

SCRA Annual Report 2012/13



SCOTTISH
CHILDREN'S REPORTER
ADMINISTRATION

Changing for children and young people



About our report

This report covers the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

It summarises SCRA's achievements and performance during that period and presents statistical information about children and young people referred to the Reporter.

The report also includes an executive summary of SCRA's audited accounts for the 12 months to 31 March 2013.

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As part of our continued commitment to the environment and to save on paper and postage costs, we have not printed our Annual Report for several years, however, you can still view all our information online, including a full set of our annual accounts and our official statistics at www.scra.gov.uk.

Our vision, values, outcomes and service standards

Our vision:

Our vision sets out what we want the world to be like for children and young people in Scotland and is - Vulnerable children and young people in Scotland are safe, protected and offered positive futures.

Our values:

Children and young people's experiences and opinions guide us. We are approachable and open. We bring the best of the past with us into the future to meet new challenges.

Our outcomes:

Our decisions are proportionate, timely and make a positive impact on the welfare, safety and protection of children, young people and communities. Our work with partners ensures children and young people are only subject to compulsory supervision if required, and only for as long as it benefits them. Our service is efficient, responsive, inclusive and continually improving.

Our service standards:

Our service standards are the promise we make to children, young people and families about how we will treat them and what they can expect from us. They are: Prepared, Listening, Learning, Outcomes, Hearings, Court, Performing, Improving.



Foreword by Carole Wilkinson, SCRA Chair

This Annual Report will be the last full year report of SCRA's work under the 1995 Act; it brings together a period of considerable change and is both a time to look forward and to look back.

The Children's Hearings System was designed originally to deal with children and young people who offend, but now receives more referrals for children in need of care and protection. What is not in doubt is the system's ability to adapt and change to reflect different needs and demands, a flexibility it will be capable of maintaining. It must above all, continue to strive to make a difference to the lives of children and young people.

In 2012/13 we have seen the downward trend in our referrals continue. The decreases are welcome, and reflect the progress in rolling out pre-referral screening and its impact, and we are grateful to our partners for supporting this process. The implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child is also part of the success story of decreasing referrals, as agencies work together to support children and their families at an earlier stage.

The referrals we do receive tend to be much more appropriate than perhaps in the past, often with a clearer rationale as to why compulsory measures are required, with individual circumstances of children and young people being more profound, high risk and complex.

Our work with children and young people drives us every day. It can test us at times - with highly technical evidence being led in proof Hearings, as well as increased levels of challenge to both Reporter and Hearing decisions, to ensure everyone's rights are visibly observed.

This has been another demanding year for staff of the organisation. They have been working hard throughout the year to implement key changes to the way the organisation is run and delivers its services. This work has included preparation for the new legislation, implementation of the new Case Management System, and embedding devolved management and budget responsibilities in each of the nine Localities.

All of these changes - when fully completed - will ensure we are working in ways that support delivery of the improvements to the Hearings System.

The Board of SCRA has continued to give priority to visiting local offices, meeting with staff and listening to their concerns - this is particularly important in this time of change. We are fortunate to have very committed and caring staff, and on behalf of the Board I would like to thank them for their hard work and their dedication over the past year.

2013/14 will be no less challenging as all the key changes we have been working towards take shape. We look forward to working with the new legislation, the newly reformed Hearings System, and to successful partnership working that delivers improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Message from SCRA's Principal Reporter/ Chief Executive Neil Hunter

This has been a year of those final stages of change for SCRA.

We have been pleased to be closely involved in the finalisation of the secondary legislation for the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and to assist the Scottish Government in this work. Reporters are key to the successful implementation of the legislation and their knowledge, experience and professional perspective was hugely welcomed as we came close to implementation. We were happy to provide advice and influence the final shape of this work and shape the procedural rules.

By the end of the 2012/13 we had pretty much completed the roll out of our Case Management System to the whole service – a very significant feat indeed.

We have continued to make progress with our children and young people's engagement and participation strategy and in 2012/13 we entered the second phase of our Modern Apprenticeship scheme, further underlining our commitment to this approach, but also to SCRA's commitment to provide training and future employment opportunities for young people who have experienced the Children's Hearings System. We were delighted for Zoie Montgomery who won the Skills Development Scotland's Service Delivery Modern Apprentice of the Year Award in November.

Our research programme continued to receive widespread acknowledgement across children's services. The influence of the 2011 Care and Permanence Report continues, with clear evidence of activity towards improvement across the country.

In 2012/13, SCRA published further important studies in relation to children and young people who have been on Supervision Requirements for more than five years. This emphasised again the need for stability, consistency and security in children and young people's placements, as well as highlighting the circumstances where positive outcomes can be delivered.

The latter part of 2012/13 also saw many staff across SCRA being involved in the completion of the children and families survey, our biennial research about how children, young people and their families experience the Hearings System and identifies scope for improvement. This survey was undertaken jointly with Children's Hearings Scotland who have a shared interest in this area of quality, experience and improvement.

Above all else, 2012/13 emphasised again the continued professionalism, commitment, skills and knowledge of our SCRA staff and the impact this makes in all aspects of the Hearings System, the services we deliver for children, young people and their families and the contribution we bring to wider public service partnership work.

Our year at a glance

April 2012

Cycle to work scheme gets underway

SCRA staff respond to Advice to Hearings survey

New timetable for the 2011 Act is announced

May 2012

Let's all make a change for children and young people - research report published

Roll out of information security labels

SCRA gets first responder status to help beat child trafficking

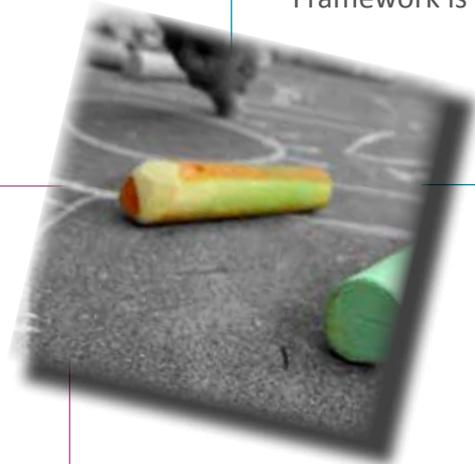
June 2012

Day 2 Training for the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 was completed for Reporter staff

Ministerial opening of Bellshill Hearings Centre

New Senior Operational Manager appointed

Updated version of the Decision Making Framework is published



July 2012

Second set of Official Statistics published

New HR & Organisational Network announced

TV screen pilot gets underway in four Hearing suites

August 2012

New Staff Guide – Stay Connected published

First meeting of new Locality Support Managers forum

September 2012

First edition of new Team Brief issued

New Equalities Forum created

SCRA shortlisted for UK-wide Apprenticeship Award

October 2012

SCRA receives 1000th FOI request

New set of Service Standards are launched

SCRA takes part in National Fraud audit initiative



November 2012

Research report - Children on Supervision Requirements for Five or More Years – Decisions and Outcomes published

Children and Families Survey 2012 gets underway

Zoie Montgomery scooped Skills Development Scotland's Service Delivery Modern Apprentice of the Year Award

December 2012

Second annual toy drive launched

New benefits service for staff introduced

Results of staff survey are published

We welcomed our first intern to the organisation



January 2013

Information Governance campaign The BIG Push 2013 is launched

Roll out of new Case Management System gets underway across the country

SCRA receives 1000th data request

February 2013

We welcomed new Modern Apprentices to the organisation

Six members of staff successfully completed PRINCE2 training course

New 'snap' cards for young children launched

March 2013

Painting project to brighten up our waiting rooms is completed

New research report on education and Supervision Requirements is published

Minister announced appointment of two new Board Members



Our stories ...

SCRA's progress and achievements in 2012/13

Throughout the year, our focus has been on delivering our outcomes and objectives as outlined in our Business Plan 2012/13.

Our outcomes

- Our decisions are proportionate, timely and make a positive impact on the welfare, safety and protection of children, young people and communities.
- Our work with partners ensures children and young people are only subject to compulsory supervision if required and only for as long as it benefits them.
- Our service is efficient, responsive, inclusive and continually improving.

Our objectives

- Ensure a smooth transition in services for children, young people and families towards SCRA 's implementation of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.
- Improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people in the Children's Hearings System by working effectively with Children's Hearings Scotland.
- Improve engagement with partners across the Children's Hearings System by participating, influencing and informing at strategic and community planning levels.
- Establish nine high-performing and effective Localities, providing local leadership for delivery across Scotland.

Here are some of the highlights of the past 12 months...

Our performance and targets

As noted in the Chair's foreword, 2012/13 has been a challenging year for the organisation for a number of reasons. Despite this, performance remained positive, with seven of our 10 targets met. Three of the targets met: 'percentage of decisions on referrals within 50 working days', 'scheduling of Hearings within 20 working days' and the 'percentage of initial Hearings proceeding to disposal' are particularly important for children and families as they ensure, that where possible, decisions about compulsory measures are made at the earliest possible opportunity.

Other targets that were met included the financial targets linked to revenue spends and ensuring that our properties were up to standard.

The 2011/12 Annual Report talked about how both notification targets were missed in the year, potentially impacted by the changing staff profiles due to new roles and voluntary early retirement/voluntary redundancy. Both these targets have seen improvements in 2012/13, with the 'notification of Hearing outcomes' improving by almost 3% to meet target. Despite improving by almost 3% also, the 'notification of referral outcomes' once again missed the target.

The two other targets missed in the year were the 'percentage of revenue savings achieved in the year' which was slightly below target due to lower staff turnover savings, while the 'variance in annual capital spends' was missed due to an anticipated overspend which has been factored in to the approved 2013/14 capital budget.

SCRA's performance against targets can be seen in detail in Table 20 of the [full statistical analysis](#).

Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011

Throughout 2012/13 we were building towards the implementation of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

In April, the Minister took the decision to move the implementation date from September 2012 to June 2013. SCRA was fully supportive of this decision, which allowed additional time for all partners to ensure that the planned reforms would be delivered successfully.

Since that point, we have worked closely with the Scottish Government on the drafting of the secondary legislation, lending our professional experience and practical knowledge to the process.

Our continued membership and active engagement with both the Implementation Programme Board and the Implementation Reference Group has ensured that we have been fully involved and informed about key decisions.

Another critical piece of work, at national and local levels, has been focused on ensuring that partners, including local authority social work departments, are aware of the Act and fully prepared for implementation.

We have been working with the Scottish Legal Aid Board on giving effect to the legal aid provisions in the Act and on the content of the Code of Practice for solicitors, and with Children 1st in relation to the operation of the new Safeguarder provisions. We have taken a leading role in co-ordinating multi-agency activity to produce the forms that are required for operation of the new Act.

During May and June, Day 2 training on the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 was carried out. The training, which was mandatory for all Reporters including Trainee and Assistant Reporters, focused on applications to the Sheriff, appeals and secure accommodation.

The Practice Instruction and Training Group developed a flexible Practice Training plan to accommodate the timescales for production of the secondary legislation and other priority work in SCRA, delivered training to support staff and initiated a suite of detailed Practice Direction in relation to the Act.

Considerable time and resources have also been spent developing a set of 2011 Act compatible and child-friendly letters, as well as information resources for partners, children, young people and families.

We started work with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service to develop a joint protocol in relation to information sharing and liaised throughout the year with the Children's Hearing Training Officers in relation to shared understanding of the new legislation.

Our Practice

Although a significant focus of the Practice Team in 2012/13 was to prepare for implementation of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, there was a raft of other work separate to the new legislation.

The Practice Team delivered a programme of Practice Training - including role of the Reporter, and evidence and court modules - to ensure Trainee Reporters and others received essential training throughout the year.

We also published Practice Instruction Notes on Devolution Issues, Use of Visual Recordings of Joint Investigative Interviews, and Adoption and Permanence Orders and a Practice Note on Schedule 1 Offences involving Injury to a Child.

We continued to work in partnership with the Scottish Government and other agencies in relation to other significant areas of work, such as young people who offend and jointly reported cases.

With the Senior Practitioner posts coming into operation, we established the Practice Network to work collaboratively with Localities on Practice-related matters.

We worked with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) to develop new Hearings Management Guidance, launched in March 2013, which is helping to ensure robust and effective arrangements for the scheduling of Children's Hearings.

Our people

During 2012/13, we continued our focus on developing our own staff. In April, 12 additional members of staff started the next Diploma in Public Service Leadership (DPSL) while in June 2012, a further five members of staff successfully completed the diploma.

In June, we announced the appointment of a new Senior Operational Manager for our North West Area. Alistair Hogg replaced Evelyn Grant, who retired from the organisation in November 2012.

In June, we also said farewell to Board Member Margaret Wells. Margaret originally joined our Board in 2004.

In July we announced the creation of a new HR & OD Network, while in September a new Equalities Network was created.

Also in September, SCRA was shortlisted for the national Training Journal Award in the Best Apprenticeship Scheme category. Unfortunately we didn't win, but were delighted to be shortlisted. There was success for our Modern Apprenticeship scheme in November when one of our MAs, Zoie Montgomery scooped Skills Development Scotland's Service Delivery Modern Apprentice of the Year Award.

In November, a new Employee Assistance Programme provider was introduced, while in December we launched a new employee benefits service for all staff and a revised childcare voucher scheme was implemented. Also in December 2012 we welcomed our first of three interns to the organisation.

We continued to make improvements to our new electronic HR system and in January the annual leave self service element of the system was rolled out to all staff.

In February 2013 we welcomed a new group of Modern Apprentices to the organisation, while six members of staff successfully completed their PRINCE2 training course. In March, the Minister for Children and Young People Aileen Campbell, MSP announced the appointment of two new Board Members – Andrew Menzies and Douglas Yates.

Our Property

SCRA is responsible for providing suitable and sufficient facilities to accommodate Children's Hearings. The current economic and budget pressures mean that there is a big focus on managing our property assets, with a real challenge from the organisation to reduce costs wherever possible. The restructuring of our estate continues on from the work in our Localities last year. Steps to achieve this aim have been taken in a number of locations.

In Lochgilphead, space freed up following reconfiguration of the office is now occupied by SEPA to reduce the overall running costs of the building. Similarly in Tranent, the former staff office is now occupied by a local care provider, again bringing running cost reductions and an income. Whilst in Inverness, the Scottish Government has taken on an occupancy agreement for Willow House on a short term basis.

Last year, SCRA also secured ownership of properties in Fraserburgh and Stranraer. Between January and March 2013, substantial external and internal works were undertaken to our Stranraer premises to provide an accessible fit for purpose Hearing facility and office. Initial upgrading work was also undertaken in Fraserburgh ahead of a larger project planned for 2013/14.

In Glasgow, a new 10 year lease has been agreed with our landlord, from which SCRA will receive the benefit of an 18 month rent free period. This will provide a substantial saving on SCRA's running costs during this period.

In June, the Minister for Children and Young People, Aileen Campbell, MSP, officially opened our revamped Bellshill Hearings Centre. Almost 50 guests attended the official opening including SCRA staff, Panel Members and local partners. The building had undergone a major refurbishment to improve the facilities for children, young people, families and Panel Members attending Hearings.

Elsewhere, the Property team has been busy working on the tendering of a new Facilities Management contract that will bring together the contracts for a number of different services into one new contract. Through competitive tendering and economies of scale it is expected that this new contract (which will be appointed in 2013/14) will provide benefits to SCRA.

Research

SCRA's research continues to receive widespread interest and influence. For example, in 2012/13 some of our recent research was considered by the Looked After Children Strategic Implementation Group, the Scottish Parliament's Education Committee, and the Ministerial Summit on Children Looked After At Home.

One of SCRA's Modern Apprentices, Zoie Montgomery's report 'Let's all make a change for children and young people' was published in May 2012 and is a young person's review of research on children's views on the Children's Hearings System. It found that the same issues keep coming up, such as children and young people not feeling listened to, and the importance of them being able to trust key workers.

'Children on Supervision Requirements for five or more years – decisions and outcomes' – was published in November 2012 and followed on from SCRA's research on permanence and adoption in 2011. This new research explored the experiences and outcomes for children who had been on Supervision Requirements for at least five years - for most, this was over half their lives.

'How much is education included in the plans of children on Supervision Requirements?' was published in March 2013. This research focused on how education and learning feature in the assessment and planning for children who are subject to Supervision Requirements.

Information Governance

Information Governance continues to be a priority for SCRA. Steps taken by SCRA to ensure information security and data protection compliance in 2012/13 included practical actions such as the removal of all fax machines, extending the use of secure email exchanges with partner agencies, and the introduction of new security labels on all correspondence.

At a strategic level, the focus was on increasing staff awareness of the need for good Information Governance and data protection compliance to help keep children and young people safe. An example of this was The BIG Push campaign ('Information Governance is everybody's responsibility') in January 2013. The month-long campaign was aimed at improving staff awareness of data security across the organisation and to kick start activity for the year ahead.

Records management was an increasing part of SCRA's Information Governance strategy over 2012/13. This was to prepare for the implementation of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 and to support changes in information management resulting from the introduction of SCRA's Case Management System.

There were 46 incidents in 2012/13 where Non-Disclosure Orders were breached. These 46 incidents involved 65 Non-Disclosure Orders. This is an increase from 2011/12 when there were 39 incidents involving 58 Non Disclosure Orders.

The most common sources were SCRA with 13 incidents and local authorities with 11 incidents.

SCRA received 25 requests under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 in 2012/13, and no requests for review or appeal.

Participation and engagement

Throughout 2012/13, SCRA's Participation Group continued to develop new and improved information materials for children and young people, and to help improve our facilities and services. The materials were developed with input from our Modern Apprentices.

In July, a plasma screen pilot got underway in four Hearing suites – Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Hamilton. The screens show our going to a Children's Hearing film and a rolling set of information slides.

In November, we introduced colourful suggestion boxes in every waiting room to encourage children and young people to post their ideas about how we can improve our services and facilities.

We held our second annual toy drive in December to improve the amount and quality of toys in our waiting rooms for children attending Hearings. Thanks to everyone who donated toys and books.

In January, we started work on a new going to court film for young people. The film is due to be launched in early 2013/14.

We added to our 'Chloe and Billy' suite of materials for very young children. In February we introduced a new set of 'snap' cards which are available in waiting rooms.

In March, our painting project to brighten up our waiting rooms in 20 locations was completed. Walls were painted in vibrant, child-friendly colours.

New developments

As part of our ongoing commitment to improve our services and facilities a number of new developments were introduced in 2012/13.

In April, our new cycle to work scheme got underway. The scheme, which stemmed from a staff suggestion, encourages staff to cycle to work, promotes healthier journeys to work and aims to reduce environmental pollution.

We published an e-guide for new members of staff. Our 'Staff Guide – Stay Connected' was launched on our intranet.

In May, following discussions with the Scottish Government and the Home Office, it was agreed that SCRA should be given first responder status to help prevent child trafficking in Scotland. Currently in Scotland only a small number of agencies have "First Responder" status, which allows them to make a referral to the National Referral Mechanism when they believe that a child may have been trafficked.

In September, the first edition of our new Team Brief was issued. We launched the Team Briefing System as part of a range of initiatives aimed at supporting increased internal engagement and communication across our organisation.

In October, our new set of Service Standards were launched. The eight new standards set our commitment and promises to children, young people and families. The standards, which were developed in consultation with staff, are: prepared ~ listening ~ learning ~ outcomes ~ Hearings ~ court ~ performing and improving.

Working in partnership

Working with our partners across the children's services community is a priority for SCRA to deliver improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

This is achieved at a local level by sharing information and data to improve services; informing and supporting the local children's services plan; and contributing to the wider community planning agenda.

Nationally we continue to help inform the public policy agenda by working closely with the Scottish Government, providing detailed data and analysis as well as research on emerging trends and themes.

We also work closely and share information and learning with other national bodies such as the Care Inspectorate and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS). Our relationship with CHS has strengthened in 2012/13 with both organisations working towards improving the Hearings System for children, young people and their families.

Shared Services

SCRA has received excellent customer feedback on its shared service provision. Our fully managed human resources and finance service remains the cornerstone of our shared service provision in

which we have developed a professional Business Partnering function that has enabled strategic and operational advice, guidance and practical support as Children's Hearings Scotland prepared itself for its statutory functions.

Leadership development, recruitment and selection, pay and grading review, as well as the development of sound financial and governance processes have been a focus for shared services over the past 12 months, with plans in place to continue the good progress in these areas in 2013/14.

We continue to work with our public sector partners to look at new and innovative ways to either share or provide cost effective solutions to key support services.

Technology

Our focus during 2012/13 was the continued development and introduction of our new Case Management System (CMS) to modernise the way we handle our casework.

CMS is both the replacement for our out-dated Referrals Administration Database which had been in use since 2000 and introduces electronic file handling to reduce and replace paper files. We wanted to create a modern, more flexible document management system to handle all our case work for children and young people.

The introduction of CMS has been a major undertaking, with South Lanarkshire our early implementer being the first site online in November 2012. Training of all frontline staff and the roll out then got underway and progressed for the rest of the country from January 2013. The national roll out was completed in April 2013 with the successful migration of data referencing 140,000 children from the old system to the new one.

Another key focus in 2012/13 was enhanced electronic information sharing with some of our partners including social work. SCRA sends approximately a quarter of a million communications each year to social work partners. At the moment only around 20 per cent of these are sent electronically.

Our aim is to eventually send 100 per cent of our communications to social work in an electronic paperless format. To progress this aim, in December 2012 a pilot got underway in South Lanarkshire to send everything electronically to social work, including reports, review letters, final decision and other letters.

Also in December 2012, discussions got underway with the Scottish Court Service for the electronic exchange of information. This is due to be launched in 2013/14.

In May 2012, SCRA published the results of a survey to find out the views of Panel Members and Reporters about the effectiveness of using laptops to record Hearing decisions. SCRA initially introduced laptops for Panel Members to electronically record all Hearings' decisions - to improve the recording of decisions, to make the process more efficient and to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland. Almost 500 Panel Members responded, along with 96 Reporters.

In 2012/13, further improvements were made to our website to make it more child and young people friendly, including 'hide' and 'submit' buttons to make it more interactive and easier for children and young people to contact us. In addition, Sammi's story, a social media type story was added to the young people section.





Our statistics ...

As stated earlier in this Annual Report, SCRA transitioned to its new Case Management System during 2012/13. One of the impacts of this has been a legacy with the recording of some historical data. For the purposes of this report, only data that has been wholly mapped across to the new system is included.

This will mean that 2012/13 figures slightly undercount the actual volumes of casework undertaken by SCRA during the year, but do not impact the overall trends.

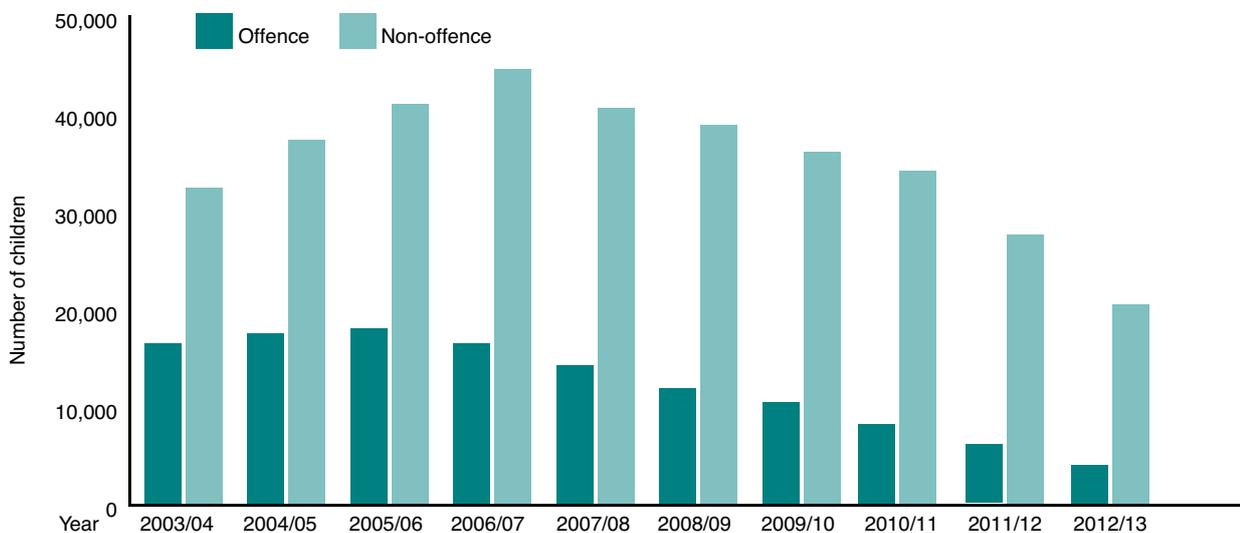
Children and young people referred to the Reporter

In 2012/13, 22,561 children and young people in Scotland were referred¹ to the Reporter:

- 20,308 on non-offence (care and protection) grounds.
- 3,636 on offence grounds².

The figure of 22,561 represents 2.5% of all children and young people in Scotland³. Within this, 2.2% of all children and young people were referred on care and protection grounds and 0.8% of all children and young people aged between eight⁴ and 16 years were referred on offence grounds.

Figure 1. Children and young people 2003/04 to 2012/13



The number of children and young people referred to the Reporter has decreased for the sixth consecutive year and is at its lowest level since 1989. The 28.6% decrease from 2011/12 levels was due to reductions in the numbers of both children and young people referred on care and protection grounds (down 27.5%) and children and young people referred on offence grounds (down 35.1%).

Despite the overall decrease in referrals, proportional increases in very young children referred continue to be seen, with 14.0% of all children and young people referred in 2012/13 aged under two. 2012/13 also saw a continuation in the high numbers of children and young people with Child Protection Orders (CPOs) received, with 743 having CPOs in the year.

1. Reporters decide the category and the grounds of referral at the time of receipt based on information contained within the referral.
 2. These figures include 1,383 children and young people who were referred on both types of grounds (care and protection and offence).
 3. % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2012 from the General Register Office for Scotland.
 4. Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children under eight years cannot be referred for offending.

The granting of a CPO requires the child or young person to be removed to (or kept in) a place of safety away from home. For this measure to be considered, they 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 743 children and young people with CPO referrals to Children’s Hearings in 2012/13, 160 (21.5%) were aged under 20 days at the date of receipt and 344 (46.3%) were aged under two years.

Referrals received

In 2012/13, 36,298 referrals were received by the Reporter, a 30.9% decrease from 2011/12 levels. Of these referrals, 27,503 were received for care and protection grounds and 8,824 for offence grounds⁵.

Most children and young people (74.2%) were referred only once in the year, with 4.1% referred five or more times. The police were the main source of referrals, comprising 79.4% of all referrals to the Reporter in 2012/13, 99.7% of all offence referrals and 72.9% of all care and protection referrals.

Grounds on which children and young people were referred to the Reporter

The reasons (grounds) on which children and young people are referred to the Reporter are those set out in section 52(2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and are summarised in Table 1. Please note that some cases have been processed using the new Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and are noted as such in the table.

Table 1. Grounds of referral and number of children and young people referred in 2012/13

Grounds of referral	2012/13
(a) Beyond control of any relevant person	2,530
(b) Bad associations or moral danger	1,692
(c) Lack of parental care	9,664
(d) Victim of a Schedule 1 offence*	7,112
(e) Member of the same household as a victim of a Schedule 1 offence	851
(f) Member of the same household as a Schedule 1 offender	427
(g) Member of the same household as an incest victim and perpetrator	10
(h) Not attending school	1,314
(i) Allegedly committed an offence	3,608
(j) Misused alcohol or drugs	463
(k) Misused solvents	12
(l) In the care of the Local Authority, and special measures are necessary	112
Other/none**	478
Total children and young people referred***	22,561

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

**Some children and young people have had referrals processed through the Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, while some other referrals have no grounds yet added. These are recorded as other/none in Table 1.

***A child or young person may be referred to the Reporter more than once in the year on the same and/or different grounds. These totals count every child or young person referred to the Reporter during the year once.

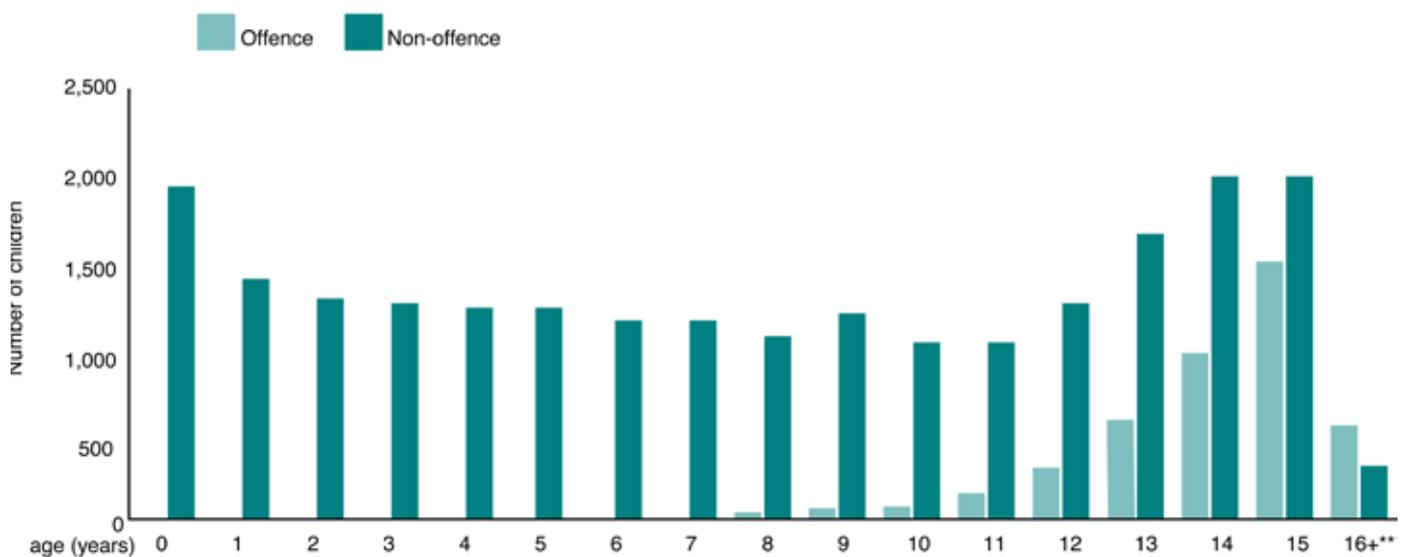
All of the main grounds of referral saw decreases when compared with 2011/12 - “lack of parental care” was the most common ground of referral, replacing “victim of a Schedule 1 offence” which has been the most common ground of referral for each of the past six years.

Since the peak number of children and young people referred in 2006/07 (56,199), the numbers of children and young people referred on “beyond control of any relevant person”, “not attending school”, “allegedly committed an offence” and “misused alcohol or drugs” grounds have decreased year on year.

The 3,636 children and young people referred on offence grounds were referred for 14,300 alleged offences on 8,824 referrals. The most common types of alleged offences were assault, vandalism and threatening or abusive behaviour.

The age breakdown of children and young people referred on both offence and care and protection grounds is shown in Figure 2. Despite the increasing proportion of younger children referred, 14 and 15 were the most common ages of referral for both care and protection and offence grounds.

Figure 2. Age of children referred on offence* and non-offence grounds in 2012/13



*Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children and young people 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 ⁶.

Reporter decisions on children and young people referred

The Reporter investigates the child or young person’s case by requesting information from different sources: 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/young person requires compulsory measures of supervision, and there is sufficient evidence to support one or more grounds for referral, the child/young person will be referred to a Children’s Hearing.

6. 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.

Reporters have other options available to them to find the right help for children and young people 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.

Table 2 shows that 20.0% of children and young people (4,472) with cases decided in the year had a Reporter decision to arrange a Children’s Hearing on at least one referral.

Table 2. Children and young people with Reporter decisions in 2012/13*

Reporter decision	Non-offence	Offence	Total
Arrange Children’s Hearing (on new grounds)	4,142	472	4,472
No indication of a need for compulsory measures	7,083	1,237	8,103
No Hearing - insufficient evidence to proceed	4,076	347	4,382
No Hearing - measures already in place	2,888	1,528	3,797
No Hearing - refer to Local Authority	3,863	447	4,177
No Hearing - family have taken action	1,110	99	1,194
No Hearing - diversion to other measures	76	152	213
Total children and young people referred**	20,325	3,436	22,348

* Data in this table relates to cases decided in 2012/13 as opposed to referrals received in 2012/13.

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

Number of Children’s Hearings held

In 2012/13, 38,316 Children’s Hearings were held for 18,039 children and young people. This was the third consecutive year of decreases, with a 5.9% drop from 2011/12. Of the children and young people with Hearings in the year, 45.6% had a single Hearing, with 8.3% having five or more Hearings.

Table 3. Number of Hearings held

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Number of Children’s Hearings	43,614	41,825	40,708	38,316

4,684 Hearings (12.2%) related to new grounds. In addition, there were 25,655 initial review or continued review Hearings for Supervision Requirements, 5,231 continued grounds Hearings and 2,746 other Hearings.

Applications to the Sheriff for proof

If not all the grounds which form the basis of the Children’s Hearing are accepted by children and young people 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 referral⁷. In 2012/13, 3,655 applications were concluded, of which 89.8% 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.

Compulsory measures of intervention

Children's Hearings decide whether compulsory measures of intervention are necessary (in respect of the child or young person) to protect the child or young person 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 and young people or address their behaviour. This may include Hearings arranged as a result of the Sheriff granting a Child Protection Order (CPO).

In 2012/13, Children's Hearings:

- Considered⁸ the cases of 743 children and young people with CPOs under section 59(2) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995; and
- Made 1,968 children and young people subject to Place of Safety Warrants under sections 66(1) and 69(7) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

As with CPOs, Place of Safety Warrant numbers are highest for very young children (aged under one), but they are also common for older children and young people. Place of Safety Warrants also require the child or young person to be kept in a place of safety away from home. A child or young person 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.

In 2012/13, 3,552 children and young people had a new Supervision Requirement made on grounds referred, with 12,514 children and young people subject to Supervision Requirements at 31 March 2013. This amounts to 1.4%⁹ of all children and young people in Scotland, see table 4.

Table 4. Children and young people subject to Supervision Requirements at 31 March

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of children and young people	13,829	13,474	13,093	12,514

As with Children's Hearings, the number of children and young people subject to Supervision Requirements has decreased for a third consecutive year. The most common ages of children and young people subject to Supervision Requirements continue to be 14 and 15 years. The types of Supervision Requirements in place at 31 March 2013 are shown in Table 5.

8. The Hearing 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.

9. % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2012 from the General Register Office for Scotland.

Table 5. Supervision Requirements in place at 31 March 2013

Types of Supervision Requirement	Number of children and young people
With parent/relevant person	5,952
With other approved foster parent	3,187
With relative/friend - other	1,312
With relative/friend - approved foster parent	797
Local Authority home	358
Residential school	287
Other residential placement	187
Other	80
None recorded	354
Total	12,514

Secure Authorisations made by Children's Hearings

Secure Authorisations can be made as conditions of Warrants or Supervision Requirements where the child or young person presents a risk to themselves or others¹⁰. In 2012/13, 135 children and young people had Secure Authorisations made as a condition of Warrants, while 112 children and young people had Secure Authorisations made as a condition of Supervision Requirements.

Appeals

Children and young people and/or their relevant persons can appeal to the Sheriff against decisions made by Children's Hearings. In 2012/13, 792 children and young people had appeals concluded, with 67% having Hearings' decisions upheld by the Sheriff on at least one appeal in the year. Where a Hearing decision wasn't upheld, the most common outcome was for the Sheriff to remit the grounds back to a Children's Hearing for a decision on compulsory measures.

In addition, applications can be made to the Sheriff to recall or vary the conditions on a CPO. 37 children and young people had applications to recall or vary CPOs in the year.



Our accounts ...

Summary extract of Annual Accounts 2012/13

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 2013 which were approved on 26 September 2013, 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, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, and delivered to the Board, the Scottish Parliament and the Auditor General for Scotland. The report of the auditors was unmodified.

The statutory financial statements can be obtained on SCRA's website, www.scra.gov.uk, or on request from:

SCRA
Ochil House
Springkerse Business Park
Stirling
FK7 7XE

Statement of Comprehensive Net Expenditure

For the year ended 31 March 2013

	2013 £000	2012 £000
Expenditure		
Staff costs	16,001	15,967
Other expenditure	8,014	6,930
Depreciation and amortisation	1,469	1,871
	25,484	24,768
Income	474	375
Net expenditure	25,010	24,393
Interest payable	5	3
Interest receivable	(4)	(2)
Pension scheme finance cost	570	1,159
Net expenditure before Scottish Government funding	25,581	25,553

Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 March 2013

	2013 £000	2012 £000
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	13,708	14,623
Investment properties	30	50
Intangible assets	16	319
<i>Total non-current assets</i>	13,754	14,992
Current assets		
Trade and other receivables	663	536
Cash and cash equivalents	257	714
Assets held for sale	150	265
<i>Total current assets</i>	1,070	1,515
Total assets	14,824	16,507
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	2,508	1,975
Finance lease	34	33
<i>Total current liabilities</i>	2,542	2,008
Non-current assets less/plus net current liabilities/assets	12,282	14,499
Non-current liabilities		
Payables	81	88
Pension liability	24,146	19,294
Provision for unfunded pensions	1,917	2,149
Finance lease	1,476	1,510
<i>Total non-current liabilities</i>	27,620	23,041
Assets less liabilities	(15,338)	(8,542)
Taxpayers' deficit		
General fund	13,693	15,136
Pension reserve	(29,718)	(25,032)
Revaluation reserve	687	1,354
Total taxpayers' deficit	(15,338)	(8,542)

Our Board in 2012/13

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.

More information about our Board, including a full Register of Board Members' Interests, can be found on our website at www.scra.gov.uk

Chair

Carole Wilkinson (*appointed 2010*)

Deputy Chair

Malcolm Dickson
(*re-appointed 2012*)

Principal Reporter/Chief Executive

Neil Hunter (*appointed 2011*)

Board Members

Margaret Wells (*re-appointed 2008*)

Andrew Miller (*re-appointed 2012*)

Bernadette Docherty MBE (*appointed 2010*)

Louise Macdonald (*appointed 2010*)

Joseph Hughes (*appointed 2010*)



Looking ahead

For 2013/14 the outlook for the Children's Hearings System is exciting, fast moving and challenging.

The new Children's Hearings legislation offers the potential to modernise processes and improve outcomes for children and young people in Scotland. Our partnership work with the National Convener of Children's Hearings Scotland and Local Authorities will be critical to ensuring that these improvements are delivered and evidenced.

The new Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act will require a refresh of some of the whole system performance indicators for agencies and partners. We will engage constructively with our partners in 2013/14 to begin conversations about how we collectively measure performance and impact, how we refresh strategic partnership work, development and planning at national and local level to get the desired benefits as quickly as possible.

We renew our commitment to ensuring the voice and experience of children and young people steers our work in SCRA and in the wider Hearings System. Our children and families survey challenges us to do better on issues of information to children and young people, being more responsive to their experiences before, during and after Children's Hearings.

Our research programme will continue to ask searching questions of us and others, based on high quality, well structured evidence. Our Modern Apprentices have laid down challenges to us in relation to the pace at which we have been trying to deliver improvements to the Hearings facilities across Scotland and our customer care commitments.

In 2013/14 we continue our own journey of improvement and innovation. Having invested over the last few years in new technology, now is the time to make it work for us as a responsive and helpful tool - opening up new possibilities and ways of working.

A key programme for 2013/14 will be the realisation of these benefits and finding increasingly effective, smarter ways of working that use the experience, commitment and talents of our staff to the full.

The financial landscape for SCRA continues to be, as it is for many public services, extremely challenging and difficult. The need to balance operational continuity, safety and quality with cashable savings and reduced headcount tests our ability each year.

We continue to have an open channel of communication with the Scottish Government and continue to see rigorous and detailed long term planning and prioritisation as key foundations of our approach.

Despite all of the change, pressures and difficulties which our staff have faced in recent years, they continue to show massive commitment to their work with children and young people, commitment to high service standards and passion for children and young people's rights to wellbeing and protection.

We will launch in 2013/14 - jointly with UNISON through the National Partnership Forum - a programme of work focussed on staff health and wellbeing at a number of different levels, a refreshed and revised leadership programme for our managers, focussing on motivation, performance, engagement and empowerment.

As always our staff are our key resource. We haven't always been able to recognise and reward this in the way we would have wished – but SCRA's Board and senior managers continue to commit ourselves to doing this better and more decisively in the immediate future.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carole Wilkinson".

Carole Wilkinson,
SCRA Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Hunter".

Neil Hunter,
Principal Reporter/Chief Executive



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Produced by
SCRA's Press and Communications Team,
October 2013

