

**Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership Meeting
Friday 26 February 2021**

Note of Meeting

<p>Attendees: Lesley Sheppard (SG) - Chair – LS Tom McNamara (SG) – TM Iain Fitheridge (SG) – IF Craig Milne (SG) – CM Leah Wilkie (SG) – LW John Urquhart (COSLA) – JU Elaine Adams (CHIP L&D lead) – EA Janine McCullough (Education Scotland)– JMcC Elliot Jackson (CHS) – EJ Bryan Evans (Children 1st) – BE Lisa Bennett (SCRA) LB Helen Etchells (SCRA) - HE Liz Cuschieri (SLAB) – LC Neil Hunter (SCRA) – NH Colin Convery (Police Scotland) - CC Fiona Dyer (CYCJ) - FD Kyrsten Buist (COPFS) - KB Marie-Louise Fox (SLAB) - MF Alistair Hogg (SCRA) - AH Suzanne Orr (SWS) – SO Carol Wassell (CHS) – CW Aileen Nicol (CELSIS) – AN Alison Todd (Angus CPC) – AT Helen Crompton (SG) – HC Hazel Robertson (PKC) – HR Fiona McFarlane (The Promise) - FM</p>	<p>Apologies: Sheriff Susan Craig (Judiciary) Eilidh Graham (SCTS) Lynne McNiven (NHS) Tracey McFall (Partners in Advocacy) Matt Forde (NSPCC)</p>
---	--

Agenda Item	Action Points
<p>1. Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed CHIP partners to the group, apologies were noted and brief introductions made.</p>	
<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting and Action Points</p> <p>Minutes of previous meeting have been agreed. The Chair agreed with the group that all actions are completed with the exception of AP1 where a further conversation needs to take place and AP6 will be taken forward at a future CHIP meeting.</p>	

<p>TM explained that AP1 was currently framed as an outstanding conversation between himself and BE to convey to the weekly recovery group. But there would be a very warm welcome for ongoing dialogue within the weekly recovery group and TM confirmed the group would be keen to hear any views, insights or concerns the wider CHIP partners may have and that these would be recorded, and reflected in updated plans as necessary. This action can now be closed.</p>	
<p>Winter Funding Plan</p> <p>TM reminded the group that this partnership has responsibility for distribution and monitoring of the £500,000 winter funding for vulnerable children. Prior to Christmas, an invite was sent to CHIP and the wider network, TM confirmed the weekly CHCRG group screened 12 proposals from CHIP and 3rd sector partners, and grant letters had now issued following CHIP's authorisation. TM confirmed that is in hand to putting in place a proportionate mechanism for organisations to report back 6 weeks after the end of the financial year to assess the impact of the funding.</p>	<p>AP1: TM to report back to June CHIP with impact report</p>
<p>Updates and Issues Paper</p> <p>NH updated the group that CHS and SCRA have completed a significant overhaul of information systems and have moved to a joint digital platform - CSAS. This is a significant achievement which is making a difference now and which holds out the promise of better system performance in the future. Due to further lockdown restrictions, the reliance on virtual hearings continues and SCRA are focused on testing and trialling new approaches. NH confirmed SCRA are integrating virtual hearings within their core digital platform, which will include a focus on improving the quality of the experience.</p> <p>SO thanked NH for his update and reflected that this will be welcomed by social workers, and will hopefully address the variable quality of connection some people have experienced with VScene.</p> <p>BE flagged up to the group that Parentline have been offering support to parents who have been attending hearings before and during the pandemic. They have received a number of calls regarding technology and they want to make people aware of challenges and how to make them better. BE thinks it would be beneficial for someone in SCRA to advise Parentline about the changes to the virtual hearings and digital platforms. BE to speak with AH to ensure this happens.</p> <p>AH informed the group that Gordon Main will be taking over from Jacqui Dunbar as the new OHOV facilitator. SCRA are delighted to have Gordon join the team. Some of the young people involved in</p>	<p>AP2: BE to speak with AH to provide Parentline with an update on virtual hearings</p>

<p>OHOV currently are coming to the end of their involvement with the programme and there was always the plan that when these young people reached 17 or 18 years old that SCRA would support them onto other things. SCRA have put in place an advisory role for children who have reached that age, and all but 1 of the young people involved in the programme currently have taken up that offer. Gordon will work with the young people to develop the role and are all very keen to engage with other groups.</p> <p>TM acknowledged those OHOV members, particularly those ending their involvement, had developed valuable skills and knowledge. He wondered whether opportunities to connect to new work/other groups with a thought to particular links to the Recovery work.</p>	
<p>Impact of current Covid restrictions on Recovery Plan</p> <p>The main highlights of the discussion on the recovery plan:</p> <p>TM reminded the group that the Children's Hearings Covid Recovery Group (CHCRG) made a commitment to get clear authorisation from CHIP on a quarterly basis on what the group have been working on. Great credit had to be given to the CHCRG for their commitment to developing the recovery plan. The recovery plan as it stands at the moment is under a draft heading but the main components are in place – the recovery plan remains a working document as we look towards moving back to the Tier structure out of lockdown. On the emergency legislation, TM confirmed that Parliament has been asked to extend all of the provision – with the exception of the provision on child assessment orders - and subject to Parliamentary process will run until end of September 2021 [to note: no option for further extensions as the legislation will expire Sept 2021].</p> <p>AH updated the group that there were many changes and experiences from October to January 2021 in relation to the pandemic, all of which needed to be reflected in the updated plan. These included virus suppression measures and all the issues setting up virtual hearings and increasing face to face hearings. Alongside this they had to roll out the new case management system.. Virtual hearings will see a rapid improvement in quality and technical support for children and families. The construction of a Recovery Team and recruitment of new reporters and assistant reporters puts SCRA in a good place for when restrictions are eased. The new lockdown restrictions have prevented SCRA fully utilising the increased capacity for delivering hearings however are now better placed - inevitably the lockdown will have pushed back the 'back to normal' hearings recovery</p>	

<p>CW highlighted it was not only important to get a snapshot of those children currently referred, and those already in the system, but also to consider who is likely to be coming to Reporters and hearings.</p> <p>EJ provided an update on panel member availability -this number reduced to 60% after new lockdown restrictions. EJ thanked the many organisations for support involving social media support on their recruitment campaign. Campaign had been a success with 1900 applications received –notably, a good percentage with care experience have applied. Appointment and training activity will run throughout spring and summer 2021.</p>	
<p>Cross Border Secure Placements</p> <p>TM outlined the issues raised by English local authorities seeking to place children in residential placements in Scotland under orders authorising a deprivation of liberty. Judgment in a Supreme Court case was pending. As the cases are subject to live litigation, he was obliged to be circumspect as to the SG's position. But he wanted to highlight the issue and plan for future CHIP activity on this. Beyond the cross border cases, a clear consistent Scottish approach to authorising interventions was needed where children were looked after and accommodated – with reference to whether any interventions interfered with, restricted or deprived a child's liberty. Scottish Government had some questions to explore with partners about domestic children's cases – needed to be sure the clarity and specificity of measures contained in children's hearings' decisions gave residential services the required authority to interfere with, or restrict, children's liberty. The group agreed to have a more detailed discussion on these issues at a later meeting.</p>	
<p>Youth Justice Improvement Board</p> <p>FD provided an update from the Youth Justice Improvement Board. The board met on 4th February and focussed on the vision, outcomes and priorities for the refreshed Youth Justice Strategy YJIB agreed the draft vision and priorities (Early intervention and support for children and families, children's rights, diversion from the criminal justice service, participation for young people with speech, language, communication needs, participation on how to get children involved, UNCRC and The Promise). A final draft has been sent to youth justice board and once agreed will be sent to CHIP.</p>	<p>AP3: Secretariat to circulate Youth Justice Vision paper for comments</p>
<p>AOB</p>	<p>AP4: Chair/Secretariat</p>

<p>The Chair asked for any items the group would like to be on future agendas.</p> <p>Suggestions include:CW commented that she would like to have an understanding of current capacity in the hearings system, and an understanding of latent need and demand that had not yet crystallised into SCRA referrals. She thinks it would be beneficial to have a session on that in the next recovery group meeting and report back to CHIP.</p> <p>LC thinks it would be beneficial to have an agenda item on advocacy workers.</p> <p>EJ suggested that it would be important to address in early course the terms and implications of The Promise plan being launched in March .</p>	<p>to consider priority for next agenda</p>
<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>29th April 2021: 10:00 – 12:00</p>	