

## A Guide to The Children's Hearings System

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

### Background

The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration is at the centre of the Children's Hearings System – the child protection and youth justice system for children in Scotland. The Children's Hearings System aims to protect the safety and welfare of children, and address their behaviour including offending. A number of agencies are involved in the Hearings System.

### About SCRA

SCRA is the national body that runs the network of Children's Reporters and the 42 local Reporter offices and Hearings Centres across Scotland.

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

If there is concern about a child's welfare or behaviour, that child can be referred to the Children's Reporter.

It is important to understand that children are not referred to the Children's Panel, Children's Hearing or SCRA. Children and young people are referred to the Children's Reporter.

Children and young people may be referred for a number of reasons, for example;

- If they are the victim of neglect or abuse,
- Their behaviour is causing concern for example, not attending school,
- For drug and alcohol misuse,
- They have committed an offence.



Children are usually referred by police, social work or schools, but can be referred by anyone, such as a concerned parent.

Once the Reporter receives a referral, they request a variety of reports from all relevant agencies, and then decide whether or not the child is referred to a Children's Hearing - which only occurs if the child may require **compulsory measures of supervision**.

If a child is not referred to a Hearing, the Reporter makes other decisions, such as:

- Action by the family to address the problem,
- Services provided by the local authority, such as voluntary measures,
- Or, there may be insufficient evidence to proceed.

It is important to understand that if a Reporter does not refer a child to a Hearing, it does not mean that nothing is being done to assist the child. It usually means that the child will receive services on a voluntary basis, rather than on a compulsory basis. Both voluntary and compulsory measures are not provided by the Reporter or SCRA, but are the responsibility of the relevant local authority.

Reporter's decisions on each referred child or young person, are completely independent and are made in the best interests of the child.

## Children's Panels

The Children's Panel is the group of volunteers in each local authority area who sit on Children's Hearings.

Each Hearing comprises of three Panel Members who are appointed by Scottish Ministers. At the Hearing, Panel Members review information on the child and their circumstances. They also seek the views of the child, their family or carers and relevant professionals such as social workers and teachers.

Before making a decision on what measures are necessary to protect the child or address their behaviour, the Hearing considers all the relevant information. All decisions are made in the best interest of the child, and are made in the Hearing in front of the child and their family or carers.

Children's Panel Advisory Committees (CPACs) recruit and review membership of Children's Panels in each local authority area. Members of CPAC are also volunteers.

For more information on Children's Hearings, including the recruitment and training of Panel Members, please log on to [www.chscotland.gov.uk](http://www.chscotland.gov.uk)

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

**For further information, please contact:**  
**Maryanne McIntyre, Press & Communications Manager**  
**Tel: 01786 459516**  
**Email: [maryanne.mcintyre@scra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:maryanne.mcintyre@scra.gsi.gov.uk)**