SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

PRESS RELEASE

29 November 2007

More than 150 children are referred each day to the Children's Reporter

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) today (Thursday 29 November 2007) confirmed that more than 150 children are now referred each day to the Children's Reporter in Scotland.

SCRA's Annual Report for 2006/07, published today, shows the highest number of children (56,199) being referred to the Reporter since records began – which equates to 154 children each day – and a 4% increase on the previous year.

This increase is solely due to a rise in the number of children being referred on 'care and protection' grounds, which includes instances where children are alleged to be victims of cruelty, sexual offences, domestic abuse and neglect. In 2006/07, 44,629 children were referred to the Reporter on this basis – a rise of 9% when compared to 2005/06.

In contrast, the number of children referred to the Reporter for allegedly committing an offence fell 7% over the same period (down from 17,641 in 2005/06 to 16,490 in 2006/07).

The most common grounds for referral in 2006/07 involved the child being a 'victim of a Schedule 1 offence' [which includes; cruelty, sexual offences, bodily injury and indecent behaviour against children] (19,485 children) and 'lack of parental care' (19,086 children).

The statistics in this latest annual report from SCRA also reveal that almost a quarter of all children referred on care and protection grounds in 2006/07 were under four years old (13,398); which is a 12% increase on the previous year.

Douglas Bulloch, Chair of SCRA, said: “These figures need to concern us all. They clearly indicate that the needs of children and their families have to be addressed much earlier.

“To achieve this, there must be effective responses in place in our communities to assist children and young people who have already been identified as being vulnerable. There must also be preventative approaches in place to divert future generations from experiencing the scale of problems that we see among the current generation of Scottish children.”

For the first time ever, 2006/07 saw more than 100,000 referrals to the Reporter (102,787), compared to 97,590 in 2005/06 (a child can be referred more than once).

SCRA’s Annual Report 2006/07 reveals that more than 30,000 children were referred where there was no indication that compulsory measures of supervision were required.

Chairman Douglas Bulloch continued: “The 31,811 children, for whom there was no indication of a need for compulsory measures, nonetheless constituted a significant workload for the Children’s Reporters in 2006/07, as they worked to ensure that no single child slipped through the net.

“SCRA has been working closely with its partners, locally and nationally, to address the challenging issue of ensuring only appropriate referrals are made to the Children’s Reporter. The Framework for non-offence referrals, established earlier this year by a Ministerial Task Group, is now being implemented across Scotland and we hope to see further progress on this in the months ahead.”

End

NOTES TO NEWS EDITORS:

The SCRA Annual Report 2006/07 is available from 9am today at www.scra.gov.uk

Tom Philliben, Director of Reporter Operations is available for media interview between 11am and 1pm today, Thursday 29 November 2007.

To arrange an interview please contact Lois Boyle/Tom Cassidy at Media House in advance on 0141 220 6040.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) is at the centre of the Children's Hearings System – the child protection and youth justice system for children and young people in Scotland. The Children's Hearings System aims to protect the safety and welfare of children while addressing their behaviour.

SCRA is the national body that administers Children's Hearings and manages the network of Children's Hearings Centres throughout Scotland. SCRA employs over 500 staff (Reporters and support staff) and operates out of 42 local offices in communities the length and breadth of Scotland.

SCRA was formed as a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and became fully operational on 1 April 1996.

Focused on children most at risk, SCRA's fundamental purpose is to:

- Make effective decisions about a need to refer a child to a Children's Hearing;

- Support Panel Members to make good decisions;
- Enable children and families to participate in Hearings; and
- Disseminate information and data to influence, inform and reassure.

More information about SCRA and the Children's Hearings System is available at www.scra.gov.uk