

# SCRA ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

Changing for children and young people



# ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

This report covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

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

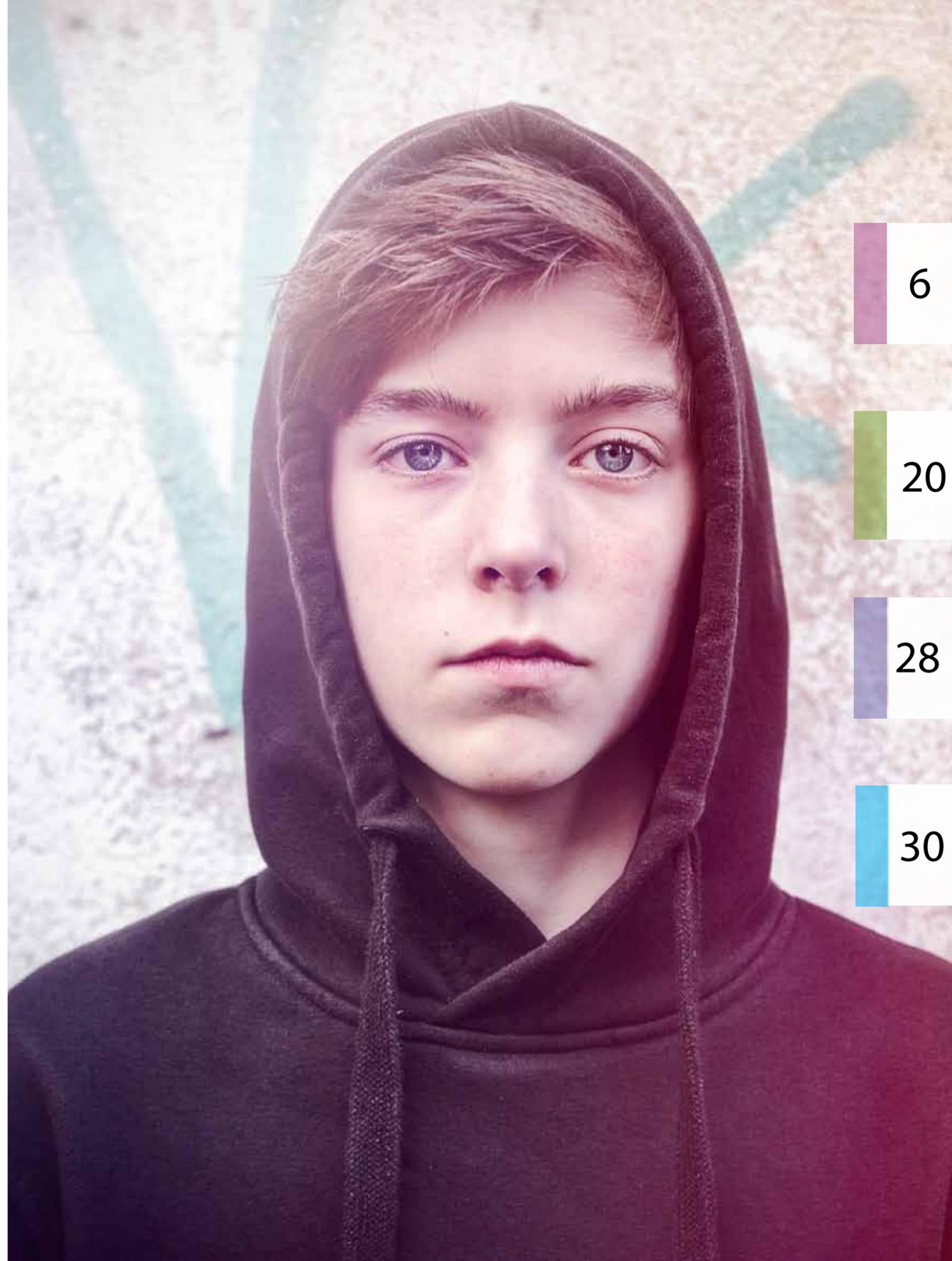
As part of our continued commitment to the environment, we have not printed our Annual Report for several years now, however, you can still view all our information online, including a full set of our annual audited accounts, our sustainability report and our official statistics at

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



SCOTTISH  
CHILDREN'S REPORTER  
ADMINISTRATION

Produced by  
SCRA's Press and Communications Team  
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## Introduction:

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## Our Vision

Our vision sets out what we want the world to be like for children and young people in Scotland: "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 Strategies

Our strategies set out our key priorities for the year. In 2014/15, we had four key strategies – sustainability, improved quality and performance, customer focus and engagement.

## Our customer commitment

This is the commitment we give to children, young people, families and our partners about how we will treat them and what they can expect from us.

This Annual Report sees SCRA and its partners moving towards realising the aspirations and policy intentions of the 2011 Act. This is the continuation of a period of change as those working in the system move forward with confidence and a commitment to deliver improved services.

Our key priorities remain; Improving services for children, young people and their families ~ Listening to and learning from children and young people about their experiences of coming to a Hearing ~ Contributing to the focus on early intervention and embedding Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) in the Hearings System ~ Working with our partners to ensure we all play our part in delivering a better service.

The Children's Hearings System continues to adapt and change, to be responsive and to reflect different demands in an ever changing world. The changes are welcome and reflect progress in implementing pre-referral screening and in GIRFEC, but we are not complacent and more remains to be done.

For the eighth year we have seen an overall decrease in the number of children and young people referred. Numbers of children and young people referred on offence grounds increased slightly from the historically low level seen in 2013/14, while the number of children and young people referred on care and protection grounds continued to decrease.

There are certain types of referrals that indicate greater concern about a child or young person's safety or behaviour, these include Child Protection Orders (CPOs) and joint reports to the Reporter and Procurator Fiscal. The majority of CPOs are for very young children, 24.7 per cent were for children aged under 20 days and 49.3 per cent for children aged under 2 years.

The referrals we receive tend to be more appropriate than in the past. Work with our partners has helped to recognise and set out a clear rationale for the need for compulsory measures. There is no doubt that the circumstances of the children and young people and the families being referred are more profound, high risk and complex.

2014/15 has again placed demands upon the workforce - as ever they have risen to the challenges. We are fortunate in having a hard working and dedicated workforce, and one determined to make a difference to the lives of children and young people. On behalf of the Board I would like to acknowledge the work they do and thank them for their continued commitment and contribution to the work of SCRA.

Ensuring the Hearings System works to improve the lives of children, young people and their families is a challenge for all who work in the system and we are committed to working with our partners to deliver an improving service and one that genuinely makes a difference to the people who matter.

SCRA continued to make progress in 2014/15, despite a number of challenges. This was a year of consolidation and steady progress as we came to terms with the first full year of the new legislation, changes to our own internal operating arrangements, and of course budget and financial constraints.

Yet there was considerable achievement too. Our Localities across Scotland continued to strengthen and develop. The leadership shown by our Locality Management Teams was an important factor in helping us maintain a focus on delivery, as well as an important source of dialogue and advice to the organisation. Our committed and highly professional staff were a source of inspiration, as their unwavering commitment to doing their best for children and young people shone through again and again.

Whilst our Localities lead out our commitment to partnership work across the country, we also strengthened our existing partnership work at national level too, particularly with the National Convenor and Children's Hearings Scotland. We also bolstered our arrangements with the Social Work profession with our tri-partite national liaison arrangement becoming more prominent and influential.

Our data and research programme continues to be valued and influential in providing evidence for all agencies and partners to reflect and generate an appetite for improvement and positive change.

We developed more consistent arrangements with Police Scotland as structures within the national force were further developed. The multi-agency Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership began to develop traction and has become a critical focus for the future development of the Hearings System.

Important streams of work on Getting it Right for Every Child, better use of research and evidence, and improving learning across the system, are really exciting opportunities to embed change and improvement in future years. SCRA continued to play a role on the Public Bodies Forum and we were very pleased to be asked to join the influential Justice Board.

Improvements to our property across Scotland continued, while the work of our Participation Group continues to develop innovative new tools, methods and approaches to engagement and promoting children's rights in the Hearings System.

Our Board continue to be a source of support and guidance, reflection, critique and scrutiny to SCRA and we continue to strive to provide them with the information they need to do their work in an open and honest relationship. We continue to work closely with our Scottish Government colleagues and sponsors whose support and assistance continue to be invaluable to us.

I'd like to thank everyone who has contributed to the continued success of SCRA this year, particularly our staff and managers who work in a really dedicated way to ensure the focus on children and young people's needs is maintained and to all of our partner agencies who work with us in the Hearings System to ensure its unique and enduring qualities shine through.

# Year at a Glance

Some of the highlights and key developments across SCRA in 2014/15 ...

## April

Pilot Wi-Fi initiative introduced in our Hearings suite in Stirling

SCRA launches guidance for Pre-Hearing visits for children and young people

New translation and interpretation contract gets underway

SCRA establishes new workload subcommittee

Implementation of our new staff appraisal scheme

## May

SCRA moves to Public Services Network (PSN)

Staff Survey and Health and Wellbeing Survey launched

Reporter Decision Making research report published

## June

SCRA takes part in the Kilbrandon 50 event

Contingency planning for Commonwealth Games gets underway

Agreement between SCRA and Scottish Prison Service on electronically sending Hearing notifications

ICO publishes its Audit Report of SCRA

## July

New research – Children on Supervision at Home published

Outreach Hearing Centre packs launched

Customer mapping workshops held with partners and staff

Memorandum of understanding signed with SCRA and G4S

## August

All staff complete data protection e-learning course

SAMH provides mental health training programme for staff

Preparation for workload recording exercise gets underway

## September

SCRA announces new customer care qualification for staff

Revised version of our Information Security Handbook is issued

Board Member Louise Macdonald steps down from our Board

## October

Consultation on new customer charter gets underway

Research report 'How we communicate with young people' is published

Graduation takes place for seven new Assistant Reporters

## November

Our annual Staff Event is held

Revision made to Information Sharing Protocol with COPFS

SCRA published our Revised Equality Outcomes and latest Equalities Statistics on our website

New Practice Direction on Movement Restriction Conditions published

## December

New Board Member Anela Anwar appointed

Our annual toy drive is launched

Advocacy Skills Practice Training held for Reporter staff

## January

Our Customer Care training programme is launched

Updated Staff Supervision Framework implemented

Reception guidelines introduced for frontline staff

## February

Updated version of our Business Continuity Plan is published

The second edition of The Zone magazine for young people is launched

Information ebook for foster carers is created

SCRA takes part in #Time to Talk day on Thursday 5 February

SCRA was awarded a Carer Positive Kitemark

## March

Children and Families survey gets underway

Online complaints easy read booklet is produced

Research starts on the use of Rule 16 and Non-Disclosure Orders

# Our stories in 2014/15 ...



## SCRA's progress and achievements in 2014/15

Throughout the year, our focus has been on delivering our outcomes and strategies as outlined in our Business Plan 2014/15.

### Our core outcomes

**Outcome 1** - The views of children and young people influence both their individual cases and how to better deliver services that meet their needs now and in the future

**Outcome 2** - Our decisions are proportionate, timely and make a positive impact on the welfare, safety and protection of children, young people and communities

**Outcome 3** - We improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in Scotland through the earliest and most effective interventions

**Outcome 4** - Together with our partners we will get it right for every child in the Hearings System

**Outcome 5** - Our staff and partners recognise SCRA's quality of service and overall performance as continually improving

### Our core strategies

- Sustainability
- Improved quality and performance
- Customer focus
- Engagement

Here are some of our stories from the past 12 months...

## Our performance and targets

Our performance for this year reflects the continuing impact of the introduction of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and the implementation of our new Case Management System during the past two years. The recovery time from these impacts has been longer than anticipated and this has led us to analyse the processing of children and young people's cases to identify areas for improvement.

Analysis so far has focussed on the first stage in the process; timescales for decision making by Reporters. The work undertaken is apparent in the recovery of the 'percentage of decisions on referrals within 50 working days' indicator which, although below target, has increased by 8 percentage points from 2013/14 to 67%. Decisions on cases are therefore being made more quickly, resulting in children and young people receiving a timelier service from SCRA than was the case in 2013/14.

Of the targets met, performance in 'percentage of initial Hearings proceeding to disposal' at 78% is particularly important for children, young people, and families as this ensures, where possible, decisions about compulsory measures are made at the earliest possible opportunity.

Hearing scheduling has experienced pressure and was 6 percentage points below target at 68%. As was the case with Reporter decision making, we will improve our performance through focussing on the key areas within the scheduling of Hearings.

Finally, three targets were narrowly missed in the year:

Revenue savings were 0.6 percentage points below the 3% target. This was due to operational staffing pressures; Capital spends were 0.9 percentage points over the 10% variance limit, primarily due to delays in four projects. These projects and the associated underspend have been carried over to the 2015/16 capital budget; and Compliance with SCRA property standards was 3 percentage points below target. Performance was impacted by the project delays above.

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

## Our people

In 2014/15, our efforts to improve staff communication and engagement continued. In April 2014 our new appraisal scheme was formally launched, while in the same month we also carried out our first staff Health and Wellbeing Survey, along with our annual Staff Survey.

The revised Staff Supervision Framework was launched in January 2015 and this was supported with Performance Management training for managers which was launched in March 2015.

We continued to focus on training and development for all staff. We held conflict handling training courses in April and June, while in spring 2014 Mental Health Awareness Training for managers was launched and delivered by the Scottish Association for Mental Health, which was later made available to all staff.

In May three trainee Reporters successfully completed the Advanced Diploma in Children's Reporter Practice and secured permanent Reporter posts with SCRA.

In July a new e-learning training platform for staff launched with all staff having to complete data protection training using the new programme.

In October, 14 members of staff started the new Scottish Qualifications Authority (SVQ) accredited Customer Care qualification, and in January a customer focus training programme open to all staff, was launched covering a variety of topics including LGBT and disability awareness.

Face to face communication is a key element of our internal communications strategy, and in November our annual Staff Event, attended by 270 members of staff, was held, while in August, the first of a series of manager's briefing events took place, covering issues such as quality, performance and sustainability.

In 2014/15, we continued to strengthen our commitment to equalities. In April 2014, our Equalities Outcomes report was published. Then in March 2015, SCRA's Equal Pay Audit and Statement, our Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Progress Report and Employee Statistics were published.

We said farewell to Board Member Louise Macdonald in September, while in December, we welcomed new Board Member Anela Anwar.

In January 2015 we created a Board Nominations Committee to ensure we have a more proactive and forward thinking approach to the recruitment of Board Members. Two new Board Members are due to be appointed in 2015/16 and the committee is working hard to ensure we attract new members who will bring a fresh perspective to our Board.

The first workload recording exercise was carried out in September 2014, the aim of which for the first time was to capture where we devote our operational activity and understand the resources versus capacity issue.

In December 2014, SCRA's Workforce Plan was approved by our Board and sees the start of an on-going plan to meet the needs of the organisation by ensuring the right levels of skills, resources and supporting policies are in place at the right time.

In December 2014 we made the difficult decision to launch a further round of voluntary redundancy/voluntary early retirement. Our commitment to no compulsory redundancies remained in place.

In February 2015 SCRA was awarded the recently launched Scottish Government's 'Carer Positive Engaged' Kitemark.

While March 2015 saw the closure of the Local Government Pension Scheme, Final Salary Pension Scheme with significant preparations underway to implement the new CARE Pension Scheme in April 2015.

## Our Reporter Practice

2014/15 saw the first full year of operation for the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, and the implementation in January of a range of amendments through working with Scottish Government colleagues to address issues that had arisen in the initial stages of the new Act's existence.

Practice Direction was updated to reflect all the changes, and information on preparation for the changes and implementation was provided to staff. In addition, the Scottish Government has undertaken a piece of action research on advocacy provision in the Children's Hearings System, with a view to examining the feasibility of introducing the provisions in section 122 of the 2011 Act.

Training on relevant aspects of the 2011 Act, and recording outcomes on the Case Management System, was developed and delivered by our Practice Team to all support staff to ensure they had a working knowledge of the new legislation. A new three day core training module for Reporters on all aspects of procedure relating to Children's Hearings was developed, as was a new core training module on the Principles and Structure of the Children's Hearings System. Both of these were delivered several times during the year, as were other core training modules.

In addition, the Practice Team supported local practice events, training and discussions throughout the year. The Practice Network continued to consider and share relevant practice issues including starting development of reference material for use in submissions on section 67 grounds, and developing aide memoires in relation to expeditious progress of proofs and managing support for court. The requirements of Locality-based Induction for Reporters were agreed and implemented to ensure a consistent approach across the organisation.

Work started on development of training on: domestic abuse, (in liaison with Scottish Women's Aid); the evidential requirements of particular section 67 grounds; and additional aspects of court. Six further Advocacy Coaches were trained to support delivery of in-house Advocacy Skills in court training for Reporter Staff.

We have also responded to consultations on issues including: Human Trafficking, British Sign Language and Freedom of Information.

## Participation and engagement

Throughout 2014/2015, SCRA's commitment to improving participation and engagement with children and young people continued.

In April 2014 SCRA launched new guidance to assist staff with carrying out Pre-Hearing visits. Feedback from children and young people indicates that many of them feel that they would greatly benefit from Pre-Hearing visits being made available.

The guidance is supported by new Pre-Hearing information packs - one for children and one for young people. The packs stemmed from an idea which came from young people during a focus group.

In July, Outreach Hearing packs were rolled out. The aim is to make our information materials readily available for families who attend Hearings in our Outreach Centres.

In December 2014, our three Modern Apprentices graduated with their Scottish Vocational Qualification in Business Administration.

Another successful SCRA toy drive took place in December/January 2015 to furnish waiting areas for children and young people with age appropriate toys, games and reading materials. Thank you to all of the staff and partners who donated so generously.

In February, the second edition of The Zone magazine for young people was published, followed in the same month by publication of an information ebook for foster carers on how to prepare children and young people attending Hearings.

Throughout 2014/15, our partnership working with bodies including Children's Hearings Scotland, Education Scotland and Social Work Scotland continued - all with an aim to continue to improve the participation of children and young people in the Hearings System.

## Our research

The main work for the research team over 2014/15 was that commissioned by the Scottish Government: 'Permanence Planning and Decision Making for Looked After Children in Scotland - Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007'. The research examined the records held by SCRA and the courts on 200 children, and also involved interviews and focus groups with decision makers in four local authorities. The research was due to be completed in early 2015/16 and the draft report will be submitted to the Scottish Government.

SCRA also completed research on Child Protection Orders (CPOs). This study examined the cases of 175 children to find out why the children came to have CPOs made and followed their outcomes in the six months after the CPOs. The research report was due to be published in 2015/16.

In October 2014, the University of Edinburgh/NSPCC Child Protection Research Centre and SCRA were successful in obtaining funding from the Sir Halley Stewart Trust for a 20 month collaborative research project: 'Assessment and Support of the Sibling Relationships of Long-Term Fostered and Adopted Children.'

Research was also carried out on: 'The Use of Non-Disclosure Orders and Rule 16'. This used a mixed method approach to gain an understanding of how Children's Hearings and Reporters are applying Non-Disclosure provisions.

SCRA carried out a national survey of the 'Well-being of Supported Young People in Scotland'. The survey questionnaire was developed with young people (including SCRA's Modern Apprentices) and is based around the SHANARRI outcome indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included). A number of organisations helped recruit young people to help with the survey design and with taking part in the survey, these are: Aberlour, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Includem, Kibble Education and Care Centre, Good Shepherd Centre, and Who Cares? Scotland. The survey was carried out between 16 March and 15 May 2015. The survey findings will be available in 2015/16.

Lastly, in March 2015, SCRA carried out a national survey of children, young people, parents and carers coming to Hearings. This is the third such survey by SCRA to assess its performance, and identify areas of good practice and those for improvement. There were 520 participants – 313 adults, 108 young people and 99 children (including 24 three to six years olds). The report will be published in 2015/16.

## Our property

SCRA is responsible for providing suitable and sufficient facilities to accommodate Children's Hearings. The continuing economic and budget pressures have resulted in a continuing drive to manage our property assets more effectively and efficiently, with an ongoing challenge from the organisation to reduce costs wherever possible, whilst maintaining service levels.

Property is central to the delivery of our services and is one of the organisation's key areas of expenditure. In recent years significant steps have been taken to reduce the size of SCRA's estate and surplus property is made available either for sale or lease. The former Stirling office and Hearing Centre is currently in the process of being sold and the capital receipt that will be realised will fund priority capital projects.

The successful integration of our operational teams in Hamilton will create efficiencies for the organisation, the first of which has been the release of surplus office space. This space will be occupied by another Scottish Government body and will significantly reduce our operating costs in this location.

Key locations identified with Localities for delivering improved Hearing and staff facilities are Inverness, Lerwick and Stornoway. In each of these towns suitable premises have been identified and projects commenced to provide modern, accessible, fit for purpose facilities that meet the needs of the Children's Hearings System. Providing a suitable facility in Perth has also been a priority for a number of years. A building has been acquired and initial works completed to the exterior of the property. Subject to securing additional funding, it is intended to renovate the building to create a replacement Hearing facility.

In addition to our core owned and leased properties, SCRA provides Hearings from Outreach Centres. These are primarily premises that are hired on an "as needed" basis. In conjunction with the Localities a review of current outreach provision was completed during the year and this forms the basis of discussions with Children's Hearings Scotland for a joint strategy on Outreach Hearing Centre provision.

To deliver efficiencies on our property operating costs, a collaborative Facilities Management contract was awarded to Carillion Plc in early 2014. Through the advantages of entering into a large collaborative contract this is expected to deliver a more competitive cost to the organisation. During the first full year of operation, SCRA has been working hard with Carillion to ensure that improved levels of service are provided across a range of repair and cleaning activities.

## Technology

Throughout 2014/15 we have continued to devote significant resources to the development of our electronic Case Management System. Following extensive consultation throughout the

organisation, an ambitious programme of improvement to the system's 'user interface' was undertaken which resulted in changes to almost every aspect of the system.

Additional letters were also added to the suite of communications available. The main objective of the programme - which was undertaken primarily by our in-house IT team - was to improve the user-experience of the system; making screens more consistent, intuitive and easier to use.

In addition to this, the changes have also improved the quality of the data in the system, eliminated a number of common errors, and greatly improved its consistency with the provisions and terminology of the 2011 Act.

The significant level of change implemented means we have established a skilled team capable of further developing the system in line with the organisation's strategic objectives. Operational staff have received these changes warmly and will shortly have the opportunity to reflect more detailed views in a user satisfaction survey.

In addition to changes to the Case Management System, this year saw the roll out of a new generation of more powerful and up to date Multi-Function Devices to our operational teams, and preparation for a planned roll-out of public Wi-Fi to our offices in line with our digital agenda, with a pilot Wi-Fi project getting underway in Stirling in April 2014.

Work has also been undertaken around supporting and encouraging electronic communication with partner agencies and this area will continue to be an important focus of our activity over the coming year.

## Information Governance

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) carried out an audit of SCRA's compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) in March 2014. The ICO issued its report on 16 June 2014, which concluded that there was 'a reasonable level of assurance that processes and procedures are in place and in delivering data protection compliance'. The Executive Summary of the audit report was published on the ICO's web site on 27 June 2014.

The ICO's audit made 29 recommendations, and SCRA produced an action plan to meet these. SCRA submitted its progress report to the ICO on 23 December 2014. The ICO responded on 13 February 2015: 'we are pleased to see that you have made significant progress in respect of our recommendations' - 18 recommendations were complete, 10 partially complete and one not yet started.

SCRA has continued to embed good information governance across the organisation and this is led out by the Information Governance Leads in each Locality. The Information Governance Leads Group meets every two months, and in 2014/15 its main focus was on the management and retention of children's case information – held in paper case files and electronically in SCRA's Case Management System.

In October 2014, in recognition of our shared responsibility across the Children's Hearings System, SCRA and Children's Hearings Scotland established an Information Governance Group. The aim of

the group is to improve information governance across both organisations, ensure best practice and effective information governance in the operation of Children's Hearings and identify opportunities for partnership working.

SCRA continues to monitor the numbers of cases with Non-Disclosure conditions and breaches of these. In 2014/15, there were 44 incidents where Non-Disclosure Orders were breached. These 44 incidents involved 55 Orders. The most common source of breaches of Non-Disclosure Orders in 2014/15 was SCRA with 23 incidents, followed by social work/local authority with nine incidents and health sources with six incidents.

SCRA received 26 requests under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) in 2014/15, and took on average 11 working days to respond to these against a statutory time limit of 20 working days. There were no requests to review how SCRA had dealt with FOISA requests and no appeals to the Scottish Information Commissioner.

Thirty eight requests for personal data were made to SCRA in 2014/15. These were dealt with as Subject Access Requests under the terms of the DPA. SCRA took on average 18 days to respond to these requests against a statutory time limit of 40 calendar days.

## Working in partnership

SCRA remains committed to working with our partners in the Hearings System to improve our processes and services to children, young people and families. During 2014/15 a significant amount of progress was made.

SCRA has supported and influenced the development of the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) in providing strategic leadership to the Hearings System. Through that group, SCRA developed and launched national inter-agency practice guidance on Non-Disclosure and we are leading the workstream developing the links between the Hearings System and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

As part of this work, in February 2015 SCRA published a new guidance document providing partners with information about making a referral to the Reporter.

We recognise the essential partnership we have with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) and have continued to strengthen and develop the Hearings Management Group as a key mechanism for improving practice between our agencies. In addition we have created a joint Information Governance group to develop collaborative policies and understanding in this area between our organisations.

Through the Principal Reporter, regular meetings have been established between SCRA, CHS and Social Work Scotland to develop common understandings and solutions to practice issues effecting all three agencies.

We have regular meetings with other key partners in the Hearings System such as CHILDREN 1st

regarding Safeguarders, the Scottish Legal Aid Board, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Police Scotland. We have contributed to training sessions on the Hearings System organised by the Judicial Institute and have joined a working group looking at evidence and procedure changes within the justice system.

In addition in 2014/15, our Principal Reporter/Chief Executive joined the Scottish Government Justice Board bringing an improved children's perspective to the Board's work. 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 permanence planning and contact.

In legislative terms, focus shifted to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and SCRA was heavily involved in discussions and working groups examining the corporate parenting and GIRFEC provisions and their associated guidance.

In the summer of 2014, we received tremendous support from our partners as we implemented contingency plans for the Commonwealth Games. One of the key festival venues during the Games was in the Merchant City, right on the doorstep of our Hearings Centre in Glasgow. As we were concerned about potential noise and traffic/travel disruption during this period, we moved Hearings to venues in other parts of the city and further afield. The aim was to minimise any impact on children, young people and families.

During 2014/15, SCRA and our partners started to develop a Digital Strategy for the Children's Hearings System. This is an ambitious five year plan which aims to improve the services to children, young people and families and increase participation through the use of digital technology. The strategy will be launched in 2015/16.

# Our statistics in 2014/15 ...



SCRA transitioned to its new Case Management System during late 2012 and early 2013, in addition, the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 was implemented during June 2013.

These changes have impacted the types of information that we are able to gather and have affected the ability to provide historical comparisons in some cases.

Estimated error margins are available through our Statistical Analysis Report which is published on our website.

This section of our Annual Report includes:

- The number of children and young people referred to the Reporter
- The grounds on which children and young people are referred
- Reporter decisions
- Children's Hearing decisions
- Compulsory measures of supervision

## Children and young people referred to the Reporter

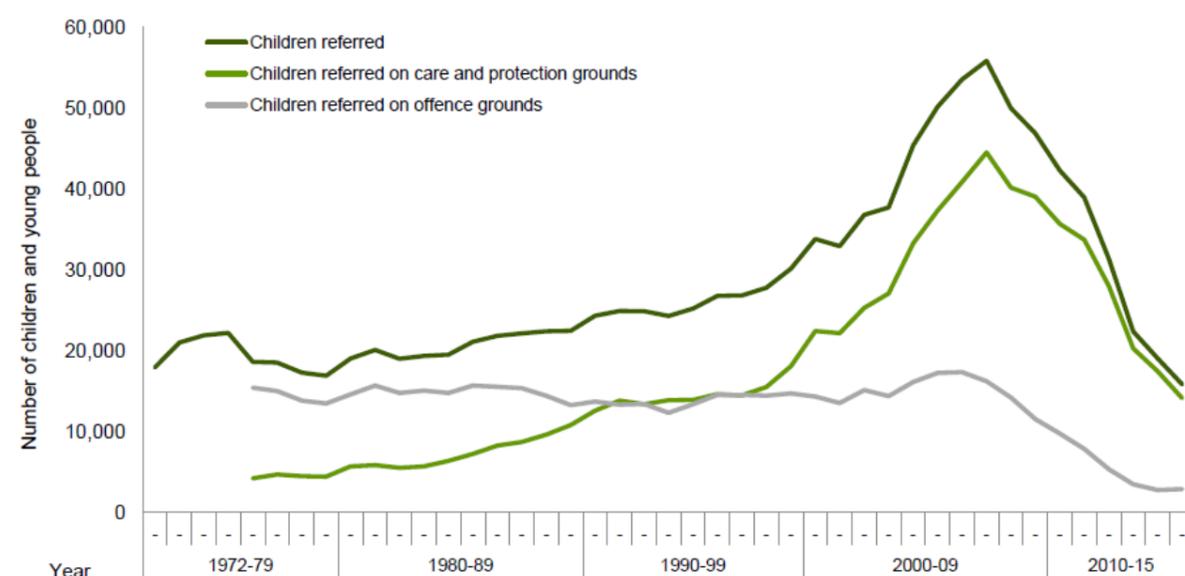
In 2014/15, 15,858 children and young people in Scotland were referred<sup>1</sup> to the Reporter:

- 14,141 on non-offence (care and protection) grounds.
- 2,891 on offence grounds<sup>2</sup>.

The figure of 15,858 represents 1.7% of all children and young people in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. Within this, 1.6% of all children and young people were referred on care and protection grounds and 0.7% of all children and young people aged between eight<sup>4</sup> and 16 years were referred on offence grounds.

The number of children and young people referred to the Reporter has decreased for the eighth consecutive year. Figure 1 illustrates the changing trends within the system over the past 43 years. It is important to note that counting methodologies have changed over time so current and historical counts are not necessarily comparative.

Figure 1. Children and young people referred by year



\* please note that offence and non-offence splits are unavailable prior to 1976.

## Child Protection Orders

2014/15 saw a continuation in the high numbers of children and young people with Child Protection Orders (CPOs) received, with 754 having CPOs in the year. 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.

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 1,174 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 2014 from the General Register Office for Scotland.
4. Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children and young people under eight years cannot be referred for offending.

Proportionately, more CPOs are granted for very young children, reflecting their greater vulnerability and requirement for immediate protection. Of the 754 children and young people with CPO referrals to Children's Hearings in 2014/15, 186 (24.7%) were aged under 20 days at the date of receipt and 372 (49.3%) were aged under two years.

## Referrals received

In 2014/15, 27,538 referrals were received by the Reporter, a 14.8% decrease from 2013/14 levels. Of these referrals, 20,606 were received for care and protection grounds and 6,932 for offence grounds.

Most children and young people (72.9%) were referred only once in the year, with 5.1% referred five or more times. The police were the main source of referrals, comprising 71.5% of all referrals to the Reporter in 2014/15, 98.8% of all offence referrals and 62.3% 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 67(2) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, and are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of children and young people referred in 2014/15 by grounds of referral

Grounds of referral	Total
(a) Lack of parental care	6,017
(b) Victim of a Schedule 1 offence	2,143
(c) Close connection with a Schedule 1 offender	503
(d) Same household as a child victim of Schedule 1 offender	525
(e) Exposure to persons whose conduct likely to be harmful to child	1,479
(f) Close connection with a person who has carried out domestic abuse	2,742
(g) Close connection with Sexual Offences Act offender - Parts 1, 4 & 5	157
(h) Accommodated and special measures needed	117
(i) Permanence order and special measures needed	7
(j) Offence	2,872
(k) Misuse of alcohol	285
(l) Misuse of a drug	147
(m) Child's conduct harmful to self or others	1,643
(n) Beyond control of a relevant person	1,371
(o) Failure to attend school without reasonable excuse	1,125
(q) Force to marry (or same household as such a child)	8
<b>Total children and young people referred*</b>	<b>15,858</b>

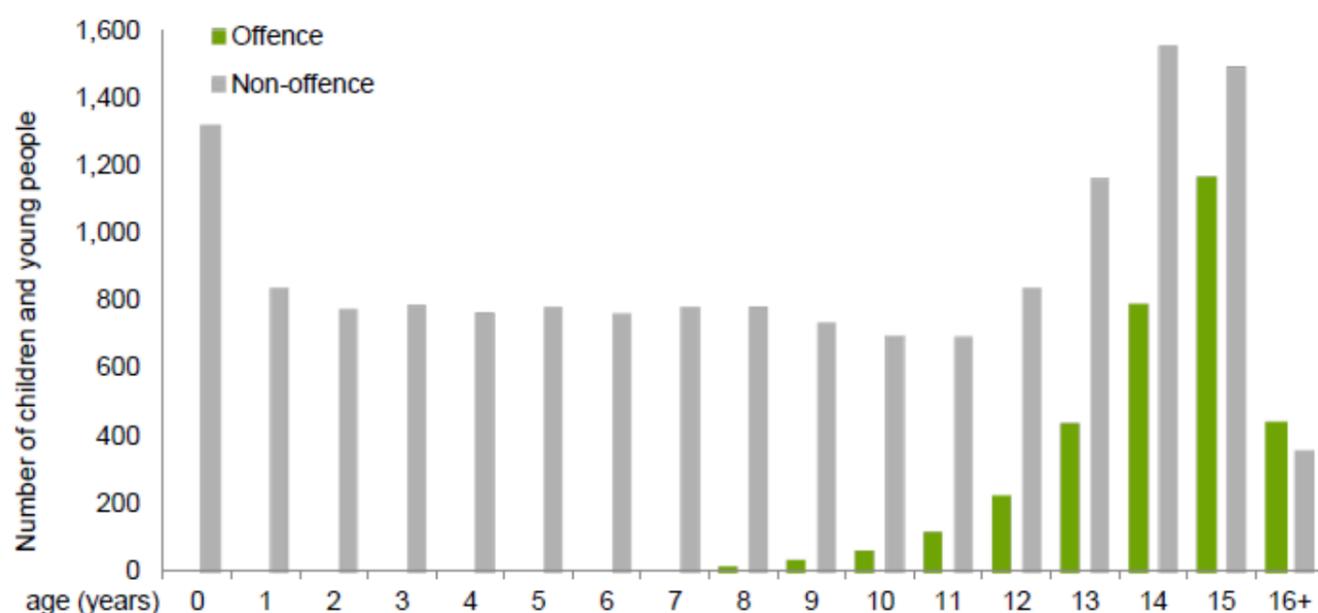
\*A child or young person may be referred to the Reporter more than once in the year on the same and/or different grounds. The total counts every child or young person once.

'Lack of parental care' was the most common ground of referral followed by 'offence', 'close connection with person who has carried out domestic abuse' and 'victim of a Schedule 1 offence'.

In total, the 2,891 children and young people referred on offence grounds in 2014/15 were referred for 9,610 alleged offences on 6,932 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. Fourteen and fifteen were the most common ages of referral for both care and protection and offence grounds.

Figure 2. Age of children and young people referred on offence\* and non-offence grounds in 2014/15



\* 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 or young person 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+<sup>5</sup> years.

## 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 or young person requires compulsory measures of supervision, and there is sufficient evidence to support one or more grounds for referral, the child or young person will be referred to a Children's Hearing.

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 young person, or to take no formal action because an other intervention is more appropriate.

Table 2 shows that 22.9% of children and young people (3,889) 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 2014/15\*

Reporter decision	Non-offence	Offence	Total
Arrange Children's Hearing (on new grounds)	3,745	232	3,889
No indication of a need for compulsory measures	5,280	1,237	6,306
No Hearing - measures already in place	2,709	1,263	3,319
No Hearing - refer to local authority	3,606	466	3,905
No Hearing - insufficient evidence to proceed	1,098	208	1,300
No Hearing - family have taken action	840	87	907
No Hearing - diversion to other measures	29	55	81
Total children and young people referred**	15,275	2,967	16,954

\* Data in this table relates to cases decided in 2014/15 as opposed to referrals received in 2014/15.

\*\* 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 or young person once.

## Pre-Hearing Panels and Children's Hearings held

In 2014/15, 4,305 Pre-Hearing Panels (PHPs) and 36,904 Children's Hearings were held. The most common reason for holding a PHP was to consider excusing a child or young person from the obligation to attend a Hearing, with 71.5% of PHPs having this for at least one reason in a meeting. For Hearings, almost two-thirds (64.5%) included a review of a Compulsory Supervision Order.

Table 3. Number of Pre-Hearing Panels and Children's Hearings held

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Number of PHPs/BMs	3,576	3,683	5,601	4,305
Number of Children's Hearings	40,708	38,316	36,200	36,904

\* Due to the introduction of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 in June 2013, 2013/14 information uses a combination of PHPs and Business Meetings (BMs) from the 1995 Act to provide an overall figure. Years prior to 2013/14 are calculated using BM volumes.

## Applications to the Sheriff for proof

If not all the grounds which form the basis of the Children's Hearing are accepted by children, young people or relevant persons, or the child or young person does not understand the grounds, the Children's Hearing may direct the Reporter to apply to the Sheriff to establish the grounds for referral<sup>6</sup>. In 2014/15, 3,054 applications were concluded, of which 91.8% 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.

5. Young people aged 16 and 17 years can be referred to the Reporter if they are still subject to Compulsory Supervision Orders, are remitted by a court or have an open case which started prior to their sixteenth birthday.

6. Under sections 93 and 94 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

## 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 them and/or address their behaviour.

### Child Protection Orders and interim orders

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 2014/15, Children's Hearings:

- Considered<sup>7</sup> the cases of 754 children and young people with CPOs under sections 45 and 46 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011; and
- Made 2,670 children and young people subject to interim orders as defined under sections 86 and 140 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

As with CPOs, interim order numbers are highest for very young children (aged under one), but they are also common for older children and young people.

### Compulsory Supervision Orders

Compulsory Supervision Orders (CSOs) 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 CSOs.

In 2014/15, 3,223 children and young people had a new CSO made on grounds referred, with 10,733 children and young people subject to CSOs at 31 March 2015. This is 1.2%<sup>8</sup> of all children and young people in Scotland, see Table 4.

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

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of children and young people	13,093	12,514	11,420	10,733

7. 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.

8. % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2014 from the General Register Office for Scotland.

The number of children and young people subject to CSOs has decreased for a fifth consecutive year. The most common ages of children and young people subject to CSOs continue to be 14 and 15 years. The types of CSOs in place at 31 March 2015 are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. CSOs in place at 31 March 2015

Types of CSO	Number of children and young people
With parent/relevant person	4,751
With other approved foster parent	3,106
With relative/friend - other	1,294
With relative/friend - approved foster parent	661
Children's unit	352
Residential school	247
Other residential placement	234
Other	35
Other non-residential placement	19
None recorded	34
Total	10,733

### Secure Authorisations made by Children's Hearings

Secure Authorisations can be made as conditions of interim orders or CSOs where the child or young person presents a risk to themselves or others<sup>9</sup>. In 2014/15, 142 children and young people had Secure Authorisations made as conditions of CSOs, while 171 children and young people had Secure Authorisations made as conditions of interim orders.

### Appeals

Children and young people and/or their relevant persons can appeal to the Sheriff against decisions made by Children's Hearings. In 2014/15, 860 children and young people had appeals concluded, with 65.2% having Hearings' decisions upheld (i.e. the appeal was refused) 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 require the reporter to arrange a Hearing (for any purpose for which a Hearing can be arranged).

In addition, applications can be made to the Sheriff to recall or vary the conditions on a CPO. 26 children and young people had applications to recall or vary CPOs in the year.

9. The full criteria by which Secure Authorisations can be made are set out in sections 83(5) and 83(6) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

# Our Board in 2014/15 ...

## SCRA Board

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.

## Chair

Carole Wilkinson (re-appointed 2014)

## Board Members

Malcolm Dickson (re-appointed 2012)

Andrew Miller (re-appointed 2012)

Bernadette Docherty (re-appointed 2014)

Andrew Menzies (appointed March 2013)

Douglas Yates (appointed July 2013)

Catherine Robertson (appointed November 2013)

Anela Anwar (appointed December 2014)

More information about our Board, including a full Register of Board Members' Interests, can be found on our website at [www.scra.gov.uk](http://www.scra.gov.uk)

## Looking ahead – reflecting on 2015/16 so far...

In 2015/16 the Children's Hearings System will continue to develop, adapt and improve in the way that it has done since its inception back in 1971. SCRA wants to be at the forefront of that change and improvement.

We particularly want to see tangible improvements to the experience of children and young people coming to a hearing – the quality of their experience, the care and respect with which they are treated and the extent to which they truly feel that their views have been heard, listened to and taken into consideration by everyone involved with them throughout their journey in the Hearings System.

We started a really comprehensive programme of work on this over a decade ago – with our many partners – and we have undoubtedly made progress – with more, much more still to be done. In the course of this year we intend to bring forward proposals for young people to be more engaged in the scrutiny and strategic direction of the Hearings System through the development of a Young Peoples' Board based on experience and models elsewhere.

We will assess the learning from our pilot project in Glasgow aimed at remodelling hearing rooms – an issue raised year on year by young people – and assess how we can start to roll some of this out.

We will continue to develop alongside young people, new tools, methods and approaches to participation, engagement and communication. We will be in the second year of being a proud corporate parent and trying all the time to get better and more effective at doing this role well. We look forward to being part of a range of other new changes being implemented in relation to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 such as the child's plan, the enhanced role of universal services through the named person, the focus on integrated service planning and delivery. Through the work we are leading on via Getting It Right in the Hearings System, SCRA will ensure it contributes constructively to these new developments.

In 2015/16 we hope to make progress with the modernisation of the Hearings System through the Inter-agency Digital Strategy. This represents a potential significant investment in a digitally enabled Hearings System for all of those people who have a role – including children, young people, their families and the range of professionals who support them.

This has real potential to upgrade and transform the way we use quickly developing digital technologies – to make things quicker, more efficient – but also opening up new channels of communication. The strategy will have a lifespan over five years – but in this next year we hope to bring forward some real tangible benefits to all.

Ensuring that Scotland can have confidence in its Hearings System is the responsibility of all who contribute to it in whatever way. We are at an important point in ensuring that all of the intended outcomes of the 2011 Act are being delivered.

SCRA has played a significant role in the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) and this will continue in 2015/16. The CHIP is an exciting multi-agency forum and a platform for the long term delivery of joined up improvements in Scotland's Hearings System.

SCRA's data and research services continue to make a significant contribution to evidence for change and improvement across the Hearings System. Part of the work of CHIP is driving forward how we use this evidence in day to day delivery and using it to underpin our cross-sector learning and development programmes.

Inevitably 2015/16 brings ongoing financial challenges to public bodies and SCRA is no exception. We have engaged in organisational change, staff reductions and efficiency over the last eight years – driving new programmes to deliver the best possible value, whilst maintaining safe, effective services for children and young people. This gets harder each year and 2015/16 will be no exception to that.

Carole Wilkinson,  
SCRA Chair

Neil Hunter,  
SCRA Principal Reporter/Chief Executive



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