

The logo for Children 1st, featuring the text "Children 1st" in white on a blue background with a red smiley face below it.

Children 1st

The text "Safeguarders Panel Team" in white on a dark blue background.

Safeguarders
Panel Team



SAFEGUARDERS PANEL TEAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

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Ministerial Foreword



Reflecting on the year 2019/20 may feel strange in the current circumstances, but it is important to recognise the contribution made by the national Safeguarder Panel in that time. Over 2,000 of Scotland's most vulnerable children received expert focus on their needs from a Safeguarder, helping decision makers to make meaningful interventions to improve their life chances. I am so grateful for all the work Safeguarders do to keep our most vulnerable children safe, protected and nurtured.

I wish a warm welcome to the newly appointed members of the Safeguarder Panel, who are joining in such unprecedented times. The Children's Hearings System will be further enriched by the experience and knowledge that you bring to the panel. You are joining a group of passionate, dedicated and highly skilled individuals who devote time and effort to the protection of Scotland's most vulnerable children. You all have a vital role to play in addressing the challenges and opportunities that we will encounter in the near future. Soon we will incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Scots law, which I am confident will bring not only welcome protections for children, but new ways of working for those who support them. It is of course crucial that all of us in the Hearings System do not waver in our commitment to fulfil the Promise made in the Independent Review of Care.

All this must be accomplished as society comes to terms with the challenges posed by the pandemic. Safeguarders, in conjunction with other professionals and agencies, have adapted quickly to the changed reality in the Hearings System. I know that the reduced volume of Hearings and the move to virtual Hearings has presented challenges for Safeguarders and their role in the system. The flexibility and pragmatism Safeguarders and the Safeguarder Panel team have shown in the face of these challenges is admirable. As the Hearings System adapts and recovers, there will be hard work ahead for the Safeguarder Panel, and I am grateful to everyone for their commitment. During these difficult times, we must not lose sight of those children for whom life can already be fraught with challenge and adversity. It is our duty to do all that we can for them.

Maree Todd, MSP

Minister for Children
and Young People

Introduction

The Children 1st Safeguarders Panel Team are proud to operate the Safeguarders Panel on behalf of Scottish Ministers.

Our Vision for the Safeguarders Panel is to be:

Excellent: We will aspire to and support excellence

Transparent: We will be fair, equitable and accessible

Accountable: We will stand up to scrutiny through ownership of our actions

Respectful: We will be respectful in all relationships and respect the roles and responsibilities in the Children's Hearings System

Children 1st have been operating the national Safeguarders Panel since 2013. In 2020 we were awarded the tender by the Scottish Government for a further two years, with the opportunity of two further years after review. Our role includes recruitment, selection, training, managing appointments, managing complaints and monitoring the performance of Safeguarders across Scotland.

We work with the Scottish Government, Safeguarders, and all those involved in the Children's Hearings System, to ensure that a child's best interests are at the heart of any Children's Hearing or related court proceeding.

This annual report will give you further detail, including Safeguarders' perspectives on how the Safeguarders Panel Team has carried out this role in 2019-20. At a time of such significant change in the Children's

Hearings System and the wider children's social care sector, we are excited to drive and support improvements, including the focus on children's interests, within the Safeguarders Panel and the wider system.

We will continue to work with partners in the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership to support Safeguarders to best represent the interests of children, focus on children's rights and respond sensitively to the trauma in the lives of children and families.



Looking Back over 2019-20

This year has seen the publication of The Promise in February 2020 by the Care Review, which has huge significance for the Children's Hearings System and wider social care sector. This was the culmination of significant work, conversation and listening. The Promise sent a very clear message to Scotland about the need to transform the way in which vulnerable children and families are supported - from early intervention, through to how the Children's Hearings and Care System works.

Listening to the voices of children, care-experienced young people and adults and their families is at the core of this work. Children 1st Safeguarders Panel Team will make every effort to listen to children and young people, and "turn up the volume" on their voice through everything we do. We will continue to engage with the findings of The Promise and ensure it has a real impact on our work.



COVID 19

The covid pandemic has impacted hugely on children and families' lives having a profound effect on their experience of the Children's Hearings System. The Safeguarders Panel Team collaborated with partner agencies, amplifying and contextualising government guidance to help manage the changes required and to ensure the wellbeing of children.

In consultation with the Scottish Government, the Panel Team clarified how we could apply sensible flexibility to Safeguarders fees and expenses to accommodate for changes in the Children's Hearings System.

We have been in frequent contact with our Safeguarders to provide regular updates and guidance, staying as connected as possible in these difficult times. As the panel team moved to home working, Safeguarders showed understanding and demonstrated flexibility with ourselves regarding practice and administrative support. Most of all, Safeguarders have been thoughtful about keeping children at the centre in these difficult circumstances, where considerations of everyone's safety is at the forefront.

This change to working patterns is likely to create longer-term changes and we will keep connected with Safeguarders, and all in the wider system. Listening and collaborating, we will work to keep children's rights and the safety of all at the centre of decision making.

The Role of the Safeguarder



A Safeguarder is an independent person appointed to a set of proceedings by a Children's Hearing or a Sheriff Court to safeguard the interests of the child. Safeguarders are appointed by Scottish Ministers and are accountable to the Ministers through a set of agreed **Practice Standards** which Children 1st are appointed to operate as part of our responsibilities.

The role of the Safeguarder is one that is best described by Safeguarders themselves, so we asked three Safeguarders to tell you about their role.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE ROLE OF THE SAFEGUARDER TO SOMEONE WHO HAS HAD NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF A SAFEGUARDER?

“The Safeguarder will listen to the child and ensure that their views are known and that they have a voice throughout the various Hearings. The Safeguarder is an experienced and knowledgeable person in matters relating to children and their welfare. They have skills to help the courts and Hearings have an independent view of what they think is the best way forward for the child.

The Safeguarder will do their best to be fair and open and explain the reasons for their decisions and recommendations”

Caroline, Safeguarder

“
The Safeguarder will do their best to be fair and open and explain the reasons for their decisions and recommendations”

Caroline, Safeguarder





WHAT MADE YOU WANT TO BECOME AND CONTINUE TO BE A SAFEGUARDER?

“I was attracted to the role of Safeguarder as I believed that I could help make a difference for children involved in the Hearings System by giving them a voice and a way in which to express their views and opinions of what they feel should happen in their lives

As a former Head Teacher within an area of multiple deprivation I engaged with the Children’s Hearings System on a regular basis. Child Protection and child welfare issues were a major part of my daily routine and on a number of occasions I met with a Safeguarder. My overall impression was that they were providing a valuable and effective means in which to safeguard and represent the views of children, keeping their best interests and wellbeing to the fore, while involved in a process which for children must be an intimidating and scary experience

I believe children are entitled to have their views and opinions heard no matter their age or stage of development and experience has shown me that children are able to communicate their thoughts and feelings in a variety of ways. The Safeguarder role showed me a way to allow this to be done and ensure a child is included in the proceedings especially if they have been excused from having to attend”

Jean, Safeguarder



WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SAFEGUARDER’S ROLE BRINGS TO THE PROCEEDINGS?

“I feel that the Safeguarder’s role is unique and important in that they are the only truly independent people involved in the process and can often, therefore, bring a different perspective to a child’s situation and ensure that the child’s views are both articulated and taken into account in any decisions made.

Regardless of the eventual outcome of proceedings, if a child feels that their views have been listened to, understood and considered, this should help them in the longer term and, hopefully, re-assure them that that their views are important and that they have the right to be heard and taken seriously”

Peter, Safeguarder

“
The Safeguarder role showed me
a way to allow this to be done and
ensure a child is included in the
proceedings especially if they have ,,
been excused from having to attend
Jean, Safeguarder

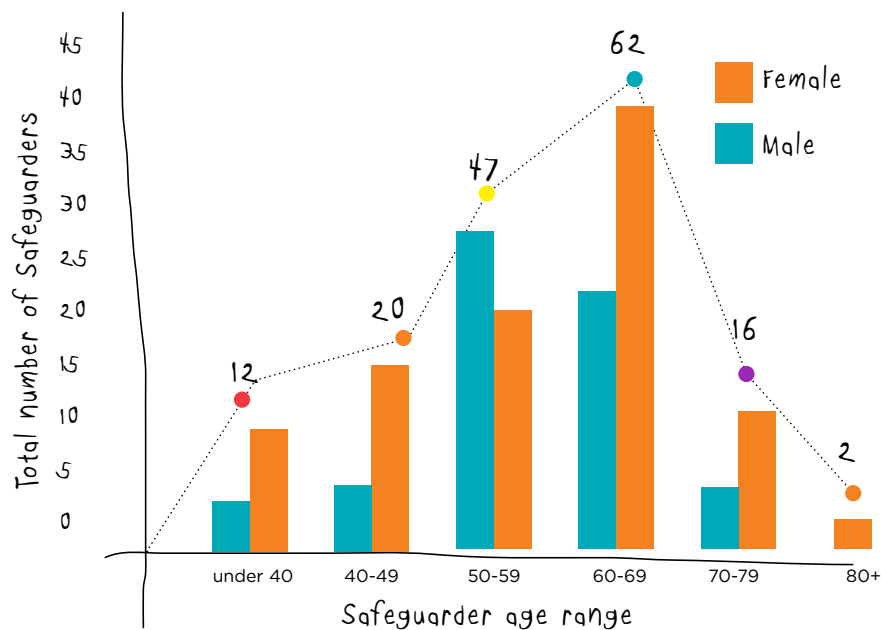
Profile of Safeguarders

Over the last 4 years we have seen some changes in the age and gender profile of Safeguarders reflected in the graphs below.

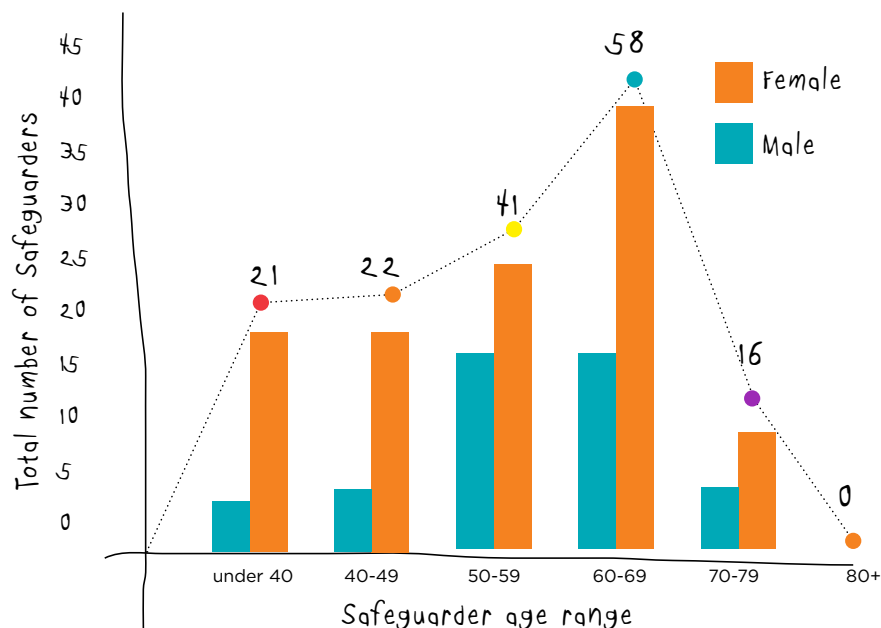
Whilst most age categories remained broadly similar across this period, the under 40 age range has increased very recently, so that we now have 21 Safeguarders under the age of

40 whereas we had 12 in 2017. The increase in female Safeguarders has also been noticeable over this period. Female Safeguarders now make up around 71% of the Safeguarder cohort whereas in 2017, 61% of Safeguarders were women. There are, as of April 2020, 158 Safeguarders in Scotland.

Safeguarder profile-Age and Gender 2016-17



Safeguarder profile-Age and Gender 2020



Children who are appointed a Safeguarder (2018-19 and 2019-20)

2018-19	Number
Number of Appointments	1305
Number of Children	1917
Male	1024
Female	893
<hr/>	
0-3	527
4-7	518
8-11	445
12-15	407
16+	20

2019-20	Number
Number of Appointments	1364
Number of Children	2008
Male	1062
Female	946
<hr/>	
0-3	558
4-7	502
8-11	481
12-15	437
16+	30

There have been 91 more children appointed a Safeguarder in 2019-20 than the previous year. Boys are appointed a Safeguarder more frequently than girls, and this is fairly consistent across the 2 years.

The proportions of children appointed a Safeguarder in different age ranges is also similar across the 2 years, with the age range 4-7 years showing the biggest change (around 2% down in 2019-20 from the previous year).



The Role of the Safeguarders Panel Team



Continuing Professional Development

“Our aim is to ensure that children and young people receive the best quality service in some of the most challenging times. We aim to provide Safeguarders with excellent training and development opportunities to support them in conducting their role to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people”

Lisa Goodman, Service Manager

The Safeguarders Panel Team collaborates with Safeguarders to best meet their learning and development requirements. We have a longstanding Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Working Group, with representation of Safeguarders from around Scotland who have diverse professional backgrounds, skills and experience alongside the Service Manager responsible for CPD and a Support Manager from the Panel Team.

In 2018/2019 the CPD group undertook an audit and review of Safeguarder learning and development opportunities. The group identified that a blended approach to learning and development provided choice and variety to meet individual learners needs. Approaches to delivery included six full day training events, some smaller workshops and a practice surgery.

The courses included Understanding Resilience and Protective Factors, Online safety and Digital Citizenship, Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children, Safeguarding in a Multicultural Society, Report Writing and Court Practice Surgeries.



Court Practice Surgery

In the Autumn of 2019, we ran a series of 6 practice surgeries across the country on the theme of court practice in response to requests from Safeguarders. These events were collaborative both in planning and implementation. They involved the CHIP Learning and Development Lead at CELCIS, the Policy and Public Affairs Manager at SCRA, and the Law Society of Scotland. There was a Children’s Reporter and a solicitor at five out of the six events which provided a valuable mixture of private practice and local authority experience. The discussion at each event was wide ranging, covering case specific issues, experiences of different courts and reflections of the role of the Safeguarder in Court proceedings.

Feedback from Safeguarders was really positive, including specific examples of new approaches and changes in practice as a result of the discussion. Solicitors and Reporters found these sessions to be a useful opportunity to think about court processes from a different perspective.

We are developing more in-depth court training, working closely with our partners at local and national level to strengthen opportunities for Safeguarders to learn and share good practice.

Support from Support Managers

Each Safeguarder is supported by their Support Manager as their main point of contact. They are responsible for helping Safeguarders develop excellent practice while safeguarding the best interests of children and young people. Support sessions are the main formal vehicle through which these practice and development discussions take place. We encourage Safeguarders to discuss practice and support issues out with support sessions. Safeguarders can speak to a Support Manager in the Panel Team through our duty service, so that Safeguarders can always contact someone to discuss difficult, complex and often emotive cases.

What do Safeguarders say they get from support sessions?

“ Many thanks to my support manager for all the support both in my sessions and on the phone ”

“ I am super impressed by what my support manager managed to record, analyse, and report back. It also gives me great confidence in going forward in the role. ”

“ It is important to establish a relationship with support managers so that constructive conversations can be had. I think my support manager has been very fair and reasonable in their discussions with me, which can be challenging but which have always been constructive ”

“ I found the session to be extremely helpful in terms of my own personal aims with regard to striving to be a more reflective practitioner aka Safeguarder. I find my support manager's approach excellent in terms of their preparation, structure and her overall stewardship of the support session discussions ”

“ I always feel very able to contact my support manager for support, and their advice is always really helpful in my decisions going forward. ”

Safeguarder Appointments

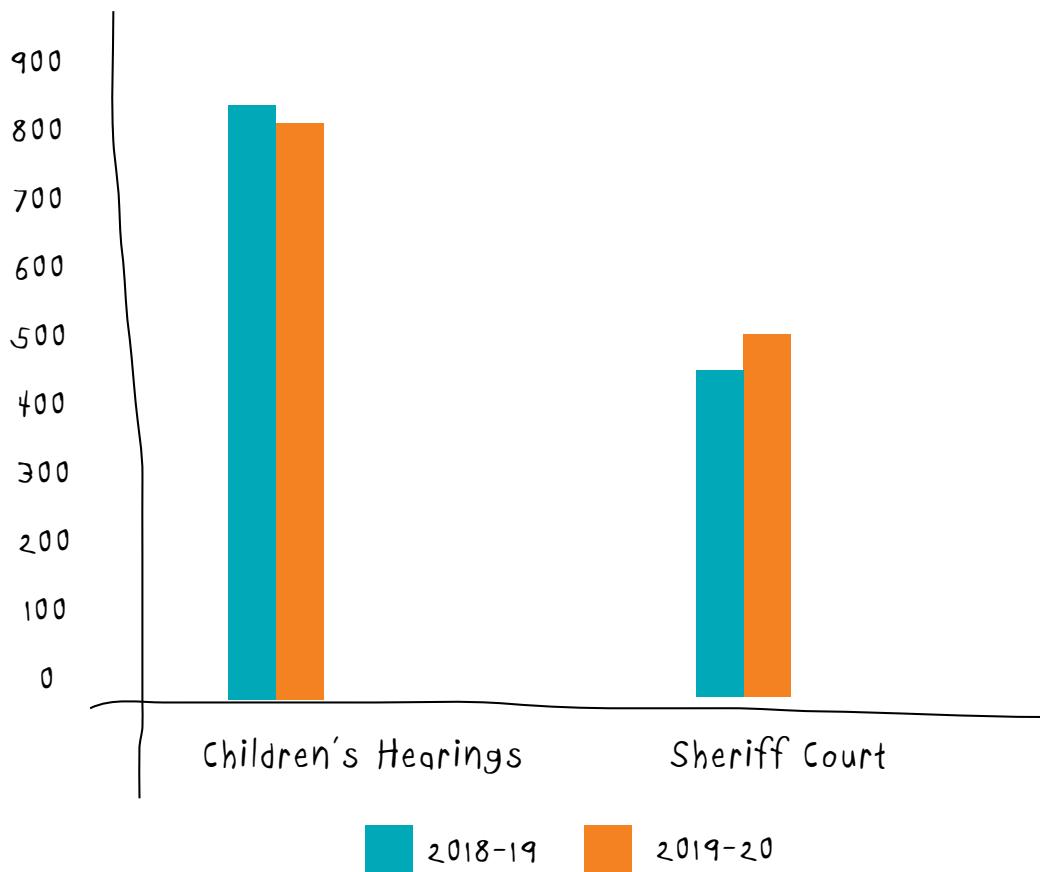
Once a Sheriff or a Children's Hearing has appointed a Safeguarder, the Panel team have two working days to allocate a Safeguarder for a child. This time frame is short to ensure minimal delay for the children and young people at the centre of these referrals.

Processing allocations is one of the ways that we communicate with SCRA and courts, and clear communication and attention to detail is at the heart of it. As the Allocation Coordinator's two days to allocate only begins when we receive the full details, the core team need to ensure that we have these as soon as we can, to make sure that we're working as quickly and accurately as possible for the child.

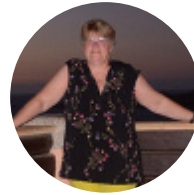
The graph below compares some of this information year to year. The numbers of Safeguarder referrals from a Children's Hearing and Sheriff Court are shown, looking at 2019/20 compared with 2018/19. As you will see there has been a decrease in the number of Children's Hearing appointments this last year but an increase in Sheriff Court appointments. There has been a 3.4% rise in appointments overall from 2018-19.

In Appendix (p15) you can see detail of all Safeguarder appointments for children and Safeguarder numbers in each local authority area for 2019-20.

Safeguarder Appointment Levels



Recruitment



It is the responsibility of the Safeguarders Panel Team, acting on behalf of Scottish Ministers, to ensure that Safeguarders are selected, trained and supported to have the required interpersonal, communication, practice skills and legal knowledge to fulfil their role. Safeguarders must be capable of satisfying key competencies. These include assimilating and analysing information to make clear, reasoned and justified recommendations.

To ensure we raised the profile for our recruitment campaign, this year we held multiple information sessions across Scotland. These were question and answer events open to anyone that was interested in the role and were focused in areas of operational need. Sessions in Glasgow and Edinburgh included contributions from the Safeguarders Panel Team and a Safeguarder on each day to help highlight the Safeguarder role.

Successful interviewees complete six days of pre-appointment assessment and training modules focussing on, amongst other topics:

- identifying the parameters of the role
- communication and engagement with children, families and professionals
- role of the Safeguarder in gathering and analysing information - understanding the child's world to reach conclusions
- the Safeguarder's role in court

“It was another successful year for our recruitment campaign. From the 20 individuals who went through the pre-appointment training, 18 were appointed as Safeguarders by the Minister. We also had 116 Safeguarders reappointed to the Safeguarders Panel”.

Paula-Gaunt Richardson, Service Manager



Looking to the future

Children 1st Safeguarders Panel Team are looking forward to the new challenges and exciting developments ahead.

Developing even **greater collaboration** with Safeguarders and partner agencies will be integral going forward. We know from experience that greater collaboration can achieve much more in the Children's Hearings System for children and young people. We will drive improvement with increased partnership working as well as increasing the focus on the rights of the child.

Central to this aim, we have redesigned our team. The Support Manager role has become a regional role, with Support Managers having a lead responsibility for Safeguarders and partner relationships in their location - the West, East and North of Scotland. We know the importance of relationships, so changes to the Support Manager allocated to an individual Safeguarder will happen gradually over the course of this year - whenever possible and appropriate. Support Managers will develop relationships in their regions with partners, including with Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA), Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) and Social Work services, as well as Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service (SCTS).

We have introduced a Mentoring Coordinator role, so that we can develop a formal peer mentoring programme for Safeguarders. This postholder has been a Safeguarder, and appreciates the strengths, knowledge and expertise that are available in the Safeguarder community, and the potential for mutual support and learning that exists. She will be developing this mentoring scheme over 2020-21, and expanding it further over subsequent years, to help realise that potential for shared, high quality, peer learning and development.

Collaboration with Safeguarders and partners also offers greater opportunities for high quality learning that will support a child-centred culture and decision making. We will continue to offer learning and development opportunities which involve Safeguarders as leaders, facilitators, and offers peer learning. We will continue to work with partners within the Children's Hearings System and the wider social care community, to provide on-line and blended learning opportunities.

Lastly, ensuring that **children's voice and interests** are represented and promoted is central to the Safeguarder's role and the role of the Safeguarder Panel Team. We have further invested in focusing on this by introducing the Children's Rights and Resources Worker role to our team. This role will help develop the team's and Safeguarders capacity to listen to children and to represent their voice in the Children's Hearing System, through input into training, the review of guidance and policies and developing child/young person specific resources.

In the context of the Promise, and the commitment to incorporation of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child into the law in Scotland, we will work collaboratively to safeguard the interests of children and young people.

The Safeguarders Panel Team looks forward to 2020-21!

Appendix

Safeguarder Allocations and Availability across Scotland: 2019-20

20. Highland Safeguarders - 9 Appt by hearing – 29 Appt by Court – 24	31. Orkney Islands Safeguarders - 3 Appt by hearing – 4 Appt by Court – 3	32. Shetland Islands Safeguarders - 3 Appt by hearing – 6 Appt by Court – 1	19. Moray Safeguarders - 7 Appt by hearing - 8 Appt by Court – 10
21. Eilean Siar Safeguarders - 3 Appt by hearing - 0 Appt by Court – 0			18. Aberdeen Safeguarders – 8 Appt by hearing – 14 Appt by Court – 30
22. Argyll & Bute Safeguarders - 9 Appt by hearing - 3 Appt by Court – 6			17. Aberdeenshire Safeguarders - 9 Appt by hearing - 11 Appt by Court – 9
23. Perth & Kinross Safeguarders – 14 Appt by hearing - 21 Appt by Court – 29			16. Angus Safeguarders - 15 Appt by hearing - 26 Appt by Court – 22
24. Stirling Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 14 Appt by Court – 18			15. Dundee Safeguarders - 21 Appt by hearing - 47 Appt by Court – 54
29. South Lanarkshire Safeguarders - 16 Appt by hearing - 33 Appt by Court – 17			14. Fife Safeguarders - 21 Appt by hearing - 60 Appt by Court – 65
25. North Ayrshire Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 30 Appt by Court – 5			13. Clackmannanshire Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 18 Appt by Court – 30
26. East Ayrshire Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 24 Appt by Court – 1			30. Borders Safeguarders - 7 Appt by hearing - 17 Appt by Court – 0
27. South Ayrshire Safeguarders - 9 Appt by hearing - 33 Appt by Court – 3			28. Dumfries & Galloway Safeguarders - 6 Appt by hearing - 31 Appt by Court – 0
1. Inverclyde Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 15 Appt by Court – 6			7. North Lanarkshire Safeguarders - 18 Appt by hearing - 60 Appt by Court – 5
2. Renfrewshire Safeguarders - 20 Appt by hearing - 25 Appt by Court – 13			8. Falkirk Safeguarders - 13 Appt by hearing - 20 Appt by Court – 33
6. East Renfrewshire Safeguarders - 13 Appt by hearing - 27 Appt by Court – 1			9. West Lothian Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 20 Appt by Court – 6
5. Glasgow Safeguarders – 27 Appt by hearing - 57 Appt by Court – 95			10. Edinburgh Safeguarders - 18 Appt by hearing - 63 Appt by Court – 18
4. East Dunbartonshire Safeguarders - 14 Appt by hearing - 15 Appt by Court – 4			3. West Dunbartonshire Safeguarders - 22 Appt by hearing - 49 Appt by Court – 30
N.B. safeguarders may choose to cover more than one local authority within reasonable travelling distance			



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We would like to sincerely thank all the Safeguarders who have made particular contributions to the work of the Safeguarders Panel this year. This has truly been a collaborative effort! The contributions included participation in the recruitment and training/assessment days, partnership events, joining and contributing to working groups (e.g. CPD Working Group, Practice Note Working Groups) and other training/networking events. We really value the quality of your contributions and the commitment to this work.

Thank you so much

Mark Allison, Elizabeth Baillie, Ian Borthwick, Derrick Bruce, Andy Colville, Gill Devine, Jean Devlin, Susan Duncan, Celia Gray, Paula Hamilton, Helen Hunter, David Johnstone, Peter Jennow, Eunice McLennan, Carole MacPherson, Raymond Mallon, Stuart Marquis, Isabel Marshall, Ian McKerron, Duncan McKinnon, Lora Meldrum, Alan Murdoch, Lisa San Jose, Allan Smith, Margaret Small and Gill Stillie

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Safeguarders
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