



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER

ADMINISTRATION

PRESS RELEASE

(Issued on behalf of the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration)

VICTIMS OF YOUTH CRIME TO LEARN OUTCOMES OF CASES

VICTIMS of crimes committed by children in the Tayside Police area are to be told of action taken following such offences. Historically, victims have not received information about the outcome of a case against a young person accused of an offence against them, but that will change from today (February 1) with the launch of a new Victim Information Service by The Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA).

After this date, victims in the Tayside Police area will routinely be provided with information regarding the outcome of cases. This will also apply in the Dumfries and Galloway, Fife and Grampian police areas, with other parts of Scotland receiving the service later this year.

The principles of the Victim Information Service will be:

- To provide specific information to victims about what has happened to the cases of young offenders referred to the Children's Reporter.
- To provide victims of youth crime with access to routine information.
- To protect the right of each child to confidentiality.

SCRA has appointed a team to provide the new service to victims, which will apply to offences committed by under-18s being dealt with by the Children's Hearings System.

The service builds on the experience of a pilot scheme that has operated in Central Scotland since October 2003. Reporters write to victims at key stages

in the process of dealing with an offence referral. Victims can choose not to receive any further information following receipt of an initial letter from the Reporter. Any subsequent contact from the victim is responded to by a victim information co-ordinator. The co-ordinators also provide the point of contact for any requests for information from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority and insurance companies.

There are three co-ordinators in post for the first phase of the new service, one covering both Fife and Tayside and one each for Dumfries and Galloway and Grampian. This will increase when the rest of Scotland becomes involved later this year.

The changes have come about following the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003, which introduced the legislative change giving victims the right to receive more information from children's reporters. The Scottish Executive has provided additional funds to SCRA for the provision of the service.

Victim Support Scotland has also been given funding by the Scottish Executive to work with SCRA in recruiting and training the staff, and to implement the new service in each of the regions through liaison with the local authority youth justice teams and police forces. The service will complement the existing youth justice work in each region and fill the information gap that victims of youth crime have previously experienced.

SCRA Principal Reporter Margaret Cox said: "The Victim Information Service will meet our commitment to tell victims about the outcome of an offence, and to help understand how the Children's Hearings System works.

"Our work with Victim Support Scotland is central to the service, but police and local authorities will also have crucial roles to play and we look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead."

Alan McCloskey, Victim Support Scotland operations manager for Central Scotland, said: "We welcome the new SCRA Information Service for victims of

youth crime. We look forward to working together with the new victim information co-ordinators to ensure the rights of victims of crime continue to be represented in Tayside and Fife.”

Derek Aitken, Dundee's youth justice co-ordinator, said: "We hope this new service can play a vital role in explaining how the system deals with children involved in offending. In offering to provide certain information to victims of youth crime, it helps the system to be more transparent about the various decisions that are taken."

Robert Peat, chair of the Angus Youth Justice Forum, said: “Angus Council and its partner agencies welcome the launch of the Victim Information Service, which will continue the expansion of services available to the victims of crime. The service will work in partnership with the Angus Youth Justice Forum to expand our current coordinated response to challenging youth offending and antisocial behaviour across Angus.”

Rob Mackay, youth justice co-ordinator for Perthshire Youth Justice Partnership said: “We welcome the introduction of the Victim Information Service. The service will play an important part in meeting the partnership's aim to include concern for victims at the centre of our youth justice developments."

For any further details, please contact the victim information team at the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration on 01786 459500, who can provide contact details for local co-ordinators. Information on youth justice issues can be found at www.youthjusticescotland.gov.uk

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Notes to Editors:

SCRA is the national body that works with partners to provide an integrated care and justice system for children in Scotland. It was formed under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994 and became fully operational on April 1 1996.

Our main responsibilities, as set out in the Act, are:

- To facilitate the work of Children's Reporters
- To deploy and manage staff to carry out that work
- To provide suitable accommodation for Children's Hearings

In 2004/5, SCRA received Grant-in-Aid of £23million, of which £2.5million was assigned to capital spending. We employ 429 staff (FTE average 2004/5) of which over 80% are engaged in frontline service-delivery in our local network of 39 offices and hearing centres.

For all media enquiries, please contact Lois Boyle at Media House on 0141 220 6040 or 07803 204119.