

-----Original Appointment-----

From: Minister for Children and Young People

Sent: 03 December 2019 14:45

To: Minister for Children and Young People; maree.todd.msp@parliament.scot; Hunter N (Neil); [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot;

Subject: Meeting with Neil Hunter (SCRA)

When: 03 March 2020 16:00-17:00 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.

Where: T4.06, Parliament

Need to start a bit later due to Parliamentary Business. Let me know if this causes any problems.

Chris

From: [redacted]@gov.scot; **On Behalf Of** Minister for Children and Young People
Sent: 03 March 2020 10:23
To: Hunter N (Neil) <Neil.Hunter@scra.gov.uk>; Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: RE: Meeting with the Minister, 4pm today

Hi Neil

Yes, Ms Todd is still happy to meet this afternoon. See you then.

[redacted]

[redacted]@gov.scot; | **Private Secretary | Minister for Children and Young People**
☎: 0131 244 0953 | Mobile: 07773578536 | St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Ms Todd's Preferences can be found here - [Ministerial Preferences](#)

All e-mails and attachments sent by a Ministerial Private Office to any other official on behalf of a Minister relating to a decision, request or comment made by a Minister, or a note of a Ministerial meeting, must be filed appropriately by the recipient. Private Offices do not keep official records of such e-mails or attachments.

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From: Hunter N (Neil) <Neil.Hunter@scra.gov.uk>
Sent: 03 March 2020 09:54
To: Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted]@gov.scot
Subject: Meeting with the Minister, 4pm today

[redacted]

Just confirming that my planned meeting with the Minister is still on for 4pm today at Parliament. I know she has a busy schedule today and has had an early start. I'm coming through from Glasgow specifically/mainly for the meeting – so let me know either way as soon as you can. I have a couple of things to discuss and update on – but none are particularly urgent or critical.

Thanks a lot

Neil

Neil Hunter
Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
Scottish Childrens Reporter Administration
Ochil House
Sprinkerse Business Park
Stirling
FK7 7XE

Tel: 0131 244 8611

From: [redacted]@gov.scot; **On Behalf Of** Minister for Children and Young People
Sent: 11 June 2020 09:29
To: [redacted]@gov.scot; Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: 11:30 Call with Neil Hunter, SCRA and Elliot Jackson, CHS

Dial in Number: [redacted]

Guest Passcode:
[redacted]

Thanks

[redacted] | Private Secretary | Minister for Children and Young People

☎: 0131 244 0953 | Mobile: 07773578536 | St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

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From: [redacted]@gov.scot;
Sent: 11 June 2020 09:26
To: Minister for Children and Young People <MinisterCYP@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: 11:30 Call with Neil Hunter, SCRA and Elliot Jackson, CHS

Hi [redacted]

If you can get me the codes that's great – I will confirm with them.

I have a call with them in 5 minutes to talk about the draft plan, and we should have an outline for Ms Todd mid-afternoon today.

[redacted]

[redacted]
Youth Justice & Children's Hearings Unit
Care, Protection and Justice
(0131) 244 7932
07827 983 683

From: [redacted]@gov.scot; **On Behalf Of** Minister for Children and Young People
Sent: 11 June 2020 09:23

To: [redacted]@gov.scot;
Subject: RE: 11:30 Call with Neil Hunter, SCRA and Elliot Jackson, CHS

Hi

I have them and will update the calendar entry this morning.

Just to confirm, you spoke to them both and they know about the call tomorrow? I've not been in touch with them. Sorry, other things took over this week.

Are there any specific papers Ms Todd should have for it?

Thanks
[redacted]

[redacted] | Private Secretary | Minister for Children and Young People

☎: 0131 244 0953 | Mobile: 07773578536 | St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

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-----Original Appointment-----

From: [redacted]@gov.scot;
Sent: 11 June 2020 06:28
To: Minister for Children and Young People
Subject: Accepted: 11:30 Call with Neil Hunter, SCRA and Elliot Jackson, CHS
When: 12 June 2020 11:30-12:00 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.
Where: Teleconference

[redacted]

Do you have the teleconference details for this, and have you sent on to Neil and Elliot?

[redacted]

From: Hunter N (Neil) <Neil.Hunter@scra.gov.uk>
Sent: 10 June 2020 18:56
To: [redacted]@gov.scot; Jackson E (Elliot) <Elliot.Jackson@chs.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: recovery routemap etc

[redacted]

I have tome between 9.30 and 10.30 or 12 and 2

Attached is a suggested briefing paper which I am happy to offer by way of outline planning to (a) return to offices and (b) return to some for of limited physical hearings

Let me know if useful or helpful to the Minister– please do not circulate this as we have not completed our internal discussions with stakeholders here in SCRA

N

Neil Hunter
Principal Reporter/Chief Executive
Scottish Childrens Reporter Administration
Ochil House
Sprinkerse Business Park
Stirling
FK7 7XE

Tel: 0131 244 8611

From: [redacted]@gov.scot;
Sent: 10 June 2020 14:09
To: Hunter N (Neil) <Neil.Hunter@scra.gov.uk>; Jackson E (Elliot) <Elliot.Jackson@chs.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: recovery routemap etc

Hi chaps - would you have 15 minutes tomorrow morning to swap notes ahead of Friday's Ministerial call?

[redacted]

[redacted]
Youth Justice & Children's Hearings Unit
Care, Protection and Justice
(0131) 244 7932
07827 983 683

From: [redacted]@gov.scot;
Sent: 08 June 2020 11:32
To: Hunter N (Neil) <Neil.Hunter@scra.gov.uk>; Jackson E (Elliot) <Elliot.Jackson@chs.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: recovery routemap etc

Gents

Hope this message finds you both well.

Do you have some time tomorrow to swap notes on recovery plans / mechanisms etc?

At the moment I can do: 8:30 – 10

1130 - 1200

1300 - 1330

1500 - 1530

[redacted]

Youth Justice & Children's Hearings Unit

Care, Protection and Justice

(0131) 244 7932

07827 983 683

From: Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter. SCRA
To: Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People
Subject: Childrens Hearings recovery programme
Date: 12 June 2020

1. Approach and experience to date

- 1.1 All SCRA Hearing Centres, by necessity were closed on 23 March and have not re-opened since. All SCRA staff are working from home with access to core systems (with some limitations related to hardware, software and connectivity). Panel Members are also working from home with similar limitations
- 1.2 There are somewhere around 300 children's hearings across Scotland every week which will include a range of review hearings, grounds hearings, ICSSO hearings, emergency transfer hearings and secure authorisations. SCRA receives around 400-450 referrals per week, 75% of which are from Police Scotland.
- 1.3 The first 2 weeks from 23 March of hearings were solely focussed on maintaining legal protections for children and young people already subject to compulsory measures or where an interim order was required to be made. Hearings during this week were 'administrative' in that they comprised of the Reporter and the 3 Hearing members only.
- 1.7 The formal outcomes of hearings, importantly including appeal rights have were sent to relevant persons, children and young people, solicitors and Local Authorities in the normal way and broadly within statutory timescales. From 4 May Hearings are now taking place on the basis of a full 'virtual' model.
 - This means that Panel Members, children and young people, relevant persons, Reporters and where appointed, legal agents, Safeguarders and advocates are able to join hearings on a secure video platform.
 - Hearings take place using secure video conferencing facilities for which SCRA have been an early adopter within the SCOT's/ITEC's network.
 - Data in its various forms used by CHS and SCRA is categorised as 'official sensitive' and UK Government business impact level 3 (BIL3) status. All ICT systems therefore need to be sufficiently secure for CHS and SCRA to use. This is why we cannot use more well-known products such as Zoom/Google Meet/Blue Jeans and others which unfortunately do not comply with our security level needs or are not supported by SCOT's.
 - We have established a virtual hearings team and a team of staff managing objective connect for transmission of papers and will extend and formalise this resource over the coming weeks.
 - A full Data Privacy Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to VScene and an Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment undertaken on virtual hearings more broadly. Both have generated management action plans which are being implemented.

- Experience to date of virtual hearings suggests these hearings have been conducted largely successfully although a number of critical issues have emerged in this initial phase which CHS and SCRA are working to improve
 - Overall network connectivity can be variable across Scotland, effecting the timings, quality of experience and duration of hearings
 - The number of reporters currently able to conduct virtual hearings is significantly curtailed – either because they lack access to hardware, private space in the home environment or have parenting/caring responsibilities. We are working on a phased return to offices to improve this whenever guidance permits
 - Interagency co-ordination arrangements are seen as positive but are proving highly labour intensive in the current context
- 1.8 As a result the number of hearings proceeding virtually in the first 2 weeks is somewhere around 20% of the ‘normal’ hearings diary, leading to significant need for prioritisation of hearings and significant deferral of hearings using the Coronavirus (Scotland) 2020 Act provisions, with the emphasis being on retaining existing legal orders in place, whilst giving us the capacity to focus on the most urgent situations.
- 1.9 Each child or young person’s circumstances are considered on an individual basis but as a guide to the priorities teams are working to the following list may be helpful:
- 8th working day hearing
 - New grounds Hearing – where there is significant concern about welfare of child if delayed.
 - ICSO/IVCSO hearings
 - Established grounds hearing
 - Local Authority Review (if flagged as urgent)
 - Emergency transfer
 - CSO review where secure authorisation is sought
 - Remit for reconsideration following successful appeal.
 - Any other case that is considered to be urgent
- 1.9 For Annual Reviews we have used the 2020 Act provisions to relieve acute operational pressures we are currently experiencing and to ensure continuity in the legal protections currently in place. Decisions on deferral are taken for each individual case and in consultation, normally with the child’s Social Worker.
- 1.10 To enable greater participation, SCRA has developed a range of good quality, accessible resources to support young people and their families to attend and participate in a virtual Hearing. (www.scra.gov.uk/young_people/virtual-hearings/). These resources included guidance to buy extra mobile data, a video on the 5 top tips for attending a virtual Hearing, together with an extensive Q&A communication. Extensive feedback and evaluation with virtual hearing participants is now underway across CHS, SCRA and in partnership with CELCIS.

2. Return to face to face hearings

- 2.1 It is obvious that the Hearing System requires to plan for a substantial period of recovery. The emergency legislation and any extension that can be achieved will be a necessary component of this.

	<p>- Central (Falkirk/Alloa)</p> <p>13th July – Irvine</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elgin - Arbroath - Stornoway - Kirkwall - Thurso - Tranent - Lochgilphead
Begin to identify and notify hearings that may take place in SCRA Hearing Centres	SCRA schedule and notify hearings 2 weeks in advance. Schedule for resumption of small number of hearings per site approximately 2 weeks from office opening date (e.g. 22 June – scheduled for 6 July, 29th June scheduled for 13 July etc.). Subject to and dependent upon size of hearings and available accommodation to enable regulations, agreement on core model of physical hearings between CHS and SCRA
Identify alternative community venues that could host hearing rooms and supplement capacity	Partner discussions at local level on completion of hearing centre assessment and reconfiguration

Stage 2

Spatial redesign of Hearing Rooms and waiting rooms to support social distancing	Commenced on desktop basis at this stage. Practical changes delivered point from which staff return to offices
Ensuring all PPE is in place for hearing centre users	First wave of PPE delivered. Final advice from HPS on suitability for level of inherent risk
Agree hourly/daily cleaning regimes, roles and responsibilities with staff, FM contractors and Trade Union	Discussions ongoing – will ramp up significant costs quickly.
Installation of additional enabling technologies that will allow hearing rooms to host various hybrid hearing options	Discussion on going with CHS on optimum model – balance of experience with efficiency of rota and scheduling and availability of hardware and software in hearing centres
Complete travel plans for children, young people and families – minimising public transport as per SG advice	As part of Reporter discussions on scheduling.
Undertake mock hearings with AST representatives to identify pinch points	TBA between AST/SCRA Locally and as required

and adaptations to the operating model, welcome and reception arrangements and panel member facilities	
Ongoing engagement with and advice from OHOV/ Foster Care Network and Youth JustUS	Commenced – focussing on approach/methodology/choice/voice/at mosphere/PPE use etc,
Submission of return to hearings plans to NHS Scotland for assessment and advice	wb 15/6
Sign off of arrangements and plans with key centre users (AST/LA etc.)	TBA

3. Key issues

3.1 Space of Hearing rooms to support regulations

3.2 Some parts of our estate are simply not big enough to accommodate hearings with 2m social distancing. A range of different approaches, including smaller number in different rooms across hearing centres may be required.

3.3 Cleaning regimes will make the turnaround of hearing rooms less than normal. Adding physical hearings to our repertoire will increase overall capacity – but it is highly unlikely that all hearing rooms can be used simultaneously and with the social distancing arrangements we expect initially very cumbersome and labour intensive pre-hearing preparations to be in place for some time. Our best estimate is that where you have 2 hearing rooms which can currently host 3 hearings each over 3 hours and be immediately ready for another 3 – our current limitations will be that both hearing rooms will be required to enable social distancing for one hearing and that at best 2 hearings could be achieved over a 3 hour period – so one third of capacity in this example.

3.4 Use of external facility

This will be explored principally through other public sector resources such as school hubs etc. and as required at local level.

3.5 CSAS roll out

3.6 CHS and SCRA commence roll out of new digital systems in July 2020. These new systems as well as providing the foundations for fulfilling our long term strategic ambitions on modernisation and improved outcomes for children and young people are also now core to our operational recovery. This is a huge and complex piece of planned work. Further pressures on scheduling of the hearings diary are inevitable and have been endorsed by the recent Technical Assurance Framework gateway review undertaken by the SG Digital Assurance Office in March 2020. Some significant thinning out of hearings activity will be necessary in different localities until completion of roll out in late August.