



SCOTTISH

CHILDREN'S REPORTER

ADMINISTRATION

PRESS RELEASE

(Issued on behalf of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration)

MINISTER TO OPEN NEW CHILDREN'S HEARINGS CENTRE

Robert Brown MSP, the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, will today (Tuesday, 27 June) officially open the new Aberdeen Children's Hearings Centre. Mr Brown will also tour the offices in the Exchange Building, on Market Street, to see how the new premises create a more comfortable and efficient space for staff, children and families.

The old Aberdeen offices comprised two converted traditional town houses at either end of a terrace on Albyn Place, one owned by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), the other leased by SCRA. There were two hearing rooms, with only one waiting room and no private interview facilities. Staff were spread over four floors in both buildings. The staff areas were cramped, did not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act and had no room for expansion.

The new premises see the staff teams and hearing facilities on three floors. Hearings are on the ground floor while the Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire teams have a floor each. There are now two purpose-built hearing suites, each with two waiting rooms. An interview room and public toilets have also been provided, all of which represent a significant improvement for children and families.

Mr Brown said: "The Scottish Executive is committed to supporting the Children's Reporter carry out its vital work in helping keep some of Scotland's most vulnerable children safe from harm.

"Aberdeen's new hearing centre has some great facilities which I'm sure will help in what can be a difficult experience for some children and families."

David Crines, Service Development Manager for SCRA's North Region, said:
"We are delighted at the improvement in the facilities both for visitors attending hearings and for staff.

"The new premises are far better for children and families than the previous offices and the open-plan aspect of the office is a pleasant environment in which to work.

"We were also pleased that everything was completed in time and that we moved in when we had planned to."

Attending a hearing can be a stressful experience, and the new premises will help address this. The new and improved facilities have created a less crowded environment, which allows the appropriate separation of visitors and reduces the potential for tension and conflict.

The move to an open-plan working environment includes the use of meeting rooms, much improved storage, and private booths with computer and phone connections that can be used by both staff and visitors. Staff also now have their own library and a seated kitchen area.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

Mr Brown will arrive at the Aberdeen Hearings Centre at 10.45am. There will be an opportunity for photographs and interviews at 11.30am. Please contact SCRA press officer Henry Hepburn on 01786 459575 or 07780 957471 if you wish to attend.

Work on converting the offices at the Exchange Building into a new hearings centre started in November 2005 and was completed on 3 April 2006. Staff moved in later that month. The budget for the project was £585,000.

SCRA is the national body that works with partners to provide a system of child protection and youth justice throughout Scotland. It was formed under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and became fully operational on 1 April 1996.

Our main responsibilities, as set out in the act, are:

- To facilitate the work of children's reporters.
- To deploy and manage staff to carry out that work.
- To provide suitable accommodation for children's hearings.

For all media enquiries, please contact Lois Boyle at Media House on 0141 220 6040 or 07803 204119.