

## Summary Annual Report 2017-18

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Children 1st is contracted by the Scottish Government to assist Scottish Ministers with the management and operation of the national Safeguarders Panel in terms of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Safeguarders Panel) Regulations 2012 and Amendment Regulations 2016

**(This report deals with 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018)**

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### Vision

**For the Safeguarders Panel to be:**

**Excellent:** what every child deserves, we will aspire to and support excellence

**Transparent:** be fair, equitable and accessible

**Accountable:** through ownership our actions stand up to scrutiny

**Respectful:** to the role and in all relationships and actions to fill it

### Summary of Achievements:

Throughout this year our focus has been on the continuous collaboration with safeguarders, strengthening safeguarder practice through embedding the operation of the Performance, Support and Monitoring Framework and the Practice Standards for safeguarders. Furthermore, in partnership with safeguarders and to develop a consistent quality of service for children, we have created a Continuous Professional Development Framework for safeguarders.

We have continued to strengthen the evidence of safeguarders meeting Practice Standards, collaborating with them through support and monitoring sessions, learning and development activities, development of Practice Notes, and the range of communication and support activities.

There has been further embedding of the reappointment process for safeguarders. This year there were a number of safeguarders who were due to be considered for reappointment and all were reappointed. There were a very small number of safeguarders who were reappointed for one year only for a number of reasons, mostly to give sufficient opportunity to demonstrate evidence of meeting the Standards. We have noted a reduction in the number of complaints and concerns raised about safeguarder practice and this gives a positive indication of the impact of the focus on quality and consistency of the national Safeguarders Panel in recent years.

### **Major 2017-18 milestones:**

Successfully administered and managed the national Safeguarders Panel

Provision of an effective nationwide level of safeguarder availability for children

Following on from the development of Practice Standards and the Performance Support and Monitoring Framework (PSMF) we have supported the national Safeguarders Panel to:

- Embed the Practice Standards as business as usual, growing and strengthening evidence of safeguarders' practice against the Standards
- Embed the Framework as business as usual, to strengthen, support and monitor safeguarder practice
- Access greater support to safeguarders, through a relational and restorative approach, offering support and challenge to enable the demonstration of a more consistently good quality, transparent and accountable Panel
- Develop the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Framework, in partnership with safeguarders, to build excellent, consistent practice for children
- Strengthen and develop the evidence base of practice and conduct using all the elements of the Framework

All operational safeguarders received:

- At least three mandatory individual support sessions to reflect on practice with their allocated individual support manager
- Two reports sampled against the Standards
- Two mandatory training events
- Individual Development Plans to support and strengthen practice in line with the Standards
- Additional and individual support where this was required to meet the Standards

Developed restorative practice of Safeguarders Panel Team (SPT) to ensure a more collaborative approach with safeguarders, developing greater consistency of SPT role focussing on support as well as monitoring, e.g. working from a shared agenda with session records fully shared and signed off by safeguarders.

Reviewed safeguarders who were appointed for one year. All were continued. A small number had a further one year appointment to continue to address/provide evidence re areas of practice.

Increased the number of Support Managers in the Safeguarders Panel Team to prioritise the quality of support and monitoring offered to safeguarders.

Internal review and audit of the PSMF with a view to continuous improvement. Project Plus (an internal review of many aspects of the work of the Safeguarders Panel Team), included a review of the PSMF. A sample of safeguarders were interviewed, documents were reviewed and discussion with Service supervisors took place. Actions from this review have been implemented (e.g. more consistent use of Individual Development Plans).

Continued collaboration in strong partnerships with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS), Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership and other stakeholders to contribute to system wide improvements towards better experiences and outcomes for children. The ongoing collaborative work with CHS regarding learning and development for safeguarders is an example which will enhance the learning opportunities for safeguarders and strengthen quality and consistency.

We responded to the publication of "The Role of the Safeguarder in the Children's Hearings System" which confirmed the Panel's focus on CPD activity including Report Writing, to develop consistency in this area, issues relating to attachment and trauma, as well as work on developing a Practice Note on working in Court for safeguarders. Progress on our CPD Framework and training delivery is noted below.

## Key Performance Indicators

### 1. Recruitment and Selection

KPI: Children 1st will be responsible for the recruitment and retention of safeguarders ensuring that the number fully trained meets demand. (SOR Ref 3)

Target: 100%

Achieved: 100%

**Table 1.1: Safeguarder, numbers, appointment and reappointment**

Appointed Safeguarders at 1 April 17	162
Resignations/Removals between 1 April 17 and 31 March 18	20
<b>Total Number of Appointed Safeguarders at 31 March 18</b>	<b>142</b>
Safeguarders recommended for 3 year reappointment from May 18	12
Safeguarders recommended for 1 year reappointment, From May 18	3

The national Safeguarders Panel Team has, throughout the year, been able to cover all appointments within the timescales required, indicating the sufficiency of numbers. The number of safeguarders has dropped slightly over the year by 20, and over the previous year from 196 in March 2015. Whilst these overall figures have some bearing on the required numbers, the important issues relate to local demand and supply and it is this more detailed analysis that is required to ensure that sufficient numbers of safeguarders remain in order that allocations are made timeously. This analysis takes place routinely within the SP team and we can begin recruitment activity when required.

Safeguarders resign for a number of reasons and for many this is a decision taken in the context of a significant number of years service and consideration as to what is right for them at this time in their life.

The facility for safeguarders to take time-out from their role was utilised by 45 safeguarders in this year. The average time was nearly four weeks and can be taken for a range of reasons including time management and health reasons.

There have been no removals of safeguarders from the panel in this year and, when we consider this alongside the reduction of complaints, this suggests a positive indication that the situations where Practice Standards may have been breached is reducing and limited to a very small number of occasions, albeit this remains of concern, not least for children involved.

This year we have received 173 notes of interest from people interested in joining the Safeguarders Panel.

**Table 1.2: Safeguarder Gender and Age Range at 31 Mar 2018**

Gender	Under 40	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+	Total
Female	12	16	22	39	8	0	97
Male	2	6	21	15	1	0	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>142</b>

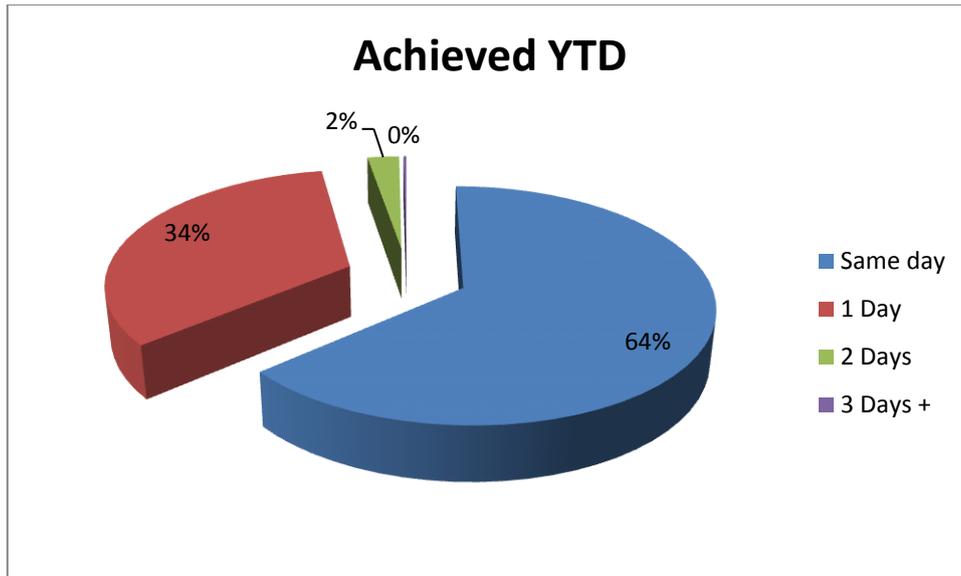
There has been an increase in the numbers of safeguarders in the two younger age groups and a decrease in the age groups over 60 which indicates a wider spread of age ranges amongst safeguarders.

## 2. Service Delivery

KPI: Appointments will be made as soon as reasonably as possible within two days of referral (SOR Ref 4)

Target: 98% within 2 days                      Achieved: 100%

**Table 2.1: Allocation Timescales**



All referrals are processed within the two day time period (target 98%) and 98% are allocated within one day of referral. This latter figure coincides with last years and again demonstrates the focus on this task by the SPT and safeguarders, and the benefit of the specific allocations role within the team. The “taxi-rank” system which we operate is transparent and facilitates occasions when an individual safeguarder may not be able to take an allocation due, for instance, to an identified potential conflict of interest.

**Table 2.2: Safeguarder Allocations by Type of Proceeding**

Type of Hearing	Nos.	%
Sheriff Court	515	39%
Children's Hearing	812	61%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1327</b>	

Again this year there has been a drop in the numbers of appointments made. This year there were 114 fewer appointments and this, when added to earlier decreases (258 fewer since 2014-15), may indicate a greater understanding of the role of the safeguarder nationally.

Whilst there are fewer appointments, the proportion of allocations from children's hearings or court proceedings remains relatively constant from the previous year, which indicated a 60:40 split from hearings and sheriff court respectively.

The statistics in 2.3 below show much variation across the country and when viewed alongside previous years statistics, this variation is shown to exist in relation to time as well as geography. We are curious about what this may be telling us and through a range of activities, including the development of the Practice Note in Court, we may develop further insights into this.

**Table 2.3: Safeguarder Allocations and Availability across Scotland: 2017-18**

<b>20. Highland</b> Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 38 Appt by Court - 19	<b>31. Orkney Islands</b> Safeguarders - 4 Appt by hearing - 2 Appt by Court - 2	<b>32. Shetland Islands</b> Safeguarders - 4 Appt by hearing - 2 Appt by Court - 2	<b>19. Moray</b> Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 11 Appt by Court - 12
<b>21. Eilean Siar</b> Safeguarders - 5 Appt by hearing - 2 Appt by Court - 0			<b>18. Aberdeen</b> Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 28 Appt by Court - 9
<b>22. Argyll &amp; Bute</b> Safeguarders - 8 Appt by hearing - 5 Appt by Court - 4			<b>17. Aberdeenshire</b> Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 12 Appt by Court - 6
<b>23. Perth &amp; Kinross</b> Safeguarders - 14 Appt by hearing - 12 Appt by Court - 27			<b>16. Angus</b> Safeguarders - 15 Appt by hearing - 23 Appt by Court - 22
<b>24. Stirling</b> Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 9 Appt by Court - 14			<b>15. Dundee</b> Safeguarders - 24 Appt by hearing - 49 Appt by Court - 45
<b>29. South Lanarkshire</b> Safeguarders - 16 Appt by hearing - 43 Appt by Court - 21			<b>14. Fife</b> Safeguarders - 21 Appt by hearing - 61 Appt by Court - 95
<b>25. North Ayrshire</b> Safeguarders - 13 Appt by hearing - 38 Appt by Court - 8			<b>13. Clackmannanshire</b> Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 9 Appt by Court - 18
<b>26. East Ayrshire</b> Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 30 Appt by Court - 1			<b>30. Borders</b> Safeguarders - 7 Appt by hearing - 13 Appt by Court - 0
<b>27. South Ayrshire</b> Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 35 Appt by Court - 2			<b>28. Dumfries &amp; Galloway</b> Safeguarders - 4 Appt by hearing - 48 Appt by Court - 1
<b>1. Inverclyde</b> Safeguarders - 8 Appt by hearing - 10 Appt by Court - 7			<b>7. North Lanarkshire</b> Safeguarders - 18 Appt by hearing - 54 Appt by Court - 12
<b>2. Renfrewshire</b> Safeguarders - 14 Appt by hearing - 31 Appt by Court - 22			<b>8. Falkirk</b> Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 16 Appt by Court - 33
<b>6. East Renfrewshire</b> Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 14 Appt by Court - 0	<b>9. West Lothian</b> Safeguarders - 14 Appt by hearing - 10 Appt by Court - 9		
<b>5. Glasgow</b> Safeguarders - 32 Appt by hearing - 65 Appt by Court - 48	<b>10. Edinburgh</b> Safeguarders - 23 Appt by hearing - 62 Appt by Court - 36		
<b>4. East Dunbartonshire</b> Safeguarders - 13 Appt by hearing - 12 Appt by Court - 5	<b>3. West Dunbartonshire</b> Safeguarders - 15 Appt by hearing - 34 Appt by Court - 31	<b>11. Mid Lothian</b> Safeguarders - 16 Appt by hearing - 13 Appt by Court - 0	<b>12. East Lothian</b> Safeguarders - 17 Appt by hearing - 21 Appt by Court - 4
<b>N.B. safeguarders may choose to cover more than one local authority within reasonable travelling distance</b>			

### 3. Performance Support & Monitoring Framework

KPI: Two mandatory training days will be delivered to safeguarders per annum with failure to attend reported to Scottish Government (SOR Ref 6)

Target: 100% delivered                      Achieved: 100% delivered

Target: 95% attendance                      Achieved: 95% attendance

**Table 3.1: Training and Elements of Framework**

Date	Course Name	No. of Events	No. of Safeguarders Attending
April	New Safeguarder Induction	2	25
Jun	Court Skills	2	23
Nov-Dec	Parental Substance Misuse	2	18
Nov-Dec	Court Practice	2	11
February	Communicating with Children	1	8
February	Analytical Report Writing	1	14
March	Trauma and Resilience	5	131
Dec-Jan	Local Engagement Events	5	44
Apr-Mar	Individual Support Sessions	384	162
Nov 17-Sept 18*	E-learning – Attachment, Attunement and Brain Development	N/A	68 complete

\*Completion date extended to end Sept

This year the Safeguarders Panel Team has been working alongside safeguarders to develop a Continuous Professional Development framework and strategy. This will set out the CPD plan from May 2018 onwards. The CPD Group consists of safeguarders across the country, with varied backgrounds and safeguarder experience levels, alongside members of the Safeguarders Panel Team.

While this work was ongoing, the group agreed to an interim plan for the delivery of training and development opportunities and this includes the opportunities in the table above. This plan was formulated from considerations of the Performance Support Monitoring Framework (PSMF), together with an analysis of IDP learning actions, safeguarder feedback from training and support sessions, and feedback from the Safeguarders Panel Team review. This ensured we remain responsive to need while supporting safeguarders to complete the obligations of their appointment to the national panel.

A number of the above sessions were pilots to test out the “fit” of training with the requirements of safeguarders and this explains the smaller numbers of attendees. We also offered the “Parental Substance Misuse” training within this year’s CPD

timetable for safeguarders who were unable to attend this mandatory training in the previous year.

All safeguarders must actively take part in CPD opportunities and are required to attend and successfully complete these events as outlined in regulation 8(3) of the 2012 Regulations (as amended), and in line with their letter of appointment or reappointment. The requirement regarding training relates to attendance at two events/safeguarder/appointment year.

As part of the interim CPD plan, opportunities have now been banded as **requisite** or **optional**. Requisite courses must be successfully completed by all safeguarders. All safeguarders must complete E-Learning, “Attachment; Attunement and Brain Development”, Module 3, and the Trauma and Resilience course as the requisite elements of this appointment year (May 2017 – April 2018). Other courses have been identified as optional. These include Court Practice and Skills, Report Writing as well as Modules 1 and 2 of E-Learning, “Attachment; Attunement and Brain Development”.

Safeguarders may decide to attend a training session because it meets the needs of an existing Individual Development Plan (IDP) or they have identified it as a priority for their own learning or development. Many of these sessions presently are pilots and will be evaluated, with feedback from the participants helping to determine whether or not they form part of the main calendar of events going forward.

*‘I just wanted to say thank you for the amazing training last Saturday. It was fascinating, important, informative – way beyond what I had expected. With the e-learning recently and the substance abuse training Children 1st have surpassed themselves.’*

*– Safeguarder*

We have piloted Local engagement events this year in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow as a result of direct conversations and feedback from safeguarders. Local engagement events provide the opportunity for safeguarders to come together to consider local or national issues. These events were facilitated by the Safeguarders Panel Team and held locally across the country. They have evaluated positively with the safeguarders who attended this year who agreed that these events are useful to establish relationships, discuss practice and develop a more shared understanding of local issues.

*‘Many thanks for giving up your time on Monday evening. I am glad I went along. I believe local meetings, will become a very helpful addition to our knowledge and understanding of the role of Safeguarder. I will certainly be encouraging colleagues to take advantage of such local meetings.’*

Reflecting on practice in a safe and private space was appreciated. This opportunity to support and learn from each other will contribute to strengthening the quality and consistency of safeguarder practice for children and young people. As such from

May 2018, local engagement events will take place in each area, twice a year as standard.

All our CPD activities are evaluated to facilitate our own learning regarding what works best for safeguarders to ensure children receive a consistently excellent service.

For our Court Skills training pilot almost all safeguarders stated an improvement in their confidence and knowledge and for many significant improvements were noted:

*'feel out of my depth' changed to 'my role and focus has been clarified'*

*'understand my role more and how to use my voice to help a child'*

*'I feel more comfortable about my role which I am sure will improve with experience'*

*'this course boosts self-confidence about role in court'*

*'I feel more confident that I can be effective'*

Our Analytical Report Writing course has also evaluated positively and will continue to be delivered to enable many more safeguarders to attend. Again there were mainly positive responses to this training.

*'What is analysis? My report should be seen in terms of 'what it is like to be that child' – loved the simplicity of this.'*

*'Linking knowledge and understanding to analysis and synthesis. I will self evaluate my reports using this.'*

The evaluation of the pilot, "Communicating with Children" provided some significant learning for us and will enable us to develop a course with a greater relevance for the safeguarder role and more opportunities to practice communication skills.

The minimum of three Individual support sessions per year for safeguarders provide an opportunity to reflect on practice, and access support and feedback from the Support Managers on the national Safeguarders Panel Team. Sessions include report sampling at least once per year, where safeguarders can focus on this specific aspect of their work. Individual Development Plans are written alongside Support Session records to support the development of safeguarder practice and ensure that support is focussed on areas of jointly identified requirements.

The Panel Team regularly audits the recording of support sessions and this year carried out two audits. The audits provide an opportunity to quality assure recording, as well as practice of Support Managers and to review the consistency across the whole cohort of Support Managers and safeguarders. We have noted an improvement in various aspects including joint planning of the support sessions

between safeguarders and Support Managers, the development of a relational approach to sessions and continued development of evidence against all Practice Standards.

To support a consistent approach and quality of support sessions all Support Managers have accessed Supervision training this year. This 2-day course with a high quality external consultant who Children 1st has worked with very successfully for a number of years, supported our Managers to be “Connected Supervisors”. As such, they have further developed the relational and restorative approach with safeguarders, modelling this approach consistently to impact on safeguarder practice and thereafter on their work with children, families and other partners.

To support the participation of safeguarders in the development of the Children’s Hearings System and to raise awareness of the safeguarder role, we coordinated the delivery of a range of safeguarder inputs for serving panel members for six Area Support Teams, as well as safeguarder input into pre-appointment training for new panel members in 18 events across Scotland. The commitment of safeguarders to facilitate a greater understanding of their role is evidenced by this voluntary participation.

## 4. Safeguarders

### 4.1 Investigation of Complaints about Safeguarders

**Table 4.1: Summary of Complaints and Concerns**

Source	Complaints Received
Family Member	1
Local Authority	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>

Complaint Outcome	Nos.
Part upheld	2
Not upheld	2

Nature of Complaint	Nos.
1-Child at the Centre	1
2-Relationships	2
3-Independence	1
4-Reports	2
5-Confidentiality	
6-Personal Conduct	4
7-Keeping up to date with skills and knowledge	

Source	Concerns Received
Family Member	11
Court	
Local Authority	8
Solicitor	2
SCRA	4
Other	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

The number of complaints against safeguarders has reduced significantly this year from 20 in the previous year to four. This follows a pattern of a reduction in previous years from 27 and 29 in 2015-16 and 2014-15 respectively. No complaints were completely upheld with half being partly upheld and two not upheld. All complaints had an element of conduct against them, although this was in total less than half the total of the previous year (10 of 20 complaints).

During this year our new Complaints Policy was developed and implemented which supported stakeholders to raise concerns as well as complaints, and also facilitated the resolution of concerns or complaints prior to taking through a formal complaint process if this was understood to be proportionate to the concern/complaint raised.

25 concerns were received and these did not progress to formal complaints for a range of reasons. Some concerns included matters which could not be progressed because they should be progressed within the hearing system and were not relevant to the complaints policy. Some people who initially raised concerns decided not to provide further information that would allow us to decide how to progress. The main reason for non-progression was that an earlier resolution process could be utilised that was more appropriate than the formal complaint process and/or there was no advantage to utilising the formal complaint process.

This appears presently to reflect a successful approach to resolving issues at an early stage rather than progressing all issues to a formal complaint process with the accompanied personal stress and resource implication's associated with this, potentially for no further benefit.

## 4.2 Complaints against Safeguarders Panel Team

**Table 4.2: Complaints against Safeguarders Panel Team**

Complaints against SPT	
In progress	1

There is one complaint against the Safeguarders Panel Team which is being dealt with by the Scottish Government and is in progress.

## Additional achievements and progress

The 2016-2017 Annual Report highlighted the following “next steps”. When steps are listed as “achieved” this does not indicate that actions are not continued, but that the work on ensuring there is a process to continue this work has been finalised and is now “business as usual”.

- Embed further the Standards and Framework with the Safeguarders Panel - achieved
- Improve the strength and consistency of the evidence base of the practice of the national Safeguarders Panel against the Standards - achieved
- Build opportunities for supporting safeguarders and collaborating with them to advance the Panel – achieved
- Collaborate with safeguarders in completing the linked training framework – achieved
- Review the feedback mechanism to better hear the voice of children and families in the modernisation process – progressed/ongoing
- Build evidence of the impact of the Standards and the Framework for the experience and outcomes for children – progressed/ongoing
- Build further clarity across the system of the role of safeguarders and consistency of reasons for their appointment – progressed/ongoing
- Continue to contribute appropriately to the wider system improvement agenda, by taking account of relevant findings and recommendations, for example from research on the role of safeguarders, from the Care Review and Better Hearings activity etc. – achieved/ongoing

And also:

- Introduce an element of proportionate auditing of fees and expenses – progressed/ongoing

## Looking ahead

As we continue to build quality and consistency of practice with our safeguarders we have had the opportunity, this year, to reflect on the research from the University of Strathclyde, “The Role of the Safeguarder in the Children’s Hearings System” and consider the range of stakeholder perspectives, including safeguarders, on this important role.

The research concludes that:

“Children 1st have undertaken a great deal of work in relation to setting a framework, for consistent and high quality safeguarder practice, including introducing ministers’ 7 key practice standards, and working with safeguarders to implement this. Safeguarders generally welcomed these standards or at least saw them as a formal statement of the ethical standards to which they generally adhered.”

The research also highlighted some areas for improvement, which reassuringly were already being actioned at planning or delivery stage. The main actions for the year ahead acknowledge the journey travelled and reflect a culture of continuous learning and improvement which is at the heart of Children 1st and the Safeguarders Panel Team, working in partnership with safeguarders, to ensure the best service for children and young people.

In this coming year, Children 1st, Safeguarders Panel Team will focus on the following:

- Development of Practice Notes for Safeguarders on Work in Court – the work began in the year of this Annual Report and will be completed in 2018-19, concluding with the writing of the Practice Notes and development of accompanying learning and development activity.
- Build on the collaborative work with safeguarders, to develop and embed the Continuous Professional Development Framework, delivering a blended, high quality suite of requisite and optional learning opportunities to equip and support safeguarders in their role.
- Review our delivery of the Performance Support and Monitoring Framework with safeguarders and key partners, to ensure we are delivering the best for children, and to plan and deliver improvement in the future.
- Increase our understanding of children’s and families views, in particular the impact of the safeguarder role, and what safeguarders and the Safeguarders Panel Team can do to improve children’s and families experience of our work.

- Recruit and induct a new cohort of safeguarders so that the national coverage that is required can be maintained and the quality and consistency of safeguarder practice for children continues to be built.
- Work collaboratively with strategic partners to contribute to the improvement of the children's hearing and wider system.

## **List of Statistical Tables**

Table 1.1 - Safeguarder numbers, appointments and reappointments

Table 1.2 – Safeguarder Gender and Age Range

Table 2.1 – Allocation Timescales

Table 2.2 – Safeguarder Allocation by Type of Proceeding

Table 2.3 – Safeguarder Allocations and Availability across Scotland

Table 3.1 - Training and Elements of Framework

Table 4.1 – Summary of Complaints and Concerns

Table 4.2 – Complaints Against Safeguarders Panel Team