

OHOV Evaluation Report 2021



Children's Hearings
Improvement Partnership



The Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership - working together, sharing ideas and co-ordinating our efforts to improve services for children and young people.

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Executive Summary

Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV) are a Board of nine young people aged 15 to 20 years old. They were established in 2018 to enable Hearings-experienced young people to have an influence on the operation and development of the Children's Hearings System.

This evaluation draws on data from OHOV Board Members, senior Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) staff and Chairs of their respective Boards, OHOV staff and CHIP members. It involved a survey, interviews, a focus group and an analysis of evaluation forms from OHOV Board meetings.

It considers the following questions:

1. What do OHOV Board members, OHOV staff and CHIP partner organisations see as the future strategic direction of OHOV?
2. What value has been added by OHOV and how has this been utilised by agencies involved in the Hearings System and how does the work of OHOV fit in and influence the strategic direction of CHIP partner organisations (e.g. participation, equalities, children's rights)?
3. What has enabled and hindered the operation of OHOV?
4. Is the current operating model of OHOV effective and resource efficient?

The Story so Far

In the almost three years since their first meeting OHOV have been involved in a number of [projects](#) with partner organisations, as well as leading on work driven by their own experiences of the Hearings System which culminated in the production of a [Zine](#) and [40 Calls to Action](#) – their demands for changes and improvements within the Hearings System. While numbers of respondents to the survey of CHIP members were low, those who had commissioned work from OHOV or were aware of the work that they had produced were overwhelmingly positive about the quality, usefulness and impact of this work.

Learning From Phase 1 of OHOV

A number of enablers and barriers for OHOV were identified. Enablers included the enthusiasm, drive and support of OHOV project staff, and the volunteers who helped at Board meetings, as well as the support of the host organisation, though also their independence from the host and other partners. The support of wider partner organisations was also seen as key, including both long-term and sustained partnerships as well as shorter term collaborative partners for specific pieces of work. Relationships were seen as an enabler in a number of senses, including between the Project Lead and the young people, and between the young people themselves. The dedication and commitment of the young people to OHOV, particularly during Covid 19, was also important.

Evaluation participants discussed some of the barriers, which included the Project Lead being unable to fully carry out their role, and particularly its strategic function, due to capacity challenges. Also, there were occasional strained relationships between OHOV and some partner organisations, and evaluation participants also indicated that a lack of

meaningful engagement by the CHIP have all affected OHOV's success. The model and lack of clarity around the process of organisations working with OHOV has also impacted on their effectiveness. Finally, Covid 19 has clearly had an impact on the ability of OHOV members to fully engage with each other and organisations, due to the limitations placed on them during the pandemic.

Phase 2 of OHOV – It's Future Direction

CHIP members, and evaluation participants from SCRA and CHS, were positive about the future of OHOV, though recognising that decisions had to be made around what this would look like. 74% of 31 survey respondents saw OHOV as having a role in enabling or contributing to the changes necessary in the Children's Hearings System to Keep The Promise. Although only 52% of these respondents thought OHOV could enable their own organisation to Keep The Promise. There was a recognition that some organisational and strategic development was necessary as OHOV moves forward. Low numbers of survey respondents does indicate a lack of awareness or perhaps engagement with CHIP member organisations, therefore while the responses to OHOV may have been positive, they may not be representative.

Key areas identified as needing consideration going forward were around staffing, recruitment of young people, and the model which OHOV is using. The positioning of OHOV, as well as aspects of partnership working, and how OHOV engages with both the CHIP and key partner organisations within the Children's Hearings System were also raised by evaluation participants as needing to be considered.

In the context of The Promise, evaluation participants raised concerns around OHOV potentially becoming lost within the huge level of transformational change which is beginning within the Hearings System. There is a need to think carefully about what OHOV's unique position is within this work, and how they can contribute and be part of this change most effectively.

Conclusion

A strong core group of young people are in place within OHOV and they, along with partner organisations, are ready to think about Phase 2. While organisations that have worked with OHOV are positive about their impact, OHOV have not necessarily received the support needed to fully achieve their initial aims and objectives.

OHOV have been effective within the context and constraints that they have been subject to. Their 40 Calls to Action have been useful and important, particularly to SCRA and CHS, giving the voice of lived experience within the Hearings System and have been responded to by and incorporated into the work of both organisations.

From this evaluation it is clear that the organisations involved in the Hearings System and the young people in OHOV have similar aspirations. It is therefore a case of ensuring that these are aligned and the infrastructure is in place to ensure that OHOV are supported to achieve these. Decisions need to be made around what the aims of OHOV are within the next phase of their development. These aims will themselves be dependent on the role and purpose of OHOV, something which, again, will require to be decided as it moves forward.

1. Background

The Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) recognised the importance of children and young people having an influence on the operation and development of the Children's Hearings System. Work on a children and young people's board for the Hearings System started in 2015, and Our Hearings, Our Voice (OHOV) was established at the end of 2018. They are currently hosted by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) but are an independent Board, linked to the oversight of the project held by the CHIP.

The core OHOV Board members are currently a group of nine children and young people aged between 15 and 20 years old from across Scotland. They have a wide range of care experience, have all been involved in the Hearings System, and at the time of their recruitment were all still attending Hearings. This gives them a unique position amongst other care-experienced groups in that they are specifically focusing on Hearings and all were also currently taking part in Hearings, rather than reflecting back on historic experiences. They are currently supported by a Project Lead (CHIP funded post), a Project Development Worker (currently vacant post) and a Project Assistant (Trainee).

Our Hearings, Our Voice aims to:

- Hold the Children's Hearings System to account
- Ensure that children and young people have a decision making role in the Hearings System
- Identify and recommend improvements across the Hearings System
- Scrutinise and support the work of partners across the Hearings System.

The first OHOV Board meeting took place in November 2018, and two years after this an evaluation of OHOV was requested by the CHIP. Delays due to Covid 19 and recruitment of a researcher into post meant this evaluation began in May 2021 and data collection was carried out between June and August 2021.

The context within which OHOV now operates has changed from when it was first established. The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, which is currently with the Scottish Government for amendment after being challenged in the Supreme Court, and the findings of The Independent Care Review which were realised in The Promise in February 2020 recognise the importance of children's rights and voices being the focus of decision making. This means that this is a timely point to carry out this evaluation given the significant period of transformational change that will be happening in the Children's Hearings System.

2. Methods

This evaluation aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What do OHOV Board members, OHOV staff and CHIP partner organisations see as the future strategic direction of OHOV?

2. What value has been added by OHOV and how has this been utilised by agencies involved in the Children's Hearings System and how does the work of OHOV fit in and influence the strategic direction of CHIP partner organisations (e.g. on participation, equalities, children's rights)?
3. What has enabled and hindered the operation of OHOV?
4. Is the current operating model of OHOV effective and resource efficient?

The evaluation used a number of data collection methods to engage with different participants and stakeholders. These included focus groups and interviews with OHOV Board Members, interviews with senior SCRA and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) staff and the Chairs of their respective Boards, interviews with OHOV staff, an online survey with CHIP members, and an analysis of evaluation forms completed by OHOV Board Members and the adults who accompanied them following OHOV Board meetings.

2.1 Focus Groups/Interviews with OHOV Board Members

All OHOV Board Members were offered the option of taking part in either a focus group or a one-to-one interview with the researcher, whichever they would prefer. One in-person focus group was held with four OHOV Board Members in July 2021. An online interview took place over Teams with one further OHOV Board Member who was unable to attend this face-to-face meeting. Arrangements were made for a further online focus group which was not attended by any of the young people.

As well as being asked about their own experiences and thoughts about OHOV and its development, the young people were also given the opportunity to provide questions to be included in the interviews with SCRA and CHS staff and the Chairs of their Boards.

2.2 Interviews with SCRA and CHS Staff and Board Chairs

Online interviews took place in July and August 2021 over Teams with:

- Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, SCRA
- Head of Strategy and Organisational Development, SCRA
- National Convenor/Chief Executive Officer, CHS
- Head of Strategy and Development and Deputy Chief Executive, CHS
- SCRA Board Chair
- CHS Board Chair

These interviews all took around an hour. All interviewees answered questions for the evaluation from the researcher and from the OHOV Board Members themselves. Responses to both sets of questions are included within this evaluation report, where relevant. Separate feedback has been provided to the OHOV Board Members in respect of the responses to their questions specifically.

2.3 Interviews with OHOV Staff

Online interviews through Teams were carried out in June 2021 with the current Project Lead and Project Assistant as well as the Press & Communications Manager at SCRA, who had previous line management responsibility for OHOV, and the Head of Policy and Practice at SCRA who has current line management responsibility for OHOV staff. An interview with the previous Project Lead took place in December 2020.

2.4 Survey of CHIP Members

An online survey was created using Survey Monkey to explore CHIP members' experiences of OHOV. It asked questions on their general knowledge of OHOV specifically from the point of view of those who had commissioned work from them, and about their thoughts on the future direction of OHOV.

The survey was disseminated to the partner organisations through the CHIP administrator on 8th July 2021 with an initial closing date of 30th July 2021. Due to a low response rate to the survey, a reminder email was sent through the CHIP administrator on 28th July 2021 with an extended closing date of 3rd August 2021. Further dissemination of the survey took place through the Deputy CEO of CHS, the Twitter account of OHOV, the SCRA and OHOV websites, SCRA's intranet, the CELCIS newsletter and emails sent to SCRA's Participation Group members.

243 responses were received to the survey, with 241 indicating that they consented to taking part. Of these 241 responses, 62% (n=149) of these contained no responses to any of the questions, and 7% (n=17) of these contained a response to only the question regarding which organisation they worked for. The reason for this level of minimal completion is unknown. These 166 responses have therefore been discounted as they do not contain any data which could be used in the following analyses.

This leaves 75 responses which contain data which could be used in this evaluation. Responses came from a range of organisations including:

- Advocacy services (CHA East Ayrshire and Unspecified)
- CELCIS
- Children 1st
- Children's Panel Members
- Children's Hearings Scotland
- Education Scotland
- Girl Guiding
- Local authorities (Perth & Kinross and Unspecified)
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Legal Aid Board
- Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
- Scottish Government

Analysis of the survey responses took place using Excel.

2.5 Analysis of OHOV Board Meeting Evaluation Forms

Evaluation forms were completed by the OHOV Board Members and the adults who accompanied them following these meetings. These forms were available for eight meetings over a two year period, November 2018 to November 2020. These were analysed by the researcher for key themes arising from them.

The focus of these forms was very practical and concentrated on grading aspects of the meetings such as space, catering and activities. As such they would have been useful to the Project Lead in planning future OHOV Board meetings but were less useful in the context of this evaluation so are drawn on, but not heavily, within this report.

3. Key Findings

3.1 The Story So Far

3.1.1 Setting Up

There was a significant lead in period to OHOV becoming operational as a Board. Work prior to establishing the project identified that OHOV would be a Board based on the English CAFCASS (Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service) model, and initial visits to the Family Justice Young People's Board in England and Wales took place as early as 2012. A number of aspects then delayed the inception of OHOV which included: delays in obtaining funding; work around ensuring the correct model was developed for the Board and implementing a suitable framework; recruiting of staff; and recruiting young people. During this period a number of organisations worked together to move this project forward including SCRA, CHS, Who Cares? Scotland, Young Scot, CELCIS and the Scottish Government. The first meeting of the OHOV Board took place on 10th November 2018.

While the set-up period of the project was longer than had been anticipated, and reflections on this and the processes undertaken may have resulted in different decisions being taken should the project be set up today, this should not detract from the achievements of OHOV since their inception. There has been, and continues to be, a consistent level of enthusiasm expressed by senior staff within SCRA and CHS, and their Boards, about this project and its potential to engage with children and young people and for their voices to be heard within the Hearings System and by the organisations who work within it.

3.1.2 Achievements / Impact

"They should be incredibly proud of the work they have done, particularly the Zine and the Quacks to Action. They have had an impact at that level and they should be rightly proud of that." (Interview – CHS)

“It’s not just about us saying as adults or “the system” saying, we ought to hear what children and young people are saying and how are we going to do that, how do we make it representative, they’ve actually created that forum that allows us to do that. So I think that is hugely impactful because it’s a place to go and clearly they have an identity, they have a presence.” (Interview – SCRA)

*“I think the young people have done so much work, absolutely magnificent work.”
(Interview – SCRA)*

Our Hearings, Our Voice have been involved in a number of different projects and attended various events since their inception. Resources from and details of these can be found [here](#).

Of the 69 survey respondents from CHIP member organisations, only 57% (n=39) stated that they were aware of OHOV.

When asked what specific pieces of OHOV work they were aware of, the responses were as follows.

Table 1. CHIP Members' Awareness of OHOV Work

Piece of OHOV Work	Percentage of Respondents Who Are Aware ¹
“Hearing Children?” Scottish Parliament Event	26% (n=10)
Our Voices Zine	51% (n=20)
Virtual Hearings Testing and Feedback	23% (n=9)
Panel Member Recruitment	41% (n=16)
Training Sessions	21% (n=8)
UNCRC Consultation Response	26% (n=10)
Returning to Face to Face Hearings Consultation	26% (n=10)
CHS Children’s Rights and Inclusion Strategy Consultation	28% (n=11)
40 Calls to Action ²	44% (n=17)
Total Number of Respondents	39

Of the 39 respondents who were aware of OHOV, 14 did not complete any of the ratings questions on these projects and one response contained all N/A responses. Therefore the analysis below is based on the 24 respondents who completed this part of the survey by providing numerical ratings to at least some of the following questions. The rating scale was from 1(low) to 5(high).

¹ Note that these do not add to 100% as some respondents were aware of more than one piece of work.

² The 40 Calls to Action are OHOV's list of changes and improvements they feel require to be made within the Children's Hearings System and can be found [here](#).

Table 2. CHIP Members' Rating of OHOV Work (from knowledge of OHOV)

From your knowledge of OHOV's work or outputs can you please rate the following aspects:	Average Rating
Quality of the work/output	4.435 (Range: 2-5)
Usefulness of the work	4.565 (Range: 2-5)
Level of impact the work has had on my own awareness of issues within the Hearings System	3.875 (Range: 1-5)
Level of impact the work has had on identifying any training needs for myself	3.208 (Range: 1-5)
Level of impact the work has had on organisational policies	3.958 (Range: 2-5)
Level of impact the work has had on organisational processes	3.625 (Range: 1-5)
Level of impact the work has had on staff awareness	3.609 (Range: 1-5)
Level of impact the work has had on identifying training needs for staff	3.435 (Range: 1-5)

When asked to provide further detail on their rating responses, the following comments were provided:

"I think that the impact of the OHOV is very welcomed, and I look forward to seeing this project grow and develop." (Survey Respondent – East Ayrshire Advocacy Services)

"Lack of visibility amongst staff group affects the above scores." (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

Of the 39 respondents who were aware of OHOV, 14 did not complete any of the ratings questions on how valuable they felt the project had been, therefore the following analysis is based on the 25 respondents who completed at least one of the rating questions below. The rating scale was from 1(low) to 5(high).

Table 3. CHIP Members' Rating of Value of OHOV

How valuable do you think OHOV has been so far:	Average Rating
...for your organisation?	3.542 (Range: 1-5)
...for the Children's Hearings System generally?	3.96 (Range: 1-5)
... in ensuring that Hearings-experienced children and young people's voices are heard?	4.28 (Range: 1-5)

When asked to provide further comments in relation to these ratings the following were included:

***“We should not measure the success short term especially when others are not ready!!
This is a great model!” (Survey Respondent – CELCIS)***

“The OHOV project is still very embryonic, so the impact will have been limited by numbers and time. But there is potential to influence much wider.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“I think that OHOV is really important for ensuring that the voices of hearing experienced children and young people inform our work. I think more could be done to raise awareness of what the group is working on, the impact the group would like it to have and why it is important/what legislation/practice/change it is informing.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

Survey respondents were also asked if they had commissioned work from OHOV. Of the 75 survey respondents from CHIP member organisations who answered the question on this, 16% (n=12) stated that they had. Those who responded that they had commissioned a project came from a range of organisations: Children 1st, CHS, CHA East Ayrshire Advocacy Service, Police Scotland, the Scottish Government and SCRA.

Eight of these respondents then went on to complete the following rating questions on what they felt about the work that had been done and the impact on themselves or their organisation from it. The ratings were from 1(low) to 5(high).

Table 4. CHIP Members’ Rating of OHOV Work (from commissioned projects)

Thinking about these specific commissioned projects can you please rate the following aspects:	Average Rating
Quality of the work/output	4.75 (Range: 4-5)
Usefulness of the work	4.875 (Range: 4-5)
Level of impact the work has had on my own awareness of issues within the Hearings System	4.375 (Range: 3-5)
Level of impact the work has had on identifying any training needs for myself	3.625 (Range: 2-5)
Level of impact the work has had on organisational policies	4.625 (Range: 4-5)
Level of impact the work has had on organisational processes	4.25 (Range: 2-5)
Level of impact the work has had on staff awareness	4.286 (Range: 2-5)
Level of impact the work has had on identifying training needs for staff	3.857 (Range: 2-5)

When asked to provide further detail on their rating responses one respondent provided the following comment:

“The comments raised were so significant and powerful it made us stop and consider lots of our current policies and practice.” (Survey Respondent – Children 1st)

Survey respondents were asked specifically if they felt the work they had commissioned had had an impact on the practice of the Children’s Hearings System. Of the 8 respondents to this question, 88% (n=7) felt that it had.

When asked to provide further detail the following comments were made:

“Publicising the added value of independent advocacy to children and young people going through the hearings processes has been invaluable. Feedback from our advocacy organisations has been very positive. The website has been developed to reflect the views of OHOV Board members and we are very grateful for their continued input and support. In terms of the siblings contact work, views and comments from the Board Members were incorporated into the Children's Right and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) and the Equality Quality Impact Assessment (EQIA). Both of these "living" documents are required to be completed and kept under review as part of the legislation process. The work of OHOV was invaluable in providing information for those assessments.” (Survey Respondent – Scottish Government)

“We had young people from OHOV taking part in the recruitment campaign last year for our PMs [panel members] and the positive feedback certainly contributed to the roll out of this practice in all areas this year.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“OHOV involvement over two recruitment campaigns influenced selection decisions locally and reinforced the importance of ensuring this inclusion of those with personal and direct experience of the hearings at a national, Scotland wide level.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“I think OHOV constantly makes us think about what we do - however there is a real difficulty translating that thinking into affirmative action.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

Based on survey respondents’ awareness of OHOV, rather than on their experiences of commissioned work, of the 25 respondents to the question of whether they thought OHOV had been able to have an impact on the Hearings System, 88% (n=22) said they had.

When asked to provide further detail the following comments were made:

“The 40 Calls to Action are a very tangible plan for SCRA/CHS which will be useful in keeping The Promise. Similarly the work around returning to hearings was really helpful and led to small improvements in relation to this.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

“Prioritised and legitimised the need to hear voices of children.” (Survey Respondent – Local Authority)

"OHOV have encouraged the Hearing System to keep the child or young person at the centre of their delivery." (Survey Respondent – East Ayrshire Advocacy Service)

"The essence of OHOV is excellent and worthwhile. However a lot of their work is in the background/preparatory [...] and although it is good work, I do not feel that there is a general recognition of this work and their presence." (Survey Respondent – CHS)

When senior SCRA and CHS staff responded to questions around the impact that OHOV had had on their organisations, as well as the Hearings System more widely, they most often highlighted the work in the Zine and the 40 Calls to Action. These have been incorporated into both organisations' strategic plans, and both SCRA and CHS are currently reporting back to OHOV on the progress they have made towards these 40 Calls to Action.

OHOV members have also recently been involved in the recruitment of SCRA Board members, with two elements of the recruitment criteria being delegated to OHOV for interviewing.

A more intangible impact identified by SCRA was a change in mind-set within the organisation.

"It's just that, a different way of thinking, different way of looking at things, different way of approaching things in relation to how we work, the language we use, how we consider participation, how we consider experience, all of these things." (Interview – SCRA)

However, the relatively low number of survey responses from SCRA staff (n=12), along with the fact that 2 out of 7 respondents from SCRA rated OHOV's value to the organisation as less than 3 on the scale (1-5), and 3 out of 7 SCRA survey respondents rated OHOV's value to the Children's Hearings System as less than 3, indicates that this impact has not been across all within the organisation.

Similarly, within CHS, there were low numbers of survey responses in terms of volunteer respondents (n=9), although relatively high for staff within the organisation (n=5). Comments suggested an awareness of OHOV but not more than this.

"In summary - I am aware of OHOV but I am unclear about what they have achieved to date. I do think we will need some kind of "OHOV support" as we proceed in implementing The Promise, but what form that support will be is the challenge." (Survey Respondent – CHS)

Another achievement of OHOV was said to be the raising of visibility and awareness of issues within the Hearings System. While this has taken place in a number of ways, the Hearing Children? Exhibition and Event held at the Scottish Parliament in 2019 is perhaps the highest profile example. Comments made in response to this event by attendees included:

- MSP – That children and young people are at the centre of every decision and that they will feel like they are at the centre
- Education Scotland – Raise awareness with schools and school staff of the impact Hearings can have on children and young people
- CHS – Commitment to listen more to children and look at ways that every panel member/board member/staff member/AST member all listen to those voices as well.
- Children 1st – “I will try to bring children’s voices into conversations I have with any CHIP partners so that children’s rights are respected and you can be at the centre – not a table!”
- Children and Young People’s Commissioner – “Today I feel inspired and awed. I promise to make sure that the Commissioner’s office considers the rights issues that matter to children and young people with experience of the Hearings System by listening to their voices when we make our decisions and use our powers.”
- SCRA – “I’m going to commit myself to give young people more choice about how they wish to participate in their Hearings in the future (e.g. through video/digital and apps!) I’m going to make sure that all SCRA staff are warm, welcoming, caring and kind to young people – before, during and after their Hearings.”

When the OHOV Board Members themselves were asked about whether they felt they had been able to influence the Hearings System, they spoke about the importance of the Zine including the 40 Calls to Action and the response to this particularly from SCRA, their involvement in the UNCRC consultation, and work with Panel Members for CHS.

Looking beyond the impact of OHOV on organisations or the Hearings System more widely, there has also been an important impact on the young people themselves from their involvement with OHOV. They spoke about how being part of the Board has improved their confidence, whether this came from being able to take on more of an advisor role within the group, or from presenting to groups of people, often those who would previously have been seen as having “power” for example Panel Members. Being part of OHOV also meant that some of the young people felt less alone, being able to meet others with shared experiences. The opportunity to be involved in team working was another personal impact which came from being part of OHOV for the young people.

“Yeah, so we had a sheet to do, your confidence level and that, so when we updated that I became a lot more [confident] than what I thought I would be. ‘Cause even doing interviews now, in my college one I got in, but I was shy at first but then I remembered I’ve done the exact same before and that.” (OHOV Board Member)

“Yeah, and more like the team work as well. Like that I used to struggle with as well because working in a team used to be too much to take on for me, ‘cause I was used to doing stuff individually, so when it came to team work I never liked it in primary and that. But doing it now in OHOV has been better because, like, you really do, do it was a team, and you’re all together.” (OHOV Board Member)

“I’d say confidence, because I’m taking, like, a leadership role as being one of the young advisors that have been there since the start [...] I think at that stage it would not be me

to, like, stand up in front of a crowd and speak to people. So the fact that I can look back and, like, I would not be the same person without OHOV. I wouldn't have that ability to speak to loads of people and be part of a group like that.” (OHOV Board Member)

“It's definitely, being with OHOV has definitely given me confidence, it's made me feel, like, not so alone in my experiences, and made me feel, like, less of a weirdo because there's other people that have been through the same stuff as me and in a lot of ways are the same as me. It's definitely, like, it's definitely given me a lot of confidence, shown what, like, changes I can actually make if I put myself into a project and actually become a part of something.” (OHOV Board Member)

3.1.3 Changes / Adaptations

Over the almost three year period which OHOV has been operating there have been various changes and adaptations which have taken place. Some of these have been natural evolutions, as learning has taken place or challenges have arisen which have required to be overcome. Others, such as Covid 19, have been changes and adaptations which were forced on to OHOV and their staff.

Staffing

There have been two main changes in staffing. The first is that the original job specification for the Project Development Worker did not result in the recruitment of someone with the required skillset which it became apparent was needed as OHOV progressed. As a result, the fixed term contract was not extended and this post is currently vacant. Secondly, the Project Lead left her role in December 2020. The position was vacant until April 2021 when it was filled by the new Project Lead, who had previously been involved with OHOV through being a member of its steering group and advisor to OHOV while in his previous position. This is currently a 12-month secondment position.

While OHOV continue to be hosted by SCRA, (which provides the infrastructure through HR, communications, administrative and line management support) the positioning of OHOV staff within this structure has changed. Initially they sat within the Communications team and now they are in Policy and Practice.

Recruitment / Model

Initial recruitment plans were to recruit 32 young people, one from each local authority area. It became clear that this was too prescriptive, and that these numbers were unmanageable given the small project staff team. This was reduced to twelve young people, which was achieved, with the intention that this could be reviewed once OHOV had been established. The core OHOV group currently consists of nine young people.

The initial model saw OHOV as a strategic level Board which would have a decision-making role in the Hearings System, was able to hold the System to account, and scrutinise and support the work of partners across the Hearings System. OHOV has, in some ways, moved away from this role and instead become more project-led over the period of its existence.

Impact of Covid 19

Covid 19 and the resulting restrictions have forced changes within OHOV, particularly in how the group have been able to meet and work together. Initially the group used BAND to meet and communicate online, and this was later supplemented by the use of Teams. While engagement as a group has continued and OHOV have continued to contribute to projects during this time, it is recognised that there has been a reduction in engagement and a fatigue by OHOV members with only being able to meet in a virtual space. As restrictions eased some of the group were able to meet in a face-to-face outdoor setting in August 2021 with a full group meeting taking place indoors on 28th August 2021.

3.2 Learning from Phase 1

3.2.1 Enablers

Staff

The enthusiasm, drive and support of all the staff working directly with OHOV has been extremely important to them being able to achieve what they have. The initial Project Lead was instrumental in setting up the group, and provided the infrastructure and personal support which allowed the building of safe and rewarding relationships with and between the young people in OHOV. These have been key in the group reaching a stage where they could produce their 40 Calls to Action, and has sustained them through the difficult Covid 19 period, where interaction has been reduced and moved to an online format.

The support of the host organisation SCRA, in both practical and emotional terms for OHOV and their project team, has enabled OHOV to develop as a group and achieve the impact they have had to date. The strong support and commitment from both SCRA and CHS has also been key. Part of this support took a practical form through the attendance of SCRA and CHS staff as volunteers at OHOV meetings, assisting the OHOV project team. Without these volunteers OHOV meetings would not have taken place as the staffing resources required to hold such events were greater than could be provided from the project team alone.

Going forward, support from the host organisations will continue to be seen as playing an important role in enabling the success of OHOV.

"[Enablers are] The young people involved. SCRA & CHS commitment. All those supporting the young people." (Survey Respondent – CELCIS)

Support of partners

There are a range of different partner organisations which have been involved with OHOV since its inception and throughout its development. These partners have performed different roles, though all have been important.

The Scottish Government has been key in providing both a moral and financial backing for the project. The buy-in from senior Ministers, reflected in both Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister, and Maree Todd, the Minister for Children and Young People at the time,

attending OHOV Board meetings, is something which was highlighted by evaluation participants.

The support of partner organisations within the Hearings System, particularly CHS and SCRA, but also Who Cares? Scotland, Young Scot and CELCIS, have also been extremely important to OHOV and their development.

While these are long-term and sustained partnerships with organisations specifically within the sector, OHOV has also worked with other partners who have provided specific skills and experience in relation to particular aspects of their development. For example, OHOV collaborated with Napier University and the Verbatim Formula team to create, develop and deliver an immersive exhibition and event within the Scottish Parliament; worked with design students from Napier University to produce their interactive Zine; and collaborated with professionals from Edinburgh University to design their logo.

Relationships

Relationships have been an enabler for OHOV in a number of different senses. Firstly, the relationship between the original Project Lead and the young people was particularly strong, and enabled the group to develop and provided them with a safe, trauma-informed space to work within. This has continued with the current Project Lead, although this building of relationships has been more difficult as he came into post during lockdown and has required to build these relationships mainly through the use of virtual platforms.

Secondly, the relationships between the young people themselves has been key to enabling the group to work well together. Again, the OHOV staff, and the model used for the group, has played a role in allowing these relationships to develop.

“And even actually to, like, bring out a trust at first ‘cause, like, I know that’s sometimes hard for people and that was hard for me at the start as well, but then doing the games and that you then build a bit of trust and bond. And then also you can trust to say things in front of them all.” (OHOV Board Member)

“So I think one good thing about it is the relationships that you’ve made with people, so friendships and stuff. We can, like, all relate to each other somehow and that’s always a nice thing to have ‘cause we’ve all gone through similar things with the Hearings System, like, and the good and the bad of that so we can all relate in that way and it’s really nice to rant I guess. It’s therapeutic.” (OHOV Board Member)

“I think the project as a whole works well for the young people because the young people have become really close and built really good friendships.” (OHOV Staff Member)

Independence

While OHOV has been hosted by SCRA, they are an independent group, reporting to the CHIP rather than being part of any single organisation within the Hearings System. While this has at times been difficult to establish and tensions have arisen around this, attempts have been made to assert and emphasise this independence. This has included providing

OHOV with an office space outwith the SCRA building, and involved a continual reiterating of the independence of the group by Project Leads.

Recruitment

While the recruitment of OHOV Board members was dependent on who applied for the role, rather than being prescribed, the fact that the young people have come from a wide geographic range rather than concentrated in the central belt, are a range of ages and generally younger than participants in similar groups, and are (or at least were at the time of their recruitment) currently involved in the Hearings System, have all been important enablers. OHOV are also specifically focused on the Hearings System, which is not the case with other groups within the care sector which will look at the care-system more widely. The majority of the young people had also not been involved in other groups prior to joining OHOV. This is an important enabler in ensuring that as wide a range of voices, and unheard views, are included within participation work.

The young people themselves are also a key enabling factor contributing to what OHOV have achieved. Despite the challenges of engaging online during Covid 19, the change of Project Lead, and it being a period of restrictions and severe detrimental impact on young people throughout Scotland, the core group of OHOV members remained determined and committed to the project, and are still in place currently.

“They all have experience of children's hearings and are passionate about making it better.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

OHOV Board meetings

A final enabler for the young people, and the success of the group, are the OHOV Board meetings themselves. While the term can conjure up a specific idea of what being a part of a Board might involve the young people commented on the fact that it was much more enjoyable, and less “boring” than they had expected.

“Well it was more funner than I'd expected. At first I thought it would be, like, boring. That was just my expectation. So at first I thought this is probably boring so then my first time going we actually got to play some team games and that so I found it more fun than I expected.” (OHOV Board Member)

“Better. I think it's definitely better than what I first thought it was going to be because I thought, you know, it's going to be Board meetings, I was expecting, like, obviously it wouldn't be boring but I get to travel now and it's, and we're all a group now so you get to be, like, oh I'll go and see everyone else, it's nice.” (OHOV Board Member)

“They [the Board members] loved coming to the Board meetings. When I used to phone them to ask about their vouchers they were buzzing to come to the meetings.” (OHOV Staff Member)

This was important in ensuring that the young people remained engaged with OHOV, which is reflected in the fact that almost three years after OHOV's first Board meeting there is still a consistent core of young people involved in it.

The structure of when and what these Board meetings would involve was also important. Knowing that there would be six meetings per year and when these would take place, as well as the structure and focus for the day, was key.

3.2.2 Barriers

Some aspects of OHOV could be seen as both enablers and barriers, such as staff and partnership working as discussed below.

Staff

The initial recruitment of staff did not result in a team which had the correct skillset which became clear as the project progressed. This resulted in the role of the Project Development Worker not being renewed at the end of the initial fixed term post. It is still currently unfilled, awaiting the result of this evaluation. While this was not the only factor that produced barriers to the Project Lead being able to engage in the level of strategic work required of their role (see the Model section below) it did have some impact on this. The result was that a great level of support was required to be given to the Project Development Worker, which detracted and took time away from other aspects of the Project Lead role needed to allow OHOV to develop.

Partnership working

While the support of partner organisations has been an important enabler for OHOV, aspects of these relationships have also been barriers. There were some strained relations between some of the partner organisations and OHOV staff, particularly around unmet expectations. Where OHOV began to evolve differently to initial expectations this led to a lack of clarity around their role or purpose which may have contributed to some of these tensions.

While the CHIP is the body to which OHOV reports, there appears to have been a lack of meaningful engagement between the CHIP and OHOV up to this point. This is reflected in the low response rates to the survey of CHIP members, and the lack of respondents from a number of key partner organisations, particularly social work. While this may not have been a barrier to the development of OHOV and their work up to now, it has been identified as a potential barrier to their development and effectiveness going forward.

“There needs to be a stronger CHIP structure around OHOV to support their independence and to filter their thoughts / ideas etc back out to organisations to make change - and to then monitor the impacts of that change. These mechanisms are just not present at the moment.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

Model

The support provided by the initial Project Lead to the young people was recognised above as an enabler, and its importance is reflected in comments made by the young people themselves about the Project Lead. However, her support and relationship with them,

aspects of this relationship and the model of working have also been identified as a barrier to the development of the group. With more of the Project Lead's time focused on supporting the young people directly rather than working with their existing support workers, impacting on the amount of strategic work and development of the group that was able to take place. This has already begun to be addressed through the setting of clearer boundaries and responsibilities for the Project Lead role.

One of the outcomes of this limitation in the level of strategic development work by the initial Project Lead is perhaps a lower knowledge of OHOV amongst CHIP members than may otherwise have been seen. This is evidenced both by the low numbers of CHIP member survey responses, and in some of the survey respondents' comments on barriers to the success of OHOV so far.

"Profile not high enough nationally." (Survey Respondent – CHS)

"Not well enough known." (Survey Respondent – Education Scotland)

"As outlined above, I think it's important to make partners and stakeholders more aware of the projects they are working on and their impact." (Survey Respondent – CHS)

The initial model for OHOV was designed to be commission-based, with organisations proposing ideas and OHOV then deciding on what projects they wanted, and had the capacity, to work on. This process appears not to have been as effective as it was envisaged. This has been identified as potentially being due to a lack of clarity and understanding about what this process would involve, or that the capacity of the group to take part in a number of projects was not sufficient, or that OHOV worked in this more project-focused rather than strategic way. The role of OHOV and how this relates to the commissioning process appears to have been unclear among organisations and will have impacted on OHOV's effectiveness.

Concerns around the commissioning model as a barrier to allowing the work to be young person driven or led have also been raised by participants in this evaluation. Instead, the work has been driven by what organisations have wanted and this could potentially have hampered OHOV's ability to impact change based on the young people's own expertise and knowledge.

Covid 19

As with all projects over the last 18 months, Covid 19 will clearly have been a barrier to some of the progress or impact that OHOV could have had. It will have had an impact on the effectiveness of OHOV, as they have had to move to online working, with no face-to-face engagement, as well as the reduction in engagement with organisations involved in the Hearings System, or at the least a change in how this engagement has been able to take place.

That there was no Project Lead in post between December 2020 and April 2021 has been a barrier, as will the new Project Lead coming into post in the middle of a period of lockdown which necessitated relationship building with the group taking place online. While this has

taken place, and the young people of OHOV were positive about the new Project Lead, it is acknowledged that this work would have been easier had interactions not been taking place solely in a virtual setting.

The limitations on working and engaging in a virtual space is something all organisations and employees have experienced, and this has been no different for OHOV. While the group have continued to meet and remain highly motivated, there have been difficulties with engaging in this format, including challenges around digital access and exclusion.

“COVID has impacted and caused major disruption to all aspects of our daily lives so this will have been a barrier.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

“So, yeah, online, I think made it difficult for us. Obviously it’s nice to be able to get out again. I definitely felt that some people were a wee bit, like excluded from it, because bad internet, no, like, don’t have access to the right equipment, like, iPads, computers, phones, so that was-, and I think that actually drove some people away [...] Yeah, maybe some support for applying for things like that. Just trying to get, so get some of the same support that the schools have had would be good for us. Getting people more involved.” (OHOV Board Member)

3.3 Phase 2 – Future Direction

There were 35 survey respondents who completed at least one section of the CHIP member survey on the future of OHOV. The following analysis is based on the respondents who completed at least one of the rating questions below. The rating scale was from 1(low) to 5(high)

Table 5. CHIP Members’ Rating of Future Value of OHOV

Thinking about the future, how valuable do you think OHOV could be:	Average Rating
...for your organisation?	4.029 (Range: 1-5)
...for the Children’s Hearings System generally?	4.265 (Range: 1-5)
... in ensuring that Hearings-experienced children and young people’s voices are heard?	4.286 (Range: 1-5)

When asked to provide further detail around their ratings, those who rated the future value of OHOV highly provided responses that included:

“OHOV is very valuable to our children and young people for now and in the future and I look forward to seeing this project grow and develop.” (Survey Respondent – East Ayrshire Advocacy Services)

“This group could be the representative ‘go to group’ often discussed, but think the level of maturity would need to be considered. Needs clarity on the role of OHOV, now that it has been in place and active for two years - what is in and out of scope.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

*"I liked the 40 points in the call to action but a lot depends on legislative changes."
(Survey Respondent – SCRA)*

While lower ratings were less common (only 9% of the responses to this question were rated below 3 on the scale), some of the responses which explained those lower scores are included below:

*"Have had no impact to date and not shown itself as likely to from previous actions."
(Survey Respondent – SCRA)*

"I have never heard of this and therefore cannot provide an accurate answer. Having never heard of it, I can only assume it would not be relevant to me in carrying out my role and subsequently not impactful." (Survey Respondent – Police Scotland)

Of the 35 respondents who completed at least one part of this section, 69% (n=24) stated that they would commission OHOV to do work in the future:

"Most definitely - I really value the young people's input. It would be far too easy for me "as an adult" to think I know best what is needed, when that is the furthest from the truth. I need the experiences of the young people to tell me what works well, what doesn't work well (or at all) as I plan with them to expand and improve the service." (Survey Respondent – Scottish Government)

"Important to sense check the resources and information we provide educators about the CHS [Children's Hearings System] through the lens of 'lived experience'." (Survey Respondent – Education Scotland)

3.3.1 Operational

A number of the operational aspects highlighted by the participants in this evaluation are linked into addressing some of the barriers or limits to OHOV's effectiveness.

Staffing

The staffing structure and skillset required by the OHOV project team has already been identified as an area which needs to be addressed. A new job description has been created for the Project Development Worker role and recruitment was put on hold to await the result of this evaluation. Maintaining the correct balance of skills within the OHOV staff team will ensure that the Project Lead is able to fulfil both the operational and strategic aspects of their role.

The Project Lead role is currently a 12-month secondment position. This will end in March 2022.

The turnover of staff, and in particular where staff have been on short-term contracts, has been identified as an issue, both in relation to a lack of continuity for the young people and for the OHOV project team themselves.

Recruitment

The need for the recruitment of new OHOV Board Members has been identified by a number of participants within this evaluation. This would involve a refreshing of OHOV and recruitment of new members, with the option of existing OHOV Board Members taking up advisor positions (which will first need to be created and defined more clearly). It has been noted as key that members of OHOV have current experience of the Hearings System, and that it would be desirable for younger members to be recruited who reflect those who currently attend Children's Hearings. This is a priority identified by the OHOV Board Members themselves.

Looking to the medium and long-term future of OHOV, as current Board Members move into advisor roles, consideration will need to be given to how to build and develop the skills of those within this role, as well as how to move forward and continue to build a network around the core OHOV members.

Model

Thinking about how OHOV meet, initially all meetings took place face-to-face, which is both time and resource intensive particularly given the small OHOV staff team. Should decisions be taken to scale up OHOV and involve more young people, this model would likely be too time and resource intensive to allow this to be scalable. There may be learning from Covid 19 and the move to online meetings around working in a more virtual way. While there are negative aspects to this way of working including the potential for digital exclusion and that this type of engagement was not favoured by the young people, a hybrid model involving both face-to-face and virtual engagement may address some of the barriers around being able to meet more often. Participants in this evaluation did note, however, that good quality online work was only possible where there were existing good relationships, and that these are difficult to establish in an online only environment.

The initial model involved six OHOV Board meetings each year, although when working on different projects some of the young people would meet outside of this. When asked about the type of future work they would like to be involved in one young person did say they would like to meet more often as they did not feel like meeting every other month was enough. This was also reflected in comments made in evaluation forms following one of the Board meetings where one young person noted that they wanted to meet more than every three months.

The OHOV Board members enjoyed the creative aspects of the work that they have been involved in, and the innovative approaches used were also mentioned as an enabler by one of the CHIP member survey respondents. This may be something which could be explored in future pieces of work, depending on the direction OHOV takes. There was less enthusiasm for projects that involved worksheets or reading big reviews and reports, but also an acknowledgement that to be involved in pieces of work like this it just had to be conveyed in a different way:

“I don’t like the ones where you have to, like, worksheets, like, I can’t, I don’t have the concentration for it, if that makes sense. But if you spoke about it.” (OHOV Board Member)

Currently, the commissioning process sees organisations put forward ideas for working with OHOV on projects, and the group making a decision on which of these are feasible given their interests and capacity. A more structured process appears to be needed in engaging with OHOV so that there is clarity for the organisations involved in the Hearings System. The current commissioning process also appears to involve a focus on the needs of organisations rather than enabling the work to be youth led, which was the initial purpose of OHOV – allowing the group to generate their own ideas and impact change based on their own experiences and knowledge of the Hearings System.

Partnership Working / Positioning of the Group

A more integrated strategic system requires to be in place to enable OHOV to meet its aims and function. A key part of this is their relationship with the CHIP which, as outlined above, may not have acted as a barrier to their development till now but which will require to be addressed as OHOV develops further.

Respondents to the CHIP member survey highlighted some of these issues:

“Perception that there is a disconnect between what OHOV does and local activities - might be helped if we had a local named contact - not sure where this aligns/overlaps with the activities of CHSCYP Inclusion Officer Post?” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“The bridges between OHOV and the people making the policy / developing change need to be stronger / less cluttered.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

While a number of changes could and some will have to be made to the operation of OHOV going forward, firstly it will be necessary to consider the unique space OHOV holds particularly in The Promise and redesign of the Hearings System. This will require consideration to be given to the future direction of OHOV in a more strategic context (as is outlined below) which will then lead on to more operational aspects of OHOV.

3.3.2 Strategic

Model / Role

“I think that, like, a thing that we have had a taste of, being, like, being equals to the people that are usually the ones that are sitting in front of us and telling us all the things that are going to happen to us, and, like, what has happened to us. And just, like, the big important people, being equal to them, and being in situations where they’re not any different to us, and they don’t have any, like, they don’t have any power, so it’s kinda, like, shared. And sometimes it’s been good, like, actually young people having that power over them where, like, we’ve been on consultations and even just...(OHOV Board Member)

'Cause it was nice, yeah, remember when Elliot and Neil actually sat down with us not as, obviously who they are, but it was just, like, how we all just say Elliot and Neil, you know.' (OHOV Board Member)

The OHOV Board members identified the importance of being able to share power with who they saw as the "important" people in the Hearings System. This was in reference to a meeting they had with Neil Hunter and Elliot Jackson who attended one of the OHOV Board meetings, as well as another meeting with the First Minister.

There were also positive comments about the OHOV Board meeting attended by Neil and Elliot within the evaluation forms completed by the young people. This was the only time OHOV has met with them. There was no follow-up or any opportunity for OHOV to then hold the two organisations to account for the promises made or work that they could do to meet the asks in the 40 Calls to Action. This is not a criticism of SCRA or CHS, whose staff made clear their keenness to engage with OHOV further, nor of OHOV themselves or the project staff. It is merely to point out that this is something which has not taken place and will require further consideration and a defined process to be agreed and implemented around the relationship between CHS and SCRA management and their Boards and OHOV.

It was felt that OHOV had not been able to hold SCRA or CHS to account.

"I don't feel OHOV has put me under any pressure and it should be. It should be a very, very uncomfortable thing for my Board to hear about children and young people's experiences of the Hearings System, because we know we're not getting it right in a lot of places. I find them quite a safe group. There are other groups out there, who if they want to speak to us or are telling us things then I will have higher levels of anxiety."
(Interview – CHS)

Changes have begun to take place however, and processes implemented which are beginning to address some of these issues. SCRA has begun reporting back on the progress they are making towards the 40 Calls to Action in a regular accessible progress report to OHOV and CHS has also begun reporting back on their progress towards these Calls.

This feedback is not only important in allowing OHOV as a whole to hold the Hearings System to account, but also personally for the young people to see the impact that they have had.

"I'd love what I've done to be recognised as a kind of ripple diagram showing what I have been involved in and how that has changed the Hearings System and made lives better"
(OHOV Board Meeting Evaluation Form Comment)

The initial aims and purpose of OHOV which saw them as having a decision-making role in the Hearings System and being able to scrutinise and support the work of partners across the System, would have required this sharing of power. However there have been limitations in them being able to meet these aims:

“As they were set up or positioned as a Board we had anticipated that they would be operating at that strategic level and interact across the Boards of CHIP. [...] The children and young people, they contributed actively to individual projects [...] but I don’t feel that that Board have demonstrated a decision making role in the Hearings System, and that’s not down to their ability at all, I just think it’s not how it’s panned out.” (Interview – CHS)

“The dynamic that it feels like at the moment is we’ve asked them what they think and then we’ve said, okay we’ll go away and do that [...] but it just feels to me like there’s still an imbalance in terms of the power, that dynamic. As opposed to young people starting to say, I’m not responding to your question or asking me for my views, I’m saying what I think. So actually owning some of the change and driving some of that. So I suppose it’s a shift in power that I would like to see but that will depend on us supporting them to have the confidence to take on that power and to do that in a way that is constructive. [...] Filling a space that is their own space rather than one that we’ve given to them.” (Interview – SCRA)

OHOV have not thus far been provided with the opportunities, infrastructure and support which would have enabled them to work in a more strategic way. This engagement at a more strategic level, the processes around it, and the infrastructure needed around OHOV to allow it to take place will all need to be considered as OHOV moves into Phase 2 of its development.

While the discussions with some of the young people in OHOV suggest that they would welcome a more strategic role, this would of course have to be discussed with all the young people to ensure that any decisions around their development are led by OHOV themselves. Support for making these decisions came through in interviews with both SCRA and CHS staff:

“So should they (OHOV) take on oversight and governance, with organisations reporting in to them, to tell them how they’re doing - just in a less formal structure. Or are they wanting to be involved in the change itself, and it could be both, and it could be different for different people. Or are they satisfied that we (organisations) go off and engage with local Champs Boards or others, and work with them on asks, come back to OHOV, to say ‘we have now progressed that, here’s the evidence’. I think that needs to be clearer, or defined.” (Interview – SCRA)

“For me, it’s that next level up, what our ask is of them and how we interact with them that have challenges really. I think they need support to operate at that higher level. [...] Could be they’re an evaluation board or something, how do we evaluate those tests of change, the thing we really struggle with, whenever we go to evaluate something, children and young people don’t get involved, and they’re probably the one voice that we really want to hear from. [...] If we’re going to make improvements to the System that directly impact the experience and outcomes for children and young people, how do we capture that? There’s something in and around that maybe that is where they hold the key. [...] that concept of that wider model that was originally there, are they the ambassadors that then go out to groups of young people in areas to say, tell me, I’m one of you, is that how we do it? For me there’s something quite powerful in that, and it’s a bit

next level for them. I don't know if that's the right answer but I feel they've got to shift what they do otherwise they're going to get lost." (Interview – CHS)

Once decisions have been made around this role and remit, this will then lead to decisions being made on the model of OHOV, its size, scale and formation, and the resourcing required to support it.

Positioning of OHOV

The current positioning of OHOV, and considerations around this as OHOV develops, were raised by a number of participants.

Currently there is a lack of engagement between OHOV and the SCRA and CHS Boards. While some engagement has taken place up to this point, with the work of OHOV being fed back to the CHS Board by the Project Lead, and the 40 Calls to Action being fed into Plans for both organisations, both Board Chairs were keen for there to be further and deeper engagement with OHOV and to hear directly from the young people. They would like to work on the best way of ensuring this engagement is useful and productive, both for the organisations and OHOV themselves. Suggestions were made to hold annual development sessions with the SCRA and CHS Boards, or to enable OHOV members to sit on these Boards. Further consideration needs to be given to these ideas.

The importance of strategic links between OHOV and CHS and SCRA was highlighted by participants. Equally the importance of CHS and SCRA working in partnership with each other was also mentioned as key for the development of OHOV.

As has been outlined above, there has been a lack of engagement between the CHIP and OHOV, with few opportunities for OHOV to share experiences with the CHIP or get advice from its members. A need for greater clarity around the role of the CHIP and its members in relation to OHOV has been identified.

While OHOV have engaged with senior staff within SCRA and CHS, evaluation participants identified a need to improve the strategic interface with partners. Social Work was identified as a main partner within the Hearings System with whom there has been little engagement so far. No one responding to the CHIP member survey identified themselves explicitly as working for social work, although two members were listed as "local authority" or "council" so may have been social workers.

The low numbers of respondents to the CHIP member survey and the lack of knowledge of OHOV reflected in some responses, indicates a lack of awareness more widely beyond, and even within SCRA and CHS about OHOV.

"I have never heard of this and therefore cannot provide an accurate answer. Having never heard of it, I can only assume it would not be relevant to me in carrying out my role and subsequently not impactful." (Survey Respondent – Police Scotland)

"Just not clear what the specific aims of OHOV are." (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“I’d like to hear more. On the ground we are not that aware of OHOV and would like to learn more.” (Survey Respondent - SCRA)

While some of the barriers identified above may have contributed to this, it also indicates that additional work may be required as OHOV develops (some of which is beginning to be addressed by the Project Lead).

Context – The Promise

Key to considering the development of OHOV, its positioning, and role and remit, is thinking about the current context in organisations Keeping The Promise.

Specific questions were asked within the CHIP member survey around the future strategic direction of OHOV, particularly in the context of Keeping The Promise.

Of the 31 respondents who completed the question, *Do you see OHOV as having a role in enabling or contributing to the changes necessary in the Children’s Hearings System to Keep The Promise?* 74% (n=23) responded that they did, with 26% (n=8) stating that they didn’t know.

“The participation of CYP in all that we do is very important. I am not sure that OHOV is the ideal vehicle for that participation - but cannot give an alternative. Perhaps a revamped OHOV may be the answer. I think their role is crucial in delivering the promise - I am not speaking from a position of strength on this as I have not directly used their services to date.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“An important voice in system redesign and improvement to ensure changes have the well-being of children at their heart and to challenge agencies who may be reluctant to embrace major changes that are likely to be necessary to their systems and processes.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

“Would need to determine if OHOV is the voice of a younger range of those with lived experience. Is it unique or duplicating those already contributing to The Promise? Is it a reference group?” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

“Two fold supporting with the development of initiatives and secondly holding to account.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

Of the 31 respondents who completed the question, *Would you like to see OHOV develop strategically in order to be able to fulfil this role?* 68% (n=21) responded that they did, 6% (n=2) that they didn’t, and 26% (n=8) that they didn’t know.

When asked if anything needed to change for this strategic development to take place, 30 respondents answered this question, with 40% (n=12) stating it did, 7% (n=2) stating it didn’t, and 53% (n=16) responding that they didn’t know.

“There needs to be a stronger CHIP structure around OHOV to support their independence and to filter their thoughts / ideas etc back out to organisations to make change - and to

then monitor the impacts of that changes. These mechanisms are just not present at the moment.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

“Better at communicating. Better service user engagement. Better partner engagement. Most folk only know they do something with ducks.” (Survey Respondent – SCRA)

“They need to be more integral to other decision making bodies eg. Children's Parliament to be have more influence.” (Survey Respondent – Education Scotland)

“More opportunities for true coproduction, More investment of resource to amplify support needed.” (Survey Respondent – CELCIS)

“To be fair, it is still quite new so not sure if requires to have an arm’s length distance from CHS to maintain objectivity or should there be a closer relationship where projects etc are shared, input received and developed together.” (Survey Respondent – CHS)

Of the 31 respondents who answered the question, *Could OHOV better enable your particular organisation to Keep the Promise?* 52% (n=16) said it could, 3% (n=1) said it could not, and 45% (n=14) responded that they didn’t know.

Those who responded that they thought it could came from the following organisations: CHS, Police Scotland, CELCIS, SCRA, Education Scotland, East Ayrshire Advocacy Services, Scottish Legal Aid Board, Advocacy organisations and Girl Guiding.

*“Could be involved in pilot projects and help to shape what these should be.”
(Survey Respondent – CHS)*

*“By sense checking our work - helping us be better corporate parents.”
(Survey Respondent – Education Scotland)*

*“Linking in with third sector organisations would help us regarding The Promise.”
(Survey Respondent – East Ayrshire Advocacy Services)*

A number of interviewees spoke of the wider change work around The Promise and where OHOV would need to be positioned within this for them to be able to fully contribute and influence and to add value. While not specifically in reference to The Promise, the OHOV Board Members themselves talked about the importance of being involved in this way:

“I think it’s that, a lot of, like, every big discussion and a lot of decisions get made that it’s, I think it’s really important to have a young person just, like, even if it’s just one young person’s voice involved, but there should always be, like, I think that’s why OHOV is so important cause it’s, there’s things that do get young people involved but this is a young person led, like, completely, complete board of young people that freely get to share their experiences. And, like, they get kept safe as well, and also get to be involved in important decisions, and they have, like, that ear, like, to listen to what we think are problems and what we think needs to change.” (OHOV Board Member)

This is a time of huge transformational change within the Hearings System, and a number of pieces of work and working groups are being, and will be, created within both the short and long-term. Consideration will need to be given on how OHOV, their work and their aims, engages with these.

4. Conclusion

It is clear that a significant amount of time was needed to set up OHOV, to create a trauma-informed, safe environment for the young people to work in, and support and grow the relationships that are needed to be able to work in this way. Now that this work has taken place and a strong core group has been established, OHOV and their partner organisations are ready to think about Phase 2.

There has been a major change in the operational context of OHOV from their inception in 2018 given the publication of the findings of the Independent Care Review through The Promise in February 2020. This is now the driver of a period of significant transformational change within the Hearings System. This evaluation provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the role OHOV can now take within this new landscape.

The organisations that have worked with OHOV already are overwhelmingly positive about their impact. This has been both in terms of tangible impacts on work that has been produced and more intangible aspects of changes in the way people and organisations think. Despite this, OHOV has not necessarily received the support needed to fully achieve their initial aims at this stage in its development.

Where we are looking at the effectiveness of OHOV it is perhaps important to consider whether we are talking about the group being effective in meeting their aims, which they have not been able to do fully, or whether they have been effective in other ways and within the context and constraints that they have been subject to. In terms of the outputs that OHOV has produced, and in particular the 40 Calls to Action, these have been recognised as having been both useful and important. This is particularly so to SCRA and CHS, by giving the voice of lived experience within the Hearings System, and have been responded to and incorporated into the work of both organisations.

Where OHOV have perhaps been less effective, this has been a result of the context which they have found themselves within, the support they have received to work as a Board, and due to some barriers. In particular, aspects of staffing and partnership working, as well as the model and positioning of OHOV, some of which have still not been resolved and need to be addressed as OHOV moves forward. Despite this they have achieved a great deal, as can be seen from the Achievements/Impact section above, and this has been recognised by both SCRA and CHS:

“I would hate for some of the things that I think are issues to detract from the work they’ve done. It’s not about them it’s about us facilitating a better way. I think the young people have delivered what they were asked to deliver. The question for me is were we

asking them the right things, but they've absolutely stepped up and done everything that was asked of them." (Interview – CHS)

To ensure that OHOV continues to be able to have an impact, and increase this impact and effectiveness, consideration needs to be given to how to address some of the barriers that have been identified within this evaluation, ensure that enablers continue to be in place, and think about its future direction. Some of this work has already begun, and this evaluation will hopefully prompt further discussions and considerations on what else may need to be addressed.

From this evaluation it is clear that the organisations involved in the Hearings System and the young people in OHOV have similar aspirations. It is therefore a case of ensuring that these are aligned and the infrastructure is in place to ensure that OHOV are supported to achieve these within the context of The Promise. There needs to be decisions made around what the aims of the group are within the next phase of their development, and these aims will themselves be dependent on their role and purpose, something which again will require to be decided as it moves forward.

5. Next steps...

The tables below outline the questions that need to be considered to address the issues raised by this evaluation. Who needs to be involved in discussing and responding to each of these are also included. This is particularly important in ensuring that there is greater co-production in the design of OHOV and their work, avoiding the adoption of a top-down approach to thinking about the solutions to these questions.

The questions have been separated into different sections below beginning with questions which the CHIP require to consider initially. Further strategic and operational questions will follow on once these initial questions have been answered.

Questions for the CHIP to Consider

Questions to Consider	Who needs to be involved
<p>How should the work of OHOV align with the requirements of The Promise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the unique role that they could hold within this work? How can we ensure that the work of OHOV compliments the redesign work that will come from the changes required to Keep The Promise? How can OHOV be a part of this wider transformational change? 	<p>OHOV OHOV Project Team Key partner organisations CHIP</p>
<p>What model is right for OHOV to then be able to carry out this role?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What should their aims and objectives be? 	<p>OHOV OHOV Project Team Key partner organisations CHIP</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are they a project-based group or do they have a more strategic role? Could they be involved in the governance of organisations? How are they able to engage with organisations and truly hold them to account around the changes that they have said they will make? 	
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Once the role of OHOV has been established, what else do we need to consider?

Questions to Consider	Who needs to be involved
<p>How do we support OHOV to take on their role within the implementation of The Promise?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What does this mean for engagement with partner organisations? How should they be positioned within the CHIP and what support does the CHIP and the organisations within it require to provide? How do we strengthen the relationship between the CHIP and OHOV, and what does this relationship look like? Do we need to raise the profile of OHOV within the CHIP and among the partner organisations who are involved in the Hearings System? If we do, how can we balance doing this with the limitations on the capacity for OHOV to take on work? 	<p>OHOV OHOV Project Team Key partner organisations CHIP</p>
<p>How can a strategic interface between OHOV and key partner organisations (for example CHS, SCRA and Social Work Scotland) be developed so that OHOV are able to hold these organisations to account, and the organisations have a feedback loop on their progress on any asks from OHOV?</p>	<p>OHOV OHOV Project Team Key partner organisations</p>

Once the strategic questions have been answered, what are the operational issues that need to be addressed going forward?

Questions to Consider	Who needs to be involved
If OHOV have limited capacity due to their size how do they prioritise who they work with? Can it be all CHIP members or identifying the key partners around redesign of the Hearings System?	OHOV OHOV Project Team
What are the staffing requirements for the OHOV project team – in terms of role requirements and length of contracts?	OHOV Project Team
<p>Do we need to carry out further recruitment for OHOV Board members?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will this take place? How do we ensure, as much as possible, a diversity of voices? <p>What does the advisor role look like for OHOV Board members who are no longer within the Hearings System but still have a role to play with OHOV?</p> <p>Is there any opportunity for paid work opportunities for those who move on from but could return to OHOV?</p>	OHOV OHOV Project Team
How will OHOV meet and engage with each other in future? Will this continue to be through face-to-face meetings or could there be a hybrid model where online engagement is also a part of this?	OHOV OHOV Project Team

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