



children's  
hearings  
scotland

Children's Hearings Scotland

Business and Corporate  
Parenting Plan

2020-2021

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# INTRODUCTION



2020-21 is the first of our new corporate plan, *Our Strategic Outlook 2020-23*. In it, Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS) laid out the significant ambitions we have over the next three years and beyond for the infants, children and young people who have hearings. We expect to see a number of major milestones this year: an extensive period of design, engagement and testing will come to fruition as our new digital system begins its roll out; new pieces of legislation will begin to come in to force; and the Independent Care Review findings will begin to be acted on, bringing with it opportunities for leading and participating in change that we look forward to engaging in.

*Our Strategic Outlook 2020-23* restates our commitment to driving improvement in the children’s hearings system by collaborating with our partners and concentrating on doing all we can to ensure that hearings are of consistently high quality, and that we have a skilled, knowledgeable and supported Children’s Panel. This Business and Corporate Parenting Plan identifies the ways in which we will progress these aims over the next 12 months.

But it is also true that this year has started in an unexpected way. The global pandemic of coronavirus has radically altered how the public, private and third sectors deliver services, and how society as a whole operates on a day-to-day basis. We, along with our partners at the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) and in social work and Scottish Government, have been forced to reimagine the operational functioning, and legal framework, of hearings in a matter of days. New approaches have been rapidly developed, tested and deployed to make certain that our core duty – caring for and protecting children in Scotland – can continue, focussing on those who need this the most.

*This year, we will continue to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances we find ourselves in while striving to deliver on our organisational purpose: to equip our volunteer community to engage positively with infants, children, young people and families; ensuring children are loved, cared for, respected and feel part of decisions taken to improve their lives.*

While this has been difficult, it has generated a wealth of new ideas, creative ways to run hearings, innovative ways of working, and new and strengthened relationships. The way the volunteer community that makes up our Children’s Panel and the Area Support Teams (ASTs) who support them have responded to ensure the continued safety of Scotland’s children is a credit to the important civic function they undertake. I am proud of how our National Team have positively adapted to the changes and how they have continued to deliver high quality work in novel ways. As the situation develops, we will take the innovation and learning it creates and apply it in ways that achieve our long-term strategic ambitions – to have effective and empathetic Panel Members making sound decisions in hearings that protect and uphold children’s rights.

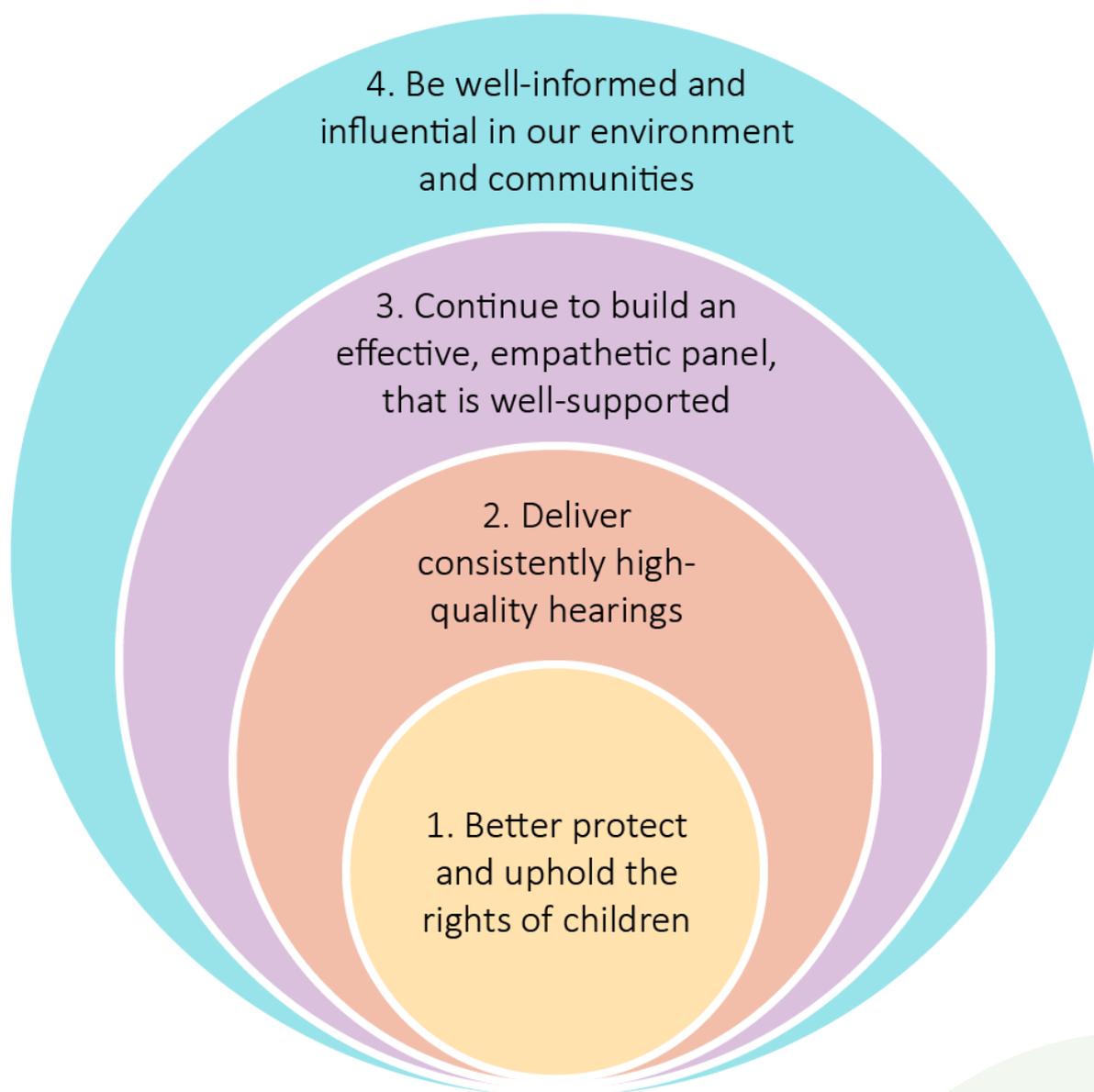


Elliot Jackson  
National Convener  
& CEO

# OUR STRATEGIC THEMES 2020-2023



In our new corporate plan, *Our Strategic Outlook 2020-2023*, we set out what our priorities for the next three years will be. We call these our “Strategic Themes” and together, they set out an ambitious, improvement-driven direction for CHS that places children’s rights at its centre. Our Strategic Themes are:



# OUR STRATEGIC THEMES – AN OVERVIEW



## **Theme 1. Better protect and uphold the rights of children:**

Rights-based working is built in to Scotland's children's hearings system. Decisions are required to be made in the best interests of the child and it gives children and young people the right to have a say in decisions about them. But we recognise that we have a responsibility to integrate the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in to our work and this will form a major strand of our effort over the coming years.

## **Theme 2. Deliver consistently high-quality hearings:**

We want the hearings experience to be the best in can be and produce sound decisions which move infants, children, young people and their families forward, positively, in their journey. We want children's hearings to be seen as an exemplar of empathetic, loving and respectful practice that promote dignity and avoid stigma.

## **Theme 3. Continue to build an effective and empathetic panel, that is well-supported:**

Central to the quality of hearings is Scotland's Children's Panel. They must be knowledgeable and skilled to undertake their role and understand the range of experiences that infants, children and young people may have and the impact of those experiences. To do this, the Children's Panel must be supported with not only the technical aspect of their role, but also the personal effect of making significant decisions.

## **Theme 4. Be well-informed and influential in our environment and communities:**

Over the coming years, we want to develop not only hearings, but also how we deliver our work and how we operate within the wider system and sector. We will look to evidence – from data, research, but also from what we are told by people with experience of hearings - to under-pin our decision making and adopt structured approaches to pilots and innovations. We will also look for opportunities to lead change within the care system and engage actively with our partners.

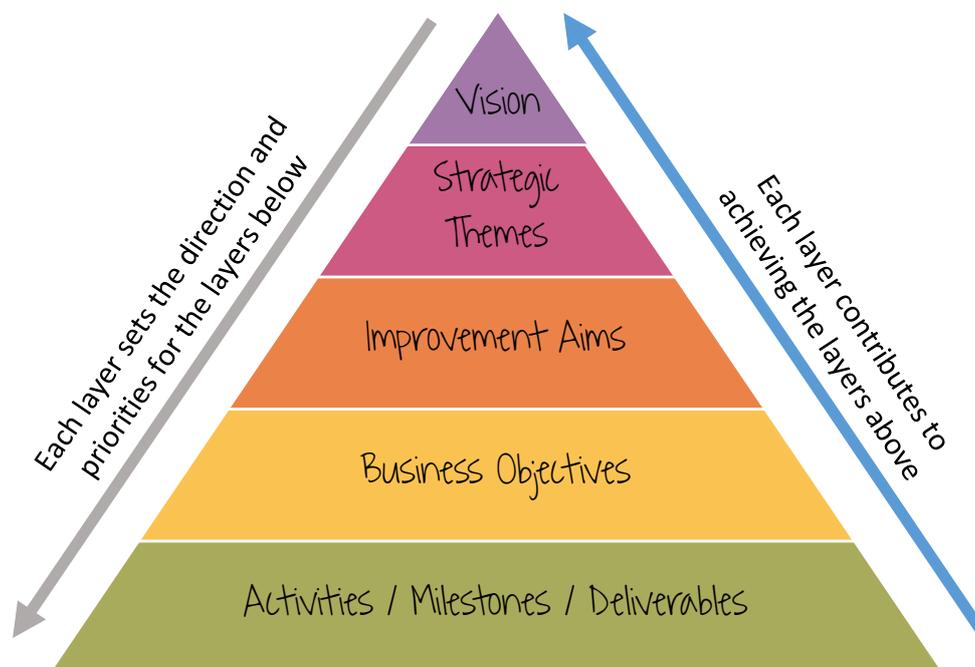
We believe these Themes represent an ambitious future for CHS, children's hearings, and those who come in to contact with hearings. We are committed to working with partners, and with the implementation structures of the Independent Care Review, to see them realised.

Pages 9-16 of this Business Plan outline the actions we are taking in 2020-21 to make progress toward achieving these Themes.

# OUR PLANNING APPROACH



To aid our planning, we have turned the strategy outlined in our corporate plan in to action through a number of operational 'layers'. As we move down the layers, the level of detail increases and their content becomes more action-focused:



- **Vision** – this is the future state we are working towards: *“A forward looking and evolving children’s hearings system, working as a community to ensure infants, children and young people are cared for, protected and their views are heard respected and valued.”*
- **Strategic Themes** – these are our big, multi-year priorities. Our themes, set out in our corporate plan 2020-23, are listed on the previous page, and this business plan is aligned to achieving these. Progress to achieving our themes is measured by our organisational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
- **Improvement Aims** – these are the major improvement-focused priorities within each Strategic Theme. Each aim has specific measures, some of which will be organisational KPIs. These aims will be set during 2020/21 and our existing Business Objectives aligned to them and new objectives generated.
- **Business Objectives** – these are the clusters of projects or programmes that are required to deliver our aims. These objectives are included here in our business plan and are usually delivered within the year. These are reviewed, and amended where necessary, quarterly with their accompanying activities and milestones.
- **Activities / Milestones / Deliverables** – these are the individual tasks and projects that make up a Business Objective. These are detailed in this plan, and are reviewed, amended where necessary, and reported on to the CHS Board quarterly.

# CORPORATE PARENTING



As Corporate Parents under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, CHS and the National Convener have responsibilities to make sure our attention and resources are focused on upholding the rights, safeguarding, and promoting the wellbeing of Scotland's looked after children and care leavers.

The specific duties on Corporate Parents are to:



**Be alert** to matters which might adversely affect the wellbeing of looked after children and young people.



**Assess** the needs of looked after children and young people for the services and support we provide.



**Promote** the interests of looked after children and young people.



**Provide opportunities** for looked after children and young people to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing.



Take appropriate action to ensure looked after children and young people **access** these opportunities and make use of our services and support.



Take any other action appropriate to **improve** our functions to meet the needs of looked after children and young people.

Throughout this plan, we have identified the actions we plan to undertake in order to fulfil our Corporate Parenting duties by using our heart symbol and a letter, according to the list above.

We will report on our progress against these actions in our annual Impact Report.

# RESPONDING TO CORONAVIRUS



The global pandemic of coronavirus has had a significant impact on the functioning of Scotland's children's hearings system and on the operations of CHS.

During this unprecedented time, we are committed to continuing to realise the ambitions set out in our Corporate Plan through the Business Objectives and their associated activities, milestones and deliverables as outlined on the following pages of this plan. Inevitably, though, significant time, resources and effort have had to, and continue to, be diverted to dealing with our reaction and response to the evolving situation and how we continue to protect and care for the infants, children and young people who have hearings.

In direct response to the coronavirus outbreak, we will continue, for as long as is necessary to carry out the following:

- Through multi-agency collaboration, continue to develop local and national solutions to the changing circumstances so that hearings can take place and that they increasingly allow opportunities for participation.
- Training our volunteer community to carry out remote hearings and keep them well-informed about our changing arrangements, engaged and feeling supported.
- Giving guidance to our volunteer community on the new Coronavirus (Scotland) 2020 Act.
- Enabling and supporting staff to work in new ways.
- Adapting pre-service training to change the methods of learning and processes for Panel Member appointment.

As and when restrictions begin to be eased and how we operate can start to change, we will then:

- Invest staff time to ensure that any hearings outstanding as a result of the coronavirus outbreak can take place.
- Provide support and advice to our volunteer community to help return to 'in-person' hearings.
- Work with SCRA and other partners to review the efficacy and future role of virtual hearings, following testing during coronavirus.
- Carry out a review of the CHS Learning Academy Prospectus and align learning and development opportunities for the whole community to the environment at the time.
- Work to resolve any backlog of complaints, concerns, and statutory information requests that may have developed.

# THEME 1: BETTER PROTECT AND UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN



	Objective	Milestones	Timescales / Targets
A 1	Better understand how the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) can be realised in CHS's work and reflect on our current performance by producing our first <b>UNCRC Realisation Progress Report</b>	Develop a framework/approach for reporting on our progress on the realisation of UNCRC	Complete by end Q2
		Publish the UNCRC Realisation Progress Report with recommendations for further work	Complete by end Q3
		Begin to implement recommendations	Progress to end Q4
B 2	Improve how children and young people can be included in hearings through a new <b>inclusion strategy</b>	Publish our Children's Rights and Inclusion strategy	Complete by end Q2
		Implement the action from the strategy	Progress up to end of Q4
A 3	Achieve a sound understanding of children's rights across our community through the provision of a new <b>online course on rights</b>	Delivery of online course	Complete by Q3
		Monitor the completion rate of the course	Minimum 30% of Panel Members have completed the course by end Q4
E 4	Ensure children are supported to express their views and opinions by implementing the national <b>Advocacy Scheme</b> in children's hearings	Make training, practice guidance and support available to the volunteer community	Dependant on external timelines
		Review all training courses to include advocacy	Dependant on external timelines
		Review the implementation and Panel Member experience of advocacy by gathering feedback	Dependant on external timelines

## THEME 2: DELIVER CONSISTENTLY HIGH-QUALITY HEARINGS



	Objective	Milestones	Timescales / Targets
5	Make hearings increasingly respectful, caring and fair places by introducing and implementing a <b>Code of Conduct</b> across the volunteer community	Publish Code of Conduct	Complete by end Q1
		Progress Dissemination of Code of Conduct	Complete by end Q2
		Complete Dissemination of Code of Conduct	Complete by end Q4
6	Provide Panel Members with the best possible information with which to make decisions by launching and implementing new operational and quality assurance processes for managing <b>independent reports</b>	Recruitment of new report writers	Complete by end Q1
		Review of guidance to request additional reports including local authority reports, safeguarder reports and independent reports.	Complete by Q3
		Launch of Quality Management Framework	Complete by end Q4
7	Improve the utility and relevance of our <b>standards and competencies</b> by undertaking an analysis and alignment exercise	Align CHS standards and competencies internally, and where relevant, externally	Complete by end Q3
8	Improve the quality of written reasons for <b>Panel Members' decisions</b>	Develop and test a framework for national review	Complete by end Q1
		Sample decisions from across Scotland	Complete by end Q3
		Make recommendations based on findings	Complete by end Q4
9	Provide Panel Members with support to be able to make <b>effective and timely decisions</b>	Issue guidance focussed on good quality decision making	Progress up to Q4



## THEME 2 Continued

	Objective	Milestones	Timescales / Targets
10	Have an accountable high-quality hearings system by progressing an effective and efficient <b>complaints process</b>	Finalise policy development	Complete end Q1 - Dependant on external organisational input timelines
		Publish policy, with guidance for children and young people	Complete end Q2 - Dependant on delivery timelines for milestone above
11	Strengthen quality assurance processes and feedback to Panel Members about performance in hearings through our <b>Panel Practice Advisors (PPA)</b>	Finalise and implement digital PPA observation framework	Complete by end Q2
		PPA observation data is being recorded on the system and is used to inform learning and development needs	100% ASTs are receiving management information on PPA observation data by end of Q4
12	Improve the quality of <b>participants' experiences</b> in hearings through improvement projects	Extend the current 'managing attendance at hearings' test of change	Complete by end Q3
		Evaluate the impact of the test of change and make recommendations based on findings	Complete by end Q4
		Continue to progress the implementation of Panel Member Profiles	Progress to end Q4
		Improve the implementation of Panel Member continuity	Progress to end Q4

# THEME 3: CONTINUE TO BUILD AN EFFECTIVE, EMPATHETIC PANEL, THAT IS WELL-SUPPORTED



	Objective	Milestones	Timescales / Targets
13	Offer our community opportunities to learn, develop and improve in their roles by creating new <b>online training modules</b> (including mandatory modules) through the CHS Learning Academy in addition to rights training (see objective 3)	Modules 1, 2, 3 live	Complete by end Q1
		Module 4 live	Complete by end Q2
		Panel Members completion of mandatory training	Completed by end of Q4: Advocacy: 50% Permanence: 50% Information Governance: 85%
14	Keep Panel Members equipped with accurate, up-to-date information and advice by updating the digital <b>Practice and Procedure Manual (PPM)</b>	First PPM Update	Complete by end Q2
		Second PPM Update	Complete by end Q4
15	Connect our volunteer community by running a programme of <b>engagement events</b> across Scotland	Run first set of 4 virtual engagement events	Complete by end Q1
		Run second set of 4 virtual engagement events	Complete by end Q2
		Begin to run local engagement events	Reach 6 ASTs by end Q4
16	Provide support to volunteers on the personal and emotional side of their role by introducing a new <b>wellbeing support approach</b>	Finalisation of approach	Complete by end Q3
		Dissemination of approach	Progress up to Q4
17	Better understand how to work effectively with the range of experiences that children and families who attend hearings may have through a <b>trauma-sensitive improvement plan</b>	Produce a trauma-sensitive improvement plan	Complete by end Q2
		Begin to implement plan recommendations	Progress up to Q4
18	Allow us to improve how we recruit, train, and support a diverse Children's Panel through a new <b>equality strategy</b>	Publish Equality, Diversity & Inclusion strategy	Complete by end Q2
		Implement actions from the strategy	Progress up to Q4

## THEME 3 Continued

	Objective	Milestones	Timescales / Targets
19	Ensure Panel Member training maintains its rigour and quality by reviewing the <b>Professional Development Award (PDA)</b> in partnership with the CHS Learning Academy	Carry out a review of the PDA, identifying changes where necessary	Complete by end Q3
20	Promote the contribution of our volunteers through a dedicated <b>volunteer recognition campaign</b>	Volunteer recognition campaign during Volunteers Week (1st - 7th June)	Complete by end Q1
21	Have <b>recruitment activities</b> that respond to the current environment and local need to recruit diverse and committed volunteers	Confirmation of Panel Member recruitment plans	Complete by end Q1
		Identify and undertake recruitment actions dependant on identified plans	Dependant on recruitment plans
		Involve children & young people in Panel Member recruitment activities	100% of ASTs involving children & young people
22	Carry out a review of our <b>Recruitment &amp; Reappointment policies</b> for volunteer roles	Produce revised Recruitment & Reappointment policies	Complete by end Q3
23	Retain Panel Members by ensuring they are <b>reappointed</b> in an efficient and effective way	Carry out necessary reappointment processes	Complete by end Q1
24	Retain AST Members by ensuring they are <b>reappointed</b> in an efficient and effective way	Carry out necessary reappointment processes	Progress up to Q4
25	Support the recruitment of <b>AST roles</b> through the provision of new resources	Produce refreshed AST recruitment materials	Complete by end Q1
26	<b>Support ASTs</b> to fulfil their role effectively	Area Support and Improvement Partners to work alongside ASTs to support local operations and relationships	Progress up to Q4



## THEME 3 Continued

	Objective	Activities / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Targets
27	Provide effective new services to the volunteer community and improve data availability through a new <b>digital system</b>	MS Teams and e mail tools are available and utilised as a communication tool nationally	End Q1 – 95% take up of e mail and MS Teams across all ASTs
			End Q2 – 100% ASTs have an active local teams channel
			End Q3 - 100% ASTs have utilised Teams video for national/local interaction
		Launch of CHS Functional Services	Complete by end Q2
		Utilise digital system for training and events	100% national and local training booked and recorded in the community hub by end Q4
		Utilise digital system for complaints and concerns tracking	100% complaints and concerns recorded in the community hub by end Q4
		Utilise digital system for rota management	100% AST rota's recorded in the community hub by end Q4
Expenses service encourages more volunteers to claim expenses	25% uplift in expenses value claimed during normal operations vs the same period in 2019/20 by end Q4		

# THEME 4: BE WELL-INFORMED AND INFLUENTIAL IN OUR ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITIES



	Objective	Activities / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Targets
28	Contribute to driving change in the sector through strategic involvement in the implementation of the <b>Independent Care Review</b> findings	Contribute to implementation group	Progress up to Q4
29	Connect with, and influence, knowledge development in the sector by being involved in <b>research</b>	Participate in 2 external research advisory groups	Progress up to end Q4
30	Improve the skills and capacity we have to make changes by <b>training</b> our staff and volunteer leaders in improvement and implementation science in partnership with CELCIS	Deliver first wave of courses	Complete by end Q3
		Deliver second wave of courses	Complete by end Q4
31	Improve the quality and consistency of how we communicate our function externally through the delivery of a new <b>corporate website</b> , including a section for children and young people	Launch new CHS website	Complete by end Q1
32	Improve CHS data and management information availability through a new <b>digital system</b>	Develop and improve management information reports at a variety of operational levels	Progress to end Q4
		Undertake the first digital benefits realisation monitoring exercise	Complete by end Q4
33	Keep our community up-to-date with developments and thinking in the sector by giving them access to the <b>views of specialists</b>	Deliver 2 'Learn from the Experts' activities	Complete by end Q4

## THEME 4 Continued

	Objective	Activities / Milestones / Deliverables	Timescales / Targets
34	Identify ways to allow our work to be <b>influenced by lived experience</b> of hearings	Publication of Rights and Inclusion strategy	Complete by end Q2
		Implement the actions from the strategy	Progress up to end Q4
35	Contribute to driving change in the sector through strategic involvement in the implementation of the <b>Independent Care Review</b> findings	Contribute to implementation group	Progress up to Q4
36	Have a nationally consistent approach to Area Support and Improvement Partners' involvement in Corporate Parenting and Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) <b>groups locally</b>	Agreement of approach	Dependant on external environment
		Implementation measure	Dependant on external environment
37	Continue active contribution to <b>national strategic and advisory groups</b> within the sector	Involvement with Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership and sub-groups	Dependant on external environment
		Involvement with Youth Justice Improvement Board and sub-groups	Dependant on external environment
		Involvement with Age of Criminal Responsibility Advisory Group	Dependant on external environment

# MONITORING OUR BUSINESS PLAN



Owing the unprecedented circumstances in which this plan is being developed, we have chosen to adopt a more flexible approach to our planning and monitoring. Each of the activities, milestones and deliverables above have been assigned a timescale in which, to the best of our current knowledge, we anticipate they will be completed, or a target specific to that activity. They may, however, have to change in response to our environment.

To manage this process, CHS operates a well-established process of monitoring and reporting:



Our quarterly performance reviews to the CHS Board will not only take in to account work delivered in the past quarter, but also reflect on upcoming work and whether alterations will be required (e.g. change of timescales, or change of scope of work) in order to adapt to the environment at the time. In addition, we also aim to keep better track of unplanned key work that may arise during the year and identify ways to include this in our reporting and monitoring.



# MONITORING OUR CORPORATE PLAN



Our Corporate Plan identified a number of key performance indicator areas to measure how effectively we are implementing our strategy over the next three years. We have set the following targets so far for 2020/21 and will, in our Annual Report, report figures for during and after coronavirus separately, as necessary:

Performance Measure	Baseline	2020/21 Target
% Panel Members who have completed Children's Rights online module	New Measure	30% by end of Q4
Training courses developed with partner organisation input	New Measure	5 out of 5 courses
% of complaints resolved within SPSO guidelines, during normal operations	2017/18: 100% 2018/19: 92% 2019/20: 100%*	100%
% CHS employee attendance	2017/18: 96% 2018/19: 95% 2019/20 Target: 93%	96%
% invoices not in dispute paid within 10 working days, during normal operations	2017/18: 80% 2018/19: 92% 2019/20 Target: 90%	90%
% IT helpdesk calls resolved within SLA terms	2017/18: 90% 2018/19: 90% 2019/20 Target: 90%	90%
% of pre-service trainees who felt that the learning objectives were met	2019/20 Target: 95%	95%
% positive staff survey feedback on opportunities for learning and development	2018/19: 33% 2019/20: 51%	55%

During March 2020, CHS was due to undertake a number of planning and business activities on which the development of some key strategic organisational measures were dependant. Owing to the postponement of these activities and the operational challenges presented to both CHS and other organisations during the initial period of 2020/21, the following measurement areas will be reviewed, developed and refined as timing allows during 2020/21:

- The views of children and young people about their hearings and the quality of their participation opportunities. There are currently pilots running which involve collecting this feedback and will look at ways these can be adapted as a sustainable solution.
- Panel Member continuity and hearings deferrals.
- Trauma training of Panel Members.
- Diversity of the Children's Panel.
- Attendance at local strategic groups.
- Use of data for decision making.
- Male Panel Members appointed.
- PDA completion rates.
- Cyber security.
- Any other relevant measures developed for our organisational Improvement Aims.

# OUR RESOURCES FOR 2020-2021

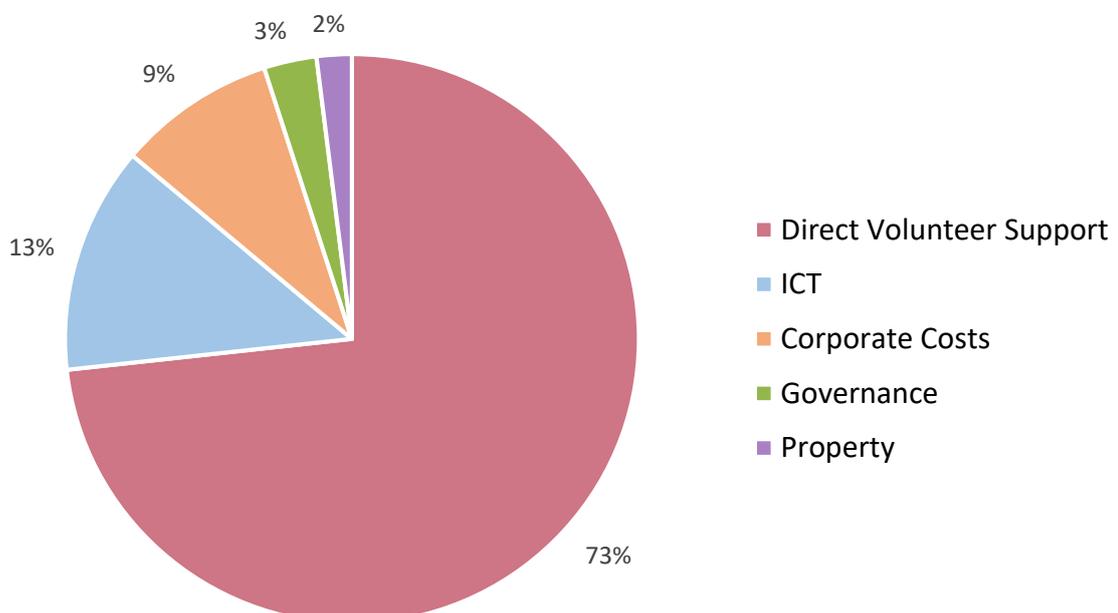


We are funded through an annual grant in aid under a framework agreement with the Scottish Government.

For 2020/21, our grant in aid is £4.69m. These resources are allocated across CHS' functions to ensure that we can recruit, train and support our volunteers.



Our Budget Allocation 2020/21

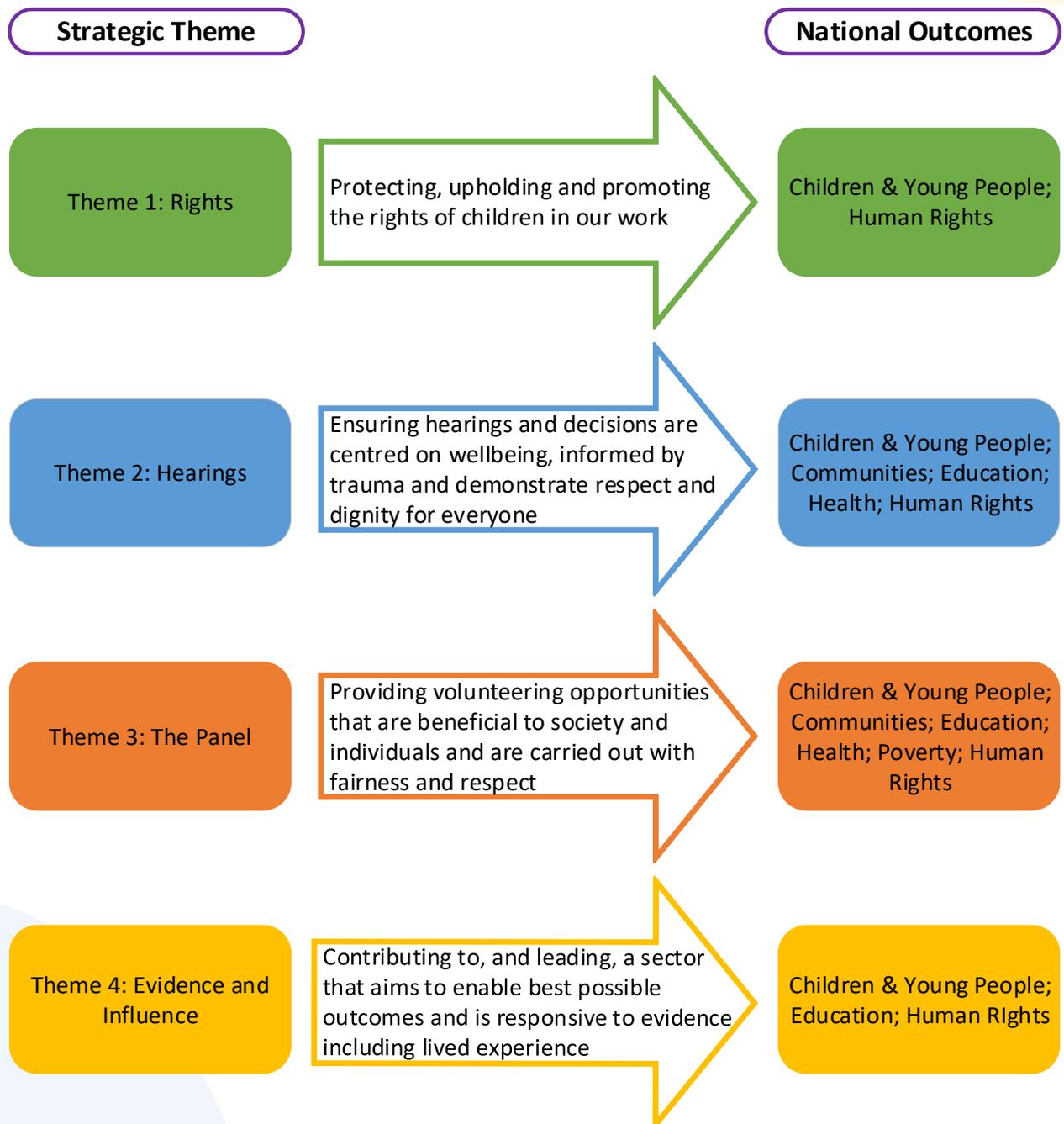


# CHS AND THE NATIONAL PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK



In our 2020-23 Corporate Plan, we set out how our Strategic Themes are aligned to Scotland’s National Performance Framework.

A summary is given below:



# Children's Hearings Scotland

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