



children's
hearings
scotland



Stepping Up, Stepping Forward – quality at our core
Quality Strategy 2024–2027

Contents

Foreword	3	Our standards	8
Introduction	4	Data and evidence	9
Quality in context	4	Our Approach	10
Aligning our strategic planning.....	4	Our Aims	11
Stepping Up	5	Stepping Forward	12
Why have a Quality Strategy	5	Shared understanding and consistency	13
Quality vision	6	Collaboration, culture, and communication	13
Quality purpose	6	Quality assurance, evidence, and data	14
Limitations	6	Implementation	15
Our Principles	7	Impact	16
People	7	Governance	16
Leadership and culture.....	7		
Planning and priorities	8		

Foreword

I am delighted to welcome you to our Quality Strategy, setting out our direction and our commitment to quality over 2024-2027. I am grateful to all the individuals, including volunteer Panel Members and PPAs, who have shared their insights in shaping this work and am looking forward to meeting others as we progress together with implementation plans.

Maintaining our standards and improving the quality of our hearings is at the heart of our CHS objectives and plans. Quality is the golden thread underpinning and connecting all that we do, regardless of our role in CHS, to help deliver high quality hearings for infants, children and young people. With over 2,000 volunteers across nine regions of Scotland and with many years of delivering Scotland's largest tribunal, we have a unique and valuable foundation.

It is right that we are not complacent, and this strategy is a building block to further harness our collective efforts, knowledge, skills and experience to deliver the best possible decisions for the children, families and carers that attend hearings. Maintaining standards consistently across Scotland is no easy challenge and we all have a role to play.

This strategy will help steer a series of focused activities, ensuring that we know what good looks like and build our processes to share good practice, identify when things are not going well, and drive improvement where needed. Our approach is based on engagement and collaborations and is intentionally ambitious. Individually and collectively we will drive a learning and improvement culture where we continually strive to do the best job we can and are able to show we are doing that.

Estelle Carmichael, Quality Manager, CHS

Introduction

Quality in context

Everything we do is underpinned by our values. They reflect who we are, what we believe in and what we stand for. In delivering this Quality Strategy, our values guide us to be fair, respectful and transparent as we step up to challenges. As we step forward, we put infants, children and young people at the core of our ambitions.

CHS Values



CHALLENGING



CREATIVE



CHILD CENTRED



RESPECTFUL



FAIR



OPEN

Across Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS), our National Team and our volunteer Community hold quality as a shared purpose and ambition, making sure our hearings make child-centred decisions which respect and protect children’s rights and support them to thrive. Nothing is

more important than maintaining the high quality of our work to do the best job we can for infants, children and young people.

Aligning our strategic planning

This Quality Strategy comes at a time of change for CHS. The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 and the Scottish Government’s consultation on Children’s hearings redesign are all helping drive Scotland’s ambition to keep the Promise made to children, families and the care experienced community. For CHS, this broader context brings both responsibility and opportunity to continue our work with partners across the system, playing our part in change, building on what we do well and improving what needs to be better.

Our Strategic Outlook sets out our planning and ambitions to drive consistency in quality and standards across the regions of Scotland. It is a powerful roadmap, guiding us towards meeting our ambitions across three themes: **Delivering Positive Outcomes, Valuing Our People** and **Driving Transformation**.

This Quality Strategy directly aligns to the objective that ‘**Quality will be the cornerstone of our hearings system**’. It sits alongside our Children’s Participation and Rights Strategy and our Learning Strategy, adding another planning lens as we work together in Delivering Positive Outcomes for infants, children and young people.

Stepping Up

Why have a Quality Strategy

Quality is a recurring theme across our planning documents, National Standards and operational guidance. It is an area that does not respect departmental boundaries; instead it is a thread that runs through, connects and cuts across a range of tribunal related work including recruitment, training, practice standards, rota management and tribunal quality assurance observations. However, quality is a challenging concept, meaning different things to different people, and plays out in different contexts. Quality can be hard to define and measure and this Strategy is an essential step towards knitting our organisational quality threads together.

With 2,200 panel members across Scotland, we need to ensure that regardless of location, hearings are consistent and reliable. We have to hold our people as active partners, delivering quality with a holistic, systems approach. We need clarity on our agreed operational standards, ensuring there are ways to test these with monitoring and feedback systems to ensure quality is sustained. It is vital that we have programmed audit and review procedures to fully appreciate the way decisions are made, understand how our infrastructure supports our tribunal and have in place mechanisms to share any learning.



Quality vision

Our vision is for our component parts to work together to ensure there is support, capacity and evidence for our Panel Members to deliver the best possible hearings across Scotland; that, regardless of location, the quality of decisions and standards will be consistent and reliable.

Quality is everyone's responsibility, integral to our culture and day-to-day work. Our vision is for our National Team and our Community of volunteers to have a shared understanding of our standards, champion 'doing things better', striving for continuous improvement and designing change, with more positive outcomes in mind.

Our vision is for our National Team and our Community of volunteers to have a shared understanding of our standards, champion 'doing things better', striving for continuous improvement and designing change with more positive outcomes in mind.

Quality purpose

CHS's purpose is to ensure our hearings make child-centred decisions which respect and protect children's rights and support them to thrive.

As the largest legal tribunal in Scotland, our hearings are the core of our organisation. The primary function for our Panel Members is to make complex and legally binding decisions. It is a demanding role and every hearing, with a child at its centre, brings great responsibility. Our National Team work to ensure Panel Members are valued and supported. With quality, our purpose is to ensure our hearings make the best possible decisions: decisions most likely to bring positive outcomes to children and young people.

Limitations

Our planning needs to take account of the limits with setting out a three-year strategy. First, with this initial plan with quality as a central focus, we have a great deal to learn as we move through thinking, planning and real-world practice. Second, there is a lot to do, meaning it is better to do fewer things and get these right than run the risk of becoming overwhelmed and ineffectual. Finally, there will be knowledge and impact from legislative change and Hearings for Children redesign work that will influence developments. We need clear direction during the first two years grounded in what we can achieve and what will have the greatest impact, using this early work as building blocks for later activities.

We will maintain a sharp focus on our remit within Scotland's care and justice system: our tribunal. Alongside this, we will continue working with partners across the Children's Hearing System, recognising that developments can only be meaningful if we work together to deliver the best possible experience to children and families in need of support.

Our Principles

Regardless of our role and place of work in CHS, the following five principles can be applied to how we understand and shape quality thinking and activities.

People

Our hearings are the space where infants, children, young people and families experience our values and standards of practice. It is our people who bring these alive through interactions and work to provide a contained, respectful and trauma responsive hearing. It is the volunteer Community and the National Team who will ensure fair, consistent and real-world implementation of strategic planning.

Across CHS, we will collaborate and work together as a team, putting infants, children and young people at the centre of everything we do to help shape quality developments. Working with CHS participation colleagues, we will ensure that when we gather perspectives from children's experience of hearings, it is done in the best way possible.

Leadership and culture

Quality is a transformational journey; we know that meaningful and lasting change takes time. With culture and leadership as drivers of success, CHS leaders at all levels will help shape an organisational environment, one that empowers and enables people to feel safe to discuss quality issues, address concerns and where people are enthusiastic to promote good practice. Effective communication and processes will help ensure everyone feels included and engaged.

Our CHS Board and CHS senior leaders have demonstrated their commitment to this strategy by authorising of three additional quality posts (if possible within the current financial restraints), recognising time and tangible resource are necessary to deliver on our quality ambitions.



Planning and priorities

We take a holistic approach to quality – planning for quality, designing and delivering improvement projects and implementing controls to monitor and provide assurance. Planning ensures that improvements are released at a considered pace along with clarity on processes for evaluation and feedback loops.

We have key organisational priorities, ensuring a focus on achievable outcomes whilst recognising the complexity of hearings, with unique situations, with a range of stakeholders and extensive procedures. Our approach is therefore responsive and iterative, taking small steps, testing and collecting evidence that demonstrates that we are moving in the right direction.



Our standards

We will use our National Standards, Competence Framework for Panel Members and Practice and Procedure Manual to benchmark best practice. We will build assessment and monitoring that is proportionate, supportive and transparent. To do this, we need tools, frameworks and processes that clearly outline what quality looks like in our hearings and for those across CHS who help make hearings happen.

Working closely with Participation, Practice and Policy, Complaints and Feedback and Learning colleagues across Positive Outcomes we will ensure that crosscutting themes are identified and we will collaborate, together shaping developments and effective evaluation.



Data and evidence

Our Strategic Outlook sets out our ambition to become a data-informed and data-driven organisation. The most valuable data we could know would be how the decisions made in a hearing directly influence and impact on a child or young person's life. But there are real challenges in making robust links and capturing meaningful evidence. The best available data for CHS will come from events in and around the hearing and we will build up our ability to capture, process and analyse that information.

Data and evidence are essential to monitor quality, identify good practice and identify areas for improvement. A solid evidence base with clear learning and appropriate feedback loops is the only way to inform any scaling out or scaling up of developments.



Our Approach

This visual provides an overview of the core components of our approach, having infants, children and young people in the centre. Stepping up on quality will only work if we do this as a team, moving forward nested in collaborative relationships. Our values and National Standards underpin all of our work and along with all of our people, together we can ensure our culture is one of continuous learning and improvement.



Our Aims

Aim of the Quality Strategy	Link to Strategic Outcomes
Develop and deliver a systemic and holistic approach to quality and improvement	Delivering Positive Outcomes Driving Transformation
Ensure our hearings are delivered in line with our standards and values with the best possible decision making	Delivering Positive Outcomes
Introduce a proactive approach to audit, review and assurance of our work, optimise the PPA network and activity	Driving Transformation Valuing Our People
Improve consistency and quality of our hearings and the decision making in place, co-creating tools where necessary	Delivering Positive Outcomes
Engage across the Community, improve our processes to ensure we are drawing on evidence to inform areas for improvement, monitoring that with clear feedback loops for continuous learning	Valuing Our People Driving Transformation
Identify and agree data sources to monitor our practice standards, using this to build our shared understanding and shape improvement activities	Driving Transformation
Bring pan-CHS quality data and relevant management information together with KPIs onto a useful dashboard	Delivering Positive Outcomes Driving Transformation
Collaborate with partners on quality improvement and data sharing	Delivering Positive Outcomes Driving Transformation

Stepping Forward

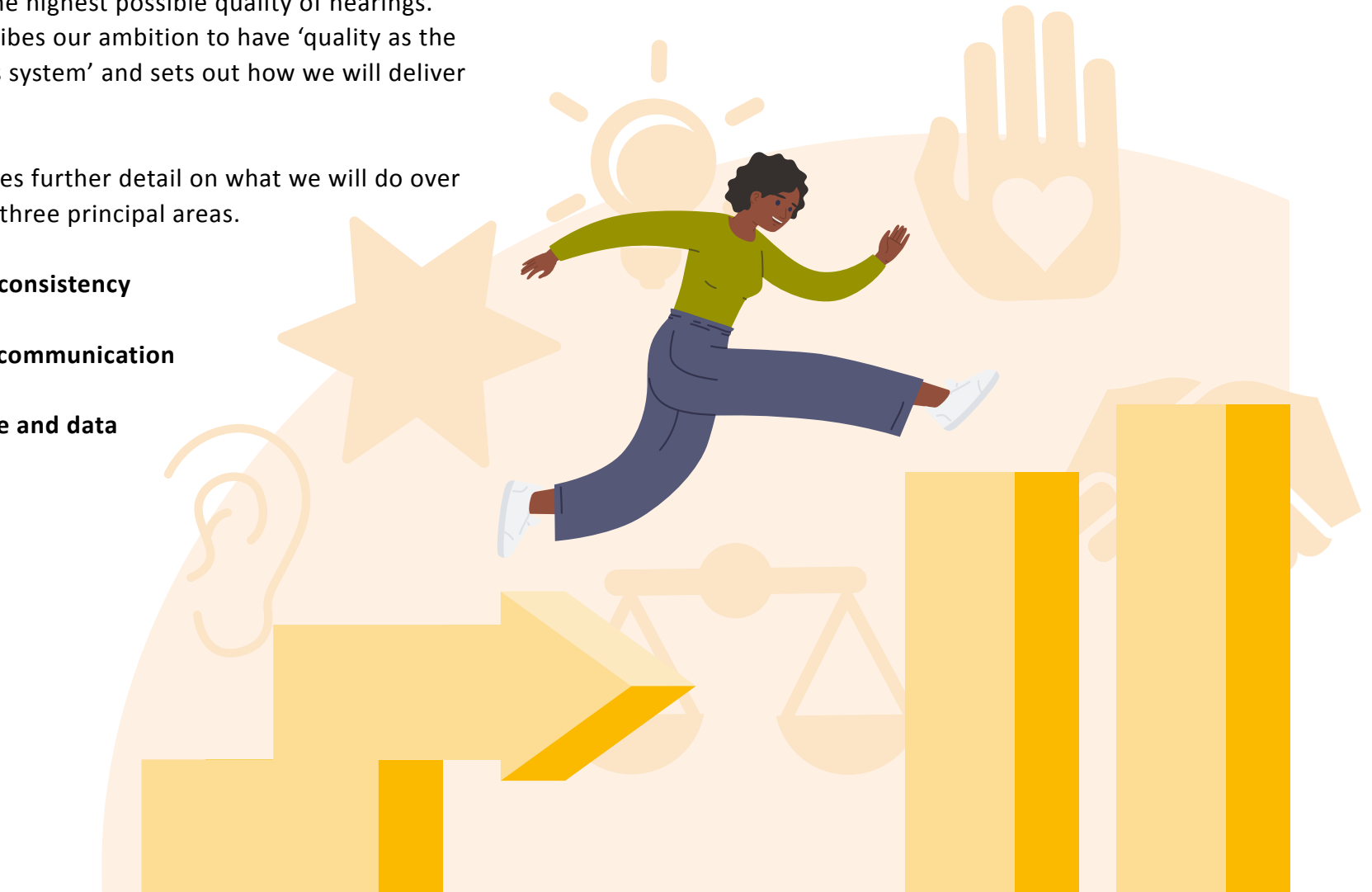
We have drive, commitment, shared purpose, and aspiration across our community to deliver the highest possible quality of hearings. Our [Strategic Outlook](#) describes our ambition to have 'quality as the cornerstone of our hearings system' and sets out how we will deliver this up to 2027.

This Quality Strategy provides further detail on what we will do over the next three years across three principal areas.

Shared understanding and consistency

Collaboration, culture and communication

Quality assurance, evidence and data



Shared understanding and consistency

‘We will be able to clearly articulate what quality looks like in the work we do and put in place Quality Frameworks that help us to measure this and share the learning’

(Strategic Outlook 2024–2027)

We will

- Strengthen our focus on quality by identifying and driving forward key priorities, using our national infrastructure to promote consistency in our developments.
- Focus on the conditions that lead to high quality hearings and positive outcomes. This will involve recruitment, rota management, training, well-being and communication.
- Build on our current Competence Framework for Panel Members and National Standards guidance to enhance consistency, clarifying what good looks like at every tribunal stage - pre, during and post hearing.
- Review how we monitor and measure our performance standards and practice indicators that inform skills, knowledge and behaviours. Developing with our Community new frameworks to promote transparency, self-assessment and self-reflection.
- Engage and collaborate to understand what aspects of the hearing we can influence and to drive best practice.
- Develop frameworks to improve consistency across hearings, targeting key aspects of the tribunal for improvement, using an

evidence based approach to improve performance and quality.

Collaboration, culture and communication

‘Building on the work of our Panel Practice Advisors, we will ensure that our Panel Members get feedback on their performance, and on the impact of the decisions they make’

(Strategic Outlook 2024–2027)

We will

- Work as a system to learn from others, engaging leaders at every level across our Community to bolster our continuous learning and improvement culture and build structures to drive consistency.
- Formulate an implementation plan that engages the Community, promotes shared purpose, with clarity of role.
- Engage with Panel Members and PPAs to understand their perspective on quality issues, ensuring effective processes to capture ideas and insights.
- We will also partner with participation colleagues to gain the views and perspectives of infants, children and young people.
- Build our capacity for continuous improvement by creating opportunities for shared learning underpinned with clear communication across our Community.
- Use effective communications to support our credibility and reputation through promoting what we do well, sharing what good looks like and sharing our continued learning and improvements.

- Celebrate our successes, sharing examples where a quality lens has been effective for Panel Members, PPAs, tribunal delivery and our infants, children and young people.
- Explore options for frameworks to allow areas to self-assess, measuring how well they are delivering and performing.
- Identify key management information, developing new quality measures and KPIs, pulling this into a quality dashboard to support timely and effective organisational decisions.

Quality assurance, evidence and data

‘We will embed Quality Assurance across the organisation and demonstrate how we are using this data and evidence for management information leading to improvement’

(Strategic Outlook 2024–2027)

We will

- Identify and clarify current, baseline data across hearings, that informs us on how we are making high quality decisions leading to positive outcomes.
- Continue to strive to address current data limitations, exploring what additional data would better inform developments and measure progress.
- Build on the work of our PPAs, our invaluable resource presently delivering quality assurance on standards through practice observations. In partnership, explore challenges, improve consistency and better link observations findings with other data and learning across CHS.
- Develop processes for routine programmes of proactive audit and review, focusing on thematic areas emerging from our evidence and exploring potential areas of evaluation across process, outcomes and impact.

Implementation

This first focused Quality Strategy emerging during a time of transformational change across the Children’s Hearings System leads us to take a phased approach to implementation, using learning from the first two years of implementation to build on later stages of development.

At CHS we have a wealth of skills, knowledge and commitment to harness across our organisation and Community as we step forward together to deliver the highest quality hearings that we can. It will be important to identify key priorities, to target activity with the greatest impact and learning from that before any scaling up or out.

Our implementation plan for years 1-2 will detail our activity in four areas (see right).



PLANNED, PROACTIVE PROGRAMME

A new process for planned, programmed audit and evaluation activity, balancing a proactive approach with responsive quality systems, measures and controls. This will include building on the quality assurance activity of our PPAs.



FRAMEWORKS AND TOOLS

We will refine our frameworks outlining ‘what good looks like’, considering carefully how we will take these developments forward, ensuring learning from the process and monitoring any impact or change.



ENGAGEMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS

How and when we will engage and connect to make sure that our developments include views and perspectives from across our community.



DATA AND EVIDENCE

How current data and evidence can generate baseline information and identify what new evidence or measures will help us track progress and collate learning on performance standards, frameworks and improvement developments. This will include working closely with our data and evidence colleagues and aligning with existing work in this area.

Impact

To measure our effectiveness and impact, this strategy will be subject to formal reviews on an annual basis. We will evaluate our progress against appropriate impact measures across process, outputs and outcomes set out in our implementation plan. We will draw on relevant evidence and ensure that views across our Community inform understanding of our progress and continue to shape our developments.

Governance

The monitoring of progress against our Quality Strategy will be assured at the Audit and Risk Committee. Principle risks will be added to the operational or strategic risk register as required.





3rd Floor Thistle House | 91 Haymarket Terrace | Edinburgh | EH12 5HE
t: 0131 244 4743 | www.chscotland.gov.uk



This publication has not been printed to save paper. However, if you require a printed copy or a copy in an alternative format and/or language, please contact us to discuss your needs.