

Children's Hearings reform: Improving the Lives of Children in Scotland



The Scottish Government is immensely proud of, and committed to, the Children's Hearings System. It is an integral part of our work to **improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland.**

Welcome to the first newsletter about the reform of the Children's Hearings System. We want to keep you in touch with what we're doing at the Scottish Government so read on to find out more about what we've been up to and our future plans.

What have we been doing?

We published a working draft of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill on 26 June in order to seek the views of key partners.

We received a wide range of comments and concerns about the proposals.

So that we can produce the best Bill possible, Ministers have decided to take the necessary time to discuss further with stakeholders and introduction of the Bill is now planned for early next year.

We want our constructive dialogue to continue and today we're sending out a paper by email to help inform our ongoing discussion with you.

The paper outlines:

- the comments we've received
- the concerns we have heard
- our response

We will also put the paper on our WebPage:

www.scotland.gov.uk/childrens-hearings-bill

We want to hear your views!

We welcome your feedback on the paper by 30 October. You can send your comments by email or post, or we can meet with you. Our contact details are at the bottom of this newsletter.

Working with partners

Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Early Years, met with panel members across Scotland over the spring and summer, to answer their questions and hear their concerns.

Mr Ingram has continued to discuss the proposed reforms with key partners such as CoSLA, SCRA, and UNISON.

He also chairs the strategic project board which meets regularly to oversee the reforms.

We have suggested to the strategic project board that it set up short-term working groups to consider the structures and processes that will lie beneath the primary legislation. We propose that these working groups, comprised of key stakeholders, will provide advice to the strategic board and the Government to help ensure we introduce the best possible legislation to Parliament.

Working with Partners (continued)

We are engaging at official level with stakeholders to help inform our work on the draft Bill and wider reforms.

We've met with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders recently, including:

- Association of Directors of Social Workers
- Children's Panel Advisory Committees
- Children's Panel Chairs and Children's Panel members
- Children's Organisations
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA)
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)
- Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Scottish Safeguarders Association
- UNISON

These discussions will continue.

Mr Ingram and officials will also be speaking at the Holyrood magazine conference on the Children's Hearings Reforms on Tuesday 27 October at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Edinburgh. You can find more information at:
<http://childrenshearings.holyrood.com/>

Engaging with children and young people

We are committed to learning directly from children and young people about their needs and experiences of children's hearings.

We are exploring with children's organisations how best to take this work forward, in particular how the hearings system can best protect the rights of children and young people and their ability to participate in hearings and have their voice heard.

About the Children's Hearings Reform Team

We've changed our name and we've increased in size!

- Kit Wyeth has joined to oversee the Children's Hearings reforms
- Denise Swanson continues to lead on work around the draft Bill and supporting legislation
- The **bill team** is led by Gaynor Davenport and supported by Hamish MacFarlane and Gillian McTavish
- The **communications and stakeholder engagement team** is led by Hazel Crawford and supported by Lynne Phillips, Moira Hughes and Phil Reid

You can reach us by email:

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And you find out more about the draft Bill on our WebPage:

www.scotland.gov.uk/childrens-hearings-bill