



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

PRESS RELEASE

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

NUMBER OF CHILDREN REFERRED TO REPORTER DOUBLES IN 10 YEARS

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) today (Thursday 16 November 2006) confirmed that the number of children being referred to the SCRA has doubled in the last 10 years.

In 2005/06, 53,883 children were referred to the Children's Reporter, the highest ever figure, compared to 26,862 in 1996/97. It is ten years since SCRA assumed full responsibility for the Children's Reporter service and for organising Children's Hearings throughout Scotland.

The main reason for the increase is due to the significant rise in the number of children being referred to the Reporter on 'care and protection' grounds. This includes instances where children are alleged to be victims of cruelty, sexual offences, domestic abuse and neglect. In 2005/06, 40,931 children were referred to the Reporter on this basis.

Today's Report also reveals that the number of children being referred to the Reporter on the specific ground of 'lack of parental care' (17,801) was, for the first time, greater than the total number of children being referred on offence grounds (17,624).

Overall, referrals to the Reporter increased by 9% in 2005/06 compared to the previous year, with the total number of referrals reaching an all time high of 97,607.

Douglas Bulloch, Chair of SCRA, said: “These figures need to concern us all. While they demonstrate there is now greater awareness of children’s needs in relation to parental drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence, it suggests that such awareness has yet to convert into appropriate early intervention and support.

“The needs of children – and those of their families and the communities in which they live – must be addressed much earlier and ideally without a need to make a referral to the Children’s Reporter.”

Margaret Cox, Principal Reporter of the SCRA, said: “Every referral arises from a concern for the child or children involved. The role of the Reporter is to assess these concerns and decide whether there is a need to intervene on a compulsory basis by referring to a Children’s Hearing. The vast majority of children currently being referred to the Reporter do not proceed to a Children’s Hearing. This suggests that, for the majority of children, there is not a requirement to intervene on a compulsory basis.

“We will continue to work with our partners throughout the Children’s Hearings System to support their efforts to provide the appropriate and timely support to vulnerable children and their families, ideally without a need to make a referral to the Reporter.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors:

The SCRA Annual Report 2005/06 is available at www.scra.gov.uk

SCRA is the national body which manages the Children’s Reporter service in Scotland and facilitates Children’s Hearings in local communities all over Scotland.

It was formed under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and became fully operational on 1st April 1996.

Its 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

In 2005/06, SCRA received Grant-in-Aid of £24.6million, of which £1.4million was assigned to capital spending.

It employs 451 staff (FTE average 2005/06) of which over 85% are engaged in decision-making about children referred in our local network of 43 offices and Hearings Centres.

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