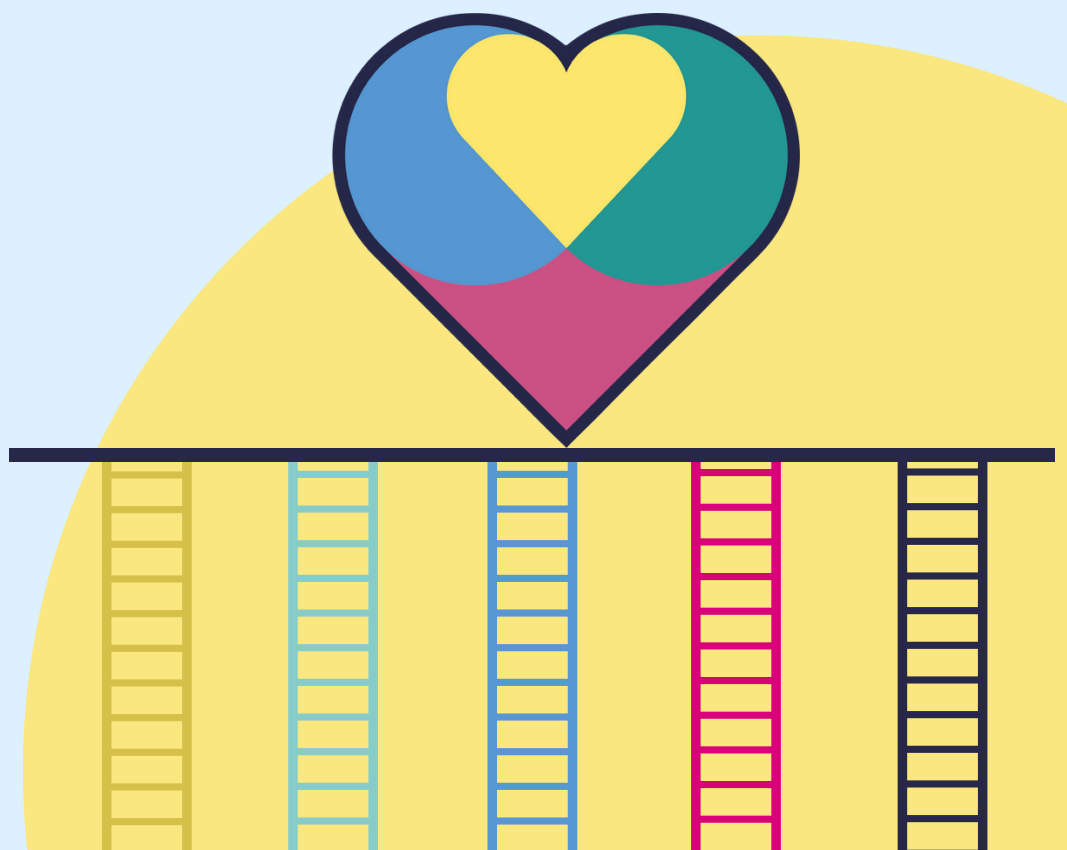


What will recommended changes to the Children's Hearings System look like for you and your family?

Hearings for Children:
The Redesign Report

Child friendly

Summary of recommendations



One

The success of the redesign of the Children's Hearings System

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- Where you are safe and loved, the right support will be in place so you can stay at home with your family and community.
 - When you and your family need help and support, it will be there when you need it, for as long as you need it, and it will not matter if you are engaged with the Children's Hearings System or not. The help and support will feel organised and it will be easy for you and your family to access holistic whole family support, mental health, and other important wellbeing services.
 - You will be able to access Restorative Justice and Family Group Decision Making services, which can help you and your family to develop your own plan, wherever you are in Scotland.
 - Your social worker and the other people who work beside you and your family will be happy, healthy and supported with enough time to get to know you well.
 - There will be enough social workers to work alongside every child in Scotland who needs one. Social workers will have time to get to know you and your family so that the information they share with your Children's Hearing will help Panel Members to make the best decisions they can.
 - Decision makers will work closely together to understand more about the relationship between poverty and families who have experience it.
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Two

The scaffolding of the Children's Hearings System

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- Everyone in the Children's Hearings System, from the Reporter to the Chair, will work closely beside you and your family. Decisions will be made with you, instead of for you, and your voice will be listened to.
 - The entire Children's Hearings System and everyone working as part of it, from the Chair to the Sheriff to the Reporter, will understand you in the context of your entire family and the difficult things in your life. This means they will think about what your parents or carers might need to help make sure they are able to look after you, they will understand more about who is important in your life and what makes you feel safe, loved and happy.
 - The way people speak about you and your family will feel supportive, easy to understand and it will be the same everywhere in Scotland. The words used in Hearings will be non-judgmental and it will be easy for you to join in the conversation if you want to.
 - Sheriffs will be specially trained to work beside you and your family. This means your experiences in the Sheriff Court will feel similar to a Hearing.
 - Everyone in the Children's Hearings System will be trained in working beside you and your family and will understand what your rights are. They will understand how the things that have happened to you in your life have an impact on who you are and how you react to things. They will also understand this about your parents or carers.
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- You and your family will understand your rights and how to access them.
 - When possible, you will come to a Hearing with a Child's Plan. Your plan will be at the heart of the Children's Hearings System. Every Child's Plan will be made in the same way and you and your family can help shape your plan.
 - Your Child's Plan will explain what help and support will work best for you and your family to uphold your rights and meet your needs.
 - Change will feel coordinated across the Children's Hearings System and the people and organisations working together to operate the system will meet with the Scottish Government to decide how they should work together.
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Three

The pathway to the Reporter

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- The Children's Hearings System will be engaged in your and your family's life at the right time.
 - The people who refer you to the Reporter will keep in mind the importance of the things that matter to you when you are little.
 - The Reporter and the people who work beside you and your family will work together. They will listen to what you think and to what your family thinks about the help and support that will make the most difference in your life.
 - The people who work beside you and your family will have a good understanding of the referral process. To help with this, the Reporter will be more involved more to help the people that work beside you.
 - The Reporter will be able to work beside parents who are expecting a baby, when they are needed.
 - The criminal justice system will work more closely with the Children's Hearings System in Scotland.
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Four

The introduction of advocacy, legal advice and the Reporter

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- The way that the Reporter works will change. Reporters will work closely with you and your family and listen to your views.
 - You will be offered independent advocacy support right after you have been referred to the Reporter. This may also be offered to your family. You will be asked several times whether you would like the support of an independent advocacy worker if you say no the first time.
 - You will be fully aware of your right to legal representation and you will be able to access support from lawyers if you need it. There will be a review of how legal aid works.
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Five

The reasons the Children's Hearings System has become involved in a child and family's life

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- You and your family will understand the reasons you have been referred to the Children's Hearings System. These reasons ('grounds') will be written in a way that takes account of your rights and the processes leading up to a Hearing will help you to understand them. The good and happy things in your life, and the life of your family, will be talked about as well as the things that are difficult.
 - Grounds will be agreed in a separate process before you and your family attend a Hearing.
 - Where possible you and your family will meet the same Sheriff if you are in Court and your experiences in Court will be similar to your experiences in your Hearings.
 - There will not be long waits while grounds are being established.
 - If you are really little and grounds are not agreed, you will not have to attend Court.
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Six

The decision-making model

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- A Children's Hearing will not feel confrontational. The main objective will be to think about what is best for you and the way this happens will feel calm, coordinated and safe.
 - Decisions will be made alongside you and your family, wherever possible, by a consistent, highly-qualified Chair and two Panel Members. These people will be paid.
 - To ensure the best decisions are made by the Panel, the process of how decisions are made will change.
 1. The Panel and you and your family will feel better prepared for your Hearing. You will feel involved in the decisions about how a Hearing should happen.
 2. The Hearing will take place and then there will be a break for everyone to have a rest and reflect.
 3. Your Chair will share a decision by talking to you and your family in a way that you understand. They will also share a longer decision in writing with you and your family and you will receive support to understand what this means after the Hearing takes place.
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Seven

The people making decisions

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- All Panel Members will work closely beside you and your family and they will be kind, empathetic and respectful.
 - Your Chair will become a familiar face for you as they follow your journey in the Children's Hearings System. Your Chair will know your background so you will not have to retell your story at every Hearing. This will help all of the Panel Members at your Hearing to make good decisions.
 - Your Chair will have an important role in upholding your family's right to a fair Hearing and to family life.
 - You and your family will feel safe, listened to and respected. Your Hearing will feel well managed by your Chair as your Chair will have the skills needed to ensure that the discussions are respectful and everyone keeps as calm as they can.
 - Your Chair will know how to follow up on the big decisions made in a Hearing and will have a responsibility to hold other people and agencies accountable for actions they agreed to.
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- During a Hearing, everyone in the room will feel supported to share their view and the discussion will not be overwhelmed by the person who has the strongest voice.
 - You will not feel overwhelmed by the number of people in a Hearing as everyone in the room will have a clear role. This means that Reporters will only attend a Hearing when they have a meaningful contribution to make and it is in the best interests of you and your family.
 - When possible, the Reporter attending the Hearing will be familiar to you as it will be the same person who engaged with you and your family as part of the referral processes and establishment of grounds.
 - The other meetings and processes that you may be part of to talk about other things happening in your life, for example in school or about your health, will feel part of the same system. You will understand the purpose of these different meetings and they won't feel complicated or overwhelming.
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Eight

The participation and preparation before a Children's Hearing

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- You and your family will feel involved and included in the preparation before a Hearing takes place. This will help you and your family to feel ownership of your Hearing.
- Communication about your Hearing will be sent in the name of your Chair, making interactions with the Hearing feel more streamlined and less confusing.
- Before a Hearing, you and your family (where possible and appropriate) will be invited to meet your Chair in a 'get to know me' meeting so they are a familiar face at your Hearing, and to learn more about the process. You will not have to go to this meeting if you do not want to.
- When possible, your Hearings will take place at a time and place which makes sense to you and to your family. You will be asked about when you would like this to be and the people arranging Hearings will listen to what you say.
- Your Chair will be able to make some decisions about how Hearings will look and feel without needing to get the whole Panel together.
- All communication from the Children's Hearings System will be easy to understand. You will be supported when papers about your Hearing are received.
- You will be encouraged to attend your Hearings and supported to make sure your voice is heard. If you do not want to attend your Hearing you will be asked about other ways to share your views and you will be supported to understand what was discussed and what decisions were made.

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- If you are really little you will not be expected to attend your Hearing, but special effort will be made to make sure the Panel hears what you think and what is in your best interests.
 - The Panel will be able to have a look at your Child's Plan and other information about you and your family that is shared with the Panel will include your views and will make sense to you and your family. The important people in your life will be involved in the discussion with the Panel where it is appropriate.
 - Everyone, including you and the people who work beside you and your Chair, will be given enough time to read the information sent before a Hearing takes place.
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Nine

The voices and involvement of children and their families

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- You will feel empowered to be involved in your Hearing in the way that you want to. You and your family will be recognised by the decision makers at your Hearing and by the people working beside you as the expert of your lives and your stories.
 - You will be involved in the way decisions are made, in the way that you want to be. You and your family will get a feeling of working alongside the Panel to make the best decisions possible. Your rights and choices about how you want to share your views and participate in your Hearing will be clearly explained to you and to your family. You and your family will be actively encouraged to participate in your Hearing and to share your views in ways that make you feel safe and heard.
 - There will be special ways to listen to little children.
 - The use of recording and written transcriptions in a Hearing will be considered. Improvement work will continue to explore other uses of technology to support you and your family to share your views.
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Ten

The people working alongside children and their families

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- Everyone in the room at a Children's Hearing will have clear roles and responsibilities which will be explained to you.
- Everyone will use clear language and will be respectful to each other.

Eleven

The decisions available to the Children's Hearing and the support for children and their families

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- You will receive the help and support outlined in your Child's Plan, which will be linked to the order made by the Panel.
- The order that the Panel makes will be more specific and detailed about the help and support you and your family need and will protect safe, loving and supportive relationships with the important people in your life.
- You will not live in Secure Care for longer than needed and your rights will be upheld.
- Wherever possible the same Chair should be present at Hearings for your brothers and sisters too.
- If you cannot live at home, wherever possible, you must remain with the same caregivers who make you feel safe and protected.
- Panels will be asked to think carefully and take into consideration what it means for you and other children to be away from your families.
- You will be able to see the important people in your life when it is safe.

Twelve

The oversight, enforcement, accountability and review of a child's order

What will these changes look like for you and your family?

- Although the decisions of the Hearing will continue to be focused on what is best for you, the Panel will consider the importance of support for your whole family to help them overcome the challenges in their lives.
 - The people responsible for making sure an order is implemented will have more power to make sure you and your family are receiving the support that was promised to you.
 - You and your family, the important people in your life and those working beside you will be able to keep in touch with the Panel about how things are going.
 - Review Hearings will be a supportive place for open and honest conversations about how things are going and what might need to change.
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Thirteen

The accountability of the Children's Hearings System

What would these changes look like for you and your family?

- You and your family will feel the improvements organisations will continue to make.
 - The right organisations will have the right information at the right time to make sure they understand if the lives of all children who engage with the Children's Hearings System have got better.
 - There will be one place to go to make a complaint about the Children's Hearings System.
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Fourteen

The implementation of the recommendations

What would these changes look like for you and your family?

- The redesign of the Children's Hearings System will truly transform the lives of children and their families.
 - Change will happen. And everyone will work together to make sure it does, beside children, families and adults with experience of the Children's Hearings System.
 - What you and your family, and other people with experience of the Children's Hearings System say is working well in different areas of Scotland will be implemented across the whole of the country.
 - The changes that are being made will be shared with you and your family and other children and families and adults who work in and around the Children's Hearings System.
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