Inverclyde	74	103	17	39	<5
Midlothian	41	43	17	23	<5
Moray	20	86	7	26	0
North Ayrshire	114	189	59	95	0
North Lanarkshire	182	266	100	114	0

Orkney	8	11	0	5	<5
Perth & Kinross	41	49	29	44	9
Renfrewshire	138	230	55	99	0
Scottish Borders	25	49	10	28	<5
Shetland	0	16	0	7	<5
South Ayrshire	43	66	26	23	<5
South Lanarkshire	183	303	77	126	9
Stirling	38	60	23	35	8
West Dunbartonshire	130	177	52	81	0
West Lothian	45	84	59	40	12
Total	2,737	4,209	1,315*	1,912	237*

*each <5 value was calculated as 2.5 to ensure data does not identify (or enable the identification of) a particular child.

Where applicable, values have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

(2) Implementation breaches

For the decisions made during the year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, there were two intended reports of breaches of implementation duties made to the National Convener, relating to two children. The details of these are below, however only Breach 1 was a valid notice as the hearing did not meet the criteria as outlined above. The Local Authorities in question are not named in order to prevent children from being identified.

Breach 1: The Local Authority did not facilitate contact as stipulated within the Compulsory Supervision Order and failed to provide the necessary care and protection for the child.

Breach 2: The Local Authority did not prepare up-to-date reports for the child or provide regular support.

(3) Action taken

Breach 1: The National Convener wrote to the Local Authority and corrective action was taken. No application to the Sheriff Principal for enforcement was necessary.

Breach 2: The hearing was notified that the previous children's hearing did not meet the criteria for the National Convener to notify the implementation authority of the intention to apply for an order to enforce the duties placed upon it.

Comment and Future Developments

The duty of the National Convener to take action in the face of non-implementation of orders remains a valuable mechanism in making sure that the rights of children to receive protection and assistance are upheld.

In August 2025, the CHS Practice and Policy Team published a practice note for the volunteer community which provided more detailed information about what Panel Members can do if they require the National Convener to take action in response to a Local Authority failing to carry out measures included on a Compulsory Supervision Order. This aimed to help raise the profile of this decision-making option across the panel community and increase the confidence of Panel Members in raising breach proceedings however, so far this has not had a material impact on the number of breaches raised. This highlights that more work is required to ensure those responsible for implementing orders are held to account.

There were only two implementation breaches reported to the National Convener¹ in 2025-26. This continues a well-established pattern of low levels of breaches reported by Panel Members each year. CHS has significant concerns about this figure and, from anecdotal evidence, this does not appear to be an accurate reflection of all breaches that occur across Scotland. Further investigative work is required to understand whether these cases represent, for example, only the most serious or repeated breaches and what support is required to enable Panel Members to raise breach proceedings when necessary.

¹ Only one breach was valid and actionable.

Additional work must take place to understand the impact of compulsory measures for babies, children and young people across Scotland. The aim of any compulsory measure is to make improvements in the child's circumstances, including to ensure the child is safe and that they have the opportunity to develop to their full potential. At present, we do not have adequate data collection mechanisms to understand the impact of Compulsory Supervision Orders on children's overall wellbeing.

The redesign of the hearing system presents a significant opportunity to address these gaps. In particular, the new Enhanced Role of the Chair will have continuity by default and greater involvement in planning hearings and therefore, more robust oversight of monitoring the implementation of orders. Given that these changes will not come into effect for a number of years, the Children's Hearings Redesign Board which is co-chaired between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), has committed to support the National Convener by prioritising the work of the joint data group to progress work in this area.

Initially, over the 2026-27 financial year, Children's Hearings Scotland will work with Panel Members and our partners at the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the Scottish Government, COLSA and Social Work Scotland to pilot new approaches to help us understand more about a) the implementation of orders and b) the impact of orders on children's overall wellbeing. This may include recording Panel Member assessments about the implementation of measures made in the previous hearing and seeking their views about why measures haven't been implemented. It could also involve working with Panel Members, social work professionals, the child and Relevant Persons to understand the impact of orders on the child's overall wellbeing. This pilot activity will be monitored and evaluated with a view to extending this across Scotland.

We believe this will be a crucial step towards understanding outcomes for children who experience compulsory state intervention in their lives. This aligns closely with aspirations in

the ‘The Promise’² and findings from ‘Hearings for Children’³ report. The latter highlighted the issue of accountability of the Children’s Hearings System and the need for improved data to “inform and support national and local understanding of the implementation, impact and outcome of decisions made by the Children’s Hearings System.”

Ultimately, all partners involved in the Children's Hearings System want to see an effective system that delivers improved outcomes for children. Our collaborative work around the data we collect aims to improve accountability of the system and provide greater insight into how children’s wellbeing and their right to grow and develop are supported through the Children’s Hearings System.

Notes on the Data

The tables feature a count of hearings that made a particular decision during the year. It includes only those decisions that require implementation by an implementation authority.

The years given refer to financial years (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026).

² *The Promise – Independent Care Review (2020)*

³ *Hearings for Children – Hearings System Working Group’s Redesign Report (2023)*

Agenda Item 12a. CHS-2627-19

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	CHS Impact Report
Responsible Executive:	Elliot Jackson, National Convener
Report Author:	Miranda Banks, Senior Communications Manager Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/CEO

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The Impact Report is produced each year and designed to fulfil two main purposes: • to document key pieces of work undertaken by CHS during the year in a way that is more accessible than the Annual Report and allows more detailed description of that work and • to highlight Corporate Parenting activities undertaken by CHS and the National Convener.
1.2	This year's Impact Report is divided into three areas of focus: • Children, Infants and Young People - the first half focuses on our Corporate Parenting activity and our work progressing children's rights, participation and inclusion. • Volunteer Community – a focus on the work undertaken with and for our volunteer community. • Hearings Redesign – focus on CHS informing legislative change and preparing our volunteering community which includes a new learning model and governance.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	That the Board approve the report for publication
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcomes 2024-2027: Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes Theme 2 – Valuing our People Theme 3 – Driving Transformation
5.	Key Risks
5.1	N/A
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

Agenda Item 12a. CHS-2627-19

7.1	No impact assessment is required.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services
8.1	There is a duty on the National Convener to provide the sponsor team with this report and to publish, this will be achieved through our website.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	None.
10.	Appendices
10.1	Appendix 1 - The Impact Report (2025-26)

Impact Report

2025-26



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Foreword

By Elliot Jackson, National Convener and Chief Executive Officer

Every day across Scotland, Panel Members make decisions at children's hearings that help keep infants, children and young people loved, safe and respected. Behind every one of those decisions is a remarkable community of volunteers, colleagues, partner organisations and people with lived experience who share a commitment to ensuring that children's rights and voices are at the heart of everything we do. This report shows the impact of that collective effort during our latest full year, 2025-26.

Throughout the year, we continued our work to improve the experiences of children and young people in hearings, deepen the participation of people with lived experience, strengthen the skills and wellbeing of our volunteer community, and help shape the future of Scotland's unique Children's Hearings System. This report captures those achievements and the difference they make in the lives of the infants, children, young people and families we serve.

You will read about young people with lived experience influencing our work at every level, from recruitment and policy development to quality assurance and children's rights reporting. You will see how children's voices have shaped improvements to hearing practice, including the successful national rollout of 'Chair Greeting the Child', helping children feel more comfortable, respected and able to participate even before their hearing starts.

The impact described in these pages is only possible because of the extraordinary people who make up our community. Our Panel Members continue to make difficult and important decisions with compassion, skill and integrity. Our Panel Practice Advisers strengthen quality through observation, support and learning. Our colleagues provide the leadership, guidance and expertise that enable the system to operate effectively. Together, they embody the values that define Children's Hearings Scotland.

Our work in 2025-26 demonstrated the power of listening and learning. We acted on feedback, improved how we support people and continued to invest in quality across the organisation. This is part of our continuous organisational improvement and our work to support a stronger, more confident and more connected community that is always equipped to deliver the best possible outcomes for those who depend on the hearings system as it evolves.

We have continued to prepare for the future. As hearings redesign progresses, CHS has played a leading role in influencing change while supporting our volunteers and ensuring that the interests of children and young people remain central. Transformation must ultimately be judged by whether it improves experiences and outcomes for children.

This report is a story of children's rights being championed, of lived experience shaping

decisions, and of volunteers being supported, recognised and empowered. Above all, it is a story of people across Scotland working together to create a better hearings system and a better future for children and young people.

To everyone who has contributed to that story during 2025-26, thank you. Your commitment, compassion and determination continue to make a lasting difference, and I am proud to share the impact you have achieved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elliot Jackson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Elliot Jackson

Introduction

By Expert by Experience, Liam Slaven

When Children's Hearings Scotland established the Experts by Experience group in April 2025, it was with a simple belief: those who have experienced the hearings system are best placed to help shape its future.

I started working with CHS over 10 years ago as a lived experience adviser, when the Experts group was just an aspiration. Now it is an established reality, and over the past year my fellow Experts and I have demonstrated the power of lived experience in action. I am so pleased to have been asked to write this introduction reflecting on the impact of our work.

As detailed in this report, since we were formed, we have contributed to more than 30 internal workstreams and several national pieces of work. We have helped shape CHS's approach to children's rights, informed volunteer recruitment, contributed to guidance and quality assurance processes, delivered workshops to Panel

Members and had the opportunity to engage directly with decision makers, including those at the highest levels of Government. Most importantly, we have brought the voices and experiences of children and young people into conversations where they may previously have been missing.

I am particularly proud that our involvement has gone beyond simply being consulted. We have been trusted to challenge thinking, ask difficult questions and help identify where improvements are needed. Whether discussing participation in hearings, children's rights, homelessness, language, or the experiences of young people leaving care, we have been able to influence real change. That demonstrates the value of lived experience and the difference it can make when organisations commit to genuine participation and co-design.

This report demonstrates that meaningful participation is no longer an aspiration; it is

something we are delivering together. The impacts highlighted in these pages show the difference that young people can make when they are trusted as partners, valued for their expertise and provided with genuine opportunities to influence change.

This is only the beginning. My hope is that the voices of children and young people become even more embedded across CHS and the wider hearings system. I hope future Experts by Experience continue to have opportunities not only to share their experiences but to lead change, shape policy and influence decisions at every level. I hope that every child who comes into contact with the hearings system feels respected, listened to and empowered to participate in decisions about their own life.

I also hope that the work of Experts by Experience inspires other organisations to recognise that lived experience is not something

to be consulted occasionally, but an essential form of expertise that strengthens services, improves outcomes and creates lasting change.

To my fellow Experts by Experience, thank you for your honesty, courage and commitment. Every conversation, challenge and contribution has helped move us closer to a system that better reflects the rights, needs and experiences of babies, infants, children and young people. I am excited to see what we can achieve together in the years ahead.



Focus on

Children, infants and young people



Evidencing our progress on children's rights

The UNCRC Incorporation (Scotland) Act 2024 embedded children's rights into law, and 2025-26 was our first full year since the Act was implemented.

The legislation confers a duty on public bodies including CHS to report each year on evidence of 'progressing children's rights'. So activity to gather that evidence within the year produced the direct impact of delivering our first annual Progressing Children's Rights Report.

We used a variety of methods to gather information and supported people across the organisation to think critically about their children's rights practice. This included:

- creative engagement with our Experts by Experience, a participation group of 10 young people aged 14 to 25 who have lived experience of hearings. This work supported them to learn about the Progressing Children's Rights report and complete report cards for the organisation's workstreams based on the four general principles of the UNCRC
- using the Improvement Service's UNCRC Implementation Framework to gather evidence from staff teams across the organisation
- awareness-raising activity with staff focusing on adopting a children's rights approach and our reporting duties
- engaging with the CHS volunteer community (including Panel Members and Panel Practice Advisers) through our Practice and Policy Bank to gather their insights about how children's rights guide

- their decision-making
- delivering a session on progressing children's rights with our bank of Independent Report Writers.

Experts highlight volunteers' role in upholding right to a safe home

A child's right to access a safe home is at the heart of decisions that Panel Members make when considering whether to impose measures stipulating where a child will live.

Our Experts by Experience were influential in highlighting this, through their involvement in the recruitment of Panel Members. For the autumn 2025 volunteer recruitment campaign, Experts asked candidates to consider the impact of homelessness on children, during the interview.

This highlighted the right to a safe home as an issue affecting children in the hearings system, and interviewee feedback revealed strong appreciation for having Experts involved.

"Nice to see young people at the centre. It was clear it was their own words and very authentic. Liked that they were involved at this stage."

Interviewee feedback

Participation

Experts by Experience

CHS has a commitment to shaping our work in response to the voice of lived experience. As part of this commitment, our Experts by Experience, a participation group of 10 young people aged 14 to 25 who have lived experience of hearings, was established in April 2025.

Based across Scotland, the Experts regularly come together to influence the work of CHS, and in their first year they have shaped 31 internal and five external workstreams.

“Being in Experts by Experience gives me an opportunity to provide input, influence and have a sense of involvement in the system I was once stuck in with the feeling of no control.”

Ryden

Influence at the highest level

Early after they were appointed, Experts visited the Scottish Parliament alongside members of Our Hearings Our Voice, to meet the Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise. This was an opportunity for them to learn how Parliament operates and share their views and experiences at the highest level of influence.

“We gave the Minister some quite hard questions, including: in a year’s time what do you see the Children’s Panel being like, and what needs to change? We also discussed what better supports need to be in place for people leaving care and leaving the hearings system.”

– Gemma



Their impact includes having worked with the CHS Quality team during Quality Week 2025.

The Experts co-produced a page within the Panel Practice Advisor Guidance. This ensures that areas identified by young people, such as language and children's participation in hearings, are at the forefront of how hearings are observed.

In September 2025 our Experts by Experience delivered a workshop to Panel Members in Highland and Moray. The following reflections provided by a volunteer show their impact:

"The city chambers were buzzing with discussion and lively debate. Paper shuffled, pens scribbled, post-its filled up with ideas.

Volunteers from across Highland and Moray paused over their notes, reflecting on what participation in hearings really meant.

Participation is more than attendance — it involves choice: to draw, to write, to record, or to ask someone to speak for you.

Around the room, heads began to nod. Pens moved again, and more post-its flew. The shift was almost audible — the quiet moment of 'I get it now'."

Participation values lead to remuneration for Experts

Our Children's Participation and Rights Strategy has four aims: respect, inclusion, empowerment and accountability. The first of those led the Board to support the move to align remuneration of our Experts by Experience with Scottish Government guidance, providing equity and respect for their time and input.



"I absolutely love doing it and would do it for nothing, but it does have impact and I sometimes have to take time off work. If this needs to be as unpaid time off, the payments mean I can still take part without any detriment."

— Liam

Wider participation impact

CHS established its internal Participation and Feedback Delivery Group, whose membership comprises an Expert by Experience plus colleagues who all have a role working or communicating directly with children and young people. The group will be accountable for the upscaling of existing participation workstreams to support children and young people to tell us what they think about hearings. In 2025-26 the Delivery Group expanded those regional participation workstreams to five of our nine regions. This work was included as a good practice case study of the 2026 **State of Children's Rights Report** (page 135) by Together Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights.

Chair Greeting the Child

Panel Members across Scotland adopted a welcoming 'soft start' to children's hearings by greeting the child in the waiting room and introducing themselves before the hearing.

This small change was conceived and driven by young people in Moray. After a two-year pilot, the 'Chair Greeting the Child' practice was then rolled out across all nine regions between March and November 2025.

Chair Greeting the Child has been successful in putting children and young people at ease before their hearings. Being able to meet and say hello to the Chair of their hearing in advance means that children are no longer walking into a hearing room to be met by three strangers, which children have told us can cause anxiety.

Our partners in social work and advocacy have shared a wealth of feedback from their own experiences in hearings as well as direct feedback from children and young people they've supported to attend hearings.

89% of advocacy providers who responded to a feedback survey saw positives from the Chair Greeting the Child project, while 72% of social workers who responded said it was making the start of hearings more child friendly.

Read comments from advocacy workers and social workers:



"It was good for the young person to see the panel Chair before the hearing started. They were very friendly and it helped put the young person at ease. After the hearing they shared that they liked the Chair."



"Young person said it helps making them feel more at ease to go into the hearing room."



"The child has felt that the chair is more of just a 'normal person' rather than someone more intimidating who just makes decisions"

"The young person voiced that there was one less stranger at the room. He could engage, even if for a bit, outside of the legal structure of the hearing."

"She expressed the hearing wasn't scary and they were very nice, and they made her feel relaxed by speaking to her before the panel."

"This was the young person's first hearing and it made her less anxious to meet the Chair."

"The young person felt more at ease being seated at the same time as the Chairperson."

"This Chair greeted the young person then explained a bit more about the hearing. This helped reinforce the young person's understanding of different options they had while the hearing was going on, such as speaking to the panel by herself."

Using feedback and complaints to improve practice

Complaints and feedback provide essential insights into how we can deliver the best possible experience in the hearing room for children and young people. Analysis of themes and trends ensures we can provide support for individual Panel Members and feed into wider practice and policy.

Recent examples include insights on the importance of good hearing management to ensure all parties feel heard and respected, and the importance of child-friendly communication.

Feedback was shared directly with Panel Members. Feedback and trends were also shared with the Practice and Policy team and are being used to update the Practice and Procedure Manual for volunteers, strengthening the guidance and support we offer our volunteers.

New guidance on meeting the needs of both older children and the very young

In 2025-26 CHS issued two Practice Guides for volunteers, to support them to make decisions for children at both ends of the age range – the youngest and oldest children in the hearings system.

Responding to the Needs of Older Children

Responding to the Needs of Older Children was drafted by the **Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ)** in partnership with CHS. It was introduced in anticipation of the **Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024** coming into full effect, which will mean the hearings system will embrace all 16- and 17-year-olds for the first time (due in spring 2027).

CHS consulted with Panel Members to discuss concerns around these changes and to determine where further training and resources could be provided. The topics covered were determined using information from the Panel Community as to what they want to learn more about, as well as information from experts in the field on what issues most often affect older children in the hearings system.



Responding to the Needs of Infants, Babies and Very Young Children

Later in the year, the Practice Guide **Responding to the Needs of Infants, Babies and Very Young Children** was also shared with volunteers.

Publication of the Guide followed a collaboration with the **Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection (CELCIS)**, as well as NHS Infant Mental Health Teams across Scotland.

The Guide gives Panel Members more support to listen to and understand the 'quieter voices' involved in hearings, a requirement highlighted in the Promise Report. It covers key areas for Panel Members to consider for hearings involving children aged 0-3 years, who are the largest group of children referred to hearings due to lack of parental support.

Both of these new guides have fed into the subsequent development of the new 'Minimising Barriers' section of the updated Practice and Procedure Manual. We will also incorporate key messages from the guides into future developments of Pre-Service training.

To date, 'Responding to the Needs of Older Children' has been viewed online or downloaded nearly 300 times, and 'Responding to the Needs of Infants, Babies and Very Young Children' nearly 250 times.

'It provided an in-depth understanding from a baby's/very young person's perspective and reminded me that although they can't verbalise how they feel there are other ways of finding that out. Another reminder of how complex a child's life can be.'

Panel Member

'[The guidance provides] a greater awareness that, as the child is often excused, it is vital within the hearing to always keep them at the centre rather than, as can be the case, the needs of the parents who are present.'



Strengthening Quality Across Hearings

The quality assurance provided by our volunteer Panel Practice Advisers throughout the year delivers a core impact of our work. Our PPAs play a key role in quality assurance, providing valuable perspectives on hearing practice and supporting Panel Members to build confidence and capability in their role.

Throughout 2025-26, we continued to embed the Quality Strategy by strengthening the ways we gather, share and use evidence relating to quality across CHS. Through engagement with volunteers, National Team colleagues and Experts by Experience, we continued to build understanding of quality and involve our people directly in shaping change.



Achievements in 2025-26

- 2,496 observations were conducted by PPAs across our nine regions.
- 1,493 individual Panel Members were observed, providing valuable insight into hearings practice and opportunities to recognise effective practice and share learning.
- 114 Lead PPAs and PPAs were involved in observations across Scotland.
- 28 Panel Members from nine local authority areas participated in Quality Conversations, helping to shape improvements to the observation process.
- 10 Experts by Experience contributed to work on language and attendance at hearings, directly informing updates to PPA Observation Practice Guidance.

Resources were created in collaboration with PPAs to help strengthen understanding on the PPA role and its contributions to hearings quality.

Our Quality team also attended staff and volunteer meetings, gathering feedback and strengthening local on-the-ground connections.

Together, these activities strengthened people's understanding of hearing practice, informed development of guidance and processes, and increased opportunities for volunteers, colleagues and Experts by Experience to contribute to quality developments.

Focus on Volunteers



Recruitment

The recruitment of volunteers to serve at hearings and to support quality assurance is among the most impactful activities we perform every year.

In the build-up to the autumn 2025 volunteer recruitment campaign, we gathered feedback to help us reduce peak demands on volunteers and local authority clerks during the selection process.

We also introduced new online National Information Sessions in the lead up to and during the recruitment phase rather than holding local in-person sessions. This enabled us to reach more people and help us manage expectations around the commitment required of volunteers. It also enabled a higher number of questions to be answered directly and individually. More than 400 people attended the online information sessions.



In most areas, the National Team shortlisted applicants for interview, reducing the burden on volunteers who previously carried out this task.

Young People involvement in recruitment

Our Experts by Experience, alongside young people from Our Hearing Our Voice reviewed interview questions and filmed a question of their own that was put to all interview candidates: they asked for their response to the statement 'Homelessness impacts on the wellbeing of children and families.' (see more on page 9)

At the close of the successful recruitment campaign, 580 applications had been received. In-person induction sessions were held in the late autumn to help build relationships.

In November 2025, 269 candidates progressed to become trainees, and just after the end of the 2025-26 year, 184 new Panel Members were appointed.

580
applications

269
trainees

184
appointed

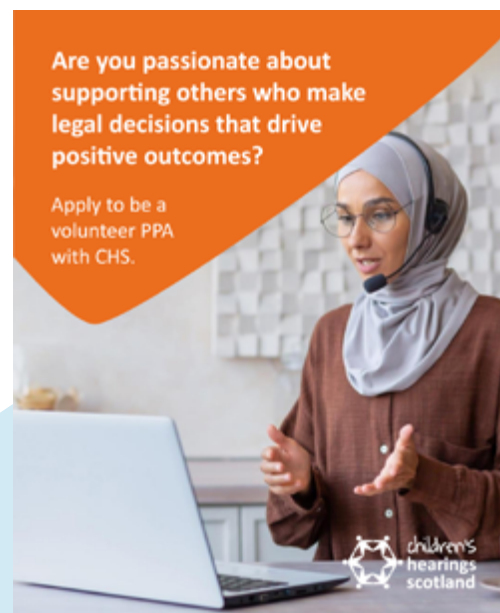
Panel Practice Adviser Recruitment

In January 2026 CHS ran a dedicated recruitment campaign for volunteer Panel Practice Advisers, to strengthen our quality-assurance capacity.

This focused approach resulted in 41 new PPAs being appointed, which is the highest number appointed in a single cohort.



A new Welcome Booklet was produced for PPAs, and all PPAs took the Introduction to Hearings and Quality Assurance courses as part of their training.



Improving Hearing Information Packs

Panel Members had fed back in 2024 that Hearing Information Packs (HIPs) contained too much duplicated material and their length could make it hard to prepare for hearings. In response, CHS worked with SCRA to improve the HIP, starting with reducing its size.

The first phase of this project involved replacing the lengthy Records of Proceedings (which often contained long historical records, blank pages or large gaps) with a concise Chronology of Decisions and Reasons. This allows a child's journey to be reviewed in one clear document without containing historical details which children can find re-traumatising.

While SCRA worked with children and young people to ensure the new Chronology met their needs, CHS worked with Panel Engagement Leads to make sure that the new Chronology fulfilled its primary purpose: ensuring that high-quality decisions can be made for children and their families.

The new concise Chronology went live in March 2026 and additional feedback has since been gathered, which will feed into a review six months after implementation.

The quotes below were gathered during a SCRA consultation on the new format with care-experienced children and young people.

"New format is so much better and less overwhelming."

"Reduced size of papers is positive; previous versions were too long and often unopened as too daunting to even open."

"Removing professionals names from old Record of Proceedings prevents triggering memories."

Learning

Preservice training and Chairing with Confidence

The Learning Team helped CHS boost the number of Panel Members able to chair hearings in 2025-26. Key to this was bringing forward the point in a new Panel Member's service when they are ready to chair. Previously it was typical for a new Panel Member to serve for six months, then attend Enhanced Practice training, serve a further six months and finally complete Management of Hearings training, becoming Chair qualified one year into their volunteering at the earliest.

Since the beginning of 2025, Pre-Service training has included as standard all the learning required to become Chair qualified, which has significantly boosted the number of chairing-ready Panel Members in the volunteer community.

In addition, existing Panel Members who needed support to step into the chairing role were encouraged to take the Chairing with Confidence learning course. Chairing with Confidence is a full day course, focusing on the procedural responsibilities of the Chair, delivering robust decisions and reasons, and the need for clear and simple language in hearings. Reflecting on practice and learning from each other are integral elements to developing as Panel Members and the course spends valuable time sharing real experiences of hearings to ground the theory in practice. Feedback from the course was positive and it will continue to be offered across Scotland.

'This was definitely well worth going to and has given me increased confidence to step up the Chair position. There is no way I would have been ready to do this without this course.'

Trauma-training

All staff and volunteers completed a two-year programme of mandatory trauma training in 2025-26 using resources from the Scottish Government-led National Trauma Training Programme.

The first trauma-informed course that staff and volunteers completed, in 2024, ensured we all developed a baseline knowledge of what trauma is and what it means to be trauma informed. The second Trauma Skilled courses, which staff and volunteers completed in 2025-26, provided the skills to increase our understanding of what psychological trauma is, how it can affect

the people we work with, and how people can be supported to recover. This module also focused on the impact of trauma on children and young people, understanding how children and young people recover from trauma and how to meet the needs of children and young people who have experienced trauma.



Strengthening wellbeing support through listening to volunteers

As part of our commitment to creating a supportive volunteer experience, during 2025-26 we introduced structured self-evaluation and wellbeing check-ins for newly appointed Panel Members. This created new opportunities for volunteers to reflect on their experiences, share feedback and access support during their first year of service.

Over the two cohorts of new Panel Members who entered service in 2025-26, around 60% took part in this process. Through hundreds of self-evaluations and wellbeing conversations, volunteers shared what was helping them thrive, what challenges they were facing, and how CHS could better support them.

“The check-ins are helpful, even though I wouldn’t usually be someone who asks for support.”
New Panel Member, 2025 cohort

Reflections from volunteers

The check-ins were designed to allow volunteers not only to reflect on their experiences, but also to connect with peers, and access support from their Wellbeing Coordinator if they needed it. They enabled volunteers to pause, build resilience by identifying what has gone well, and foster a sense of personal progress and growth over time.



An important benefit from these sessions was the feedback that helped us to better evaluate our training and wider support for volunteers.

Local support

We heard how volunteers increasingly feel confident in their role and value the support available to them. Many highlighted the importance of peer support, opportunities to observe experienced Panel Members, learning and development opportunities, and wellbeing conversations.

Volunteers also described feeling reassured by support from colleagues, buddies, Panel Engagement Leads and Wellbeing Coordinators.

CHS volunteers have always supported each other informally through skill-sharing and friendly conversations between hearings. Since the introduction of the new Tribunal Support Model, volunteers have had additional support provided by their Area Support Teams and CHS National Team.

Experienced volunteers continue to play a role in helping new Panel Members develop and grow, including as they gain experience at chairing hearings.

CHS responding to feedback

Importantly, through these check-ins, volunteers also told us where improvements were needed for them to feel more confident, capable and connected at CHS. New Panel Members wanted a better understanding of the realities of hearings, clearer expectations, more opportunities to observe hearings, stronger digital support, and greater connection with the wider Panel Community. Some also highlighted challenges around hearing scheduling and navigating the practical realities of the role.

We responded to this feedback by making changes across recruitment, learning, induction and wellbeing support, which in 2025-26 included:

- introducing hearing observations earlier in the volunteer journey
- refreshing and strengthening Pre-Service training to better reflect the complexity of hearings
- strengthened proactive wellbeing support through check-ins, debriefs and tailored support for volunteers
- improving digital guidance and support by providing devices and support in-person at welcome events
- enhancing our process to seek learning support needs and our reasonable adjustment processes for trainees

Personalised support

The feedback has also helped us provide more personalised support to volunteers. Through wellbeing conversations, individual volunteers have been connected to learning opportunities, local events, peer support and tailored guidance to help them develop confidence and continue volunteering well.

By listening to volunteers and acting on what they tell us, we are strengthening both volunteer wellbeing and their overall experience of volunteering at CHS, including volunteers' sense of being valued. We hope this forms part of an improving volunteer journey with reduced burnout and higher retention rates.

"It still feels early in my journey, but I feel equipped and supported."

"The debrief after a difficult hearing and the follow-up check-in made a real difference."

"I was apprehensive in preparing for my first hearing sessions, but the training equipped me well. I was well supported by my fellow panel members and felt confident in the hearing room."

After three-month evaluation

Strengthening partnerships through knowledge exchange

Panel Members and Social Workers came together in Glasgow for a pilot knowledge exchange programme that received highly positive feedback from participants.

Three sessions were held for groups of around five Panel Members and five social workers each time, with the aim of strengthening understanding of each other's roles, experiences and perspectives at hearings. The programme, which is in line with the Promise's aim of 'supporting the workforce', was a response to feedback from both groups, which was refined through a needs analysis survey to identify topics for discussion.

Nearly 90% described the quality of the discussion as excellent and more than 70% said the pilot will significantly improve children's and families' experiences within hearings. Participants said the sessions created an open environment where both sides could speak honestly, challenge assumptions and dismantle the sense of 'us versus them', with the experience described as reassuring, confidencebuilding and professionally validating.

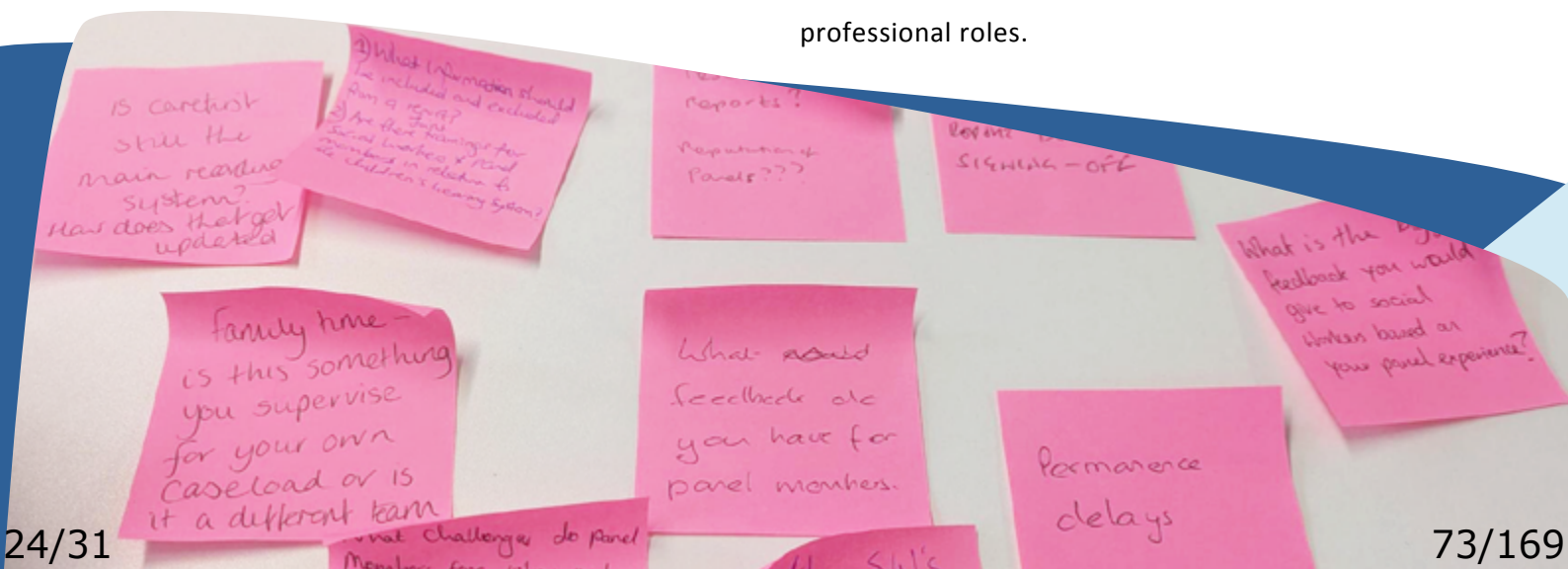
"Insight into the workload of social work should be mandatory training for Panel Members. so important to understand the depth of social work involvement with children and families. Helps enhance confidence in and gain further respect for their views and recommendations."

- Panel Member

"Useful being able to share my experiences but also to hear what Panel Members need to hear/read to justify decisions."

- Social Worker

The model will be expanded across the Glasgow region, with monthly sessions planned that will enable many more Panel Members and Social Workers to benefit. There will also be opportunities to include Panel Practice Advisers. The pilot delivered proposals for future training, including for Social Workers on writing reports, and for Panel Members on strategies for managing the dynamics created by legal representatives in hearings, maintaining a child-focused approach, and ensuring clarity of professional roles.



Community Hub

In response to a growing need for cohesion of communication platforms and sources of essential information, in November 2025 the Communications and Engagement team delivered a transformed Community Hub: a SharePoint-based central space for resources and services for volunteers.

While there is no 'correct' way for volunteers to access their digital channels and platforms, the update puts them all in one place for the first time.

The main Hub also has links to additional SharePoint-based resources and services provided by CHS.

The Community Hub has around 500 unique users a day during the working week.

"The new layout is very easy to navigate. I like the fresh look, too."

"Clear and concise. User friendly."



Town Hall webinars

In 2025 we hosted two Town Hall webinars: large-scale online meetings open to all volunteers across Scotland, where we share important information and invite questions, often with external guests answering those questions on our expert panel.

Legislative changes affecting children's hearings

In May we addressed recent and upcoming changes to the hearings system resulting from changes in legislation: the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act, the change to the age of criminal responsibility, and legislation that would deliver hearings redesign and was still in draft, commonly referred to at the time as the 'Promise Bill'.

The discussion was chaired by a Panel Member and the expert panel comprised our Practice and Standards Manager, our Practice and Policy Advisor and a Tribunal Delivery Manager, all of whom know the legislative landscape well. More than 230 people attended the one-hour webinar, with more than 20 questions asked and answered, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

'Hearing the smallest voices'

Our December 2025 webinar featured Dr Helen Whincup, Senior Lecturer at the University of Stirling who discussed her award-winning longitudinal study about the issue of permanence, which followed the lives of nearly 2,000 children in the care system for more than a decade. It also featured a Lead Panel Practice Adviser and our Policy Team Manager, and the event coincided with our launch of our new guidance for volunteers 'Responding to the needs of infants, babies and very young children' (see page 15).

It was attended by more than 180 volunteers and again a good range of questions were put to our panel and answered, and feedback was overall very positive.



"I hope it demonstrates that our quiet, often hidden and very sensitive volunteer work and all the many training hours volunteers put in is valued and recognised."

Lorna MacAulay,
Panel Member, Eilean Siar

Recognising the contributions made by volunteers

Each year, CHS's Regional Teams host events to recognise and celebrate the commitment and work of volunteers across Scotland. During 2025-26, recognition events took place across all nine CHS regions. Volunteers from all backgrounds came together to meet, mingle and celebrate their service milestones.

Three volunteers reached exceptional milestones in 2025-26. Gordon Wyness from Highland and Stephen Phillips from West Dunbartonshire celebrated 45 years of service, while Ian Hart from East Dunbartonshire marked an

extraordinary 50 years, becoming the first Panel Member to do so.

King's Garden Party

In July 2025, 38 current and former volunteers from across all nine CHS regions attended the King's Garden Party at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. They were nominated in recognition of their services to infants, children and young people.

The King's Garden Party is also an opportunity to raise public awareness of the important work our volunteers do across the country. We were delighted to receive coverage in at least eight newspapers and their websites across Scotland.



Focus on

Hearings redesign



Informing legislative change, and preparing volunteers

CHS played an important role in the development of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Bill. During 2025-26 the legislation was introduced to Parliament and completed the three formal stages of scrutiny and amendment by MSPs, ensuring it would subsequently (in May 2026) be enacted by Royal Assent.

During the final year of the Bill's journey, CHS:

- provided a response to the Scottish Government's 'call for views'
- provided written evidence to the Education, Children and Young People Committee
- gave evidence in person to the Education, Children and Young People Committee



Meanwhile our involvement in the non-legislative space continued, through the Hearings Redesign Board, ensuring alignment with partners across the children's care and justice sector as we prepare for the implementation of the Act. We also progressed priorities of our own, such as 'Chair greeting the child' (see page 12).

A new learning model to support our vision for the future

In 2025-26, we brought learning in-house and reshaped the Learning Team so that we can create a more inclusive and adaptable learning experience for Panel Members. This change will also offer greater flexibility so that we can respond to the upcoming changes to the children's hearings system and build our digital learning provision.

Governance

Throughout the year, the Governance Team delivered improvements to our policies and processes ensuring compliance with Scottish Government requirements for Non-Departmental Government Bodies.

This included improving the quality and scheduling of information provided to our Board to evidence that we are operating not only in line with statutory responsibilities and strategic objectives, but also in line with good governance principles: accountability, transparency, integrity, risk management, efficiency and continuous improvement.

Thematic summary

Learning from lived experience

A defining feature of 2025-26 has been the increased influence of young people across our work. Lived experience has become more visible and influential throughout CHS. The establishment and growth of our Experts by Experience team demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that young people are active partners in shaping the future of CHS and the wider hearings system.

Investing in quality

Across the year, CHS continued to build a stronger focus on quality. Through proactive steps we had our biggest single intake of Panel Practice Advisers. Our PPAs' dedication, enhancements to guidance and training, and our increasing use of evidence and feedback all contributed to a strengthening of our quality-assurance capacity and capabilities.

Valuing our people

The achievements detailed in this report have been made possible by the commitment, expertise and compassion of our volunteers and colleagues. Throughout 2025-26, we invested in recruitment, learning, wellbeing and recognition and continued to build a culture where people feel valued and empowered.

Strengthening partnerships

Successful change depends on collaboration. Throughout the year, CHS worked with partner organisations including Our Hearings Our Voice, the Scottish Government, SCRA, local authorities, advocacy organisations, academics and others to enhance the volunteer experience, improve hearings for participants and ensure change puts children's rights and interests first. These relationships entail knowledge sharing and collective problem-solving, and the progress highlighted by this report shows not only the strength of CHS, but also the strength of partnerships that support our shared ambition for Scotland's children.

Building for the future

2025-26 was a year of both delivery and preparation. CHS continued to play a key role in shaping the future of the Children's Hearings System. Legislative change and wider hearings redesign present opportunities to strengthen how we uphold children's rights and improve outcomes. We are not waiting for change to happen: with input from young people and our volunteers we are helping to shape it. As we move forward, we do so with confidence, guided by evidence, informed by lived experience and supported by a dedicated volunteer community committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for infants, children and young people.



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Agenda Item 13. CHS-2627-20

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 Sept 2026
Title:	Involving our lived experience Experts in organisational decision making at Children's Hearings Scotland
Responsible Executive:	Elliot Jackson, National Convener-CEO/ Stephen Bermingham, Head of Policy and Practice
Report Author:	Angela Phillips, Participation Coordinator

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is for the Board to consider and approve an opportunity to help elevate our lived experience Experts in organisational decision making at Children's Hearing Scotland.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	We ask that CHS Board: • Support the commitment outlined in the Participation and Children's Rights Strategy for CHS to be sector leaders in involving children and young people in corporate decision making. • Approve The CHS Participation Charter. • Continue to support the involvement and opportunity for our Experts to attend CHS Board meetings. • Nominate up to two board members to take on an engagement and liaison function between CHS Board and the Experts by Experience Board.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Purpose and opportunity, section 1
3.2	CHS Participation Charter, section 2
	Stage 1 – Building relationships and agree working principles, section 3
	Stage 2 – Embedding joint working principles, section 4
	Stage 3 – Experts being involved in decision making, section 5
	Measuring our success, section 6
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • 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

Agenda Item 13. CHS-2627-20

	• Theme 2 - Driving Transformation • Objective 1 - Work with partners and stakeholders to lead and influence change. • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	N/A
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	A full suite of impact assessments were undertaken for the Children's Participation and Rights Strategy. This is a core part of that workstream.
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	In the planning and preparation for this paper we have reflected the feedback and aspirations of CHS Board members and Experts discussed on 17 June 2026 at the CHS Board meeting.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	There is no significant additional resource implication associated with this paper. The attendance of two CHS Board members at two Experts Board meetings a year will incur associated resources, but this was assessed as not significant.
10.	Appendices
	Involving our lived experience Experts in organisational decision making at Children's Hearing Scotland

Agenda Item 13. CHS-2627-20

Involving our lived experience Experts in organisational decision making at Children's Hearing Scotland, September 2026

1. Purpose and progress to date

CHS is committed to amplifying the voice of those with lived experience in the decision making of the organisation. This reflects our strategic theme of driving transformation and is a key focus of our 2026/27 business plan. It is also a duty of UNCRC Article 12, that children have the right to give their opinions freely on issues that affect them. It requires adults in position of influence to listen and take their views seriously. We recognise that to do this effectively is a process, we need to provide young people with the information, knowledge and support to engage effectively in organisational decisions making. This is a journey we have started and are committed to.

Over the last year CHS have invested in recruiting, supporting and developing our Experts by Experience group. They are a group of young people, based all over Scotland, aged 14 to 25, with lived experience of children's hearings. They regularly come together to influence the work of CHS and take part in opportunities to drive forward improvements in practices and standards across the organisation. Having made this investment, CHS are ambitious to be sector leaders in involving young people with lived experience in organisational decision making. This will elevate CHS' credibility and influence as we enter a period of significant children's hearings system redesign.

Our Experts working together with CHS and the Board provides an exciting opportunity to progress our existing commitments included in the [CHS Participation and Rights Strategy](#). Building on the strategy this paper builds on the commitment of the Board to:



- **Respect** our Experts by actively listening, empathising, and valuing the perspectives and experiences of those with lived experience.
- Ensure the **inclusion** of the views and experiences of those with lived experience are embedded in the direction of CHS at the highest level of decision making.
- Provide an **empowerment** platform for those with lived experience to create and influence lasting change.

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- Demonstrate **accountability** in fulfilling the commitments CHS make to those with lived experience.

2. CHS Participation Charter Background

CHS Experts met with CHS Senior Leadership Team and Board members in November 2025 and June 2026 and have worked together to co-design a Participation Charter. This charter provides the foundations for how CHS can include our Experts and wider groups of children and young people with lived experience in decision making.

If approved by the Board we will adopt and embed the principles of the charter to all participation work at CHS as well as using it as a framework for self-evaluation.

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The CHS Participation Charter

Purpose: To reinforce the commitment from CHS to embed meaningful participation of children and young people in governance, policy development, service design and decision making. It recognises young people as experts and commits CHS to moving beyond consultation towards shared decision making and co-production.

Vision: To continue the long-term vision of a Children's Hearing System where the voices of children and young people shape decisions and services that affect them, influence strategic direction, develop quality standards and improve hearings for young people in Scotland.

The Six Charter Principles:

- **Listen with Purpose:** Participation must influence decisions rather than simply gather opinions. Children and young people's voice will be listened to at all stages of the decision-making process – from the beginning to the end. Young people should always know why they are being involved, how their views were considered, what changed because of their involvement.
- **Value Lived Experience Voice:** Expertise gained through lived experience holds the same weight as professional knowledge.
- **Share Power:** We will involve young people as partners in decision making in matters that are important to them.
- **Inclusive:** We will ensure participation is inclusive, safe and accessible for young people and remember young people have the choice to participate.
- **Rights Respecting:** Ensure children's rights are consistently exercised rather than complied with.
- **Create Opportunity:** We will create opportunities for children and young people with lived experience to work together to influence change. We will create opportunities within CHS for young people to gain skills and experience.

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3. Stage One – Building relationships and agree joint working approaches

Relationship building is a key foundation to our groups at CHS working together. Since November 2025 our Experts have met with SLT and the CHS Board to start this process. The success of this is reciprocal trust, which will lead to young people having the skills and confidence to be involved in organisational decision making at CHS.

Opportunities so far:

- Experts have observed CHS Board meetings in March 2026 and June 2026. This provided the opportunity for our Experts to fully understand the role of the Board and how decision making happens at CHS.
- In March 2026 one of our Experts presented to the CHS Board on the involvement of our Experts in the creation of the CHS Panel Member recruitment campaign.
- Our Experts met with CHS Board members in November 2025 and June 2026 to build relationships and co-design a The CHS Participation Charter.

Next steps:

- For the opportunity for an Expert to observe CHS Board meetings to continue and be offered on a rotational basis to all Experts. Our attending Expert will continue to be supported by one of the Participation Team, with both receiving the Board papers in advance. As our Experts grow in confidence, we can explore opportunities for our Experts working with the CHS Board that extend past observing.
- For the Board to approve the co-designed CHS Participation Charter and the recommendation for the charter to be adopted across the organisation. The charter reinforces the commitment from CHS to embed meaningful participation of children and young people in governance, policy development, service design and decision making.

4. Stage Two – Embedding joint working principles

Until now the ways of working between the groups has been trialled on an ad-hoc basis. By the end of 2026 we have the opportunity to strengthen this process. This will reinforce the commitment as outlined in the strategy and The CHS Participation Charter to involving young people with lived experience in decision making at CHS.

Next steps:

- An opportunity from our Experts for one or two nominated CHS Board members to consider taking on a liaison function between the CHS Board and our Experts. The Board liaison function would:

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- Attend two Experts Board meetings a year, where practicable.
 - Provide updates to our Experts on the work of the CHS Board.
 - Update the CHS Board on the work of our Experts.
 - Consider ways to develop further opportunities for our Experts which extend past observing CHS Board meetings.
- Ongoing engagement with SLT and Senior Managers on ways to involve our Experts in their structures and how they can most effectively influence organisational priorities.
 - Develop a process via the liaison function for our Experts to share information and proposals with CHS decision makers on their work along with proposed areas for improvements within CHS.
 - Develop an abridged version of SLT/Board papers to be provided to our Experts to give an overview of what decisions are being made with an opportunity for our Experts to influence/inform decisions.

5. Stage 3 – Experts involved in decision making

The significant redesign agenda including the planning, deciding and delivering what CHS need to do up to and beyond 2030 to keep The Promise in Children's Hearings is one of our Experts priorities for next year. This is outlined in the Consistency Pillar of their Three Pillar Implementation Plan.

Under this pillar it is proposed that Experts:

- Work with the CHS Board to create a Participation Charter to determine how young people will be involved in decision making at CHS.
- Work with the Practice and Standards functions and other teams to identify areas of redesign work to involve young people.
- Create engaging sessions where young people can influence redesign and see themselves in the outcomes.
- Widen the reach of lived experience voice in redesign through regional partnership working.
- Ensure this plan is under continuous review.

Next steps:

- Our Experts will have worked collaboratively with CHS SLT and Board to influence and help shape legislative and non-legislative priorities as part of the 2027-2030 strategic outlook. This will also consider legislative developments and work to progress actions identified in the 2023-26 Progressing Children's Rights Report.
- There is a reciprocal flow of information and opportunities for our Experts to influence decision making at CHS. Examples of this may include Experts attending Board development sessions, joint fun activities and dedicated liaison members of the CHS Board attending Experts Board meetings.

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6. Measuring our success

Effective participation needs to be agile and therefore plans and activities need to flex and change depending on the feedback from young people and the requirements of CHS. We will continue to bring creativity and innovation to this work, and this will be reflected in how we report on its impact and progress.

We will use the principles of The CHS Participation Charter as a framework to continually monitor and evaluate each opportunity as well as wider participation projects:

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Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Q1 Performance Report 2026/27
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison – Director of Business and Finance/ Deputy CEO
Report Author:	Karen Ferris – Corporate Governance Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note on the Q1 Performance Report that monitors the delivery of the objectives in the CHS Business and Corporate Parenting Plan 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 note Appendix 1 - CHS Performance Report, Appendix 2 – Key Performance Indicators, the following summary and key points.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Format of Revised Report
3.1.1	A revised Performance Report has been developed for 2026/27 to provide the Board with a clearer and more integrated view of progress against the key objectives within the CHS Business Plan. The new format is intended to strengthen strategic oversight by bringing together focused reporting on performance, delivery progress, and risk information in the one report. A key enhancement is the inclusion of dedicated risk columns alongside performance information. This enables the Board to consider not only whether objectives are being delivered. Integrating risk and performance reporting supports more informed discussion, earlier identification of emerging issues, and a stronger focus on assurance.
3.2	Overall Position at Q1
3.2.1	• 8 strategic objectives are in scope for 2026/27. • All 8 objectives remain on track overall. • No objectives have yet been fully completed, which is expected given most milestones fall in Q3 and Q4. • Two milestones are currently reported as "In Progress (Delayed)" and one "Not Started (Delayed)", although none are currently considered to place the overall business plan delivery at risk.
3.3	Objectives Flagged as "Needing Attention"
3.3.1	Objective 4 – Digital and Data Strategy

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	ISO 27001 certification, which supports the redesign of data-related activities, is behind schedule. This has been driven by: • Competing organisational priorities. • Maintaining delivery timescales for accreditation and external audit requirements. • Embedding ISO 27001 requirements into business-as-usual operations It is anticipated that there will be a re-scoping of the timeline for delivery in Q2. An extended timeline may delay the ability for automatic data flow into CSAS from external CHS systems, however further work is required in this area in readiness for this activity before this can be deployed and therefore this does not impact the overall activity timeline for this work. Taking into consideration the current controls and planned re-scoping of this milestone, the overall risk to delivery of the objective remains low.
4.	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
4.1	New Measures for 2026/27
	The KPIs for 2026/27 have also be refreshed and of the 16 measures, 8 of these are new measures. A number of these new measures incorporate additional data that is now available to the data and performance analyst: ➤ % of recommended applicants appointed as Panel Practice Advisers ➤ % of appointed Panel Members who have sat on a hearing within 3 months of appointment ➤ % of appointed Panel Practice Advisers who have observed a hearing and written a report within 3 months of appointment ➤ % of active volunteers who have completed Mandatory Training by the required deadline ➤ % of newly qualified Panel Members who feel confident putting their new learning into practice ➤ % of active Panel Members appointed more than 12 months ago who are Chair qualified ➤ % of active, eligible*, Chairs who have Chaired in past quarter ➤ % of all Panel Practice Advisers who have completed their first 3-year re-appointment period
4.1.1	KPI Q1 Performance
	Of the 16 measures, 8 of these achieved less than 90% of their annual overall target. However, this is to be expected as these results reflect performance at the end of Q1 only, and the targets are set for the full 12-month reporting period, performance should therefore be viewed as an early indication of progress rather than a final assessment, particularly for measures where activity is expected to accumulate across the year. • Recommended applicants appointed as Panel Members — 67% against 85% target (79% of target) • Appointed Panel Members sitting on a hearing within three months — 67% against 95% (71% of target)

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	- Appointed Panel Practice Advisers observing a hearing and writing a report within three months — 0% against 95% (0% of target) - Panel Members appointed over 12 months ago who are Chair qualified — 84% against 95% (88% of target) - Panel Practice Advisers completing their first three-year reappointment period — 53% against 85% (62% of target) - Active Panel Members receiving one observation during the year — 33% against 90% (37% of target) - number of feedback items received from children and young people – 5 received against target of 128 (3.9% of target) - Invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations (not payment terms) – 42% against 95% (44% of target)
4.1.2	KPIs to Note
	1) Appointed Panel Practice Advisers observing a hearing and writing a report within three months — 0% against 95% (0% of target) - This is because there have been no new PPA's appointed since 30th October 2025. It is anticipated that new recruits will be appointed in Q3. 2) Active Panel Members receiving one observation during the year — 33% against 90% (37% of target) – This figure will increase as the year progresses and is currently on track. To date 600 panel members have received an observation. 3) Number of feedback items received from children and young people – 5 received against target of 128 (3.9% of target) – Feedback from children and young people remains low despite postcards being introduced in several areas. A communications campaign is now underway, with further improvements expected through a redesigned website, the launch of Voicebank and continued local engagement. Technical issues are still preventing QR codes from being added to SCRA letters. 4) Invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations (not payment terms) – 42% against 95% - Performance was impacted by delays in the approval and payment processes during the first three weeks of Q1 following the implementation of the new SAGE system. Despite this, 75% of all invoices were paid within the agreed payment terms during the period. The system is now up and running effectively.
5.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
5.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • 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

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	- 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 - 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.
6.	Key Risks
6.1	No significant risks identified. All risks noted on the performance report are tracked and, if material, will be escalated to SLT and senior managers.
7.	Risk Register
7.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
8.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
8.1	N/A
9.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
9.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
10.	Resource Implications
10.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
11.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – Performance Report Appendix 2 - KPIs

CHS Quarterly Performance Report
Q1 2026/2027

#	Objective	Expected Outcome	Key Milestones	Milestone Goal Date	Milestone Status	Objective Overall Status	Objective Overall Risk Level	Objective Risk/Issue	Mitigating Action
					Q1				
1	We will improve the hearings experience for children, young people and their families by implementing a programme of legislative and non-legislative redesign	1) 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 2. Shaping our future - We will be intensively planning redesign, creating a blueprint for our future, while developing our next Strategic Outlook for 2027-30	Create a peer learning session and resources and deliver three sessions during the financial year to improve the rights and experiences of babies and infants in the children's hearing system.	Q4	In Progress	On Course	Low	No risks or issues currently identified that are expected to affect delivery	Routine monitoring through quarterly performance reporting
			Draft Strategic Outlook for Board approval.	Q3	In Progress				
			Create high level blue print.	Q3	In Progress				
			Agreed approach to redesign.	Q3	In Progress				
			Final Strategic Outlook, Annual Business and Corporate Parenting Plan and Operational Plan.	Q4	In Progress				
2	We will shape our organisation through the voice of lived experience, by placing our Experts by Experience at the heart of organisational decision-making.	1. Strengthening voice - We will have further strengthened our Experts by Experience involvement with governance and decision making, creating a direct relationship between a. Voice and redesign planning and b. Voice and CHS Board governance.	Relationships - Launch the CHS Mentoring Scheme.	Q2	In Progress	On Course	Low	No significant risks or issues currently identified that are expected to affect overall delivery	Monitoring & support through standard operational channels
			Develop and deliver workshops linked to redesign planning to children and young people across Scotland in partnership with our Experts and Regional Teams.	Q3	In Progress				
			Opportunities and Influence - Carry out a skills audit for our Experts alongside a mapping exercise of workstreams our Experts could be involved with.	Q2	Not Started (Delayed)				
			Establish the opportunity for our Experts to have a reciprocal space during Board development sessions/SLT meetings to discuss areas that are important to them.	Q3	In Progress				
3	We will implement the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 across Children's	1. Learning for our Panel Community - Our Panel Community will be fully trained and ready to welcome the new legislation through a training programme focused on the changes and requirements.	Fulfil our obligations and prepare our people for the implementation of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, delivering a national programme of learning and engagement that ensures volunteers are prepared, confident and capable in applying new legislative requirements.	Q4	In Progress	On Course	Low	No significant risks or issues currently identified that are	Monitoring & support through standard

	Hearings Scotland and ensure our compliance with all provisions.	2. Supporting good practice - Our Panel Practice Manual will be fully updated and re-released to reflect and uphold the legislative changes within the Care and Justice Act.	Deliver C&J Internal Working Group to ensure roll out of revised practice guidance in a digitally enabled fully updated Practice & Procedure Manual.	Q3	In Progress			risks identified that are expected to affect overall delivery	operational channels
4	We will publish a digital strategy and data strategy for CHS that meets the needs of Children's Hearings aligning to our redesign planning and strategic outlook.	1. Digital ambitions - A one-year digital strategy will be developed with an accompanying one year implementation plan outlining our digital delivery.	With SCRA, deliver CSAS Joint Investment Work, enabling autonomous access to CHS cleansed data and additional hearings based.	Q4	In Progress	Needs Attention	Low	Challenges identified to ISO activity delivering to original timeline	ISO resource and timeline pro-actively being managed at senior level.
		2. Data ambitions - A data strategy will be published with an accompanying one year implementation plan outlining delivery .	To support and enable redesign related data activities, achieve ISO27001.	Q4	In Progress (Delayed)				
5	We will improve the quality and consistency of Panel member decision-making at Children's Hearings, by strengthening our observation practice and process.	1. Strengthening our observation practice and process - Create a new practice guidance for observations at hearings, and commence with the implementation of the new guidance for our Panel Practice Advisor community. 2. Evidence-driven quality improvement - Use the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) to implement a robust improvement framework focused on strengthening our quality across our regional delivery.	Refine draft Practice Guidance for Observations with regions.	Q2	In Progress	On Course	Low	No significant risks or issues currently identified that are expected to affect overall delivery	Monitoring & support through standard operational channels
			Support the design and creation of digital elements and digital Guidance, including testing with PPAs and Panel Members.	Q3	In Progress				
			Comms and launch of final Observation Practice Guidance and template.	Q4	Not Started (Not due)				
			Update PPA related Learning resources.	Q4	In Progress				
			Design and deliver PSIF self-evaluation.	Q2	In Progress				
			Align actions with team plans, identifying owners and dates for final Action Plan.	Q2	In Progress				
			Provide an evaluation report on PSIF process and project.	Q3	In Progress				
			Agree next stage implementation for PSIF within CHS.	Q4	Not Started (Not due)				
6	We will continue to transform and strengthen our learning offer to volunteers and staff, through the provision of high-quality learning that	1.Evolution of CHS learning for all - We will have a transition plan that brings all learning for all people at CHS, volunteers and staff, under one function. 2. Creating a baseline for learning - We will have conducted a learning needs analysis of our volunteer community and a review of learning provision, including the delivery methods across	People Ops and Learning teams to collaborate on a transition plan defining, activities, timeline and responsibilities as well as any skills development needed to complete transition to learning for all people to be under one function.	Q3	Not Started (Not due)	On Course	Low	No significant risks or issues currently identified that are expected to affect	Monitoring & support through standard operational
			Redesign of pre-service: Analysis of competencies.	Q1	Done				
			Redesign of pre-service: Categorise content for digital and in person.	Q2	Done				
			Redesign of pre-service: Design digital and in person pre-service modules.	Q3	In Progress				

	high quality learning that meets the evolving needs of Children's Hearings.	CHS, creating a baseline on which further development can be built. 3. Increased digital learning - We will publish a digital learning plan, outlining how we will deliver a greater percentage of pre-service training digitally and the percentage target we intend to achieve.	Redesign of pre-service: Peer review (Practice and Policy, Facilitators and Learning Champions).	Q3	In Progress			expected to affect overall delivery	channels
			Redesign of pre-service: Roll out to Facilitators.	Q3	Not Started (Not due)				
			Redesign of pre-service: Roll out to 2027 cohort of volunteers.	Q4	Not Started (Not due)				
7	Through a programme of clear communications and effective engagement around hearings system redesign, we will inspire understanding among all of our people and empower them to play their part in shaping and delivering change.	1. Defining our Communications Strategy - Start delivery of a refreshed Communications and Engagement Strategy that ensures our people are informed and engaged with the redesign of children's hearings	Deliver a multimedia national volunteer recruitment campaign, partnership toolkit, with related website content, providing a compelling case for joining CHS, to enable capacity to meet obligations relating to Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024.	Q2	In Progress	On Course	Low	No significant risks or issues currently identified that are expected to affect overall delivery	Monitoring & support through standard operational channels
			Design and deliver a communications and engagement strategy to support Hearings Redesign.	Q1	Done				
			Develop an internally agreed approach.	Q2	Done				
			Introduce the approach to the CHS community and gather feedback to inform its refinement. Review and update milestones for this objective.	Q3	Not Started (Not due)				
8	We will further progress our ambition to be an employer of choice, securing and retaining top talent with a package of employee focused, values driven policies and plans.	1. Further strengthen our leadership at CHS - We will have delivered a learning programme of enablement and coaching for our senior managers, further strengthening the foundations for children's hearings redesign. 2. Bringing our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy alive - Develop an implementation plan for our strategy. This will include awareness raising, training, and improvements to policy and design, including a focus on inclusive and values based recruitment	Develop and finalise line manager and senior manager principles that define expectations of leaders across the organisation.	Q2	In Progress (Delayed)	On Course	Low	No significant risks or issues currently identified that are expected to affect overall delivery	Monitoring & support through standard operational channels
			Deliver programme of enablement and coaching for senior managers by end.	Q3	In Progress				
			Complete review of the performance management process, develop revised process, guidance and materials, to be aligned with senior manager principles and the EDI Strategy.	Q4	Not Started (Not due)				
			Review and design guidance, learning and practice resources for staff and volunteers relating to EDI.	Q3	In Progress				

Appendix 2 – Q1 Key Performance Indicators

	Statutory Function – Recruit/ Train/ Support	Performance Measure	Baseline	2026/27 Target	2026/27 Q1 actual
Valuing our people	Recruit	% of recommended applicants appointed as Panel Members	2020/21: 84% 2021/22: 75% 2022/23: 84% 2023/24: 85% 2025/26: 76%	85%	67%
Delivering Positive Outcomes	Recruit	% of recommended applicants appointed as Panel Practice Advisers	New Measure	85%	80%
Delivering Positive Outcomes	Recruit	% of appointed Panel Members who have sat on a hearing within 3 months of appointment	New Measure	95%	67%
xDelivering Positive Outcomes	Recruit	% of appointed Panel Practice Advisers who have observed a hearing and written a report within 3 months of appointment	New Measure	95%	0%
Driving Transformation	Train Objective 3	% of active volunteers who have completed Mandatory Training by the required deadline	New Measure	95%	90%
Valuing Our People	Train Objective 5, 6	% of pre service trainees who felt the learning objectives were met	2021/22: 99% 2022/23: 98% 2023/24: 99% 2024/25: 98% 2025/26: 98%	95%	98%

Appendix 2 – Q1 Key Performance Indicators

Delivering Positive Outcomes	Train Objective 6	% of newly qualified Panel Members who feel confident putting their new learning into practice	New Measure	85%	Not available in Q1. Evaluation process underway in Q2
Delivering Positive Outcomes	Train Objective 6	% of active Panel Members appointed more than 12 months ago who are Chair qualified	New Measure	95%	84%
Delivering Positive Outcomes	Support Objective 6	% of active, eligible, Chairs who have Chaired in past quarter	New Measure	90%	88%
Valuing our People	Support	% of all Panel Practice Advisers who have completed their first 3-year re-appointment period	New Measure	85%	53%
	Support	% of Panel Members retained during the year	2021/22: 81% 2022/23: 80% 2023/24: 83% 2024/25: 84% 2025/26: 82%	85%	95%
	Support	% of Panel Practice Advisers retained during the year	2024/25: 77% 2025/26: 78%	85%	96%
Delivering Positive Outcomes	Support Objective 5	% of active Panel Members having 1 observation in year	2023/24: 71% 2024/25: 76% 2025/26: 77%	90%	33%

Appendix 2 – Q1 Key Performance Indicators

Delivering Positive Outcomes		# Number of feedback items received from children and young people	2023/24: 12 2024/25: 49 2025/26: 85	50% increase on last year	5
		% CHS employee attendance kept	2021/22: 85% 2022/23: 97% 2023/24: 97% 2024/25: 98% 2025/26: 96%	96%	95%
		% invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations as per set target (not payment terms)	2021/22: 85% 2022/23: 89% 2023/24: 87% 2024/25: 84% 2025/26: 43%	95%	42%

Agenda Item 15a. CHS-2627-22

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	26-27 Q1 Data Summary
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/ Deputy CEO
Report Author:	Elaine Gray, Data & Performance Analyst
Authors who contributed to the context of the data:	None

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1.	The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an overview of data for Q1. An Infographic is attached at Appendix I. KPIs have been reported in the Performance Report.
1.2.	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1.	1. The Board are asked to note the report. 2. Following digital investment and shared working with SCRA, we now have access to greater range of operational hearings data, and we are working to create an agreed National Data Set for reporting against, this reporting format will therefore be reviewed and updated in due course.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
	<u>Disclaimer</u> • Much of the data reported here are live operational data and subject to change. • Data are to 30/06/26 unless otherwise specified. • Quarterly changes are since 25/26 Q4-end. • “Active” is defined as being on rota in the past 3 months or has an assignment (session/observation) in future; for Chairs it does not mean they Chaired.
3.1	Panel Members:
3.1.1	• At end Q1 there were 2,104 (+77) Panel Members. The increase is a result of the appointment of the cohort from the autumn 2025 recruitment campaign. • 1,845 (+77) active Panel Members = 87.7% (+0.5%). See data in Table 1 and trends in Figure 1.

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3.1.2	- The Panel Member forecast is shown in <u>Figure 2</u> and indicates that we are currently on track to be able to support the forecast increase in hearings as a result of the implementation of the Care and Justice Act in spring 2027. - The Forecast is based on assumptions around recruitment campaigns, including maximising the intake from our Autumn 2026 campaign, the number of Panel Members we aim to appoint, implementation dates, and data assumptions made in the forecast, such as ends of service. - The forecast is based on the assumption that CHS will begin to see an increase in Hearings as a result of the Care and Justice Act in April 2027, but the numbers will steadily increase rather than there be a sharp uptick. - Close monitoring of capacity will continue during 2027 to inform ongoing recruitment activity.
3.2	Chairing Panel Members
3.2.1	- At end Q1, there were 1,534 Chairs (+66) = 72.9% (+0.5%) of Panel Members are Chair-qualified. 1,422 (+81) of all Panel Members are both active and Chair-qualified = 67.6% (+1.4%). 77.1% (+1.2%) of active Panel Members are Chair-qualified. - See data in Table 1 and trends in Figure 1.
3.3	Panel Practice Advisors
3.3.1	- At end Q1 there were 148 (+30) PPAs; this is due to the recent appointments of PPAs following a successful national recruitment campaign. 80 (-2) active PPAs = 54.1% (-15.4%). The decrease in active PPAs is likely due to the newly appointed PPAs not yet being on rota to observe Panel Members and skewing figures.
3.3.2	PPA completion of their first term The target is for 85% of PPAs to complete their first 3-year appointment term. The actual is 53.3%. We have been investing in improving PPA recruitment, onboarding and training, ongoing development and building of PPA community connections and we expect to see this retention rate increase over time.
3.3.3	Observations - The target is for 90% of active (and eligible) Panel Members to be observed at least once during the year. - At the end of Q1, 32.7% had been observed. This is comparable to Q1 25/26 and previous in year trends.
3.4	Volunteer demographics
3.4.1	- There have been some changes in the volunteer demographic information over the past quarter, likely as a result of ends of service and new cohorts being appointed. - Length of service: - Panel Members:

Agenda Item 15a. CHS-2627-22

	▪ mean of 6.0 (-0.3) years ▪ median of 4.0 (+0.3) years ○ PPAs: ▪ mean of 3.0 (-0.7) years ▪ median of 2.1 (-0.9) years • Gender: ○ Panel Members: ▪ 73.4% (+1.0%) female ▪ 26.3% (-1.0%) male ▪ 0.3% (+0.1%) non-binary or blank ○ PPAs: ▪ 65.1% (+3.2%) female ▪ 26.2% (-0.1%) male ▪ 8.7% (-3.1%) non-binary or blank • Age: ○ Panel Members: ▪ mean of 54.8 (-0.1) years ▪ median of 57.1 (-0.1) years ○ PPAs: ▪ mean of 59.9 (0.0) years ▪ median of 62.1 (-0.9) years • Previous experience of the children's hearing system: ○ This data shows the number of volunteers who have declared previous experience of the hearing system. ○ Experience type (i.e. lived/as a previous volunteer/worked in the sector) is not recorded. ▪ Panel Members: 5.2% (-0.2%) ▪ PPAs: 18.8% (+5.2%)
3.5	Compulsory Supervision Order Implementation Breaches
3.5.1	• 2 Compulsory Supervision Order implementation breaches were reported in 26/27 Q1. One was resolved at Stage 1 and one is on-going.
4.	Key Risks
4.1	None.
5.	Risk Register
5.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
6.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
6.1	Impact assessment not required.
7.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)

Agenda Item 15a. CHS-2627-22

7.1	There is no requirement for engagement and consultation in relation to this paper.
8.	Resource Implications
8.1	There is no specific resource implication associated with this paper.
9.	Appendices
9.1	Appendix 1 - Data Summary: 2026-27 Q1 data

Table 1. Volunteer data

	PMs	Active PMs	Chairs	Chairs of Active	PPAs	Active PPAs
Ayrshire	133	90.2%	101	79.2%	9	66.7%
Central	228	89.5%	182	82.8%	18	50.0%
Glasgow	371	83.6%	248	73.9%	18	61.1%
Grampian	179	83.2%	135	83.2%	17	35.3%
Highland	132	83.3%	98	78.2%	9	55.6%
Lanarks & D&G	284	91.5%	173	63.5%	11	45.5%
N Strathclyde	261	90.0%	175	71.1%	27	59.3%
South East	210	91.0%	183	88.0%	15	60.0%
Tayside & Fife	306	86.9%	239	82.3%	24	54.2%
National count	2,104	1,845	1,534	1,422	148	80
Change count	+77	+77	+66	+81	+30	-2
National %		87.7%	72.9%	77.1%		54.1%
Change %		+0.5%	+0.5%	+1.2%		-15.4%

Table 2. Demographics

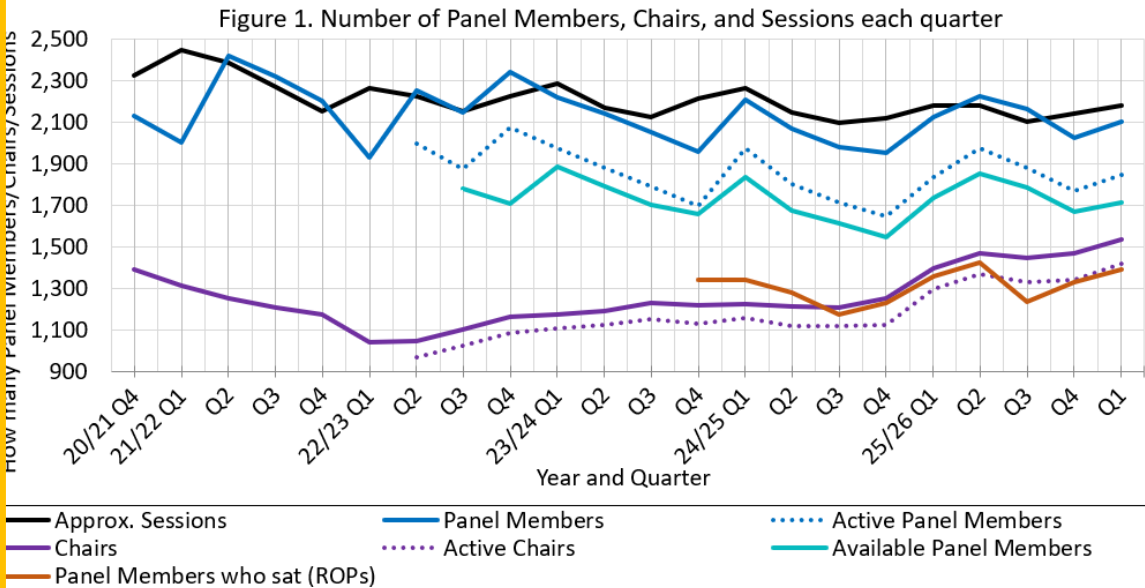
	PMs	Change	PPAs/AST	Change
Mean length of service (yrs)	6.0	-0.3	3.0	-0.7
Median length of service (yrs)	4.0	+0.3	2.1	-0.9
% Female	73.4%	+1.0%	65.1%	+3.2%
% Male	26.3%	-1.0%	26.2%	-0.1%
% Other genders or no data	0.3%	+0.1%	8.7%	-3.1%
Mean age (yrs)	54.8	-0.1	59.9	0.0
Median age (yrs)	57.1	-0.1	62.1	-0.9
% has exp. of hearings system	5.2%	-0.2%	18.8%	+5.2%

Panel Member forecast

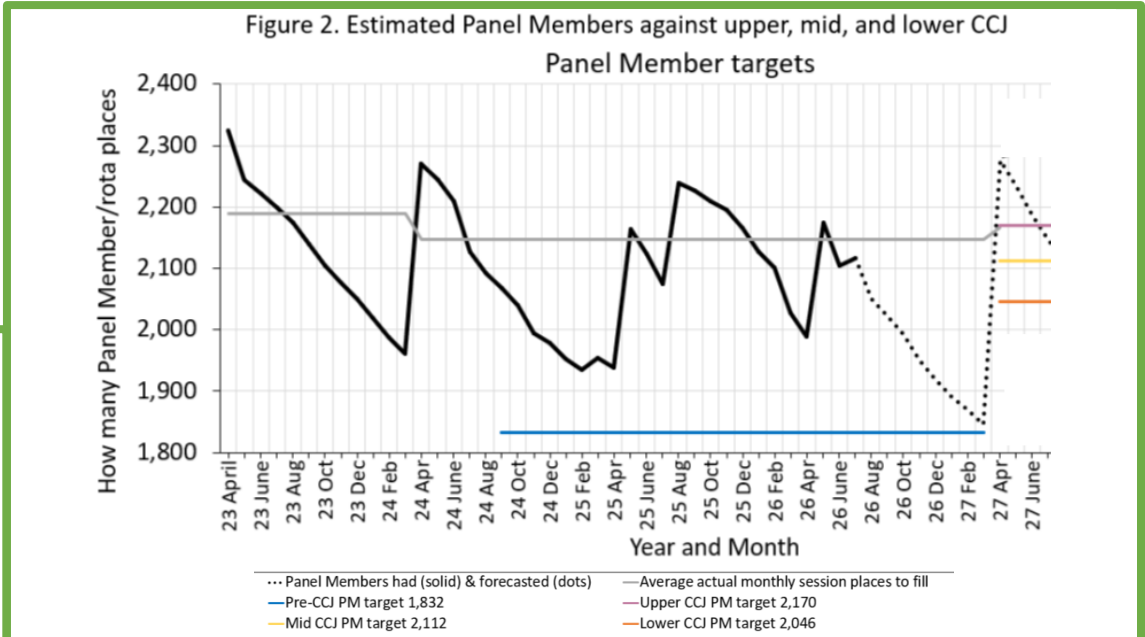
Calculations updated July 25; data updated July 26.

- Forecast based on live operational data and subject to change.
- Additional Care & Justice Act sessions anticipated from April 2027.
- We continue to closely monitor timelines for C&J and recruitment along with capacity and risk.
- Forecast predicts we are track to be within target range for the first ~seven months, but thereafter, it will depend on session numbers and PM data.
- Risk is impacted by PM service ends, PM unavailable rate, number of sessions PMs can do, number of sessions PMs scheduled for, rota optimisation, scheduling project, and number of rota sessions created by SCRA.

Trends over time

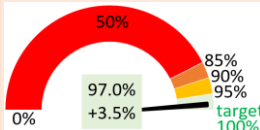


Definition of active: has been on rota in the past 3 months or is scheduled for future.

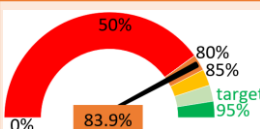


Performance overview

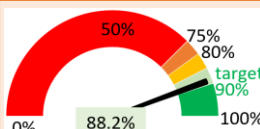
PMs against forecasted PM target



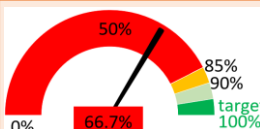
Active PMs appt. >12m ago who are Chairs



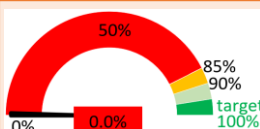
Active Chairs who chaired in the past Q



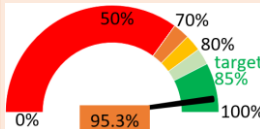
PMs sat within 3 months of appt.



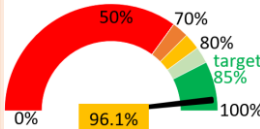
PPAs wrote report within 3 months of appt.



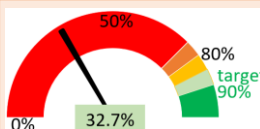
PMs retained in year



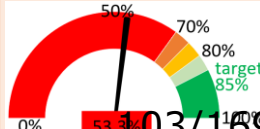
PPAs retained in year



Active, eligible, PMs observed in the year



PPAs completed first 3-year term



Agenda Item 16. CHS-2627-23

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Wellbeing and Retention Update
Responsible Executive:	Joanne O'Leary, Director of People & Culture
Report Author:	Brittany Williamson, National Wellbeing Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1.	This paper provides assurance on the delivery and impact of the Wellbeing & Retention Approach and the contribution of Wellbeing Coordinators in supporting volunteer retention, experience, and resilience. It also outlines how the wellbeing support offer is evolving to change with the community and to support through anticipated redesign.
1.2.	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead after this update has been shared at the Board meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1.	The Board are asked to note the impact of the Wellbeing & Retention Approach, recognise the strategic contribution of Wellbeing Coordinators to volunteer retention and organisational sustainability, and endorse the continued development of the wellbeing offer to support the Panel Community through reform and change.
3.	Introduction and background
3.1	The ability to attract, retain and support skilled volunteers is critical to Children's Hearing Scotland's ability to fulfil its statutory functions. As such, wellbeing is a key enabler of volunteer activity, engagement, and retention.
3.2	Over the past three years, the Tribunal Support Model has enabled wellbeing to become embedded within volunteer management practices, operational delivery and community engagement. Through locally delivered and nationally informed support, Wellbeing Coordinators have become trusted points of contact for Panel Members and Panel Practice Advisors, providing both individual support and strategic insight into the experiences of the volunteer community.
3.3	This model has strengthened CHS' understanding of volunteer needs, supported earlier intervention where concerns arise, and created more responsive systems that better reflect the realities of undertaking an emotionally demanding decision-making role.
3.4	The Wellbeing & Retention Approach developed in 2024 set out the 4 pillars of focus to support our volunteer community, delivered through: • Tools & Resources; • Volunteer Management;

	• Recognising Contributions and • Building a Diverse Community The approach has evolved with the organisation and is being refreshed to support work across the Tribunal Delivery team, our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion ambitions, our Health and Safety agenda, and other organisational aims. The approach continues to be delivered through a matrix model with regionally based Wellbeing Coordinators and feedback loops to central colleagues. In 2026, alongside other volunteer retention data, we seek to strengthen the collation of insights and themes (alongside Quality colleagues and other qualitative data sources), to continue to influence the development of the delivery model. The approach recognises that retention is influenced not only by volunteer recruitment and recognition, but by the quality of support volunteers receive throughout their journey. Wellbeing Coordinators play a central role in translating national policy into meaningful local support, ensuring organisational processes remain person-centred whilst maintaining consistency across Scotland.
3.5	Impact Across the Volunteer Journey A key strength of the wellbeing model is its presence across the full volunteer lifecycle. Wellbeing Coordinators provide support at key transition points, helping volunteers build confidence, navigate challenges, remain engaged and leave well where appropriate. Wellbeing Coordinators enhanced support to our Panel Community through more person-centred improvements, helping develop more proactive impactful processes, and ultimately helping our volunteers at every step of their journey.
3.5.1	The wellbeing support offer is available to community volunteers and Wellbeing Coordinators deliver this by: • Supporting reasonable adjustments at recruitment and training stages to promote inclusion and accessibility; • Dedicated 3- and 6-month check-ins for newly qualified Panel Members to strengthen confidence and identify support needs early; • Support during reappointment processes to encourage reflection, development and continued engagement; • Guided reflective conversations and debriefs following complex or emotionally impactful hearings; • Support during complaints, leave of absence periods and returns to hearing activity; • Recognition and end-of-service conversations that ensure volunteers feel valued throughout their contribution to CHS. Collectively, these interventions strengthen volunteer experience, provide assurance regarding volunteer wellbeing and create opportunities for organisational learning through direct feedback from the community.
3.5.2	<u>Supporting through change:</u> from Trainee to becoming confident Panel Member Improving trainee and newly qualified PMs confidence, managing issues sooner, and strengthening engagement as we support volunteers through this new role.

Supporting volunteers through periods of transition has emerged as one of the most significant contributions of the wellbeing model. Experience over the past three years demonstrates that early relationship-building, proactive engagement and tailored support improve confidence, reduce uncertainty and strengthen retention among newly qualified Panel Members.

This includes:

- **Developing trust and relationships:** embedded early the offer of wellbeing support, onward signposting, and building a culture of trust and openness. This includes attending Preservice Training days in some instances.
- **Making introductions at welcome events:** Sharing the wellbeing support offer and personal responsibility for self-care when sitting on hearings. We continue to strengthen the acknowledgement of the high-stress situations volunteers may be involved in.
- **Provision of additional supports and reasonable adjustments** coordinated centrally and delivered locally, in a more proactive and structure manner to enable trainees to participate fully in training and hearings once qualified and a friction-less handover to TD colleagues.
- **3- and 6-month check-ins** with newly qualified PMs as a dedicated opportunity to help build confidence and identify issues early, the feedback of which has influenced national delivery and engagement.
- **Building confidence and supporting the chairing pathway**, delivered collaboratively with PELs, enabling PMs to progress safely into chairing roles. This has also included relaying evidence to support temporary, or in some instances, permanent exemptions to chairing.
- **Dedicated support coordination** as a key person to reach out to for personal or relational support needs, onward support requirements, or for re-direction of questions relating to the volunteer role. This has resulted in onward referrals to our current Employee Assistance Provider (EAP) and other services (i.e. Women's Aid, Alcoholics Anonymous, Cruse Bereavement)

3.5.3 **Wellbeing offer and supportive volunteer management**

Wellbeing Coordinators provide a consistent and proportionate wellbeing offer throughout a volunteer's time with CHS. Their role combines supportive volunteer management, early intervention and safeguarding, helping CHS better understand volunteer capacity, identify emerging risks and respond appropriately to individual circumstances.

This includes:

- **Support after difficult or emotionally impactful hearings:** Wellbeing Coordinators lead timely check-ins after hearings using insights locally, from AST insights, or from SCRA. Support comes in the form of 1-1s or at times, facilitated debrief sessions. Improvements from these conversations are managed within the wider AST.
- **Reviewing and updating activity status of volunteers:** In line with the Leave of Absence, Off Rota, Unavailable Policy, Wellbeing Coordinators lead on the support during periods of personal difficulty or that which requires time away from the rota. They take the lead in managing Leaves of Absence, including signposting to external support and managed, supportive returns to

	rota where appropriate. Their advice is sought by TDMs when there is a complaint or feedback, to ensure our processes are as robust as they are kind. They also advise the TDM on where inactive PMs are not responding over a sustained period of time, thus having them marked as 'Unavailable' and therefore more accurate data on our active community members. • Managing resignations and feedback during endings: Wellbeing Coordinators take a compassionate approach to exiting CHS where they recognise contributions and ensure people have a space to feel heard. • This support is particularly important given the recognition of psychosocial risks to health and safety, and the nature of complex hearings, where volunteers can be exposed to distressing circumstances, heightened conflict and cumulative emotional impacts. Through reflective conversations, signposting and managed support pathways, Wellbeing Coordinators help mitigate the risks associated with burnout, withdrawal and vicarious trauma. Engagement through the Hearings Delivery Group seeks to obtain relevant information in advance of complex hearings to make more visible the wellbeing support to strengthen resilience ahead of hearings.
3.4	Wellbeing as an Enabler of Redesign As CHS progresses with redesign, wellbeing will be a critical component of successful implementation. Feedback gathered through the Wellbeing Coordinator network indicates that volunteers require not only timely information about change, but structured support to navigate uncertainty, changing expectations and evolving roles. Insights from the Wellbeing Community of Practice have identified three priority areas requiring ongoing focus to strengthen the wellbeing support offer and implement redesign changes: • Volunteer wellbeing, safeguarding and resilience; • Clear roles, responsibilities and expectations; • Community engagement, culture change and volunteer confidence throughout transition. The existing wellbeing infrastructure provides CHS with an established mechanism to gather feedback, identify emerging themes, support meaningful engagement and maintain trust during periods of change. This places Wellbeing Coordinators in a unique position to help shape how reform is experienced by the volunteer community and to minimise unintended impacts on retention and volunteer experience.
4.	Forward Look
4.1	During 2026/27, Wellbeing Coordinators will continue delivering operational support whilst contributing to strategic priorities relating to volunteer retention, community engagement, data and evidence, volunteer safeguarding and reform implementation. Their role will remain an important bridge between national developments and local volunteer experience.

	These include: • Consistent delivery: Wellbeing Coordinators will continue to be key to delivering volunteer management processes, providing relevant feedback and insights, and driving an improved and consistent approach with their AST colleagues. (i.e. Policy and Guidance for: Devolved Budget, Recognition, Reasonable Adjustments, Adult Safeguarding, Ends of Service, CSAS Volunteer Management records, Feedback and Complaints processes) • Data, themes, and impact: we are reviewing data and streamlining the qualitative data that is available across the volunteer journey (i.e. wellbeing check-ins, absence, reappointment, end of service) and how this aligns with quantitative data from CSAS. Previous work to support CSAS data management has been undertaken to ensure rota plans reflect volunteer activity and training records. • Strengthening wellbeing support offer in light of redesign: considering the operating model and co-develop what support to the community can look and feel like through changes. This includes exploring similar high-pressure roles, explore considerations such as supervisory models, safeguarding done well, considering the needs and impact of various volunteer and contractor roles, and implementing boundaries for Panel Members and remunerated chairs. • Participate in and influence relevant national working groups: ○ Equality Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (EDIWG): Ensure voice and feedback from volunteers is considered and implemented in organisational delivery plan, including actions around training requirements, relevant learning modules to strengthen our trauma-informed practice and voice of care-experienced, and supporting disability-friendly processes ○ Health and Safety Committee: Contribute to development of H&S Policy and CHS Risk Assessment, eventually undertaking discussions and risk assessments locally with SCRA and supporting training and awareness raising with community in response to feedback ○ Recruitment and selection improvements: Building on previous contributions, continue to be involved in the review of EDI selection training and good inclusive recruitment practices. Three years into the Tribunal Support Model, wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a strategic contributor to volunteer sustainability rather than solely an individual support function. The development of trusted relationships, responsive support mechanisms and robust feedback loops has strengthened CHS' understanding of its community and enhanced its ability to support volunteers undertaking a demanding public service role. As the organisation moves through a period of significant change, this capability will become increasingly important in maintaining confidence, engagement and retention across the Panel Community.
5.	Key Risks
	N/A
6.	Risk Register

	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
	Impact assessment not required
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
	Engagement with Catherine Goodfellow as Retention manager and TDM lead for Wellbeing, Hazel Oliver.
9.	Resource Implications
	N/A

Agenda Item 17. CHS-2627-24

Meeting:	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
Meeting Date:	21 September 2026
Title:	Retention Operational Plan: Business as Usual, built on volunteer voice and experience
Responsible Executive:	Joanne O'Leary, Director of People & Culture
Report Author:	Brittany Williamson (National Wellbeing Manager)
Contributing	Catherine Goodfellow (Recruitment & Retention Manager) with cross-organisational team data

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1.	The purpose of this report is to present a consolidated view of volunteer feedback gathered across the volunteer lifecycle and to set out CHS's coordinated retention approach. This report brings together evidence from: • End of Service survey and exit interview conversations; • Reappointment Review meetings; • Volunteer User Experience Research from Q1-2 2026; • 3- and 6-month self-evaluations and Wellbeing check-ins with newly appointed Panel Members from 2025-26 This work is aligned to our Business As Usual and has been shared with relevant Learning Team colleagues and Tribunal Delivery contacts (Hazel Oliver and Laura Mearns as TDM leads for Wellbeing and Recruitment, Learning)
1.2.	In summary: 1.1 Volunteers remain highly committed to improving outcomes for children and young people and continue to describe their role as meaningful, rewarding and purposeful. 1.2 Feedback gathered from volunteers at different stages of the volunteer journey is remarkably consistent, providing confidence that as an organisation, we understand the key drivers of volunteer engagement and retention. 1.3 The strongest positive themes relate to purpose, support from colleagues, learning opportunities and community. 1.4 The strongest recurring challenges relate to workload and time commitment, charring expectations, hearing preparation, digital systems, communication overload and maintaining a sense of community. In response, CHS has developed a coordinated retention operational plan that is shared across various teams in the organisation and will be considered in upcoming recruitment activities.
1.3.	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead after this update has been shared at the Board meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1.	SLT are asked to note the findings from volunteer feedback and the consistency of themes emerging across the volunteer lifecycle (Appendix A) and the Retention Operational Plan (Appendix B).

3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Background Over the last two years CHS has built a stronger understanding of volunteer feedback through the introduction of: ○ Wellbeing check-ins and self-evaluation processes for new PMs ○ Wellbeing Coordinators submitting data to end of service questionnaires ○ Quantitative reappointment feedback collated centrally 2. User research to understand drivers for volunteering These sources provide insight from across the volunteer experience: when newly joined; when established and actively participating in hearings; when approaching reappointment; and when choosing to leave the organisation. Taken together, this feedback enables CHS to better recognise and acknowledge the lifecycle of our volunteer community. This report brings this data together to create a single understanding of volunteer experience and retention to highlight improvements as part of the operational activity for retention.
4.	Understanding Our Volunteer Community: Key Findings and Retention Risks
4.1	Volunteer Archetypes – user research experience User research identified three broad groups within the volunteer community which can help explain differing experiences and support needs. Long-Serving Community Anchors ○ Joined pre-2018 ○ Highly connected to local identity and community. ○ Value relationships and peer discussion. ○ Experienced volunteering before significant digital transformation. ○ Often act as ambassadors and informal mentors Adaptive Contributors ○ Joined 2018 to early 2020 ○ Experienced both local and regional delivery models. ○ Adaptable to organisational change. ○ Highly outcomes-focused. ○ Bridge perspectives between newer and longer-serving volunteers. Self-Motivated Learners ○ Joined since 2020 ○ Motivated by learning and personal development. ○ More accustomed to digital and hybrid environments. ○ Value frequent feedback and opportunities for progression. ○ More likely to navigate systems independently. Across the findings, the subset of volunteers (n=25) had common views as they: ● Remain motivated by purpose of improving outcomes for children and young people ● Are concerned by the extent of work, communication, digital systems, community connection and development opportunities.
4.2	What keeps volunteers regularly participating in hearings Across all sources of business as usual retention feedback (n=>600 over 2 year span), volunteers consistently report that they: ● feel strongly committed to children and young people

	• feel the role provides a sense of purpose and meaning despite challenges • value opportunities to contribute to their communities • are motivated by learning and development Purpose remains the strongest protective factor for volunteer retention and therefore it is important to continue to respond to and develop activities that maximise hearing involvement, limit frustrations, and deliver the volunteer role as intended
4.3	Helping volunteers find community, belonging and feel supported The importance of community emerges consistently across all feedback sources. Volunteers value support from Area Support Teams in the form of Wellbeing Coordinators, PELs, PPAs, Buddy relationships, and learning from peers. Feedback themes that are found to detract from community belonging include: • A sense of reduced local identity • Fewer face-to-face opportunities • Reduced opportunities to connect with peers • Feeling disconnected from wider organisational activity. Community connection appears to be one of the strongest drivers of both volunteer wellbeing and retention as recognised in volunteer motivations.
4.4	Volunteer role expectations, workload and time commitment The commitment to the role is the strongest recurring challenge identified across all sources of feedback. Volunteers consistently report: • Hearing preparation taking longer than expected • Large hearing bundles and hearing papers • Balancing volunteering with employment and family commitments • Managing training requirements • Increasing complexity of hearings Time commitment remains one of the most common reasons for volunteers ending service. As an organisation we continue to strive for a diverse mix of volunteers who represent the voices of Scotland to support retention efforts and to recognise the potential barriers to volunteering.
4.5	Learning, Development and Feedback Training is consistently identified as one of the most valued aspects of volunteering. Volunteers particularly value: 3. Pre-Service training 4. Trauma-informed approaches 5. Local learning opportunities 6. PPA observations and feedback 7. Support from experienced volunteers Volunteers would like: 8. More regular developmental feedback • More observation opportunities to support assurance of practice • More verbal reflective discussions • Additional support with confidence building • Greater visibility of hearing outcomes Focusing volunteer-involving activities around the development of volunteers as they prepare and continue honing practice sitting on hearings, is of high value.

4.6	Chairing Chairing expectations emerged as a notable theme across all sources of data with common feedback including: • Nervousness about chairing 9. Desire for more experience before progressing 10. Requests for more coaching and mentoring • Limited opportunities to build confidence • A reason for leaving and/or feeling that the enforcement of the policy result in the 'right time' to exit
4.7	Digital Systems and Communications Common operational themes are across all areas: • Digital systems, CSAS • Hearing paper management • Device performance. • Virtual hearings. • Email volume and communication overload. These challenges affect both new and experienced volunteers.
5	Retention Plan
5.1	Coordinated Response Recruitment & Retention, Learning, Wellbeing, and Tribunal Delivery, and other colleagues are working together to coordinate a retention plan based upon the evidence gathered throughout the volunteer lifecycle. Seen in Appendix B, these priorities include: 1. Setting Realistic Expectations Earlier 2. Strengthening Onboarding and Early Engagement 3. Learning, Confidence and Development 4. Improving the Digital Experience 5. Building Community and Connection These priorities align with 'Business As Usual' activity and is not unique to the core operation of CHS. However, there are some activities within this plan that require decisions about use of resource or about how changes are delivered.
6	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
	Theme 2: Driving Transformation • Becoming a more data-informed organisation. • Using volunteer insight to drive improvement activity. Theme 3: Valuing Our People • Supporting volunteer wellbeing. • Creating an inclusive culture. • Strengthening engagement and connection. • Improving volunteer retention and experience.
7	Key Risks
	Failure to address recurring themes may impact: • Volunteer retention; • Volunteer wellbeing;

	• Chairing capacity; • Volunteer engagement; • Recruitment outcomes; and • Long-term sustainability of the volunteer community.
8	Risk Register
	<i>There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.</i>
9	Impact on Inequality/Rights
	<i>Equalities Impact Assessment Required: No</i> <i>However, the findings support continued work to improve accessibility, inclusion, digital confidence and diversity within the volunteer community.</i>
10	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
	<i>This paper is founded on direct engagement with volunteers throughout the lifecycle, including:</i> <i>1. Self-evaluations.</i> <i>2. Wellbeing check-ins.</i> <i>3. Reappointment reviews.</i> <i>4. User research.</i> <i>5. End of Service questionnaires.</i> <i>6. Exit interviews.</i>
11	Resource Implications
	<i>The majority of actions outlined within this paper are being delivered through existing teams and planned business activity.</i> <i>Future opportunities requiring investment will be considered through existing planning and prioritisation processes. This can be supported by engagement where slides will be shared at a later date.</i>

APPENDIX A: VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK THEMES ACROSS THE LIFECYCLE

Key message: The consistency of themes across all sources suggests a high degree of confidence in CHS's understanding of volunteer experience and retention drivers.

Theme	New PM Check-ins	UX Research	Reappointment	End of Service
Purpose and impact	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community and belonging	✓	✓	✓	✓
Time commitment	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hearing papers	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning and development	✓	✓	✓	✓
Feedback and observations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chairing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Digital systems	✓	✓	✓	✓
Communications	✓	✓	✓	✓
Volunteer support	✓	✓	✓	✓

APPENDIX B: Retention Operational Plan: Business as Usual, built on volunteer voice and experience (2026-27)

Priority	Action	Progress	Lead Area	Intended Outcome
Panel Member Expectations	Refresh campaign messaging and recruitment materials; emphasis legal decision maker- from first interaction on website, social media followed by emphasis at Information Sessions	Complete	Recruitment & Retention	Improved understanding of role
	Refresh Recruitment & Selection training	Complete	Recruitment & Retention	Reduced expectation gaps
	Communication of expectations around workload, commitment and development requirements in recruitment communications	Complete	Recruitment & Retention	Reduced expectation gaps
	Reiteration and clarity of expectation in interview with briefings	Oct	Tribunal Delivery	Reduced expectation gaps
	Increased focus on rota availability from application to detailed explanation at interview.	Oct-Nov	Tribunal Delivery / Recruitment & Retention	Reduced expectation gaps
	Pre-Service training emphasis on role	Early Nov	Learning	Improved understanding of role
Onboarding	Welcome booklet and onboarding refresh	Oct-Nov	Recruitment / Learning / Wellbeing	Better early engagement
	Anticipated milestones through first year communicated and diarised	Nov	Recruitment / Learning / Tribunal Delivery	Improved connection and attendance
	Intro to Preservice with Digital induction and observation availability submissions	Nov	Recruitment / Learning / Tribunal Delivery	Better early engagement and role capability
	In-person with newly appointed Trainees via Digital Drop-ins	Nov-Dec	Tribunal Delivery	Better early engagement and role capability
Build confidence	Refreshed Preservice modules to build capability	Q4 26/7	Learning	Improved capability for role
	3- and 6-month self-evaluations	Aug '27	Learning	Early identification of practice training needs
	3- and 6- month Wellbeing check-ins	Sep '27	Wellbeing	Increased belonging, resilience and identification of support needs
Development	Use check-in data to coordinate support	Ongoing	Learning / Wellbeing / Tribunal Delivery	Better volunteer experience
	Refresh PPM and practice guides	Q4 26/27	Practice / Learning /	Increased practice skill

			Wellbeing / Tribunal Delivery	development and confidence
	Chairing support pathways and guidance	Q4 26/27	Wellbeing / Tribunal Delivery / Learning / Quality	Increased confidence, growth mindset
	Increased focus on developmental conversations	Q1 27/28	Wellbeing / Tribunal Delivery / Quality	Constructive feedback and stronger development
Digital	Devices 'in-hand' with Digital Support at Pre Service intro	Ongoing	Digital / Recruitment / Learning	Increased digital confidence
	Increased visibility of available support routes	Ongoing	Recruitment / Learning / Wellbeing/ Tribunal Delivery	Better volunteer experience
	Updated digital guidance to provide with laptops to new PMs	Nov/Dec	Digital / Learning	Reduced frustration
	Weekly digital drop-ins with colleagues supporting before Pre-Service	Nov-Jan	Digital / Learning / Tribunal Delivery	Increased system confidence
Communication	Induction webinars centrally delivered for consistent messaging	Nov-Dec	Tribunal Delivery	Consistent messaging
Community	Recognition and engagement activity	27/28	Tribunal Delivery / Wellbeing	Stronger volunteer belonging
	Peer learning and networking opportunities	27/28	Tribunal Delivery	Improved community connection
Volunteer Management	Establish consistent inactive Panel Member monitoring processes (i.e. volunteer engagement aligned to CSAS and Reappointment)	Q3 26/27	Recruitment / Wellbeing/ Tribunal Delivery	Better vol. mgmt. and understanding of retention
	Reappointment Review meetings recognising PM commitment, review strengths, feedback, and discussion re: redesign	27/28	Recruitment/ Wellbeing/ Tribunal Delivery	Understanding of retention of volunteers

Agenda Item 18. CHS-2627-25

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Phase 1 – Organisational Self-evaluation
Responsible Executive:	Carol Wassell, Director of Positive Outcomes/Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance/Depute CEO
Report Author:	Estelle Carmichael, Quality Manager

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to ask the Board to note the update on the progress of the phase one implementation project of the CHS/Public Service Improvement Framework. The report outlines the rationale for this work, its contribution to implementation of the Quality Strategy, the key findings and improvement priorities identified, and how evaluation of this phase will inform future organisational self-evaluation and the further implementation of Quality Strategy developments.
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 note the • Background and purpose of project • Update on phase one implementation • Taking forward improvement actions • What next • Conclusion
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Background and purpose
3.1.1	Over the first 18 months, implementation of the Quality Strategy has focused on developing the infrastructure, evidence and capabilities required to support a more integrated approach to assurance, organisational learning and improvement. Key deliverables include Quality Observation Insights, enhanced support for Panel Practice Advisers and CHS's first organisational self-evaluation. Together, these developments are strengthening CHS's ability to understand quality, identify improvement priorities and support evidence-informed decision-making. As part of Quality Strategy implementation, CHS identified the need for a more systematic approach to understanding organisational strengths, identifying improvement priorities and supporting evidence-based decision-making. Organisational self-evaluation is a key component of the wider quality programme and supports the development of a more integrated approach to quality planning, assurance and improvement.

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	The Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) was selected as CHS's organisational self-evaluation framework because it is a recognised methodology used across Scottish public services and aligns with approaches used in other sectors. Working with the Improvement Service, CHS developed a tailored approach aligned to National Standards, What Matters principles and the values of the Children's Hearings System, while building internal capability for future delivery. A phased approach was adopted, focusing initially on the Tribunal Delivery Directorate. This enabled the methodology and delivery approach to be tested and evaluated, while also providing an opportunity to better understand the impact of the Tribunal Delivery model and supporting infrastructure introduced in 2023.
3.2	Update, outputs and outcomes
3.2.1	The analysis stages of Phase One are complete, with improvement planning in its final stages. The Improvement Service has provided a draft final report and once finalised, this will conclude their involvement. A total of 261 participants, including 36 colleagues, 220 volunteers and 5 clerks, contributed feedback against 34 evaluation statements, providing CHS with its first structured organisational self-evaluation evidence base for the Tribunal Delivery model. Participation levels provided a broad evidence base across colleagues, volunteers and clerks, supporting confidence in the findings and resulting improvement priorities. Delivered in partnership with the Improvement Service, the project tested a tailored organisational self-evaluation approach aligned to the CHS context. The findings highlighted the significant contribution of the Tribunal Delivery Directorate, its colleagues and the infrastructure supporting Children's Hearings across Scotland. The findings identified several organisational strengths, particularly the extent to which CHS values are demonstrated in practice, alongside positive evidence relating to volunteer engagement, wellbeing support, partnership working and leadership communication. Opportunities for development were identified in planning and collaboration, consistency of practice, feedback and complaints, and the digital and information environment. Beyond the findings, the project has established a baseline for future improvement and increased organisational capability in self-evaluation, improvement planning and organisational learning.
3.3	What next?
3.3.1	The draft Improvement Plan is being refined with the Tribunal Delivery Directorate and relevant national teams. Several actions align with existing organisational priorities and programmes of work and will require continued cross-directorate collaboration. The Plan provides a coordinated framework for implementing agreed improvements, with clear ownership, timescales and expected outcomes. Final approval will be agreed between the Tribunal Delivery Directorate and SLT. The final report will conclude the Improvement Service's role; however, Phase One will not formally conclude until the Quality Team completes its evaluation and presents findings and recommendations to SLT. As this phase was intentionally designed as a learning project, the evaluation will assess the methodology, delivery

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	approach, participant experience and organisational learning generated through the process. Implementation of the improvement plan will be monitored through existing governance arrangements, including a formal 12-month review point. Learning from the self-evaluation, improvement activity and project evaluation will inform recommendations on the future development and application of organisational self-evaluation within CHS, aligned to the Quality Strategy and wider quality programme.
3.4	Conclusion
	Phase One has successfully tested CHS's first organisational self-evaluation model, providing evidence of the strengths of the Tribunal Delivery model and the people, partnerships and infrastructure that support the delivery of Children's Hearings, while also identifying clear improvement priorities. It has identified clear improvement priorities, established a baseline for future development and strengthened organisational capability. Importantly, the value of this work extends beyond the findings themselves. It has demonstrated how organisational self-evaluation can support assurance, organisational learning and continuous improvement, providing an important foundation for future implementation of the Quality Strategy. The next stage will focus on implementing agreed improvements, evaluating impact and using the learning from this phase to inform future development of organisational self-evaluation within CHS
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Theme 2 - Driving Transformation • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation. • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People • Objective 2 - The organisational design remains agile, adaptable and responsive to support ongoing organisational transformation.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	The principal risk is that learning and improvement opportunities identified through the self-evaluation are not fully embedded within organisational planning and delivery. This is being mitigated through the development of a coordinated improvement plan with clear ownership and a Quality Team evaluation designed to inform future implementation. Evaluation findings and a formal 12-month review will provide evidence of progress, impact and the contribution of organisational self-evaluation to wider quality developments.
6.	Risk Register

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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	<i>A DPIA was completed for this work and further impact assessments may be required at later stages as the work evolves. This will be kept under review</i>
8.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)
8.1	The approach supports CHS's commitment to inform, engage and consult with volunteers on matters that affect their role and experience. The Quality Team will share the findings, agreed improvement priorities and progress updates with volunteers, ensuring their insight continues to inform implementation and future development of the framework.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	No resource implications
10.	Appendices

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Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Quality Strategy Update and Thematic Observations Report
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance-Depute CEO/Carol Wassell, 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 Committee to note the midpoint update on implementation of the Quality Strategy (Appendix I) and to present findings from CHS's Snapshot national analysis of observation reports (Appendix II). The report was presented at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meeting on 4 August for noting.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact the Executive Lead in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	The committee is asked to 1. Note the findings of the national observation analysis. 2. Note that the analysis provides a national snapshot of hearing practice across Scotland and a. a meaningful degree of assurance b. evidence of recurring strengths alongside opportunities to strengthen consistency, confidence, participation and communication of reasoning. 3. Note the midpoint community communications, reflecting continued efforts to promote a shared understanding of quality, of the PPA role and to help support our learning and improvement culture
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Summary
3.1.1	We have completed a national analysis of observation findings, bringing together 406 observation reports completed between July and October 2025. Capacity was created to undertake this work in recognition of the opportunity to maintain engagement with the PPA community and begin translating observation activity into organisational insight. The analysis provides a snapshot national perspective on hearing practice across Scotland, enabling learning from individual observations to inform organisational learning, quality improvement and future assurance arrangements.
3.2	Findings and strategic implications

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3.2.1	Assurance While observations provide only a partial view of practice and are intended to support learning and development rather than provide a comprehensive assessment of hearing quality, the consistency of findings across reports offers valuable organisational insight. Within the scope of observations undertaken, hearings were consistently described as child-centred, respectful, collaborative and values-led, supported by effective Chair leadership. These themes were evident across different hearing settings and observation reports. No significant or systemic concerns requiring escalation were identified. A small number of recurring themes highlight opportunities to further strengthen and enhance practice, supporting ongoing improvement across our hearings.
3.2.2	Learning Alongside clear strengths, the analysis identified recurring opportunities to strengthen: • Consistency of hearing structure. • Clarity of reasoning • Confidence, participation and contribution. These themes were identified across regions, hearing types and experience levels and represent opportunities to build on existing practice
3.2.3	Volunteer journey A significant finding from the analysis is that learning themes vary across different stages of hearings, Panel Member roles and levels of experience. This provides a richer understanding of how strengths and development opportunities emerge throughout both the hearing process and the volunteer journey. These insights create opportunities for more targeted learning, development and support activity, helping CHS better understand where different forms of support may add most value at different stages of the volunteer journey and hearing process. The analysis also highlights the positive contribution of newer Panel Members. Observation findings suggest that many are already demonstrating key strengths in practice while continuing to develop their confidence, skills and experience through participation in hearing
3.2.4	Strategic importance The most significant outcome of this work is that CHS can now begin to systematically translate learning from individual observations into organisational learning and improvement. • This represents an important step in delivering the Quality Strategy and establishing an effective organisational feedback loop, enabling insights from practice to inform learning, development and quality improvement activity.

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	While CHS is still developing its baseline quality intelligence, this analysis begins to establish that foundation. The introduction of the new digital observation form is expected to further strengthen the quality and consistency of data, expand analytical capability and support the development of richer organisational insight over time.
3.3	Quality Mid Point Update (Appendix I)
3.3.1	The mid-point review was accompanied by a news article for our community, providing an update on activities completed to date and their contribution to the development of quality assurance, organisational learning and continuous improvement. Key highlights included: - Publication of the first Quality Insights reporting series, including the national observation analysis and two supporting practice resources for PPAs. - Completion of the Improvement Service phase of the PSIF self-evaluation, providing a foundation for improvement planning and future quality development activity.
4.0	Next steps
4.1	- Findings from the observation analysis and PSIF self-evaluation will inform volunteer learning and development, guidance and resource review, improvement planning, and future quality reporting. - A more detailed evaluation of the PSIF findings, key learning points and proposed improvement priorities will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team and Board in November/December 2026. - In addition to the national observation analysis, two targeted PPA practice briefings have been developed to ensure learning is translated into practice improvement. These resources will be progressed through engagement with Learning and Development, Information Governance and regional colleagues. - PPA practice briefing: Building on Strong Practice in Observation Reports - Supports PPAs to further strengthen consistency, specificity and actionable feedback within observation reports. - Encourages clearer articulation of the impact of observations, building on existing strengths in observation practice. - PPA practice briefing: Writing Context with Care - Provides practical guidance on balancing contextual information, learning and confidentiality. - Supports observation reports to remain proportionate, developmental and focused on observed practice.

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	Together, these resources demonstrate how learning from observation activity can be translated into practical support for PPAs, strengthening the quality, consistency and developmental value of the observation process.									
5.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook									
5.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • Objective 2 - Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system. • Theme 2 - Driving Transformation • 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 • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.									
6.	Key Risks									
6.1	<table><tr><th>Risk</th><th>Mitigation</th></tr><tr><td>Learning emerging from quality evidence is not systematically translated into organisational improvement</td><td>Continued engagement with Learning and Development, Policy, Information Governance, regional colleagues and volunteers to ensure findings inform planning, guidance and improvement activity</td></tr><tr><td>Quality evidence remains fragmented and used in isolation</td><td>Strengthened organisational feedback loops, thematic reporting and use of evidence to inform strategic planning, service design and improvement activity</td></tr><tr><td>Baseline quality intelligence is still developing, and expectations may exceed the maturity of available data and processes</td><td>Development of observation processes, implementation of the new digital observation form and continued thematic analysis to strengthen quality intelligence over time</td></tr></table>		Risk	Mitigation	Learning emerging from quality evidence is not systematically translated into organisational improvement	Continued engagement with Learning and Development, Policy, Information Governance, regional colleagues and volunteers to ensure findings inform planning, guidance and improvement activity	Quality evidence remains fragmented and used in isolation	Strengthened organisational feedback loops, thematic reporting and use of evidence to inform strategic planning, service design and improvement activity	Baseline quality intelligence is still developing, and expectations may exceed the maturity of available data and processes	Development of observation processes, implementation of the new digital observation form and continued thematic analysis to strengthen quality intelligence over time
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Baseline quality intelligence is still developing, and expectations may exceed the maturity of available data and processes	Development of observation processes, implementation of the new digital observation form and continued thematic analysis to strengthen quality intelligence over time									
7.	Risk Register									
7.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage.									
8	Impact on Inequality/Rights									
8.1	N/A									
9.	Duty to Inform, Engage and Consult People who use our Services (Internal and External)									

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9.1	Views have been gathered from some national team colleagues and the Lead PPA group on the approach and draft content of the snapshot analysis and PPA briefings
10.	Resource Implications
10.1	None
11.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Midpoint Quality Update Appendix 2 - Snapshot Analysis Report

Quality Update: from foundations to impact (3 min read- published sharepoint August 2026)

Estelle Carmichael, Quality Manager

Over the past 18 months, CHS has been strengthening how we understand, support and improve quality across Scotland. Drawing on the insights of volunteers and colleagues, and a growing evidence base, we are moving from building foundations to using insight to inform improvement.

This update shares what we have learned so far, why it matters and what happens next.

Headlines - What you need to know

- CHS has completed a national snapshot analysis of anonymous observation findings.
- The findings highlight strengths in hearing practice as well as shared opportunities for development
- Themes emerging from observations are now helping shape CHS developments
- The next phase of the Quality Strategy focuses on turning insight into action.

What we've achieved together

Since the launch of CHS's first [Quality Strategy](#), volunteers and colleagues across CHS have helped establish new foundations for quality improvement. This includes:

- A national Quality Team
- New observation guidance and PPA practice briefings
- Updated PPA induction, training and support
- National observation analysis and reporting
- Collaborating with our national Lead PPA Group
- Development of an organisational evaluation framework

Together, these developments have strengthened CHS ability to identify strengths, recognise recurring themes and use insight to support change across Scotland.

Growing the conversation about quality

Our first World Quality Week in November 2025 helped start new conversations about quality across CHS generating:

- 264 blog reads
- 72 keynote attendees
- 368 case study views
- More than 3,200 social media views

We also launched a new PPA webpage and FAQ section to make information and resources easier to access.

From observation to improvement

Over this period, PPAs completed 2,917 observations, creating valuable opportunities for reflection and development. This work would not be possible without the commitment of Panel Members and PPAs across Scotland.

Drawing on more than 400 anonymous observation reports completed during July and October 2025, the Quality Insights series provides a national picture of hearing practice across Scotland. This means CHS can look beyond individual observations

to identify recurring strengths, common themes and opportunities to build on good practice. The analysis should be understood as a snapshot of practice observed during those periods. While observation reports do not provide a comprehensive assessment of hearing quality, the consistency of themes identified across the large dataset provides valuable organisational insight.

The findings highlight many examples of positive practice. Across Scotland, PPAs consistently describe hearings as:

- Child-centred
- Respectful and inclusive
- Well prepared
- Collaborative
- Supported by effective Chair leadership

Across the observations, recurring themes to strengthen practice are also identified, these include:

- Greater consistency in hearing structure, planning and role clarity
- Building confidence in participation and contribution
- Developing confidence and fluency in questioning and discussion
- Making reasoning and decision-making more explicit

These themes represent shared opportunities to highlight good practice and to strengthen practice and support at every stage of a volunteer's journey.

The analysis also highlights the contribution of newer Panel Members, who are demonstrating strong commitment, preparation and openness to development while continuing to build confidence and experience.

Further detail is available in the Quality Insights report 'From observation to improvement'.

What happens next?

Alongside the Quality Insights work, CHS has completed the first stage of its self-evaluation using the [Public Service Improvement Framework \(PSIF\)](#), gathering feedback from:

- 36 national colleagues
- 220 volunteers
- 5 clerks

This feedback is helping CHS identify priorities, develop actions and measure progress over time. Further feedback will be shared later this year.

The next phase of the [Quality Strategy](#) focuses on connecting insight more directly to improvement. Over the coming months we will:

- Share learning from the PSIF self-evaluation
- Strengthen guidance and support for PPAs
- Use observation findings to inform support, guidance and policy
- Improve how quality evidence is brought together and used across CHS

The next step is to use that insight more consistently to strengthen support, improve practice and continue delivering the best possible hearings for infants, children and young people.

Quality Insights Series From Observation to Improvement

About this work

Our national analysis of observation findings shows what we have learned from over 400 observation reports completed across Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) during July and October 2025. It provides insight into practice in hearings across Scotland, what is working well, what we are learning, and where we can develop further.

They provide a snapshot of hearings practice observed during those periods rather than a comprehensive assessment of all hearings taking place across Scotland.

This report forms part of the Quality Insights Series - From Observation to Improvement along with two supporting briefings for Panel Practice Advisers (PPAs) and building on earlier work exploring Panel Member experience of observations, 'Quality Conversations with Panel Members'.

By bringing together learning themes from these reports, CHS can begin to identify strengths, common development themes and opportunities for improvement activity.

Hearings take place in complex and often emotionally challenging circumstances, and the quality of what happens in those rooms matters greatly to children, young people and families. The insight captured here reflects the professionalism, care and commitment of our community of volunteers navigating that responsibility every day.

The people behind the findings

Our Panel Practice Advisers

This report is only possible because of the work of Panel Practice Advisers across Scotland. PPAs bring knowledge, experience and thoughtful skilled judgement to the observation process. Through their observations and feedback, PPAs play an important role in supporting reflective practice and helping Panel Members build confidence and develop their skills over time. Their observations provide a valuable perspective on hearing practice and create opportunities for reflection, learning and improvement across the CHS community.

Our Panel Members

At the centre of this work are Panel Members and the analysis offers clear and compelling evidence of the scale and significance of that contribution. Panel Members manage a wide range of unique hearings and navigate complex circumstances with competence, empathy and care. They balance legal responsibilities with a strong commitment to the rights, wellbeing and lived experiences of children and young people.

The analysis highlights the important role of our newly qualified Panel Members, who are a visible and active part of this dataset. They demonstrate strong alignment with CHS values, thoughtful preparation and a commitment to learning and development. Alongside more experienced colleagues, they make a valuable contribution to hearings while continuing to build confidence and experience.

Understanding the findings

Observation reports provide valuable insight into hearings practice but should not be interpreted as a comprehensive measure of quality or performance. Individual observations reflect observer experience and professional judgement, vary in structure and depth, and provide a window into practice. The findings should be understood as strengths and learning themes identified through observation. The value of this analysis lies in the consistency of themes emerging across a large national dataset and the organisational insight this provides.

What is working well

Values led and child centred

Overall, PPAs identified many examples of positive practice across the observation reports analysed. Across Scotland, hearings are consistently described by PPAs as calm, respectful and well managed.

‘The hearing was conducted in a calm and respectful manner throughout’.

There is a clear and steady focus on children and young people, with Panel Members working to ensure that their needs, rights and experiences remain

central throughout. This is not just an intention, it is visible in practice, reflected in:

- The way hearings are conducted.
- The language that is used.
- How questions are asked, and;
- How decisions are reached and explained.

The analysis shows strong alignment with CHS values. PPAs regularly describe practice characterised by empathy, dignity, respect and careful attention to the lived experiences of infants, children and young people.

‘You kept the child at the centre of your thinking.’

‘You showed empathy and respect in your contributions.’

Preparation and collaboration

The reports show that Panel Members come well prepared, demonstrate a strong understanding of the cases before them, and engage thoughtfully in discussion. They frequently describe Panels that support each other and work together effectively, respectfully challenge one another and draw on different perspectives to reach balanced decisions.

‘You clearly understood the papers and identified the key issues early’

‘You ensured all participants were given the opportunity to contribute’

‘You supported newer members effectively and contributed to a positive Panel dynamic.’

Leadership and Chairing

Reports reveal that the process of decision making is thoughtful and considered, often highlighting behaviours and skills that Panel Members use to show this in hearings and to communicate clearly to infants, children and young people and others in the hearings.

Chair leadership is a particularly strong feature, with analysis clearly demonstrating chairing plays a particularly important role. Where chairing is effective, it provides structure, pace and clarity, helping to create hearings that are focused, inclusive and well managed.

‘You led the hearing calmly and clearly.’

‘You created a clear structure for the hearing and ensured discussion remained focused throughout.’

Effective chairing helps Panel Members participate confidently, supports the development of newly qualified members, creates space for balanced contribution and ensures hearings remain focused on the needs of children and young people. Across the dataset, chairing emerges as one of the strongest influences on hearings quality and consistency.

‘You supported newer Panel Members to contribute confidently while maintaining the flow of the hearing’

In summary, across observations, PPAs consistently identified strengths relating to strong preparation, respectful and inclusive communication, effective Chair leadership, collaborative Panel working and a consistent focus on children and young people. The consistency of these themes across regions, hearings types

and experience levels suggest a shared understanding of effective hearings practice that is visible in hearings, not just in guidance.

Shared opportunities for learning

Highlighted in the findings is that learning and development are visible at every stage of the Panel Member journey. The themes identified below represent opportunities to strengthen and refine already effective practice, many of which are common across all experience levels.

Consistency of planning and structure

There is some variation in how hearings are planned and structured, including how agendas are used, how roles are allocated and how discussions are managed.

Many hearings show strong structure, but ensuring consistency would:

- Support confidence, particularly for newly qualified Panel Members.
- Make hearings more predictable and accessible for families, and;
- strengthen overall clarity and efficiency.

Using an agreed structure at the outset could strengthen hearing quality, support Panel Member confidence and create a more consistent experience for infants, children, young people and families.

Clarity of decisions and reasons

Decisions made by panels are consistently described as appropriate and well informed. However, the reasons behind those decisions are not always

expressed as clearly as they could be. This applies both to discussions within the hearing and when stating the reasons for decisions at the end.

Strengthening how reasoning is explained would:

- Improve transparency.
- Support understanding for children, young people and families, and;
- further reinforce confidence in the system.

‘Ensure your reasoning is consistently made explicit.’

Confidence and participation

Confidence and participation were highlighted as an area for development in all levels of Panel Member experience. PPAs regularly identify opportunities for Panel Members to contribute earlier, challenge appropriately, trust their judgement and play a fuller role in discussion.

‘You contributed well when invited; the next step is to contribute earlier.’

‘You had relevant points, continue to share these more confidently.’

The analysis shows that learning does not stop with experience. Panel Members and Chairs continue to refine their practice over time. Whilst experience supports confidence and fluency, observations identify opportunities to focus on:

- Balancing contributions within the Panel.
- Managing complexity.

- Maintaining structure and focus.
- Clearly articulating their reasoning.

For newly qualified Panel Members, development themes focus on:

- Procedural fluency
- Questioning skills
- Trusting their own judgement.

The findings reinforce that hearing practice requires ongoing reflection, learning and development at every stage of the volunteer journey.

Learning across hearing stages

The themes identified above are visible across each of the distinct hearing stages. Looking at strengths and opportunities with this lens provides additional insight into where effective practice is most visible and where development opportunities commonly arise.

Before the hearing

Strengths - PPAs frequently describe strong preparation, early issue identification and effective collaboration between Panel Members before hearings begin. Pre-hearing discussions are often used to clarify key issues, agree priorities and support newer members.

‘You identified the key issues early and helped focus discussion on what mattered most.’

Learning themes - Development areas focus on increasing consistency in hearings structure, clarifying questioning roles and supporting confidence in early contributions.

During the hearing

Strengths - This is where strengths are most consistently visible. Hearings are regularly described as calm, respectful, child-centred and well managed. Active listening, inclusive communication and effective facilitation are recurring features.

‘You used language that was accessible and ensured everyone understood.’

‘You ensured all participants were given the opportunity to contribute.’

Learning themes - These include building confidence in questioning, supporting appropriate challenge and making reasoning more explicit during discussion.

After the hearing

Strengths - Decisions are generally described as proportionate, evidence based and focused on the needs of the child.

‘Decisions were clearly explained and understood.’

Learning themes - At this stage these most commonly relate to explaining reasons clearly and ensuring written records fully reflect the Panel's discussion

and decision-making process. Importantly, the consistency with which these themes appear across hearing stages, regions and experience levels suggests they represent shared development opportunities rather than isolated examples of practice.

What are we learning as an organisation

The themes identified through observations are not only relevant to individual Panel Members and Chairs. When viewed collectively, they provide insight into the factors that enable effective hearings, where greater consistency may be beneficial, and how CHS can strengthen learning and improvement at an organisational level.

Enablers of effective hearings

The analysis suggests that hearing quality is influenced not only by individual Panel Member skills but also by broader factors such as hearing structure, role clarity, preparation and Chair leadership. These appear to be important conditions that enable confidence, participation and effective decision-making.

Development needs are shared

Many of the development themes identified are not limited to specific regions, hearing types or experience levels. This suggests opportunities for national approaches to learning and development that support consistency while recognising local variation.

Transparency matters

The recurring theme relating to articulation of reasoning highlights the importance of supporting children, young people and families to understand how decisions are reached and why. This may represent a key area for future improvement activity.

Learning can be strengthened organisationally

The findings demonstrate a strong culture of reflective practice and continuous learning among Panel Members and PPAs. Observation activity generates valuable insight, but much of this learning currently sits within individual feedback conversations. Bringing findings together at a national level creates opportunities to identify recurring themes, share effective practice and strengthen organisational learning and improvement.

‘You were receptive to feedback and keen to develop.’

Why a national analysis matters

Individual observations provide valuable opportunities for reflection and development. When viewed collectively, however, they provide a richer picture of hearings practice across Scotland and help CHS identify themes, understand patterns across regions and hearings types. We can use these insights to inform learning, guidance, policy development and quality improvement activity.

These insights are most valuable when used to inform learning, support volunteers and guide continuous improvement across CHS.

Applying the learning

The findings provide an evidence base that will be shared with colleagues across CHS to support future developments.

How these findings will inform future development

Learning and Development

Use observation findings to:

- Strengthen confidence and participation.
- Develop questioning and discussion skills.
- Support Chair development.
- Share examples of effective practice.

Policy, Practice and Guidance

Use themes to:

- Review guidance relating to hearings structure.
- Strengthen communication of reasons.
- Refine supporting practice materials to reflect recurring themes.

Regional and Volunteer Support

Use findings to:

- Promote learning through regional structures and events.
- Share effective practice.
- Support volunteer development.
- Promote our learning and improvement culture.

Quality, evidence and improvement

Continue to:

- Improve thematic analysis.
- Strengthen organisational reporting.
- Use findings alongside other evidence sources.
- Evaluate the impact of improvement activity.
- Monitor whether actions address the current themes.

Conclusion

This analysis provides a snapshot of themes emerging from observation reports completed during July and October 2025. The findings highlight examples of practice that PPAs describe positively, alongside recurring themes for learning and development.

While observations cannot provide a comprehensive assessment of hearings practice, the consistency of themes across the dataset offers valuable insight into areas of strength, opportunities for development and considerations for future improvement activity across CHS.

Above all, these findings reflect the commitment of Panel Members across Scotland who give their time, experience and care to supporting infants, children and young people through often complex circumstances. Their openness to reflection, feedback and development provides an important foundation for learning and improvement across CHS.

If you want to hear more about observation developments or the work of the Quality team, contact CHSQuality@chs.gov.scot.

APPENDIX - Summary overview tables

Understanding the Appendices

The tables below do not introduce new findings. Instead, they provide additional ways of exploring the themes already discussed within the main report.

The appendices are intended to support understanding of the findings and the patterns emerging from the data. They should be read alongside the main report, which provides the full analysis, context and conclusions.

Table 1 below - provides an at-a-glance breakdown of strengths and learning themes identified by Panel Practice Advisers (PPAs) across different stages of the hearing journey, Panel Member roles and experience levels.

Stage	Area	Themes and Patterns emerging from PPA observation reports
Pre-Hearing	Overview Pattern	Strong preparation; early issue identification and collaborative planning; consistent use of pre-hearing to establish focus and approach.

Pre-Hearing	Effective Practice Themes	Papers reviewed in advance; key issues identified early; discussions focused and purposeful; shared understanding of risks and options; used to clarify issues, agree focus, consider proportional responses and prepare questioning; informal mentoring evident.
Pre-Hearing	Individual Learning (Newer Members)	Key Strengths - Strong commitment and preparation; benefit from peer support; developing confidence. Development areas - Focus on raising questions proactively, applying procedures independently and increasing active participation.
Pre-Hearing	Individual Learning (Experienced Members)	Key Strengths - High confidence and fluency, model practice and support others. Development areas - includes making reasoning more explicit and balancing leadership with inclusive participation.
Pre-Hearing	Chair Learning	Key Strengths - Calm and inclusive facilitation; clear tone setting. Development areas - includes consistent structure (agendas), clearer allocation of

		questioning roles and use of prompts/checklists.
Pre-Hearing	CHS Learning	Key Strengths - culture of preparation, collegiality and mentoring. Development areas - greater structural consistency and clearer roles to support confidence.
Hearing	Overview Pattern	Calm, respectful and child-centred hearings; balance of empathy and authority; strong facilitation and procedural integrity.
Hearing	Effective Practice Themes	Respectful engagement; appropriate language; dignity maintained; chairs manage pace and focus; active listening, age-appropriate engagement, attention to views and trauma-informed responses.
Hearing	Individual Learning (Newer Members)	Key Strengths - Appropriate contributions and relevant questioning; growing confidence. Development areas - includes timing, follow-up questioning and confidence to challenge or clarify.

Hearing	Individual Learning (Experienced Members)	Key Strengths - Strong analytical questioning and Panel balance. Development areas - includes maintaining explicit child focus in complex cases and creating space for others.
Hearing	Chair Learning	Key Strengths - managing dynamics, fairness, clarity and proportionality. Areas of development - includes pausing before decisions, simplifying explanations and managing hybrid delivery.
Hearing	CHS Learning	Key Strengths - respectful challenge, peer support and stated trauma-informed practice. Development areas - child friendly communication and supporting newer member confidence.
Post-Hearing	Overview Pattern	Proportionate, evidence-based decision-making with strong records
Post-Hearing	Decision-Making	PPAs cannot comment on decisions made. General comments include clear reasoning; proportionate decisions; records generally robust.

Post-Hearing	Development Themes relevant to all Panel roles and stages of experience	Ensure written records reflect discussion; allow reflection before finalising; improve consistency and clarity in written articulation.
Post-Hearing	CHS Learning	Key Strengths - feedback loops, ownership and reinforcement. Development areas - strengthen reflective writing and ensure learning is embedded over time.

PPM reference and frequency - learning themes analysis

Table 2 below - provides additional insight into the relative frequency of learning themes identified within observation feedback that referenced the Practice and Procedure Manual (PPM).

Microsoft Copilot was used to support the identification and grouping of recurring learning themes within observation reports that referenced the Practice and Procedure Manual (PPM). The analysis was reviewed and refined by the Quality Team and is intended to provide an indicative view of the relative prominence of learning themes across the dataset rather than a precise quantitative measure.

PPM Learning Type	Frequency	Purpose
Procedural reinforcement	Very high	Reinforcing process and structure, including agenda setting
Application in practice	High	Bridging knowledge → practice
Confidence and fluency	Medium-High	Supporting confidence
Decision and Reasons stage	Medium	Improving articulation
Role clarity	Medium	Clarifying responsibilities
Consistency	Medium	Standardising approach
Error correction	Low-medium	Addressing minor gaps

Agenda Item 20. CHS-2627-27

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Children Hearings Scotland Approach to Redesign
Responsible Executive:	Lynne Harrison, Director of Business and Finance & Deputy Chief Executive
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 note an update on the planning that is shaping our approach to the Redesign of Children's Hearings.
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 note the progress made in considering Children Hearings Scotland's approach to the Redesign of the Children's Hearings System in Scotland. The Board are asked to note that our planning and preparation for Redesign has been built on the foundation of our global lessons learned of change and delivery activity in the past three years. We have also sought the insight of public sector organisations operating in transformational and complex contexts, understanding the foundations of their success.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Background
3.1.1	Since the passing of the Children (Care, Care Experience and Services Planning) (Scotland) Act, work to design our organisational approach to implement the legislative and non-legislative change has taken place at pace and with pro-activity that reflects our commitment to redesign and to keeping the promise. The passing of the Bill is a significant milestone for Children's Hearings on the way to our 2030 target, built on years of work including the Independent Review of Care, the work of the Hearing Systems Working Group, the Hearings for Children Report and change readiness work undertaken across Children's Hearings Scotland.
3.2	Foundations for Success
3.2.1	<u>Organisational Design:</u> The implementation of the Tribunal Support Model created our nine regions across Scotland, created a Positive Outcomes directorate and introduced a Quality Team to integrate quality assurance alongside practice, learning and our work across CHS. This internal work created sustainable volunteer roles and alongside our Foundations for Learning programme, Promise programme and

Agenda Item 20. CHS-2627-27

Capacity programme created the foundations on which we will keep the promise in the coming years.

Strategic Planning and Delivery:

The Tribunal Support Model also introduced the functions of Change & Innovation and the Programme Management Office. Two new teams that strengthened our approach to change and delivery. These new functions delivered change and provided high levels of governance and assurance across our change activity including delivery of our Tribunal Support Model programme that gained recognition at the Scottish Public Service Awards for outstanding Project and Programme Management.

Early 2026, these teams were combined to create a new Strategic Planning and Delivery team with a remit to broaden our governance and assurance beyond change and to include our core delivery. The key benefit of this is a holistic, big picture view of our organisational delivery with alignment to our strategic outlook, business and corporate parenting plan and internal operational plan delivery.

Lessons Learned:

Our new Strategic Planning and Delivery team have taken a pro-active approach in what is a critical year of planning set within a challenging and complex delivery landscape. The design of our approach has been informed by our global lessons learned which constitutes three years of change delivery insights and principles from within CHS. In addition to taking an information based approach internally, we sought the insights and learning from other public sector organisations who have or are undergoing transformational change in complex environments. Principles have emerged which will be adopted include adopting a holistic systemic view, using proportionate governance, making sure we have the right people with the right skills and ensuring that decision making is empowered and delegated to the right level.

Leadership Development:

The leadership and management of our business as usual and redesign delivery is core to everything we do and as part of our planning for redesign we have invested in our senior managers, integrating a coaching approach to people management and leadership. We've also created thought leadership spaces for our senior managers and leaders to unpack, consider and plan for the redesign ahead.

These sources of insight are directly shaping our thinking and emerging approach to redesign, we are confident that we are building an approach that is well informed by our organisational strengths and also areas we can develop to create the foundations of success.

Data & Infrastructure:

Using data and evidence to better enable decision making and drive improvement is a key ambition of Hearing Reform and for CHS. We have worked with Data Orchard to develop a Data Strategy and implementation roadmap 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.

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	We have also jointly invested in a digital rebalancing project with SCRA that allows CHS to autonomously access data within CSAS, transforming our ability to bring evidence, evaluation and quality assurance into our work and supporting more person-centred rota scheduling. This work has been progressing at pace, demonstrating a mature and collaborative delivery model between SCRA, CHS and Leidos, supported by the secondment of the CHS Data Analyst into SCRA. This has improved requirements shaping, governance confidence and operational trust across the programme. The benefits delivered by each phase are: • Tranche 1 has successfully delivered a secure and separated CHS data the architectural foundations for greater data segregation, interoperability, and organisational autonomy. • Tranche 2 will enable CHS to focus on practical improvements that strengthen our operational delivery i.e. rota and scheduling improvements • Tranche 3 will enable us to explore innovations built from a strong digital and data base.
3.3	Built for Children's Hearings Scotland
3.3.1	A key principle from our learning was the importance of any approach being proportionate for our organisation and not a lift and lay of what might have worked well in a different operating or strategic context or applying a set methodology not bespoke to our needs. Proportionate governance and assurance that creates an enabling environment, delegating appropriate decision making and leadership to our subject matter experts and talents across our team and community will be a key enabler to our success. Critical to that success will be the oversight and holistic view held by the Strategic Planning and Delivery Team. In a context of public sector reform and informed by our internal and external insights, we will place our national team staff with subject matter expertise at the centre of our delivery. This will require a careful balance and management of resource and capacity across our business as usual and redesign delivery. A critical success measure for redesign will be our ability to meet the needs of children attending hearings today, whilst planning and delivering change for the future and our community and organisational capacity and talent is at the centre of our planning. Early 2026 the Board approved a new streamlined approach to our Business and Corporate Parenting Plan, with a deeper focus on fewer areas of strategic activity. This focused approach will continue to be replicated in our planning ensuring that our organisational capacity is focused on our priorities.
3.4	Our Wider Operating Context
3.4.1	Children's Hearings Scotland is one component in a wider set of stakeholders in the hearing system. The complexity and interplay of roles and responsibilities alongside the acknowledgment of the dependencies and connections across organisational boundaries is core to our redesign thinking. Our programme

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	design must be cognisant of the challenging delivering landscape across the hearing system, our statutory partners and wider stakeholders. Impactful change for children attending their hearings is dependent on all partners playing a role with the required system capacity and resource needed. This alongside an ability to change a complex system with the leadership, focus and compromise that will take. Our approach to redesign includes a number of planning assumptions allowing us to progress our internal design and planning whilst broader decisions on commencement, finance, governance and regulations are made. A driving planning assumption is that the new enhanced chairing role will commence from 1st April 2028. A key enabler of this provision is the release of seed funding in financial year 27/28. The Board should be assured that in designing our internal approach to governance and assurance, we have been mindful to the wider governance space within the Redesign Board, jointly chaired by the Scottish Government and COSLA. The Redesign Board will hold a holistic view of non-legislative change, at present the governance arrangements for the commencement of new provisions has not been announced. Placing our Experts by Experience at the heart of redesign and ensuring our Panel Community are informed, engaged and consulted on different aspects of our redesign approach is a key principle.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • 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 • Objective 1 - Work with partners and stakeholders to lead and influence change. • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation. • Theme 3 - Valuing Our People • 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	At this stage of progress with the work, there are no risks identified

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	The content of this paper provides mitigation for risk No.5, 'Planning for Reform' and delivers some of the actions outlined in the strategic risk register
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There is no requirement for anything to be added to the Risk Register at this stage. Our approach to the management of risks and issues at Programme and Project level will be fully aligned to our organisation approach to risk.
7.	Impact on Inequality/Rights
7.1	The content of this paper does not require any impact assessments. As the Redesign work is further developed and initiated at project level, we anticipate the use of impact assessments to inform and direct our work.
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. As part of the development of our approach to Redesign, our Senior Managers from across the organisation have been engaged in a number of thought leadership sessions that have informed and shaped the approach and principles, with our Senior Leadership Team retaining final decision.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	At this stage of designing our approach to redesign, there is no specific resource implication associated with this paper. This is anticipated to change as work is initiated and delivered.
10.	Appendices
	None

Agenda Item 21a. CHS-2627-28

Meeting:	CHS Board
Meeting Date:	23 September 2026
Title:	Independent Writers Report Function: Annual Report March 2025 - April 2026
Responsible Executive:	Stephen Bermingham, Senior Policy and Standards Manager (on behalf of Carol Wassell, Director of Positive Outcomes)
Report Author:	Nicola Hadden, Practice & Policy Advisor

1.	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is for the Board to note the annual report on the Independent Report Writer (IRW) of the financial implications within the period, recent developments, key performance indicators, issues and risks as well as planned developments for the function. Following review from SLT in June 2026, it was requested that the report be provided to the Board to note. This annual report covers the period March 2025 – April 2026.
1.2	Any member wishing additional information should contact Stephen Bermingham in advance of the meeting.
2.	Recommendations
2.1	Following review from SLT, the recommendation is for the Board to note the content of the report.
3.	Key Points for Discussion
3.1	Quality assurance has been championed in the function over the last year including pilot review process and feedback from Panel Members (paragraph 4.8-4.17) There has been an increase in the cost of the overall function (see risk register below). Part 6 of the report discusses the increase and factors that have contributed to this.
4.	Alignment to CHS Strategic Outlook
4.1	This work is aligned to the CHS Strategic Outcome 2024-2027: • Theme 1 - Delivering Positive Outcomes • 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 • Objective 2 - We will become a data-informed and data-driven organisation.

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	• Theme 3 - Valuing Our People • Objective 4 - to develop our people capabilities.
5.	Key Risks
5.1	A detailed assessment of the risks and mitigations for the function are provided in Section 8 of this report.
6.	Risk Register
6.1	There has been an increase in IRW requests and a significant increase in costs and complexity of requests, notably an increase in report requests for psychologists/psychiatrists. Therefore, consideration of financial and staffing resources requires to be monitored to ensure efficient operation of the function. These risks along with the risks identified in section 8 of the report have been shared with the Corporate Governance Manager for inclusion on the risk register. The increase of overall cost of the function will also be shared with the Sponsor Team at the Scottish Government. They will be updated with any developments in relation to cost. (table 4)
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. We will continue to share information with the CHS community via existing communication channels.
9.	Resource Implications
9.1	33 reports were completed in 2025-2026; the total cost is £166,771. For the financial year 2024-2025 26 reports were completed with a cost of £109,195: this represents an annual increase of £57,577. An analysis of this is included in section 6 of the annual report.
10.	Appendices
	Appendix 1 - Independent Report Writers Function: Annual Report March 2025 – April 2026.

Independent Report Writers Function: Annual Report March 2025 – April 2026

Accountable Director:	Stephen Bermingham, Senior Policy and Standards Manager
Report Author:	Nicola Hadden, Practice and Policy Advisor with support from Emma O’Hare, Business Support Assistant
Recommendation:	For oversight of the Board
Resources Implications:	N/A

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1	Impact Assessment Duties	Required	Completed
	Equalities Impact Assessment	N	N/A
	Children's Rights Impact Assessment	N	N/A
	Data Protection Impact Assessment	N	N/A
	Islands Impact Assessment	N	N/A

2 Purpose

2.1 This is the annual report on the IRW (Independent Report Writer) function to inform the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of financial implications within the period, recent developments, key performance indicators, issues and risks as well as planned developments for the function. This annual report covers the period March 2025 – April 2026.

2.2 To ensure appropriate governance of the function it has been agreed that an annual report will be provided to the SLT. The annual report allows for oversight of the function, whilst operational and emerging issues are reported and managed through existing management structures.

3 Background

3.1 Rule 61(1)(b) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Rules 2013 provides that a hearing considering accepted or established grounds or a review hearing (including deferred hearings) can "require the Reporter to obtain any report from any person which the children's hearing considers would be relevant to any matter to be determined by the hearing". This function is managed and overseen by CHS. Since December 2021, the children's hearing must also consider this when considering deferring the decision to make, vary or continue a Compulsory Supervision Order. This also meets the requirements of Section 77 of the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019.

3.2 In most hearings, sufficient information for decision making is provided by the child, relevant persons and those already working with the child or family. However, in some hearings, an independent, expert view is required to support the panel's decision making. These are referred to as 'Independent Reports.'

3.3 Independent reports requests were previously managed by CELCIS. CHS took over the function in June 2020 and has incrementally made improvements to the way it operates and the added value it provides to Panel Member decision making. The function is managed by the Practice and Policy Team.

3.4 In February 2024, an internal audit of the function was conducted by BDO to provide assurance of the design and operational effectiveness across various areas including timelines, KPI's and recruitment. BDO found there were very strong processes in place around communication, commissioning, delivery and reporting of the function.

4 Key Developments Review

- 4.1 As part of the ongoing improvement of the function the Practice and Policy team identified key improvements around the processes and procedures put in place for commissioning IRW requests, including the requirement of certain criteria. Work was undertaken by a Practice and Policy Advisor to investigate the legal framework behind the function. The conclusion of this review was there are limited circumstances where CHS can refuse a request as providing advice is a statutory function that maintains the independence of the legal decision making process. Based on a legal review we now have a clear direction of how to deliver the function, meaning we are able to support decision making so that improves outcomes for children.
- 4.2 The Team are currently updating our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SCRA and our practice guidance for Panel Members. The updated Practice and Procedure Manual will mirror this guidance.

Recruitment

- 4.3 The team have identified the need to undertake recruitment to expand our bank of Independent Report Writers (IRWs). Over the last year there has been an increase in the number of reports requested as well as a difference of expertise, in particular a significant increase in requests for psychologists. There have been occasions in the last year we have been unable to commission a report due to not being able to identify a suitable qualified and available report writer. By undertaking a targeted recruitment process, we hope to ensure this does not happen in the future.
- 4.4 Through recruitment, we aim to strengthen our Independent Report Writer Bank. This will include recruiting additional clinical psychologists and educational psychologists. We will also aim to recruit psychiatrists and other professionals such as Speech and Language Therapists. This work will be undertaken over the 2026-27 financial year.

Reappointments

- 4.5 All IRWs are required to be considered for reappointment after two years. Those that were appointed in August 2023 and who wanted to remain on the bank were all met with in July-September 2025 for review. Reappointment meetings were completed using a standard template of questions. Professional registrations were checked and confirmation of areas the writers are available to work in and an update of their specialisms and expertise.
- 4.6 During the reappointment process, IRWs raised the following common themes:
- IRWs felt as though CHS staff were approachable and responded quickly in relation to any concerns or issues that they had.
 - Some IRWs were unable to attend the Community of Practice (COP) events due to scheduling issues. The COP events are held in the evening to support IRWs to attend, however some of our report writers have family commitments or other work commitments in the evening. The date of the event is provided to IRWs several months in advance to try and mitigate this issue.
- 4.7 The next round of reappointments will be undertaken in October 2026.

Quality Assurance Process

- 4.8 Quality assuring the independent report writers is achieved through the feedback process (discussed below) as well as ensuring the report writers are registered with a professional body. Before each quote is requested, a member of the Practice and Policy Team will check the report writer's professional registration. The professional bodies provide robust quality assurance that the report writers are qualified to practice in their specialist fields.

The Practice and Policy Team quality assure the process but are not qualified to undertake an assessment of the professional assessments of the report writers (see paragraph 4.11), to do so would compromise the independent of the report and the expertise of the report writers.

Pilot report review

- 4.9 This year the Practice and Policy Team made quality assurance a priority. A pilot sampling tool was developed to assess the reports received by CHS. Two Practice and Policy Advisors reviewed the reports using the Practice Standards and KPIs to identify 'success criteria' of the process to assess service delivery.
- 4.10 There was a four-month assessment period from 01/01/2025 – 30/04/2025. During this period, 10 reports were submitted. These reports were completed by Social Workers and Psychologists.
- 4.11 Throughout the pilot it was clear that the Panel Member feedback forms (discussed below) helped to track the quality and usefulness of the report in informing their decision making. The report writers also fed back that receiving a summary of the feedback was helpful for them to refine their practice.
- 4.12 By the end of the pilot project clear aims were identified. The quality assessment process needed to:
- Gain evidence to understand whether the reports aided Panel Members in making a substantive decision;
 - Provide valuable feedback to the report writers to ensure high standards and identify areas for improvement;
 - Gather evidence that could support the reappointment process.

Feedback from Panel Members

- 4.13 A key priority has been reviewing feedback from Panel Members to support CHS to understand if reports are supporting Panel Members to make well-informed, substantive decisions for infants, children and young people.
- 4.14 The Practice and Policy Team now gather this feedback directly from Panel Members after the hearing that considered the report has been completed. The team can access Power BI to identify the Panel Members, and the feedback form is sent to them on the day of the hearing or after. One issue that has been identified is obtaining the hearing date and time. Currently, the IRWs are relied upon to provide this information. There

is a suggested change within the revised MOU that proposes SCRA routinely provide this information to CHS directly.

- 4.15 Within the feedback form Panel Members are asked to comment on the overall quality of the report as well as the assistance it provided to help them make a substantive decision. Since we began obtaining feedback we have completed thirty-five feedback form. Within these forms there is a response from between one and three Panel Members from the hearing. Thirty-three of the feedback forms confirmed the report either assisted the hearing in making a substantive decision or if they were unable to make a substantive decision this was unrelated to the report. Throughout the feedback Panel Members make positive comments about the structure, quality, language and detail provided by the report writers.
- 4.16 This feedback assists in learning for the report writers as to what was helpful for the hearing and areas they can improve on. Additionally, it provides an insight to CHS as to how or if the reports are assisting Panel Members make substantive decisions for children and young people as well as ensuring the quality of the reports being submitted. From the feedback we have received, we can conclude that the reports have been deemed as valuable for decision making.
- 4.17 The quotes below capture Panel Members' views on the reports and the value they derived from them:

“Extremely detailed written report and excellently summarised at panel. Clear recommendations and reasons for those recommendations as well as practical advice and explanations of potential consequences during the hearing to specific questions.”

“This report I would say was quite pivotal in this hearing. Much acrimony and blame was being placed on the team around the child. Having this independent and very knowledgeable and experienced Doctors report was extremely valuable and I hope it is included in the HIP for subsequent hearings.”

“Excellent report, explained in lay mans terms the science behind the specific areas we asked for clarity on and gave great insight into how things could be improved for the child going forward, the report was detailed where it needed to be and simplified so that the family and child could understand it, it made a difficult situation very much better and less stressful for everyone.

gave great feedback virtually and acknowledged the family, and everyone else in the room

We would not have made the best possible decision without recourse to both the written report and the attendance of the report writer via the virtual system.”

Community of Practice events

- 4.18 To support the Independent Report Writers, Community of Practice events were facilitated to provide opportunities for IRWs to come together, share practice and discuss key topics. It was originally intended that this would be every quarter, however over the last year two events have taken place (August 2025 and February 2026).
- 4.19 The Community of Practice events have been requested by IRWs as an improvement identified in their appointment interviews. The meeting in August 2025 had input from SCRA around their role within the function. There was also a quoting activity to look at how they quote for commissions. For the event in February 2026, the Practice and Policy Team gave a short presentation and activity on progressing children's rights. Thereafter, there was a focus on getting feedback from the IRW's on how the function runs and how this can be improved.
- 4.20 All 25 IRWs are invited to the event. In August 2025 10 IRW's attended and in February 2026 11 IRW's attended. Both sessions were positive and had good engagement and discussion. Bank members have previously fed back that they appreciate these inputs and the opportunity to discuss topics with their fellow professionals. Moving forward it is hoped that IRWs will suggest topics that would be useful and continue to input into the sessions. Within the next financial year there will be two community of practice sessions. This will ensure a manageable schedule and allow for meaningful and high-quality engagement with the IRWs. We hope to encourage the IRWs to take ownership of the sessions and identify focus topics.

Building Panel Member understanding of the function

- 4.21 As Independent Report requests are only intended to be made sparingly and so many Panel Members are not aware of the process of requesting a report or the commissioning procedures. It was identified that work required to be undertaken around Panel Members understanding of IRW requests and information to include within the reasons and decisions. A practice note was developed and distributed through the Practice and Policy Teams channel and the community newsletter in December 2024, which stimulated some engagement from the panel community. The practice note is also available via the Practice and Policy resource library on the Community Hub.
- 4.22 This year revised guidance will provide clarity around our process of commissioning such as why, in limited circumstances, would we refuse a request and the procedure following a refusal. Once we have completed this update, will explore mechanisms for promoting this across the panel community.
- 4.23 The Practice and Procedure Manual (PPM) is currently in the process of being updated. Within the new version of the PPM, the section on independent report requests will be revised to include helpful guidance on what to include within a request as well as the process around what happens if we cannot fulfil the request.

4.24 It is important that Panel Members understand that these reports should be sought to answer specific, narrow and deep questions to aid them in making substantive decisions.

4.25 As a part of the Children (Care, Care Experience, and Service Planning) Act 2026, CHS has emphasised that new enhanced role of the chair will include requesting specialist advice, including the commissioning of Independent Reports. This will help with quality assurance and ensuring greater consistency in requests received. CHS will continue to influence the shaping of this and will provide further update as the work develops.

5 Report writers and requests

5.1 The bank currently consists of 25 IRWs. Each member of the bank is an expert in their specialist field; at present the bank is made up of:

- 4 Clinical Psychologists
- 3 Clinical Psychologists/Forensic Psychologists
- 3 Educational Psychologists
- 15 Social Workers

5.2 There is variation in the number of requests for independent reports across Scotland, as is illustrated by the table below. This is not unique to this function – it is also reflected in other panel decisions such as the appointment of Safeguarders. The Practice and Policy Team will investigate this further over the 2026-27 financial year. This may lead to work with regional staff to raise awareness of this function amongst the panel community.

5.3 It has been identified that there are gaps in locations that utilise the service more often which will need to be considered when further writers are to be appointed to the bank. Particularly in Grampian; not having writers in this area may impact travel costs that are being invoiced for.

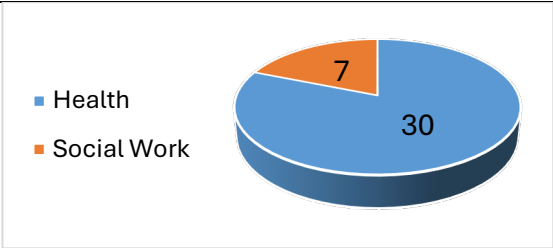
Table 1: Report requests by region

Location	Number of bank writers residing in location	Total report requests 2024-25	Total report requests 2025-26
Ayrshire	2	11	4
Central & West Lothian	6	2	3
D&G/Lanarkshire	1	1	7
Glasgow	7	4	3
Grampian & NI	0	3	2
Highlands & Moray	0	1	1
North Strathclyde	1	5	10
Southeast	8	4	4
Tayside & Fife	5	1	3

- 5.4 North Strathclyde is using this service more than any other area (10 requests this year), followed by D&G/Lanarkshire (7 requests this year), please see Table 1 for evidence of this. Both these regions have seen requests significantly increase from the previous year. Further engagement work with regional staff is required to understand the rationale for this increase.

Table 2: Report requests by type

Report Type Requested	No.
Child Psychologist	15
Clinical Psychologist	12
Psychiatric Assessment	1
Educational Psychologist	2
Parenting Capacity Assessment	5
Social Work Report	2
Total	37



- 5.5 37 report requests were received in 2025-26; 33 being commissioned and 4 requests rejected by CHS. In 2024-2025 of the 32 requests received, 26 were commissioned and 6 were not.
- 5.6 There are a higher number of requests for child or clinical psychologists this financial year (often Panel Members will use the term child psychologist and clinical psychologist synonymously). In 2024-2025 there were 16 requests for a child/clinical psychologist compared to 27 in 2025-2026. There was a decrease in parenting capacity assessment requests from 11 in 2024-2025 to 5 in 2025-2026.
- 5.7 This will inform our targeted recruiting new report writers, as well as their ability to travel to the various locations.

6 Finance

- 6.1 In the 2025-26 financial year, CHS has commissioned 33 reports. Our tendering process requests a minimum and maximum cost for reports to allow report writers a level of flexibility to respond to the child’s needs and the unknown complexities of undertaking the commission. Our total quoting range was £112,573.18 (combined minimum) to £175,499.74 (combined maximum). This is higher compared to 2024-2025 in which the total quoting range was £81,457.78 (combined minimum) to £131,100.94 (combined maximum)

- 6.2 The total of reports invoiced in 2025-26 was £166,771.40. This is a significant increase in expenditure from the previous year (see table 3 below).
- 6.3 A combination of factors has contributed to this increase. These include:
- Increase in the number of reports requested
 - Type of report requested, more psychologists/psychiatrists less social work
 - Market pressure, child psychologists/psychiatrists are in high demand with significant waiting lists. This has pushed up costs.
 - Inflation, a number of contractors have increased their costs due to inflationary pressures.
- 6.4 Compared with 2024/25 there has been an increase in the number of requests by 6 reports, which has overall increased the cost of the function and the types of reports have been more expensive to commission.
- 6.5 As referenced in paragraph 5.6, there has been a rise in requests for clinical/child psychologists. By nature, these types of reports are often more complex and costly than for example a social work report or parenting capacity assessment. This is due to various factors including time spent with the parties, analysis and to draft the findings. Due to the number of these types of reports increasing and the costs rising with inflation, the average cost of the reports have risen by 20%.
- 6.6 In addition, IRW's rates are higher due to their experience. Their hourly rate ranges from £90 - £120, depending on their skills. One clinical and forensic psychologist on the bank has indicated his rate will be increased to £200 per hour. Due to inflation, hourly rates from report writers are increasing as well as cost for travel either through mileage or public transport and accommodation for any overnight stay required. There is also an impact due to market pressure as CAMHS and related child psychological services being under significant resourcing pressures resulting in a high demand for independent experts. This has an overall impact on their hourly rate and overall cost of the reports.
- 6.7 This is reflected in the highest three invoices received in 2025-2026 which were £10,792.80, £10,496.88 and £9,612.18. These reports were completed by psychologists. As there has been an increase in both the number of requests and psychological input, this has resulted in a higher cost of the overall function.
- 6.8 It is also key to note in 2025-2026, eighteen of the report requests received one quote in return. CHS will seek to request at least three quotes, however often more quotes are sought. There have been limited occasions we have asked only two report writers for example, if the request is very specific or the other report writers will not travel to the area. We are hoping to resolve this through recruitment. It is important to note that due to the high demand in psychologists/psychiatrists their availability to undertake work at relatively short notice is limited.
- 6.9 When identifying who to commission various factors are considered such as expertise, travel and overall cost. In the last year we have seen a rise in requests in North

Strathclyde and Lanarkshire/Dumfries and Galloway (see table 4 below). If report writers are not located near the implementing authority or where the relevant persons reside this can increase the cost of the overall report due to travel and possible cost of accommodation. Whilst this is taken into account when considering who to commission if only one quote is returned there is no opportunity for price comparison and the report will be commissioned at the quoted cost.

- 6.10 There are many reasons for the lack of returned quotes including IRW holidays, capacity and quality of requests. We will try to address this with recruitment, reappointment and promoting the guidance through comms and the PPM.

Impact of Children Care and Justice (Scotland) Act

- 6.11 With the implementation of the Care and Justice Act in early 2027, there could be an increase in report requests and overall cost. Over the past three years, the average age of a who is the subject to an independent report is:

2023-2024: 8 years

2024-2025: 6 years

2025-2026: 8 years

- 6.12 In 2025-2026 there were report requests for 5 children over 14 years old, 6 children over 15 years old and 1 child over 16 years old. All these requests were for psychologists, apart from one from a psychiatrist and one for a parenting capacity assessment, although this was relating to multiple siblings. This was a significant increase from 2024-2025 where there were reports requested for 4 children over 14 years old and none over 15 or 16 years old. The reports were for psychiatric, psychological and clinical neuropsychologists.
- 6.13 Whilst the average age suggests that increase age in referral will not have an impact, the data from 2025-2026 shows that children aged 14-16 made up 36% of the reports requested. Depending on the reasons why 16- and 17-year-olds are being referred into the hearing system, we may see an increase in report requests as there could be more young people who require therapeutic intervention or assessment. However, independent reports are just one of the mechanisms that Panel Members have to assist children. Other measures or orders made be more appropriate for these young people. We anticipate that there may be an increase regardless of the implementation of Care and Justice as we continue to promote Panel Member awareness, increasing complexity of hearings as well as continued pressure on services such as CAMHS. The cost of these reports will also rise with the increase of IRW's fees. Finance colleagues are aware of this and we have a commitment from the Scottish Government to underwrite significant increases in the cost of running the function.
- 6.14 Independent report commissions and costs for the last three years can be found in the table below.

Table 3 – Cost of reports by Financial Year

Financial Year	Number of reports commissioned	Total cost
2023 – 2024	26	£89,697.20
2024 - 2025	26	£109,194.88
2025 - 2026	33	£166,771.40

6.15 In conclusion, there is an increase of commissioned reports by six in the year 2025-26 and an increase in spending of approximately £57,576.52.

6.16 The Positive Outcomes Business Support Assistant supports this function. A clear process is in place for approving commissions, tracking commissions and recording costs on the finance requisition log. There have been no difficulties reported regarding these processes in the 2025-26 financial year.

6.17 The following table highlights the frequency of requests per region over the past six years. this shows a significant variation in the use of the service across regions.

Table 4 – Frequency of report requests by region

Region	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
Ayrshire	2	4	6	5	11	4	32
Central & WL	0	1	0	0	2	3	6
Glasgow	0	3	2	2	4	3	14
Grampian & NI	3	5	7	2	3	2	22
North Strathclyde	3	7	3	4	5	10	32
South East	0	0	1	5	4	4	14
Lanarkshire, D&G	2	0	6	5	1	7	21
Tayside & Fife	1	2	3	1	1	3	11
Highlands & Moray	1	2	4	3	1	1	12
Total	12	24	32	27	32	37	164

7 Key Performance Indicators

7.1 To ensure we are meeting deadlines with the Independent Report Writing function, the following Key Performance Indicators are in place:

KPI	Performance
Notification from SCRA of Request within two days:	94% of requests received were requested within 2 days
Identifying three writers to tender for report within one working day:	88% of requests were sent to a minimum of three writers
Writers returning quotes within three working days:	79% of quotes were returned within 3 days

SCRA sending relevant paperwork to commissioned writer within two working days:	18% of commissions received paperwork from SCRA out of timescales.
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- 7.2 It was not possible to obtain a quote from at least three writers in 12% of requests as there was an insufficient number of report writers with the relevant expertise or availability to travel to the required regions. These cases include areas that are more specialist in nature, for example traumatic brain injury and a psychiatric assessment of a child. As noted previously, we have identified the need for recruitment to widen the scope of specialist experience and geographical coverage. It is hoped that this will support ongoing improvement in the meeting of these KPI's.

8 Issues, Risks and Mitigations

- 8.2 We have had a steady stream of requests throughout the year, with the highest number of requests (12) in Q3. A Practice and Policy Advisor, takes a lead on delivering the function, with support from the Business Support Assistant. However, all Practice and Policy Advisors are aware of the process and assist in running the function. The Team will continue to monitor requests to the function and the staffing required to deliver this statutory function.
- 8.4 Over the last year, there has been an increase in the overall cost of the function for various reasons (see paragraph 6.3). As part of our meeting cycle with the Sponsor Team at the Scottish Government, we will make them aware of this increase as part of our accountability that informs grant-in-aid decision and keep them informed of demand for the service.

- 8.5 The risks to the organisational goals/realisation of this project/etc are:

There is a risk that:	Potential reputational risk to CHS as an organisation.
Which may be mitigated by:	Professional accreditation checks.
Tolerance for risk (High/Med/Low):	Medium
Treatment (Tolerate/Treat/Transfer/Terminate):	Treat
Action:	The commissioning process and professional accreditation checks have been improved and continuously monitored. Before every quote is requested, the professional accreditation is checked by a Practice and Policy Advisor and ticked on the request log sheet. When we undertake recruitment and reappointment, accreditations will be checked and monitored.

There is a risk that:	Number of requests that are rejected by CHS which can lead to drift and delay for children.
Which may be mitigated by:	Improvement of CHS's staff understanding legal obligations and ensuring Panel Members have more awareness around the IRW function.
Tolerance for risk (High/Med/Low):	Medium
Treatment (Tolerate/Treat/Transfer/Terminate):	Treat
Action:	In 2025-26, we obtained legal advice to ensure that CHS have a clear understanding of duties imposed. Updating the PPM, MOU and guidance document in line with this advice to ensure that Panel Members are also aware of the suggested process and legal requirements.

There is a risk that:	Requests for IRW increase and impact on capacity
Which may be mitigated by:	Careful monitoring and existing management and finance oversight
Tolerance for risk (High/Med/Low):	Medium
Treatment (Tolerate/Treat/Transfer/Terminate):	Treat
Action:	Monitor and consider additional staffing resource via the Workforce Planning Group if required. Obtaining legal advice will result in a more efficient process.

There is a risk that:	Increase to the overall cost of the function
Which may be mitigated by:	Careful monitoring and existing management oversight. There is an understanding with the Scottish Government Sponsor Team that the costs for the function will be underwritten as there is no way to limit the demand for independent reports. We will share this report with them and firm up this detail going forward.
Tolerance for risk (High/Med/Low):	Medium
Treatment (Tolerate/Treat/Transfer/Terminate):	Tolerate
Action:	Monitor average cost estimates of reports and hourly rate. Ensure IRW's keep within their minimum and

	maximum quote. Keep finance colleagues and Scottish Government updated, as they are now.
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9 Plans for 2026-27

Quarterly Meetings with SCRA Practice Team

- 9.1 Frequent meetings to discuss independent reports to be reintroduced with SCRA. These informal meetings should be used to discuss KPIs, issues and themes identified with the Independent Reports function. These meetings will resume after the MOU has been finalised.

Revise and finalise the MOU

- 9.2 The MOU is in the process of being revised. This required to be re-drafted following the legal advice received. Once this has been checked and finalised, this will be sent to SCRA for their comments.
- 9.3 When both parties are content with the final version, approval and signature from the National Convener is required.

Preparation for Independent Report Writer re-appointments and recruitment

- 9.4 Reappointment discussions for the 2024 cohort of independent report writers are due to take place in the October 2026. The planning of these sessions should be timeously planned as 13 writers will have to take part in this process to review their commitment to the bank. The framework for discussion will have to be completed and logged within the Independent Report folder. It is most likely that that these meetings will take place online or via telephone.
- 9.5 Recruitment of new report writers will take place in 2026. As we have seen an increase in report requests and expertise required, this will inform the recruitment campaign. The aim is to ensure that there are sufficient number of report writers, particularly in the field of child psychology, for each region with a variety of experience.

Community of Practice meetings

- 9.6 We will hold two Community of Practice meetings this financial year. The aim for these sessions is to engage with the experts, allow them a place to connect with one another and ensure the sessions are valuable for everyone. It is hoped that our report writers will suggest topics they would find useful and lead elements of these sessions.

Quality Framework – Feedback

- 9.7 We will continue to request feedback from Panel Members on the quality of the reports. The report writers have expressed how helpful this is for their own development. It is also a useful tool for us to quality assure the function.

10 Recommendation

- 10.1 It is planned that the reporting cycle for the IRW function will be submitted to the Senior Leadership Team on an annual basis. It is recommended that the Senior

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Leadership Team note the report, and any questions are directed to the Practice and Policy Team.