



Children's Hearings Scotland
Corporate Plan

OUR STRATEGIC OUTLOOK 2020-2023

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OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



INTRODUCTION



This is a critical and exciting time for CHS with Scottish Government support and investment in our service at unprecedented levels. We recognise the depth, scale and pace of delivery required during 2020-23 and so have made Government performance outcomes a key focus for our strategic plan.

We have made a number of structural changes to strengthen our capacity to improve outcomes right across our organisation. We are now ready to play a leading role in driving change in the children's hearing system, including implementing and taking forward the recommendations outlined in the Independent Care Review and adapting to other changes and developments, planned and unplanned, that will appear over the coming years.

This Strategic Outlook will challenge and stretch the organisation and is a blueprint for new levels of innovation, inclusion and collaboration. We are confident in our plan to be increasingly shaped by the views and insights of children and young people with lived experience of the hearings system, service delivery partners and our volunteer panel community who give their time so generously and will deliver close to 90,000 hearings during the life of this three-year plan.

Our Vision outlines our drive to deliver as one CHS Community and **Our Purpose** sets out our commitment 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.

We move forward into 2020 in a challenging operational situation, but with energy and confidence knowing **engagement, collaboration** and **partnership** are paramount to the successful delivery of our Strategic Outlook, 2020-23 and work is already underway to ensure our community understand our direction and goals.

Yours in partnership,



Garry Coutts
Chair, CHS Board



Elliot Jackson
National Convener
& CEO

“ *Our Strategic Outlook 2020-2023 is ambitious, improvement focussed and will enable every member of the Children's Hearings Scotland community to contribute tangibly to the goals and outcomes set out by the Scottish Government for infants, children, young people and families.* ”

WHO WE ARE



Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) is one of a number of organisations that work within the children's hearings system, Scotland's unique care and justice system that exists to ensure the safety and wellbeing of infants, children and young people in Scotland.

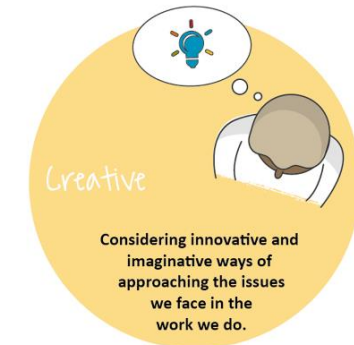
Our activities focus on recruiting, training and supporting volunteer Panel Members who make decisions in children's hearings, and volunteer Area Support Teams (ASTs) who provide support and direction at a local level.

We have 3,000 volunteers in our community, across six different volunteer roles:

- **Area Convener** – leads ASTs and work with partners at a local level.
- **Depute Area Convener** – supports the Area Convener to lead the local AST.
- **Learning and Development Coordinator** – organises Panel Member learning at a local level.
- **Panel Member** – takes part in children's hearings and makes legal decisions about the care and protection of infants, children and young people.
- **Panel Practice Advisor** – maintains the high quality of our Panel Member practice through observation and feedback.
- **Panel Representative** – a local point of contact for Panel Members, representing their interests with the ASTs. Panel Representatives also allocate Panel Members to children's hearings.

This volunteer community, and the staff who work at CHS (called the National Team), are led by the National Convener and Chief Executive. The National Convener is responsible for the recruitment, training, retention and support of Panel Members.

OUR VALUES



OUR AMBITIONS



OUR VISION

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.

OUR 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.

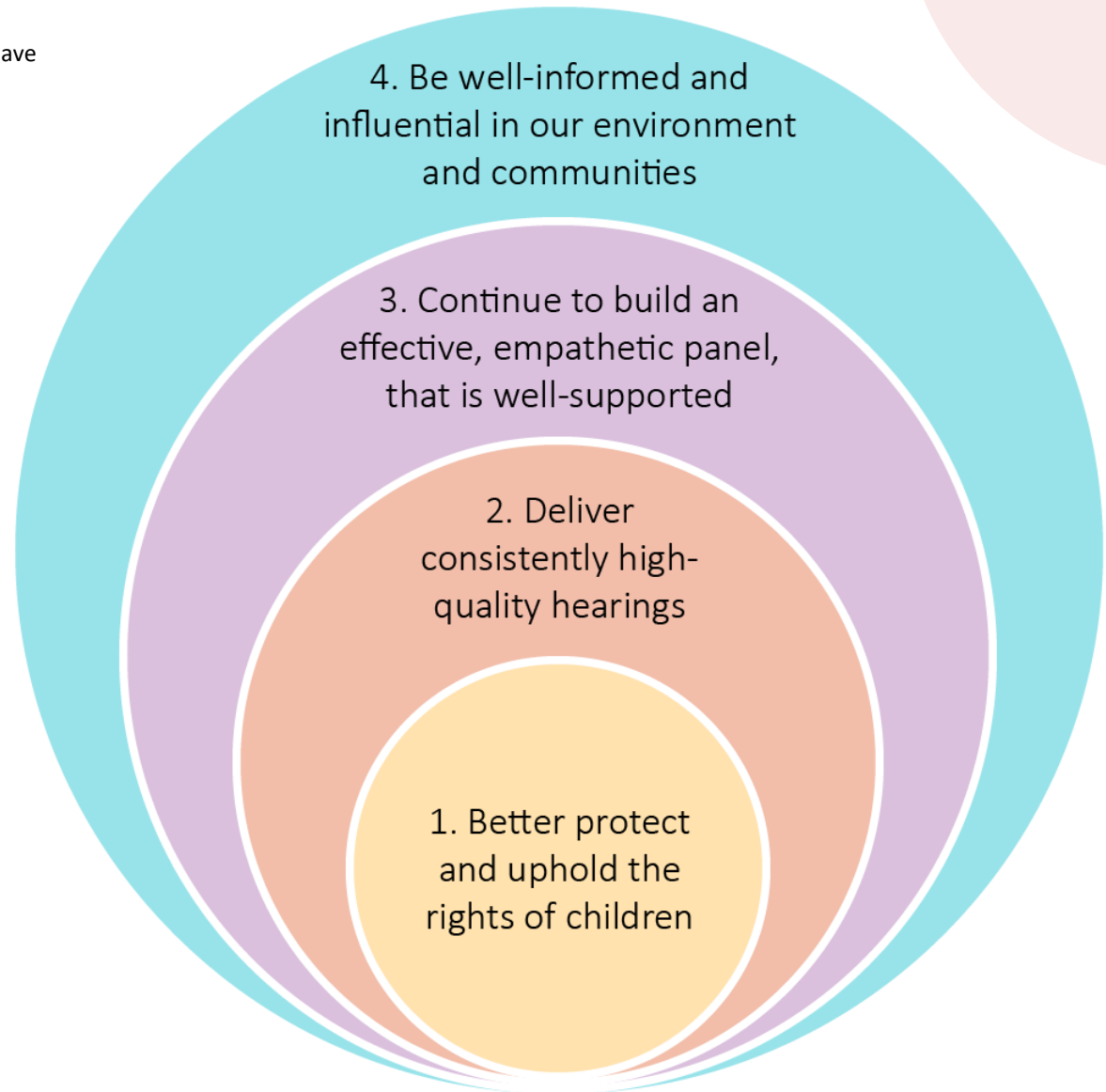
We are passionate about providing an exemplary service today but we also want to be ready for the next decade and for the changes in the care, protection and support that children, young people and those around them deserve and expect. While this plan focusses on 2020-2023, we acknowledge that our ambitions will take time to come to fruition and we have goals that run far beyond this period; the next 3 years are only the start of the next significant journey for CHS and the wider sector.

This Plan sets out how we will be working during 2020-2023 to deliver our mission and move closer to seeing our vision be realised. We are committed to embracing our own Corporate Parenting responsibilities and to making positive changes to how we work and the role that we play in the hearings system, the wider care system, and in the lives of infants, children and young people in Scotland.

OUR STRATEGIC THEMES FOR 2020-2023



To direct our actions and activities over the next 3 years, we have set 4 strategic themes that lay out what we want to achieve:



THEME 1 BETTER PROTECT AND UPHOLD THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN

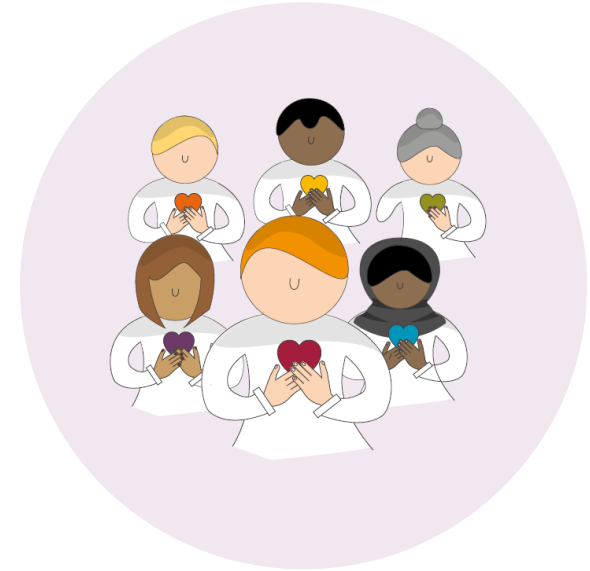


Rights-based working is built in to Scotland's children's hearings system. Legislation requires hearings to make decisions based on the best interests of the child. It gives children and young people the right to have a say in decisions about them and for their opinions to be taken seriously, and requires that the care and protection of individual infants, children and young people be reviewed regularly. These are features we are committed to.

We want to go further. We will focus on ensuring that hearings are places in which children's rights are recognised, respected and upheld. We recognise that this may be complex, but we will listen intently to children, young people and those with whom they have significant relationships, and work with our partners to shape best practice in the hearings system.

As an organisation, CHS will focus its attention on integrating the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in to its work and will promote, internally and externally, the importance of children's rights in its work.

We want to create hearings that feel empowering to children and young people and be part of a system that is centred on love, care and respect.



Examples of what we will do to deliver this theme:

Ensure that our volunteers are trained in children's rights, and understand how to enable them.

Ensure that children and young people are able to participate fully in our work.

Use data and feedback to keep our approach to rights, and how they are exercised in hearings, under review.

Introduce a framework for measuring our progress on children's rights and the realisation of UNCRC within our work.

Learn from, and work with, partners to adopt best practice in our rights work.

Train our staff in children's rights and how to embed them in their work.

THEME 2 DELIVER CONSISTENTLY HIGH-QUALITY HEARINGS



We have always been driven, as a public body, to fully understand what is in the best interests of each child and to ensure hearings meet their needs, directed (where possible) by children and young people. We want to ensure that the hearings experience is felt by the child or young person to be the best it can be and that hearings produce sound decisions, which move the child, young person and those around them forward, positively, in their journey. Infants, children and young people being able to effectively participate in hearings, but also have an influence over how they run, will be key enablers of this.

We want to ensure that hearings, while places in which formal legal decisions are made, are carried out with love, care, respect. This approach will be underpinned by behaviour within and outwith the hearing. We will challenge behaviour that does not display these attributes.

Over the next decade of the hearings system, improved early services and cultural change to supporting infants, children and young people will result in fewer hearings being needed. This is not, however, a reason for their quality to do anything other than improve.

We want children's hearings to be an exemplar of sound, empathetic, loving and respectful practice in Scotland toward children, young people and their families and will work with our partner organisations in the hearing system to achieve this.

Examples of what we will do to deliver this theme:

Work with partners to increase the influence children and young people can have on hearings. We want this to lead to the delivery of co-designed hearings.

Rationalise, and better use, the system of standards, codes and competencies in which we operate.

Start to work with our partners to ensure that hearings are run with processes that do not cause delays or disruption.

Undertake work focused on demonstrating and cementing acceptable hearings behaviours and conduct

Explore how hearings can work more effectively with the families of infants, children and young people who attend hearings.

Ensure that we promote dignity in hearings by understanding the impact of stigma in hearings and identifying ways to avoid this.

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




Scotland's Children's Panel is unique. It plays a vital role in supporting Scotland's infants, children and young people by making decisions with, and for, them. Its strength comes from the fact that, while unified by shared values and a desire to make a difference in Scotland and their local community, each Panel Member is themselves unique. Promoting this diversity of experience, knowledge and backgrounds will be a key aim for us over the next three years.

High quality decision-making in hearings requires a Panel that is well-trained. Panel Members must understand the legal framework in which children's hearings operate, how to communicate with each other and with children and young people, how to work effectively as a team, how to function as a leader when necessary, and have an awareness of the range of experiences infants, children and young people may have. All this knowledge and these skills need to be kept up-to-date and need to respond to changing legislation, approaches and national and local environments. In developing our learning and training opportunities, we will seek to work with others in the sector.

But we are increasingly aware that the support Panel Members require goes beyond these technical aspects. Making significant decisions about the future of infants, children and young people can be personally difficult and emotionally draining. We must therefore ensure that Panel Members have the resilience to carry out their role, and access to additional support if they need it.

We will continue to offer this support while openly and collaboratively supporting wider discussions about the role and make-up of Scotland's Children's Panel.

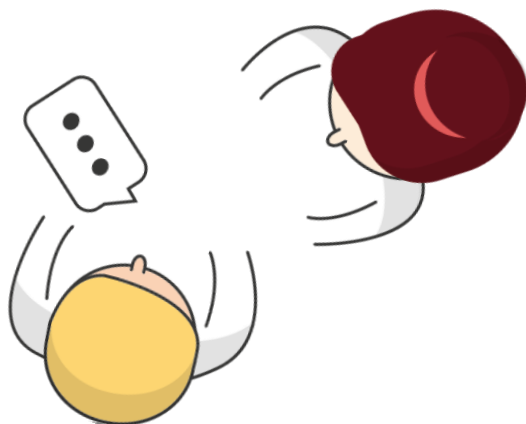


In 2019,
62%
of Panel Members told us that they would like more opportunities to discuss good practice and talk through difficult cases.

Examples of what we will do to deliver this theme:

- Begin our journey to fully embedding throughout our work an awareness of the impact of trauma.
- Actively seek to increase the number of Panel Members with lived experience of the hearings system and strive for greater diversity of the Children's Panel.
- Continue to develop the training offered through the CHS Learning Academy to ensure Panel Members feel confident in their skills and abilities.
- Introduce a new approach to supporting Panel Members wellbeing.
- Connect, include, celebrate, and explore how to better support, our volunteer community by rolling out a new engagement programme.
- Contribute actively to any national review of the role of volunteer decision makers as suggested by the Independent Care Review.

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.

Our activities will be underpinned by a renewed commitment to evidence-based working and continuous improvement, while also generating knowledge through pilots and trials. This approach will be significantly enabled by a new digital system that will transform the accuracy and range of data available to us. We will welcome opportunities for collaboration on how we use and share data.

We will redouble our efforts to work with partners and aim to lead change within the care system. This will involve becoming a more active participant in the environments in which we work. We will take opportunities to contribute to, respond to, and influence research, legislation, policy and practice to make improvements for the better across care, protection, and youth justice. As part of this involvement, we will advocate for the increased use of effective early intervention and identify ways to work with partners who support infants, children and young people before the need for a hearing.

As part of better understanding, and therefore improving, the hearings system, we believe it is important to take the voice of lived experience of the hearings system in to account as fully as possible. This will include listening to and changing the language we use where necessary. We want to be an organisation that, like hearings, listens to what they have to say and takes action accordingly.

Examples of what we will do to deliver this theme:

Introduce and embed a new digital system that will allow us to record and review data.

Ensure that our changing environment and developing knowledge is having an impact internally - by using it to train our staff and volunteers.

Ensure our staff and volunteer leaders are trained to understand improvement and implementation science.

Actively seek opportunities to engage more closely with research about the hearings system, care and child development.

Introduce systems that allow our work to be influenced by lived experience of hearings at all levels.

Engage actively in our strategic and operational environment - taking leadership spaces when we can to drive positive change.

OUR STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT



CHS is just one of many organisations involved in the children's hearings system. We work closely with partners, projects and groups at both a national and local level to improve children's hearings and to consider how the wider system can best support the wellbeing of infants, children and young people. We operate within an ever-changing, complex environment, and wide range of internal and external drivers have influenced the shape and content of this Plan. These will impact on the delivery of our work over the next three years and are, amongst others:

National Approaches and Strategies

- [Getting it Right for Every Child](#)
- [Volunteering For All](#)
- [Scottish Government Youth Justice Strategy](#)
- [Scottish Government Public Service Reform](#)
- [Child Protection Improvement Programme](#)
- [Independent Care Review](#)
- [National Advocacy Practice Model](#)
- [Better Hearings](#)
- Scottish Government Improving Outcomes for Children, Young People and Families

Strategic Groups & Partnerships

- [Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership \(CHIP\)](#)
- [Youth Justice Improvement Board \(YJIB\)](#)
- [Age of Criminal Responsibility Advisory Group](#)
- [Our Hearings Our Voice \(OHOV\)](#)
- [Scottish Volunteering Forum](#)

Key Legislation and Agreements

- [Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#)
- [The Children & Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [Age of Criminal Responsibility \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#)
- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)

Approaches and Methods

- Participation and co-design
- Trauma-informed practice
- Improvement and Implementation Science

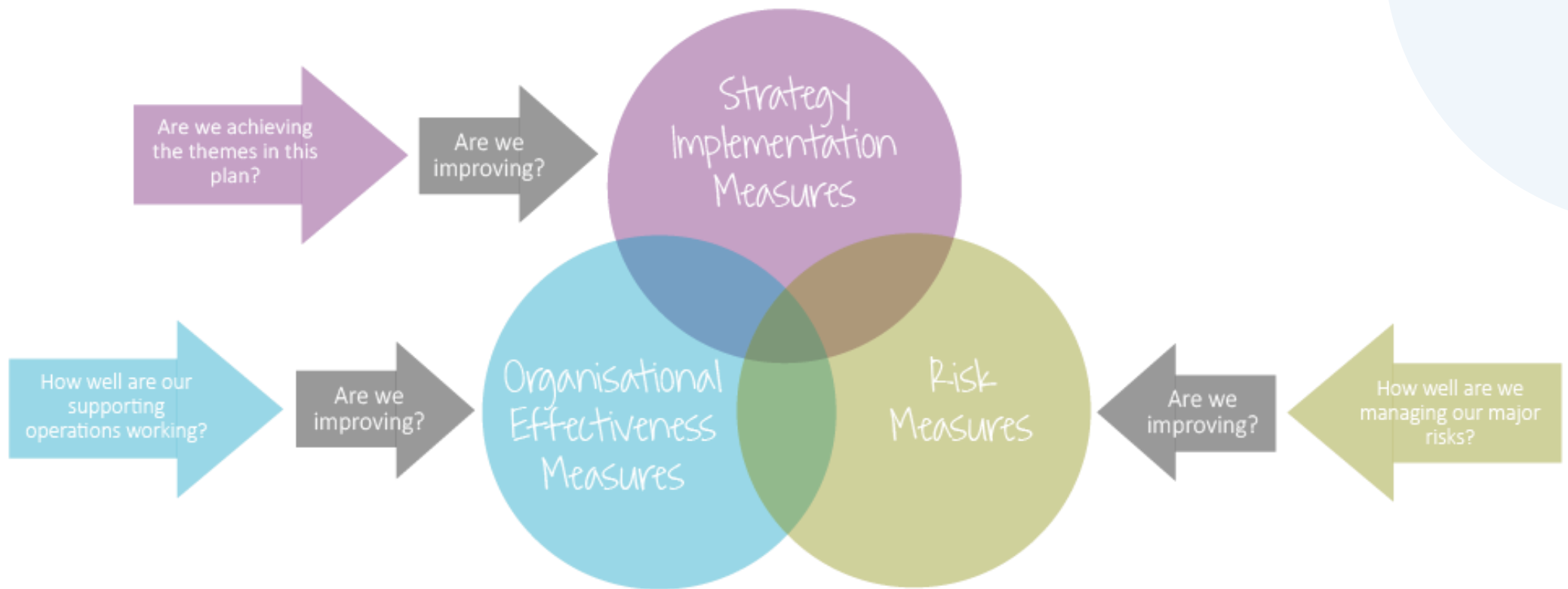
Internal Intelligence

- CHS Volunteer Community Survey
- Management Information and Data
- CHS Staff Survey

OUR MEASUREMENT APPROACH



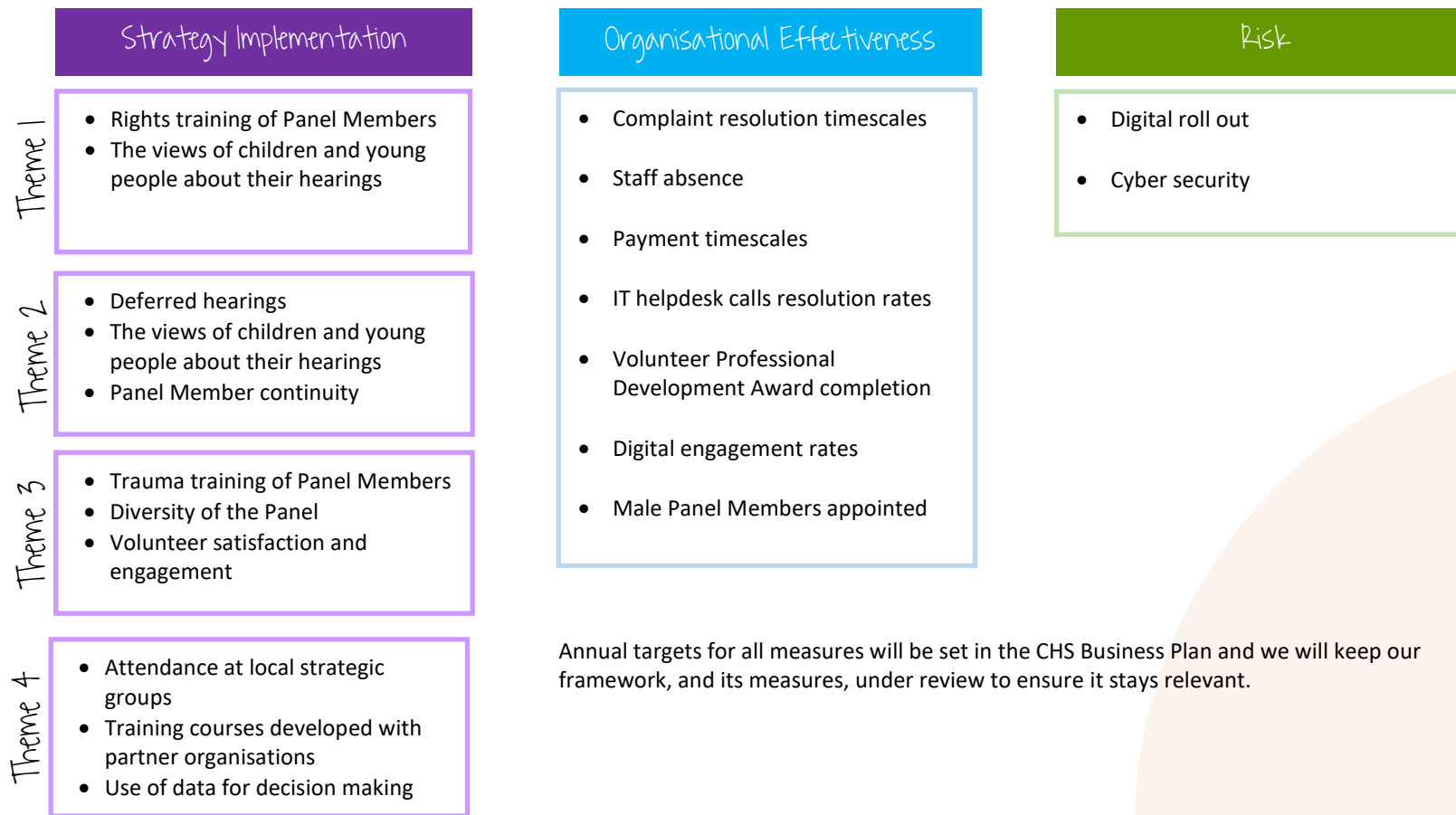
To monitor our progress, we will use a set of 3 measures, designed to track the overall performance of CHS across the years of implementing this strategy:



OUR MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK

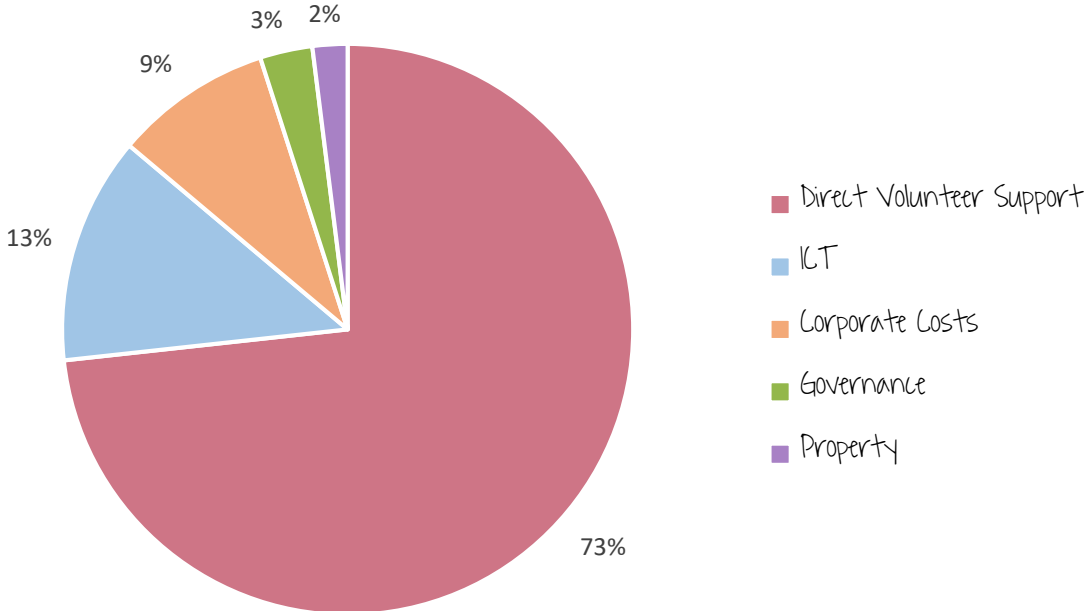
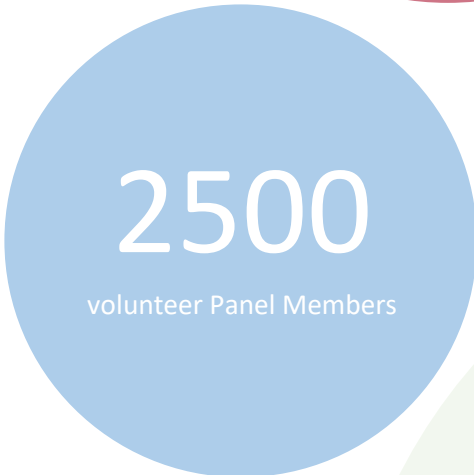


Based on our overarching approach on the previous page, we will measure and report on the following aspects of our work to monitor the performance of our organisation and progress implementing our 4 themes over the next 3 years:



Annual targets for all measures will be set in the CHS Business Plan and we will keep our framework, and its measures, under review to ensure it stays relevant.

OUR RESOURCES



We are committed to delivering best value, innovative approaches to achieve our aims. We work collaborative with our partners, and in particular with the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration on digital and other areas of work, included shared staff and functions. We strive to derive maximum value for all organisations we work with.

OUR CONTRIBUTION TO SCOTLAND



Below we outline how Children’s Hearings Scotland, and this Corporate Plan contributes to the outcomes of the National Performance Framework:

National Outcome	Theme 1: Rights	Theme 2: Hearings	Theme 3: The Panel	Theme 4: Evidence and Influence
Children and Young People: We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential.	Ensuring that children's rights are fully protected and upheld in hearings.	Ensuring that hearings are experiences that do not stigmatise, and produce decisions that are made in the best interests of the babies, infants, children and young people, allowing them to flourish and have positive relationships.	Ensuing that our volunteers carry out their civic function with love, care, respect and fairness.	Advocating within the sector for systems and approaches that produce the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
Communities: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient, and safe		Effective decision making for children and young people who are offending, are at risk of offending or have been offended against.	We provide inclusive volunteering opportunities that are valued by society.	
Education: We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society		Ensuring that hearings are experiences that do not stigmatise, and produce decisions that are made in the best interests of the wellbeing of infants, children and young people, including minimising disruption.	Ensuring our volunteers are skilled and trained to perform their roles. 65% of volunteers said that volunteering has increased their confidence in their own abilities. 28% of volunteers for whom employment is a consideration said that their employability had increased because of volunteering.	Engage with, contribute to, and support, research and developments to better understand how to support and work with children and young people.
Health: We are healthy and active		Ensuring hearings decisions that are centred on the wellbeing and participation of infants, children and young people. We want to ensure that our approaches are informed by an understanding of trauma.	55% of our volunteers said that volunteering has increased their self-esteem. Ensuring that Panel Members are supported with the emotional and personal impact of their role.	
Poverty: We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally			Employability: 28% of volunteers for whom employment is a consideration said that their employability had increased because of volunteering.	
Human Rights: We respect, protect and fulfill human rights and live free from discrimination	Ensuring that children's rights are fully protected and upheld in hearings.	Ensuring that Hearings treat everyone with dignity and respect.	Ensuring the Children's Panel demonstrates the importance of dignity, fairness and respect in fulfilling their role.	We will listen to the voice of children and young people to influence our work at strategic and operational levels.

Children's Hearings Scotland

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