



SCOTTISH  
**CHILDREN'S REPORTER**  
ADMINISTRATION

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Andy Miller  
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Via email: [andy.m@sclcd.co.uk](mailto:andy.m@sclcd.co.uk)

**Principal Reporter/Chief Executive:**  
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Dear Mr Miller,

**National Good Practice Guidelines for Supporting Parents with Learning Disabilities**

Thank you for contacting the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) in relation to the guidelines on Supporting Parents with Learning Disabilities.

We found them to be informative and they have been passed to our Practice and Training teams to see what lessons SCRA as an organisation can draw from them.

We also felt that some additional information about some specific aspects of the Children's Hearings System would be of interest to you.

As you will be aware, the creation of the Children's Hearings System was based on the principles outlined by the Kilbrandon Report. Participation is at the heart of the System and the child is at the centre of proceedings. Of course, it is equally important that parents and carers are able to understand and contribute to proceedings, and we recognise our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 in this regard.

**Information provided prior to the Hearing**

SCRA provides a number of information leaflets on the operation of the Children's Hearings System and these are available in different formats on request. Furthermore, a significant quantity of information is available on SCRA's website, which has been awarded an AA rating for accessibility.

We endeavour to ensure that any communication sent to parents or carers about a Children's Hearing is straightforward and easily understandable. All papers for Children's Hearings are distributed at least 7 days in advance of the Hearing to ensure that participants have sufficient time to read them or to seek support and advice.

**Support at the Hearing**

Parents/carers have the right to bring someone to the Hearing with them to support them through the process. This can be a friend or family member or a professional who is involved with the family and has developed a relationship of trust with them. The Reporter also has a role within the Hearing to support fair process.

SCRA conducted research in partnership with the Scottish Government on Advocacy in the Children's Hearings System. The Big Words and Big Tables research ([http://www.scra.gov.uk/cms\\_resources/Big%20Words%20and%20Big%20Tables.pdf](http://www.scra.gov.uk/cms_resources/Big%20Words%20and%20Big%20Tables.pdf)) was focused on children but many of its conclusions could equally be applied to adults with learning disabilities.

It found that some of the main aids to accessibility were:

- Providing papers that are accessible
- Preparation and discussion before the Hearing
- Knowing what to expect
- Evidence of listening
- Providing explanations
- Creating a comfortable environment
- Asking for views about possible decisions.

Children were also asked to identify behaviours in adults that were unhelpful in facilitating good communication:

- Talking over you.
- Using language and terminology that is not understood.
- Repeating statements or questions.
- Directing questions to others.
- Asking difficult or awkward questions.
- Talking about children and young people rather than to them.
- Being discouraged from speaking.

Some of the barriers to effective participation that children identified were:

- Feeling shy or embarrassed
- Feeling suspicious of adult motives
- Feeling that adults did not listen to answers
- Feeling that adults did not believe answers
- Fear of an unknown process
- Fear of outcomes

Based on the findings of this research and the experiences of our staff, SCRA has argued that there is a need for greater provision of independent advocacy support within the Children's Hearings System. We remain open to engagement with groups that experience particular challenges in participating in the Children's Hearings System process and would encourage you to get in touch with us about any specific issues you might like to raise.

Yours sincerely



**Nick Hobbs**  
**Policy Officer**