



# Higher National Unit Specification

## General information

**Unit title:** Management of Children's Hearings (SCQF level 7)

**Unit code:** H5BT 34

**Superclass:** EC

**Publication date:** October 2013

**Source:** Scottish Qualifications Authority

**Version:** 02 (March 2025)

## Unit purpose

This unit forms part of the Professional Development Award for Children's Hearings in Scotland: Panel Members. It is the final unit in the group award and aims to prepare members for their role in chairing children's hearings. Learners will develop skills in how to manage children's hearings effectively. In studying this unit they will be able to explain the role and responsibilities of a chairing member. They will be able to demonstrate through practice their ability to manage the process and to adhere to the procedural requirements.

Through observation of simulated practice they will demonstrate their skills in communicating with all participants and in upholding the rights of the child or young person and others.

## **Outcomes**

On successful completion of the unit, the learner will be able to:

1. Explain and evaluate the role and responsibilities of the chairing member.
2. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relevant rules and procedures in the role of chairing member.
3. Demonstrate good practice in acting as chairing member to maintain the rights of the child and others present at the hearing.

## **Credit points and level**

1 Higher National Unit credit at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7).

## **Recommended entry to the unit**

Because of the specialised nature of this unit and others linked to the Professional Development Award for Children's Hearings in Scotland: Panel Members. All learners must be serving members of the children's panel and have served as a panel member for at least six months. In addition to this, learners must be recommended by the Area Support Team to undertake the unit.

## **Core Skills**

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the support notes for this unit specification.

There is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skill components in this unit.

## **Context for delivery**

If this unit is delivered as part of a group award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the group award to which it contributes.

## Equality and inclusion

This unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website:

[SQA Assessment Arrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements) (www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

# Higher National Unit Specification: Statement of standards

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Acceptable performance in this unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the unit specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to SQA.

Where evidence for outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the knowledge and / or skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

## Outcome 1

Explain and evaluate the role and responsibilities of the chairing member.

### Knowledge and / or skills

- Stages of the hearing in relation to the role of chairing member
- Statement of grounds
- Roles and responsibilities of others participating in the hearing
- Appropriate sources of additional information and guidance
- Procedure for conclusions and endings
- Hearings and options

## **Outcome 2**

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relevant rules and procedures in the role of chairing member.

### **Knowledge and / or skills**

- Discussion prior to the children's hearing or pre-hearing panel
- Physical environment
- Managing attendance
- Open/introductions and setting the scene
- Maintain purpose and direction
- Upholding rights
- End of the hearing

## **Outcome 3**

Demonstrate good practice in acting as chairing member to maintain the rights of the child and others present at the hearing.

### **Knowledge and / or skills**

- Time management and agendas
- Team working
- Verbal and non-verbal communication
- Engaging and disengaging with the process
- Non-judgemental attitude / congruence
- Ensuring full participation
- Interpersonal relationships
- Managing conflict stress and distress
- Respect and cultural diversity
- Managing interactions and contributions
- Written reasons for decision

## **Evidence requirements for this unit**

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their knowledge and / or skills across all outcomes by showing that they can:

- provide a detailed evaluation of the role of the chairing member.
- demonstrate in practice the completion of all relevant procedural requirements.
- demonstrate, through simulation, to the observer effective practice in the role of chairing member in at least one children's hearing upholding the rights of the child and others present at the hearing.
- demonstrate through practice ability to enable all participants in the children's hearing to fully engage equitably in the hearing process keeping the child at the centre.

Assessment for this unit will be carried out through the completion of a specially prepared workbook for outcome 1 and through assessed observation for outcomes 2 and 3.



## Higher National Unit Support Notes

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Unit support notes are offered as guidance and are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

### Guidance on the content and context for this unit

Aspects of the National Standards for the Children's Panel addressed through teaching and learning for this unit are:

**Standard 1:** Children and young people are at the centre of everything that we do.

**Standard 2:** Panel members are well equipped and supported to undertake their role.

**Standard 3:** Panel member practice is consistent across Scotland.

**Standard 4:** Every children's hearing is managed fairly and effectively.

**Standard 5:** Every children's hearing makes decisions based on sound reasons in the best interests of the child or young person.

**Standard 8:** Functions, roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood within the system.

The focus of this unit is the application of the knowledge and practice skills gained throughout the training programme. This is in line with the requirement for the chairing member to be able to describe the responsibilities of their role and to accurately apply the relevant rules and procedures during the hearing as set out in the Practice and Procedure Manual provided to panel members by the National Convener.

Learners will be expected to undertake the duties of the chairing member and to demonstrate their ability in the following competences:

- Obtain views from appropriate sources when required.
- Enable all participants to express their views during the hearing and to take account of them.
- Maintain the rights of the child and others present at the hearing.

In order to achieve the competencies learners must be able to understand the relevant law and procedures of children's hearings and the role of the chairing member. This is clearly defined in the Practice and Procedure Manual provided to panel members by the National Convener. Class based activities should focus on ensuring that learners have understood these documents in detail.

Although parts of this knowledge will have been gained in the other units, it will be important to recap as some time will have passed since the learners were assessed on the legislation, particularly as it applies to the role of chairing member.

Much of the focus of the learning at this stage will relate to the learner's ability to work as part of a team. They should recognise when it is important to seek additional information from relevant sources when they require clarification or when they are uncertain of the course of action to take.

Through observation of their practice in simulated activities, learners will be required to demonstrate their skills within the hearing as the chairing member ensuring that they were able to keep the focus on the welfare of the child. Learners need to demonstrate the ability to regard the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child throughout the child's childhood as the paramount consideration.



The observation of simulated practice will also show the extent to which they can actively seek the views of the child and encourage the child's participation — in whatever form this takes — and that they take account of the child's views.

Learners will need to demonstrate clear decision making and remain focused on their role. This includes the need to maintain confidentiality and follow guidance in relation to preparation, reading papers, storing papers safely and returning them to the Children's Reporter at the end of the hearing.

It would be useful to develop some exercises for learners to undertake in groups to practice their skills. Class based activity could also include role play or other simulated exercises on procedures and working with the other members of the hearings team.

Simulated exercises can also be used to ensure the learners are aware of, and respect, cultural and other differences among all who attend a hearing. Included in this are for example differences in age, beliefs, gender, race, religious customs, sexual orientation, class, lifestyles, language and any physical or learning disability uses correct forms of address and appropriate language.

These simulated activities will enable the lecturer to reaffirm the learner's knowledge from the previous two units and ensure that they are able to ask questions appropriately and encourage and engage others in discussion in a manner that is sensitive to people's circumstances and that they are able to remain open minded and fair.

During the formal assessed observations of simulated practice it will be important to ensure that learners:

- facilitate and encourage the participation of a child or young person and family as well as all other parties to ensure a fair hearing takes place.
- explain in straight forward, everyday language the procedural, legal and other issues covered in the hearing, as appropriate.
- seek clarity of children's (and others') understanding.

They will be required to chair a hearing ensuring all relevant issues are discussed and explored and to take an active part in deliberations. This can be a formal simulation observed by a member of the centre's training team, or an actual hearing observed by an Expert Witness who must be an approved member of the area support team.

The following Practice Observation Checklist can be used by observers, in either situation, to assist them in planning for, observing, and recording the learner's practice.

- introduce the agenda and invite contributions from those present.
- take necessary account of all factors that may discriminate and undermine full and effective participation.
- appear open minded and show that they have not prejudged the Outcome of the hearing.
- demonstrate, through the questions they ask and the contributions they make, their understanding of the need to protect rights and enable participation where there is a lack of capacity to understand and participate.
- maintain the rights of the child and others present at the hearing.
- communicate purposefully and ensure the child has opportunities at all stages of the hearing to express their views.
- avoid using terminology, jargon and acronyms, which can inhibit participation.
- assist with pacing the hearing, taking account of the child's stage of development, understanding, level of distress and attention span.
- help to create a positive tone at the hearing through their own verbal and non-verbal contributions, avoiding lecturing, threatening or mentoring.
- demonstrate sensitivity in situations where there is a high level of emotion, such as stress, distress, anger or conflict.
- give verbal decisions and reasons using clear and concise language so that the family understand them.
- check that what they have said has been understood.
- arrive in sufficient time to have an adequate prehearing planning discussion.

- behave in a measured, calm and non-confrontational manner.
- give support to the other panel members and work as a team member.
- demonstrate respect and have an awareness of own style of working and its effect on the functioning of the team and others at the hearing.
- manage the hearing in a manner that enables participation by all those present.
- end the hearing appropriately.
- articulate the decision and the reasons for it in clear and concise language that all can understand.

### **Guidance on approaches to delivery of this unit**

- It is recommended that this unit is taught as the final unit in the PDA and that delivery should follow the order of the outcomes.
- It is recommended that much of the delivery of formal learning for this unit is classroom based supported by discussions on actual practice experiences. Small group working is encouraged as a method of consolidating learning.
- Observation of simulated practice forms a significant part of the assessment for the unit and can be undertaken using the practice observation checklist above.

### **Guidance on approaches to assessment of this unit**

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Assessment for outcome 1 of this unit may be carried out using the final part of the specially designed workbooks which provide learners with case study materials. Learners will be required to submit workbooks for formal marking as directed by the training provider. Learner answers should not exceed the word length identified in each section of the workbooks plus or minus 10%.

Each learner's work should be marked by their lead lecturer.

The main assessment for this unit should be undertaken through observation of simulated practice in the role of chairing member of at least one children's hearing.

### **Opportunities for e-assessment**

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the evidence requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at [SQA e-Assessment](http://www.sqa.org.uk/Guide%20to%20best%20practice.pdf).  
([www.sqa.org.uk/Guide to best practice.pdf](http://www.sqa.org.uk/Guide%20to%20best%20practice.pdf)).

### **Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills**

Learners will develop communication skills verbal and non-verbal in relation to working with each other. Class based activities will prepare learners to communicate with children and young people as part of their formal role and function.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) may be used as a research tool. Accessing and evaluating electronic sources which provide complex information, current facts and ideas on professional concerns and issues should be encouraged. Learners will source and read detailed reference materials from a range of sources. Learners will be accessing systems and resources through CHIRP (CHS) portal.

Problem Solving skills will be gained through considering scenarios and seeking appropriate responses to challenging situations, the focus of group discussions will be on identifying progressive solutions to given situations.

Working with Others as part of groups of learners will help to prepare learners to work with colleague panel members and officials of the Children's Hearings System, small group exercises will help learners further develop their advice guidance and listening skills.

In completing this unit learners will be observed putting their knowledge and skills into practice through observation in a simulated hearing, chairing at least one children's hearing.

## History of changes to unit

Version	Description of change	Date
02	Updated to remove requirement for direct observation.	25/03/25

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Unit template: February 2025

# General information for learners

**Unit title:** Management of Children's Hearings (SCQF level 7)

This information will help you decide whether this is the unit for you by explaining what the unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit forms the final part of the Professional Development Award for Children's Hearings in Scotland: Panel Members.

The focus of the unit is on your role as chairing member of the children's hearing. The learning is aimed at ensuring your full understanding of the responsibilities and functions of this role as outlined in the Practice and Procedure Manual provided to panel members by the National Convener.

You will have successfully completed the first two units in the award and have been in practice as a serving member of the National Children's Panel for a minimum of six months.

The teaching and learning for this unit will consider the responsibilities of the chairing member and will pay particular attention to the legislation policies and procedures governing the role. You will be provided with further opportunities to expand and practise your communication skills, team working and leadership.

The assessment you will complete will focus on you acting in the role of chairing member and will consider your pre hearing preparation, your ability to work with a team, your focus on the rights and welfare of the child or young person, how you ensure a fair and transparent process, how you complete the proceedings and record the reasons for decisions.

The skills you demonstrate will be informed by all of the knowledge and understanding you have gained throughout your training programme and will link with the following areas of the National Standards for the Children's Panel.

**Standard 1:** Children and young people are at the centre of everything that we do.

**Standard 2:** Panel members are well equipped and supported to undertake their role.

**Standard 3:** Panel member practice is consistent across Scotland.

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