

# SCRA Annual Report 2009/10



SCOTTISH  
CHILDREN'S REPORTER  
ADMINISTRATION

## Changing for Children



Our stories ...



Our statistics ...



Our accounts ...

This report covers the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010. It presents information about children and young people referred to the Reporter in the year 2009/10, and summarises SCRA's achievements and performance during that period. The report also includes an executive summary of SCRA's audited accounts for the 12 months to 31 March 2010.

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As part of our continued commitment to the environment and to reduce print and postage costs, this is the second year of our new-format Annual Report, however, you can still view all our information online.

You can view a full copy of our annual accounts, more detailed statistics, including our online statistical service, which provides more in-depth information about individual local authority areas, via our website – please visit [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk).

# SCRA's vision, purpose, outcomes and values

SCRA's vision is to "Transform the life chances of vulnerable children and young people in Scotland." This vision is supported by the Scottish Government and is underpinned by SCRA's values. It ensures that the needs of children and young people are at the centre of everything we do.

## Our purpose

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

- Make effective decisions about a need to refer a child to a Children's Hearing.
- Enable children and families to participate in Hearings.
- Provide suitable accommodation facilities for Children's Hearings.
- Disseminate information and data to inform and influence improved outcomes for children and young people.

## Our outcomes

- The quality of our decision-making has the best possible effect on the safety and protection of children and young people.
- Outcomes for children and young people are improved by working collaboratively with our partners involved in the Children's Hearings System.
- Our service to children and young people, their families and the communities in which they live is efficient, responsive, inclusive and continually improving.

## Our values

- Child centred - fundamentally at the heart of what we do.
- Integrity and trust - respect for children, families, our partners and each other, and the basis from which we deliver our goals.
- Creative and innovative - using new knowledge, skills and technology to provide a more effective and efficient service.
- Professional and accountable - competent and objective, responsible for our actions and decisions.
- Listening and responding - to children and families; consulting with our staff; working closely with our partners; engaging with communities.





## Foreword by Carole Wilkinson, SCRA Chair

For the third year we have seen a fall in the number of children referred, down by 15.2% on offence grounds and 8.6% on care and protection grounds. These continuing trends are welcome and reflect the changes in referral practice among our partners. This indicates that the introduction of pre-referral screening and the implementation of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) are having an impact. In the current financial climate this better use of resources, people, time and money is essential.

The police remain the principal source of referrals (88.1%) for both offence and non offence grounds. The expectation of GIRFEC is that early identification, intervention and support from agencies will foster effective collaboration and partnership working, leading to better support for families, thereby reducing the need for referrals and compulsory measures. However, with 0.5% of all referrals from health and 6.8% from social work, there is clearly still much work to be done.

Type of referral	Police	Social Work	Education	Health	Other
Overall referrals	88.1%	6.8%	3.4%	0.5%	1.1%
Offence referrals	99.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Non-offence referrals	83.1%	9.7%	5.0%	0.8%	1.4%

There has been an increase in the number of children with Child Protection Orders from 661 in 2008/09 to 665 in 2009/10. We continue to see increases in Supervision Requirements – from 13,219 in 2007/08, to 13,523 in 2008/09 and 13,829 in 2009/10.

These increases suggest that more children in Scotland require compulsory measures each year and as my predecessor noted in his last Annual Report, this is not good news. We need to gain a better understanding of this trend and identify effective interventions to help support families and avoid compulsory measures.

I am conscious in writing this foreword I do so as the incoming Chair of SCRA, and I am looking back to a period overseen by my predecessor Douglas Bulloch. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to his work and to his stewardship of SCRA. As well as Douglas's period of office coming to an end in the spring of 2010, Joe Morrow also retired from the Board. My thanks to him for his contribution over the years to the Board and to the work of the organisation.

During the year the Board and the staff of SCRA have been working with Scottish Government colleagues and with our partners to support the passage of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill through Parliament. The legislation aims to develop and strengthen the Hearings System, and seeks to identify earlier those children and young people who require help and support. It is expected to complete its stage 2 parliamentary passage in the autumn of 2010.

The Board and Officers of SCRA will continue to work with the Scottish Government and our partners to deliver a safe and effective Hearings System that always listens to, and remains responsive to children and their families.



## Message from SCRA's Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, Netta Maciver, OBE

An Annual Report is intended to be an organisational account of how it has spent the public money given to it. The accounts section shows the figures, and the words tell you the organisational story. I'm charged with providing part of that.

The legislation underpinning the Children's Hearings System has been under review for six years. Last summer saw a draft Bill issued which led to debate and consideration by all involved. By February 2010, we had a new version of that Bill, which by the end of March had seen evidence sessions being given to the Education Committee of the Parliament.

This is the difficult bit of writing an Annual Report. It runs from April to March and even when the story has moved on to be debated in the Parliament, convention means that you have to wait for next year to hear what's happened. But the hint is - it's good news so far!

The financial year has been a hard one for the UK, and in SCRA we have begun planning for three to five years of smaller budgets. We have fully reviewed our service in partnership with staff, and have advanced our case management replacement system, which will streamline how we process cases allowing more resources to be focused on supporting children and families.

Part of that review has led to our new engagement process with children and young people. Working closely with two voluntary organisations, Young Scot and Who Cares? Scotland, we want to give young people a greater role in showing us how to make the System better for them. In addition, young people who have been in care, will become part of our workforce for the first time.

SCRA is committed to improving the facilities we provide for our staff, for children and families and our partners attending Hearings. In 2009/10 we made significant improvements to a number of our premises, making them more welcoming and modern, and making smarter use of our space.

Scotland is proud of its Hearings System and it is vital that young people here can, if properly encouraged, participate in the Hearing. But we must remember that the System only brings children into it who need compulsory measures of care and protection. The Hearing is a process to deliver such an order - the work done with the child and family often happens in communities, alternative families or in residential services.

It needs to happen quickly for the child not to lose out. It needs to happen effectively so that their life chances are enhanced. It needs to happen to ensure we all make a difference to that child's life.

My thanks to all colleagues at SCRA for participating in the review and the changes so far, and for their appetite to keep improving. I would also like to thank Douglas Bulloch and Joe Morrow who retired from our Board in March 2010.

# Our year at a glance ...

## April 2009

- Information sharing pilot with police commenced
- Business Plan 2009/10 launched
- Revamped office opened in Paisley providing improved facilities for staff, Panel Members, children and families



## June 2009

- SCRA launched new Practice Audit self-assessment
- Every Reporter attended Practice workshops to prepare for changes to the role of the Reporter in a Hearing
- Scottish Government published draft Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill
- SCRA held a series of Data Workshops in conjunction with ADSW

## August 2009

- SCRA staff moved into the new multi-agency West Lothian Civic Centre
- Two of SCRA's offices moved over to a new, improved telephony system - this was the start of the national roll out



## May 2009

- SCRA launched new Dignity at Work policy
- Internal evaluation of SCRA's new performance appraisal scheme

## July 2009

- SCRA's Transition Team embarked on a programme of visits to local offices as part of their engagement on the draft Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill
- SCRA produced a series of new information leaflets for children and families, including translated material

## September 2009

- Victim Information Service was rolled out across SCRA
- Twenty members of staff were presented with their Introduction to Management Development certificate
- SCRA carried out its first electronic staff survey

#### October 2009

- SCRA staff presented the charity, Who Cares? Scotland with a cheque for £5,217 following a number of fundraising events
- New research report about the Views and Experiences of Children and Families involved in the Hearings System published
- New Online Statistical Dashboard launched to provide partners with an interactive statistical service



#### December 2009

- Evaluation of Early and Effective Intervention research published
- European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) rolled out across SCRA
- Work commenced on new integrated HR and payroll system
- SCRA Research Programme published

#### February 2010

- SCRA published Engagement with Children and Young People Framework
- New joint agreement signed between SCRA and COPFS
- SCRA staff voted for Mary's Meals as their charity for 2010
- Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill published



#### November 2009

- 'The Journey Forward' event held for staff
- SCRA hosted Child Protection Policy Forum in Glasgow
- SCRA published research on Children Aged Under Two Referred to the Reporter
  - SCRA re-awarded the Disability Symbol by Job Centre Plus

#### January 2010

- Project to build a new Case Management system got underway
- Project started to deliver a new intranet for SCRA
- SCRA produced a new Staff Engagement Framework

#### March 2010

- SCRA's Chair Douglas Bulloch and fellow Board Member Joe Morrow both retired from SCRA's Board
- Updated Practice Instruction material launched
- SCRA submitted written evidence to the Scottish Parliament in response to the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill

### SCRA's progress and achievements in 2009/10

Throughout 2009/10, our focus was on the three key areas outlined in our Business Plan: driving improvements in practice quality and the management of our casework for children, transforming the way we deliver our services to children and families, and preparing for the transition to new arrangements for the Children's Hearings System. Here are some of the highlights:

#### Our performance and targets

Performance in 2009/10 has been positive, with 11 of our 15 indicators being met.

The indicators met included key outcomes for children and families such as scheduling of Hearings within 20 and 30 working days, decisions on referrals within 50 working days and notification of Hearing decisions sent to children and families within five working days. This is a reflection of the ongoing efforts by our staff to ensure our service to children and families is continuously improving.

The target was also met for initial Hearings proceeding to disposal, ensuring that where possible, Hearings were able to make a decision on compulsory measures for a child at the earliest available opportunity.

Other key targets that were achieved, included ensuring our properties met expected standards and that we complied with our budget requirements.

In four of our performance indicators we missed our targets. The 'average days for non-offence referrals' indicator missed an increased target by one day. Care and protection referrals that go to a Hearing can be impacted by the time taken to receive relevant reports, associated court work and Hearing continuations for reasons including obtaining Safeguarder appointments and foster placements. Work with partners will focus on these areas.

The 'notification of referral outcomes' target was increased by 15% in 2009/10. The amended target was missed by 3%, with the agreement of managers in order to tackle pressing activities.

The indicator 'non-offence applications established at court' missed the target by 2%. Establishing cases at court is subject to changes of circumstances or additional information not available at the time of referral. Reporters are encouraged to bring 'borderline' referrals where there are genuine concerns for a child regardless of the impact on the target.

Finally, one of SCRA's staff turnover savings targets was missed, the outturn of which was 2.6% against a target of 4.25%. Equivalent savings were however achieved in other areas.

## Working with our partners

In 2009/10, SCRA continued to develop partnerships at local and national level and this has led to a number of successful initiatives and events. A key strand of our partnership working has been information sharing.

In April 2009 a pilot got underway with SCRA, Central Scotland Police and Lothian & Borders Police, to provide a new method of updating the police about young people who are aged 16 to 17, but still on Supervision. This is a statutory responsibility of SCRA. The new approach provided an electronic and centralised way of notifying the police, allowing for a more effective and efficient way of transferring crucial information.

Discussions are underway with the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) to implement the system across Scotland.

In 2009/10, work continued with ACPOS and the Integration of Scottish Criminal Justice Information Systems (ISCJIS), to enable the electronic transmission of the Standard Prosecution Reports (SPR2) with Scottish Police Forces, replacing the hard copy youth crime reports historically delivered to every SCRA office. Since then, good progress has been made to develop an effective, national solution and this major piece of work will now be implemented in 2010/11.

In June 2009, SCRA held four workshops in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW). More than 100 people attended the four workshops, including partners from social work departments across the country. The aim of the workshops – which were held in Edinburgh, Inverness, with two in Glasgow - was to raise awareness of SCRA's data, and to promote the sharing of this data with social work partners across Scotland, to contribute to better outcomes for children.

In September 2009, with support from the Scottish Government, SCRA rolled out the Victim Information Service (VIS) which aims to provide information to victims of youth crime. The service, which has now been introduced across Scotland, aims to provide victims of youth crime with updates on decision making. Victims are identified from police reports and their details are recorded in SCRA's Referrals Administration Database (RAD). Then communication (via letter) is sent at all key stages in the decision making process, until the outcome of the referral. The scheme was developed in partnership with Victim Support Scotland.

In October 2009, SCRA staff presented the charity Who Cares? Scotland with a cheque for £5,217, following a series of fundraising events by staff across the country. Who Cares? Scotland provides support for children and young people in care. In January 2010, SCRA staff voted for Mary's Meals as the organisation's charity for 2010.

In November 2009, SCRA convened a forum in Glasgow of key partners to discuss child protection issues. The event, which included representatives from health, social work and academics, looked at what action could be taken to address any gaps, and what organisations could learn from each other to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children. Some of the themes covered included the need to co-operate over training, to share research and disseminate information, and ensure that all partners in the child protection system have a complete understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities.

In February 2010, SCRA implemented a new protocol in conjunction with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), regarding cases jointly referred to the Reporter and the Procurator Fiscal. The aim of the protocol is to ensure there is a consistent standard for our contact with the COPFS, and that delay is minimised in decision making, particularly regarding those children who are jointly reported who are some of the most vulnerable children, the children who present the highest risk to others and those over 16 who are most likely to make the transition into the adult justice system.

### Practice

As part of our ongoing commitment to modernise and improve our Reporter practices, we introduced a refinement to the role of the Reporter. We wanted to put beyond doubt, that the role of the Reporter did not compromise the independence and impartiality of the Hearing. The change was introduced nationally on 14 September 2009, following consultation with Panel Chairs and a national training programme with the Children's Hearings Training Organisers. In addition, every Reporter received training in the new practices.

The change ensures the ethos of the Children's Hearings System is maintained - that Reporters continue to support fair process in a Hearing, and that children and families attending Hearings have the best possible experience.

The change also ensures the Reporter is still able to make representations if the Hearing is at risk of making a decision which is not, in the Reporter's view, competent or procedurally correct.

During 2009/10, we also carried out a review of all our Practice material - which is the guidance used by our staff on a daily basis - to ensure we comply with legislation and our statutory responsibilities. This was a major piece of work, which was led by SCRA's Practice and Policy Team, with ongoing input from Reporters in each region. The updated Practice Instruction material was launched in March 2010.

### Our people

In 2009/10, SCRA implemented a number of measures to enhance engagement with our staff, which included strengthening our partnership with UNISON.

Following on from the introduction of a National Partnership Forum, four Regional Partnership Forums

and a Head Office Partnership Forum were created in 2009/10 to ensure closer working with senior management, UNISON and staff representatives.

The Regional and Head Office Forums are playing a key role in our organisational change process, which got underway in 2010.

In September 2009, SCRA carried out its first electronic staff survey, which was developed in conjunction with UNISON. The results led to the implementation of an action plan which focused on areas such as staff development and staff health and well-being.

In January 2010, SCRA announced a Voluntary Redundancy/Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme, which came into operation at the end of March 2010. The scheme, which was introduced in partnership with UNISON, aimed to accommodate the wishes of volunteers, while having benefits for the organisation. The benefits included enhancing our ability to plan our workforce capacity for the future, giving more certainty to budget efficiencies, while helping modernisation, and more importantly maximising the security of employment for SCRA staff.

The essential issue of implementing the scheme, was to ensure the sustainability of the service and the workload of colleagues who remain.

We agreed in partnership with UNISON that the way to achieve this was to phase the retirement/redundancy exercise over 12 months. A number of colleagues have already left us, and SCRA would like to thank them for their years of dedication and commitment to the organisation.

Also in January 2010, SCRA launched a Staff Engagement Framework. The aim of the framework is to grow a strong organisational culture of staff engagement, and for staff to be empowered to become involved in the life of SCRA, ensuring that SCRA's business is informed by staff expertise and opinion.

Our culture of consulting with staff developed further in 2009/10, with a series of consultation exercises and focus groups on a range of topics from the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill to requirements for a new intranet.

There was a strong focus in 2009/10 on 'growing our own'. Our leadership and management programme was introduced and in September 2009, 14 managers started a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Service Leadership, while 20 members of staff were presented with their certificates after successfully completing an Introduction to Management course. In March 2010, SCRA became members of the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

In May 2009, we launched our new Dignity at Work Policy and in November 2009, we were also re-awarded the Disability Symbol by Job Centre Plus.

In December 2009, work got underway with Midland HR, to provide SCRA with a new integrated HR and payroll system. The new system 'eHR' was due to go live on 1 April 2010. The new system 'eHR' will bring a number of benefits for SCRA, including significant savings, a better use of technology and a reduction in paper usage.

### Our facilities

One of SCRA's key responsibilities is to provide accommodation for Children's Hearings. We are committed to providing safe and welcoming premises for children and families, Panel Members and our staff. In 2009/10, a number of property projects got underway to provide more modern and flexible facilities. We saw improvements made to our premises in Edinburgh, Inverness, Glasgow, Lochgilphead and Stirling. The space in Head Office was reduced through better utilisation, making significant savings and enhancing collaborative working.

In August 2009, staff from our West Lothian Team moved into the new multi-agency West Lothian Civic Centre. The Centre has been purpose built in the heart of Livingston and is home to 1,000 members of staff from a number of organisations, including the local authority, the police and the Procurator Fiscal's Service.

In November 2009, we started a major property development in the centre of Kilmarnock, bringing together two teams from East and North Ayrshire, into one building. In addition, in December 2009 we undertook extensive work to our new premises in Dumfries to provide a modern staff base and Hearing premises in a central location.

### Engagement with children and young people

In 2009/10 SCRA developed plans to enhance engagement with children and young people in the Hearings System.

The project, which involves a partnership approach with Who Cares? Scotland, Young Scot, Aberlour Childcare Trust and Glasgow City Council, aims to make the Hearings System more accessible and more responsive to the needs of children and young people. Work has been ongoing to improve all methods of communication with children and young people and to ensure they are involved in the decision making which affects them.

The results from this project will really be seen in 2010/11, including the introduction of four modern apprentices who will join SCRA in 2010.

### Technology

During 2009/10, significant work was completed to prepare for the implementation of a number of projects in 2010/11 to modernise technology within SCRA.

The deployment of a new telephony system commenced, with installation in eight offices during 2009/10. Delivering significant cost savings, this project will also combine a number of different telephony contracts into one to be managed by ScotsConnect, the Scottish Government's IT provider. Deployment of the new system to the remainder of SCRA offices is due for completion by the end of 2010.

In January 2010, a project commenced to review SCRA's existing case management tool and to determine the best way to improve and update our systems and processes. The project's aim is to develop a new case management system for SCRA.

Work was completed on a scoping exercise for a new intranet which established staff and organisational requirements, and identified the most appropriate and cost effective technical solutions available. Development work on the new intranet began in January 2010 using Windows SharePoint Services 3.0.

SCRA published its first inhouse eBook in February 2010 using Adobe InDesign software. Subsequently SCRA's staff magazine has been produced in this manner, reducing the use of paper and saving on printing costs.

Following the successful pilot of using laptops in Hearings to help Panel Members record Hearings decisions, 37 laptops have been purchased for installation in 2010/11.

## Information management

In 2009/10, a strategic review of how information is managed in SCRA was carried out. From this an Information Management Strategic Framework was introduced to set out the vision for information management in a modernised SCRA. The Framework delivers consistency of practice and compliance with relevant legislation, and has resulted in improvements in how SCRA manages the information it holds on children's cases.

The security of the information on children remains a high priority for SCRA. In 2009/10, further work was done to strengthen procedures. For example to further improve practice in SCRA on Non Disclosure cases, an e-learning course was made available to all staff and the Non Disclosure Improvement Group established.

Of the 1,500 cases which had a Non Disclosure condition attached in 2009/10 there were 64 breaches, with SCRA staff being accountable for four of these. Family members and third parties were the two main causes of Non Disclosure breaches. SCRA continues to work with the Information Commissioner's Office and our partners to minimise the number of Non Disclosure breaches.

Work is ongoing to further strengthen information security in SCRA, through a programme of awareness raising and training to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities, and a review of all policies and guidance is underway.

### Strengthening the Children's Hearings System

On 1 May 2009, the Scottish Government announced plans to strengthen the Children's Hearings System following an extensive period of consultation. This led to the draft Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill being published on 26 June 2009.

We acknowledged that this was a draft Bill, and appreciated the opportunity for further discussion with the Scottish Government and our partners in the Hearings System, to ensure that the final Bill genuinely strengthened the System and improved outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. In February 2010, the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill was published, and SCRA welcomed this as a positive step forward. The Bill clarified the role of the Reporter - the Reporter will continue to be able to attend Hearings and for the first time an explicit statutory right has been built in - and the Reporter will continue to have responsibility for organising Hearings, issuing papers, arranging review Hearings and handling appeals.

We then embarked on a period of consultation with our staff and partners, and this culminated in written evidence being submitted to the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee.

As we move into 2010/11, we welcome the Bill's progress through the legislative process.

### Additional legislation

In 2009/10, there were two significant pieces of legislation introduced to the Scottish Parliament which will impact on the Children's Hearings System in 2010 and beyond. During the last year, SCRA has been engaged in extensive discussions with the Scottish Government and partners on these issues.

The Criminal Justice and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2010, which is due for implementation in December 2010, will result in a number of changes to the Hearings System.

Firstly, it raises the age of immunity from criminal prosecution from eight to 12. It also provides for the retention of DNA and forensic evidence from those children who accept they have - or who are found to have - committed serious sexual or violent offences. The list of offences was established by a working group of which SCRA was a member. Guidance on DNA retention is also currently under development with SCRA's involvement.

The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 was passed in June and is due to be implemented later in 2010. This will introduce new protective offences for children, which distinguish between offences committed against young children and those committed against older (teenage) children. In addition, girls aged 13-15 years can now be committing an offence by engaging in consensual sexual activity if their partner is under 16.

## Our research

In September 2009, SCRA published 'The Views and Experiences of Children and Families Involved in the Children's Hearings System in Scotland'. This report was the culmination of work that started in October 2008.

The research was carried out in two phases. Firstly, a national survey of 630 children, young people, parents and carers attending Children's Hearings, which was then followed by in depth interviews with 37 of these children, young people and adults. The research found that, in general, the Children's Hearings System is working well but areas for improvement were also identified.

SCRA is actively working in response to the research findings to improve the experience of children and families attending Hearings. The first of the improvements are being introduced in 2010 to improve the letters we send to children and young people, to ensure they receive information about their rights and to enable them to have a better say in their Hearing via new All About Me forms. In addition, work is ongoing to minimise the number of people in Hearings and to make them less 'court like'.

Over recent years, more very young children have needed to be placed on Supervision Requirements, and on emergency measures (Place of Safety Warrants and Child Protection Orders) to protect them and safeguard their welfare. SCRA carried out research to try to find out the reasons behind this trend, by examining the backgrounds of children aged under two years old, the risks they face and the actions taken to protect them.

The research also assessed the extent to which the Scottish Government's early and effective outcomes of safe, healthy and nurtured are being met for these vulnerable children. The report, 'Children Under the Age of Two Years Referred to the Reporter', was published in November 2009.

Some pre-referral screening processes have been established across Scotland to ensure that children get the services they need when they need them, and are only referred to the Reporter when they require compulsory measures of supervision. In December 2009, SCRA published a research report, 'Early and Effective Action Screening Groups' which looked at interventions and outcomes for children and the impact of the screening processes on referrals to the Reporter.

Also in December 2009, SCRA published its Research Programme for 2009/10 and 2010/11. This was published following consultation with a Research Forum of partners in the Hearings System, which had been established to inform SCRA's research programme and to encourage greater research collaboration. The Forum ensures our research is relevant for partners, and that it focuses firmly on outcomes for children and young people.



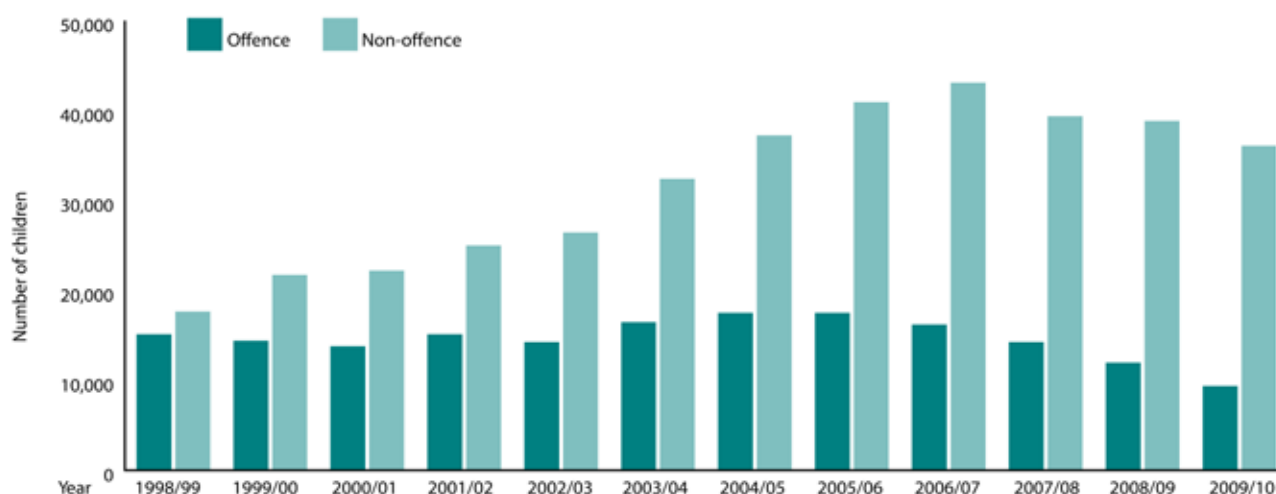
## Children referred to the Reporter

In 2009/10, 42,532 children in Scotland were referred<sup>1</sup> to the Children's Reporter:

- 35,735 on non-offence (care and protection) grounds.
- 10,012 on offence grounds<sup>2</sup>.

The figure of 42,532 represents 4.7% of all children in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Within this, 3.9% of all children were referred on care and protection grounds and 2.2% of all children aged between eight<sup>4</sup> and 16 years were referred on offence grounds. There was an almost equal number of girls and boys referred on care and protection grounds, while boys made up 75% of children referred on offence grounds.

**Figure 1. Children referred 1998/99 to 2009/10**



The number of children referred to the Reporter has decreased for the third consecutive year and is at its lowest level since 2002/03. The 9.8% decrease from 2008/09 levels was due to reductions in the numbers of both children referred on care and protection grounds (down 8.6%) and children referred on offence grounds (down 15.2%). Figure 1 illustrates the changing pattern of referrals. In 2002/03, 72% of children referred had at least one care and protection referral. This has risen to 84% in 2009/10.

The focus on child protection continued in 2009/10, particularly for very young children. During this period, SCRA saw a small increase in the number of children with Child Protection Orders (CPOs) received, from 661 in 2008/09 to 665 in 2009/10.

<sup>1</sup> Reporters decide the category and the grounds of referral at the time of receipt based on information contained within the referral.  
<sup>2</sup> These figures include 3,215 children who were referred on both types of grounds (care and protection and offence).  
<sup>3</sup> % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2009 from the General Register Office for Scotland.  
<sup>4</sup> Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children under eight years cannot be referred for offending.

## Referrals received

In 2009/10, 73,783 referrals were received by the Reporter, an 11.9% decrease from 2008/09 levels. Of these referrals, 51,276 were received for care and protection grounds and 22,585 for offence grounds<sup>5</sup>. Most children (69.3%) were referred only once in the year, with 5.1% referred five or more times. The police were the main source of referrals, comprising 88.1% of all referrals to the Reporter in 2009/10, 99.5% of all offence referrals and 83.1% of all care and protection referrals.

## Grounds on which children were referred to the Reporter

The reasons (grounds) on which children are referred to the Children's Reporter are those set out in section 52(2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Grounds of referral and number of children referred in 2009/10

Grounds of referral	2009/10
(a) Beyond control of any relevant person	3,920
(b) Bad associations or moral danger	2,383
(c) Lack of parental care	14,430
(d) Victim of a Schedule 1 offence*	16,660
(e) Member of the same household as a victim of a Schedule 1 offence	1,167
(f) Member of the same household as a Schedule 1 offender	534
(g) Member of the same household as an incest victim and perpetrator	14
(h) Not attending school	2,033
(i) Allegedly committed an offence	10,012
(j) Misused alcohol or drugs	1,114
(k) Misused solvents	18
(l) In the care of the local authority, and special measures are necessary	30
<b>Total children referred**</b>	<b>42,532</b>

\*Any of the offences mentioned in Schedule 1 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 (offences against children to which special provisions apply).

\*\*A child may be referred to the Reporter more than once in the year on the same and/or different grounds. The total counts every child referred to the Reporter during the year once.

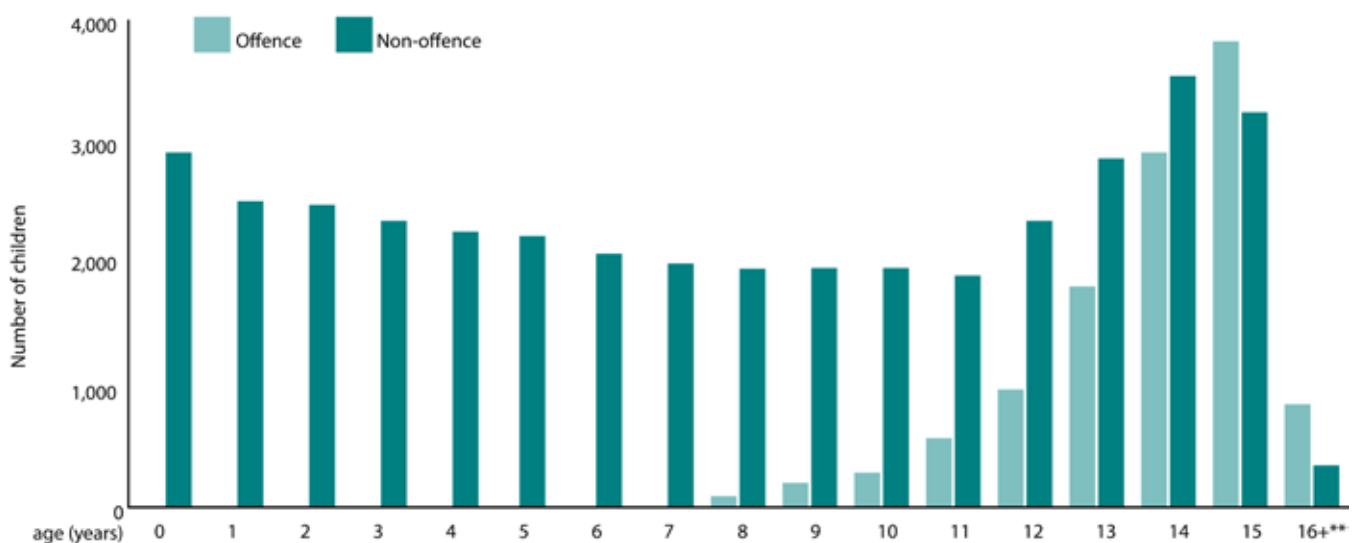
With the exception of the number of children referred for 'bad associations or moral danger' (which increased by 3), children referred on each ground decreased compared to 2008/09. The number of children referred for the two most common grounds, 'victim of a Schedule 1 offence' and 'lack of parental care', decreased by 10.5% and 5.8% respectively when compared to 2008/09.

<sup>5</sup> The totals are not the sum of referrals on offence and care and protection grounds, as a single referral can contain both types of grounds.

The number of children referred on offence grounds decreased for the fourth consecutive year. These children were referred for 35,239 alleged offences on 22,585 referrals. The most common types of alleged offences remain breach of the peace (7,642), assault (7,245) and vandalism (6,593). These three categories comprise over 60% of all alleged offences referred.

The most common ages for children to be referred to the Reporter continue to be 14 and 15 years. The age breakdown of children referred on both offence and care and protection grounds is shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Age of children referred on offence\* and non-offence grounds in 2009/10**



\* Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children under eight years cannot be referred to the Reporter for having committed an offence. Such behaviour in a child aged under eight years may be referred under another ground.

\*\* Young people aged 16 and 17 years are combined to provide an age group of 16+ years<sup>6</sup> in this report.

## Reporter decisions on children referred

The Reporter investigates the child’s case by requesting information from different sources including: social work, police, school, health and voluntary organisations. The Reporter evaluates the information and decides whether there is a need for compulsory intervention.

Where the Reporter decides that the child requires compulsory measures of supervision, and there is sufficient evidence to support one or more grounds for referral, the child will be referred to a Children’s Hearing.

Reporters have other options available to them to find the right help for children such as asking the local authority to provide voluntary advice, guidance and assistance to the child, or to take no formal action because other intervention is more appropriate.

<sup>6</sup> Young people aged 16 and 17 years can be referred to the Reporter if they are still subject to Supervision Requirements or are remitted by a court.

Table 2. Children with Reporter decisions in 2009/10\*

Reporter decision	Non-offence	Offence	Total
Arrange Children's Hearing (on new grounds)	5,162	1,397	6,184
No indication of a need for compulsory measures	15,743	4,538	19,601
No Hearing - insufficient evidence to proceed	9,755	1,122	10,771
No Hearing - measures already in place	4,366	2,811	6,052
No Hearing - refer to local authority	5,022	1,160	5,777
No Hearing - family have taken action	2,384	383	2,729
No Hearing - diversion to other measures	74	1,404	1,448
<b>Total**</b>	<b>36,264</b>	<b>9,949</b>	<b>42,860</b>

\* Data in this table relates to cases decided in 2009/10 as opposed to referrals received in 2009/10.

\*\* The totals do not equal the sums as children can be referred more than once in the year and may have multiple Reporter decisions. The totals count each child once.

Table 2 shows that 14.4% (6,184) of children with referrals decided in the year had a Reporter decision to arrange a Children's Hearing on at least one referral.

## Number of Children's Hearings held

Despite the decreases seen in the number of children referred in the last three years, the number of Children's Hearings continues to rise. In 2009/10, 43,614 Children's Hearings were held, a 1.7% increase compared to 2008/09.

Table 3. Number of Children's Hearings held

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Number of Children's Hearings	41,891	42,302	42,866	43,614

Of the 43,614 Hearings in 2009/10, 14.8% (6,452) related to new grounds. The breakdown of other types of Hearing in 2009/10 were initial review Hearing (20,788), continued grounds Hearings (6,969), continued review Hearings (6,947) and other Hearings (2,458).

## Applications to the Sheriff for proof

If not all the grounds which form the basis of the Children's Hearing are accepted by the child or relevant persons, or the child does not understand the grounds, the Children's Hearing may direct the Reporter to apply to the Sheriff to establish the grounds for referral<sup>7</sup>. In 2009/10, 4,289 applications were made and 89.4% were held to be established by the Sheriff. When an application to the Sheriff for proof has been established, the grounds are referred back to a Children's Hearing to decide if compulsory measures are necessary.

<sup>7</sup> Under section 68 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

## Compulsory measures of intervention

Children’s Hearings decide whether compulsory measures of intervention are necessary (in respect of the child) to protect the child and/or address their behaviour.

### Child Protection Orders and Place of Safety Warrants

Children’s Hearings can make short-term decisions to address emergency and/or high risk situations, where measures have to be put in place immediately to protect children or address their behaviour. This may include Hearings arranged as a result of the Sheriff granting a Child Protection Order (CPO).

The granting of a CPO requires the child to be removed to (or kept in) a place of safety away from home. For this measure to be considered, a child must be at risk of significant harm.

Proportionately, more CPOs are granted for very young children, reflecting their greater vulnerability and requirement for immediate protection. Of the 665 children with CPO referrals to Children’s Hearings in 2009/10<sup>8</sup>, almost half (320) were aged under two years.

Children’s Hearings may continue a CPO, which has already been approved by a Sheriff, with or without a variation to the condition(s). The Hearing may also decide not to continue a CPO.

Children’s Hearings can also make Place of Safety Warrants. In 2009/10, Hearings made 2,044 children subject to Place of Safety Warrants<sup>9</sup>. Place of Safety Warrant numbers are highest for children aged under one, but are also common for older children and require the child to be kept in a place of safety away from home. A child must be at significant risk for this measure to be considered.

### Supervision Requirements

Supervision Requirements are the most common form of compulsory intervention made by Children’s Hearings. They are also the only longer-term option available to Hearings. It is the statutory responsibility of local authorities to implement Supervision Requirements. At Children’s Hearings in 2009/10, 4,580 children had a new Supervision Requirement made on grounds referred. At 31 March 2010, 13,829 children were subject to Supervision Requirements. This is 1.5%<sup>10</sup> of all children in Scotland.

Table 4. Children subject to Supervision Requirements at 31 March

	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of children	12,644	13,219	13,523	13,829

<sup>8</sup> Under section 59(2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Under sections 66(1) and 69(7) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

<sup>10</sup> % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2009 from the General Register Office for Scotland.

As with Children’s Hearings, the number of children subject to Supervision Requirements has risen year on year, and was higher in 2009/10 than in any previous year. The most common ages of children subject to Supervision Requirements remain 14 and 15 years. The types of Supervision Requirements in place at 31 March 2010 are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Supervision Requirements in place at 31 March 2010

Types of Supervision Requirement	Number of children
With parent/relevant person	7,136
With other approved foster parent	3,094
With relative/friend - other	1,399
With relative/friend - approved foster parent	810
Local authority home	429
Residential school	379
Other residential placement	163
Other	148
None recorded	271
Total	13,829

## Secure Authorisations made by Children’s Hearings

Secure Authorisations can be made as conditions of Warrants or Supervision Requirements where the child presents a risk to themselves or others<sup>11</sup>. In 2009/10, 180 children had Secure Authorisations made as a condition of Warrants, while 141 children had Secure Authorisations made as a condition of Supervision Requirements.

## Appeals

Children and/or their relevant persons can appeal to the Sheriff against decisions made by Children’s Hearings. In 2009/10, 775 appeals were made with 64% of the Hearings’ decisions upheld by the Sheriff.

In 75% of the cases where a Hearing decision wasn’t upheld, the Sheriff remitted the grounds back to a Children’s Hearing for a decision on compulsory measures.



<sup>11</sup> The full criteria by which Secure Authorisations can be made are set out in section 70(10) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

# Summary extract of Annual Accounts 2009/10

The financial information in this document does not comprise the statutory financial statements of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration for the financial period ended 31 March 2010 which were approved on 23 September 2010, but represents extracts from them. These extracts do not provide as full an understanding of the financial performance, or financial and investing activities, as the complete financial statements.

The statutory financial statements have been reported on by SCRA's external auditors, Audit Scotland, and delivered to the Board, the Scottish Parliament and the Auditor General for Scotland. The report of the auditors was unqualified.

Audit Scotland has confirmed that this extract is consistent with the statutory financial statements.

The statutory financial statements can be obtained on SCRA's website, [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk) or on request from:

SCRA  
Ochil House  
Springkerse Business Park  
Stirling  
FK7 7XE



# Net Expenditure Statement

For the year ended 31 March 2010

	2009/10 £000	2008/09 £000
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Staff costs	17,407	15,942
Other expenditure	8,383	8,807
Depreciation	2,498	1,448
	28,288	26,197
<b>Income</b>	315	389
<b>Net expenditure</b>	27,973	25,808
Interest payable	58	11
Notional cost of capital	246	(233)
Interest receivable	0	(47)
Other finance cost/(income)	1,857	162
<b>Net expenditure before Scottish Government funding</b>	30,134	25,701

## Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 March 2010

	2010 £000	2009 £000	2008 £000
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	13,720	12,673	12,889
Investment properties	175	-	-
Intangible assets	1,182	1,288	-
Financial assets	-	33	-
<i>Total non-current assets</i>	15,077	13,994	12,889
<b>Current assets</b>			
Trade and other receivables	651	833	1,044
Cash and cash equivalents	430	257	1,801
Assets held for sale	262	-	-
<i>Total current assets</i>	1,343	1,090	2,845
<b>Total assets</b>	16,420	15,084	15,734
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	1,299	2,007	2,442
Finance lease	26	-	-
<i>Total current liabilities</i>	1,325	2,007	2,442
<b>Non-current assets less/plus net current liabilities/assets</b>	15,095	13,077	13,292
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>			
Payables	100	193	200
Pension liability	28,558	8,153	3,716
Unfunded pension liability	2,012	493	481
Finance lease	1,485	-	-
<i>Total non-current liabilities</i>	32,155	8,839	4,397
<b>Assets less liabilities</b>	<b>(17,060)</b>	<b>4,238</b>	<b>8,895</b>
<b>Taxpayers' equity</b>			
General fund	10,077	10,542	9,174
Pension reserve	(29,052)	(9,317)	(4,146)
Revaluation reserve	1,915	3,013	3,867
<b>Total taxpayers' equity</b>	<b>(17,060)</b>	<b>4,238</b>	<b>8,895</b>

SCRA operates under the direction of an eight person Board. As a Non-Departmental Public Body, SCRA's Board, although acting independently, is ultimately accountable to Scottish Ministers, and Board Members are appointed by Ministers.

Our Board Members reflect a wide range of experiences and backgrounds in relation to children and young people. The Board plays a significant role in setting the strategic direction of SCRA, and in challenging the organisation to ensure we deliver our plans.



Pictured front row left to right:

Carole Wilkinson,  
Netta Maciver,  
Malcolm Dickson.

Back row left to right :

Andrew Miller,  
Bernadette Docherty,  
Margaret Wells,  
Louise Macdonald

(Joseph Hughes  
is not pictured.)

### Chair

Carole Wilkinson (appointed 2010)

### Deputy Chair

Malcolm Dickson

(appointed as Board Member 2008, appointed as Deputy Chair 2010)

### Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

Netta Maciver OBE (appointed 2008)

### Board Members

Margaret Wells (re-appointed 2008)

Andrew Miller (appointed 2008)

Bernadette Docherty (appointed 2010)

Louise Macdonald (appointed 2010)

Joseph Hughes (appointed 2010)

More information about our Board,  
including a full Register of Board  
Members' Interests can be found on our  
website at [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)

SCRA's Chair, Carole Wilkinson reflects on the first six months of 2010/11.

As in the early months of 2009/10, the first six months of 2010/11 has seen SCRA focusing on the reform of the Children's Hearings System. There has been considerable debate and discussion about how best to strengthen and improve the system. The Bill has now passed stage 1, and SCRA will continue to work with the Scottish Government and our partners as the Bill progresses and we move to implementation.

SCRA has embarked on a programme to transform and modernise the organisation which will ensure we are prepared for the changes ahead. This work will continue and is becoming more significant given the economic climate. We know the resources available to us will decrease and therefore we need to make sure we have the right staff, with the right skills in place and that we are using our very experienced and well qualified staff appropriately.

As part of the changes we are introducing new roles to the organisation, in particular to enhance our direct work with children and young people. Listening to and responding to children will be given greater attention in the coming year.

As the new Chair of the Board, I have been impressed with the experience and commitment of the staff. I have also become aware of the quantity and quality of data we collect, that we use to inform our work. We know that others find this information helpful and we will increasingly look to make our information available to our partners to help them in their work.

We will also look at the gaps in knowledge and research to help inform our research agenda and to influence the research of others. We want to encourage debate with our partners about trends, about what works and what makes a difference to children and their families, with a view to finding ways to improve what we and others do so we can all be more effective.

This is a challenging and exciting time for SCRA and for the Children's Hearings System. There is still a great deal of work to be done, but with the continued commitment of our staff, and the support of our partners, we can deliver an improved service which meets the needs of children and their families.



Carole Wilkinson  
SCRA's Chair



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Thank you to Young Scot for providing some of the  
photographs for this report

[www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)



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