

Third Quarter Organisational Performance Report 2007/08: (1 October 2007 to 31 December 2007)

Executive Summary

The third quarter data continues the 2007/08 pattern of decreasing referral rates against the corresponding quarter from the previous year. When compared to Q3 in 2006/07, the number of children referred on offence and care and protection grounds both again decreased significantly.

In contrast to the decrease in referrals, the number of children on Supervision Requirements continues to increase and has now exceeded 13,000 for the first time since records began. Hearings, appeals and court applications all increased when compared to Q3 in 2006/07. The implication presented by the data continues to be that more of the right children are now being referred to the Children's Reporter. This picture is not universal however and there continue to be significant local variations.

	Q3 2006/07	Q3 2007/08	
Referrals to the Reporter	25,447	21,276	↓ 16.4%
Non-offence referrals to the Reporter	16,812	13,996	↓ 16.7%
Offence referrals to the Reporter	8,672	7,300	↓ 15.8%
Children referred to the Reporter	18,986	16,055	↓ 15.4%
Children referred on non-offence grounds	14,084	11,902	↓ 15.5%
Children referred on offence grounds	5,898	4,993	↓ 15.3%
Child Protection Orders (CPOs)	137	107	↓ 21.9%
Supervision Requirements at 31 December	12,666	13,103	↑ 3.5%
The number of Children's Hearings held	10,201	10,492	↑ 2.9%
The number of Court Applications	951	1,099	↑ 15.6%
The number of Court Applications Led	108	108	0%

Analysis

Pre-referral screening has been identified as an important factor in the fall of non-offence referrals in areas which have established such (mainly police led) processes. However, despite the decreases, referral rates remain high and this is particularly marked in the areas with no pre-referral screening. Children referred on care and protection grounds continue to outnumber offence referrals by more than 2:1. The level of complex casework undertaken by Reporters has continued to increase as can be seen in the table above.

Organisational Performance

SCRA performance throughout 2007/08 has been strong, despite the prevailing workload pressures. This can be seen comparative to Q3 performance from 2006/07. At the end of Q3, SCRA was on target to meet or exceed eight of its eleven targets. Of the remaining three targets, two are only just off target and the other is being addressed through management action. Performance varies across the regions, reflecting differences in referral activity, workload and staffing profiles.

SCRA Targets:	Q3 2006/07	Q3 2007/08
The percentage of Hearings scheduled to take place within 20 working days from Reporter decision (Target for the year: 73%)	68%	67%
The percentage of Hearings scheduled to take place within 30 working days from Reporter decision (Target for the year: 92%)	90%	91%
The percentage of written notifications of referral outcomes sent to children and families within five working days (Target for the year: 62%)	63%	78%
The percentage of written notifications of referral outcomes sent to children and families within eight working days (Target for the year: 75%)	73%	85%
The percentage of written notifications of Hearing decisions sent to children and families within five working days (Target for the year: 88%)	87%	93%
The percentage of written notifications of Hearing decisions sent to children and families within eight working days (Target for the year: 93%)	92%	96%
The percentage of non-offence applications established at court (Target for the year: 93%)	91%	94%
The degree to which SCRA core properties comply with SCRA property standards (Target for the year: 76%)	76%	78%
The percentage of staff attendance (Target for the year: 95%)	94%	95%
The percentage of expenditure that is within budget (Target for the year: 97%)	100%	100%
The average number of training days per member of staff (Target for the year: 4.5 days)	2.3 (Apr - Dec 06)	2.6 (Apr - Dec 07)

Financial Performance

Revenue expenditure for the period to December 2007 was £18,882k, £1,745k less than budget. This delayed spend is mainly due to vacancy savings in HQ, the delay in implementing the pay award due in October 2007, and lower than forecast spend on Section 85 cases and outsourced court work costs.

The revenue forecast for the year is for a planned underspend of £688k which will be used, in part, to fund the extension of key temporary frontline posts to the end of 2008/09. The main factors in the movement from the December year to date position are that the pay award will be accounted for and additional staff costs will be payable in the final quarter.

Capital expenditure for the period to December 2007 was £469k. The latest forecast of the capital underspend is £1.85m. This is largely attributable to the delayed decision to join the ScotsConnect Shared Services IT platform and adjustments to the Property Programme.

Management Response

The Executive Management Team (EMT) has completed a thorough challenge and review exercise of the budget and current plans. This further aligns financial and business planning within the organisation. EMT has re-prioritised resources to allow a number of temporary posts at the frontline to be extended through to March 2009.

A challenging planning process has also been initiated to identify further significant savings to be accrued in 2007/08 and carried forward into 2008/09 to meet the essential costs of maintaining an effective frontline service (e.g. consolidating current temporary posts as appropriate). In addition, an ambitious modernisation agenda is being pursued with a view to examining and re-engineering SCRA's business processes to deliver improved effectiveness in terms of decision making and managing casework.

A five day programme of intensive practice training has also commenced and will reach all teams and Reporters throughout SCRA by June 2008, ensuring that the quality of practice is consistent and continually improving. Feedback continues to be excellent.

A further series of managers briefings are planned across HQ and the four Regions for the end of February/beginning of March. This will provide an opportunity for EMT to meet with SCRA managers to discuss a series of key issues facing the organisation.

13 March 2008