



Children who are on Supervision Requirements for five or more years



Executive Summary

Supervision Requirements are the main legal means by which children become looked after in Scotland. Children are placed on Supervision Requirements when compulsory measures are needed to protect them and/or address their behaviour. The numbers of children with Supervision Requirements are increasing. In 2009-10, 13,829 children had Supervision Requirements.

The Supervision Requirements of 2,150 children have lasted for five or more years. It is known that looked after children generally have poorer outcomes in life than other children.

This analysis was carried out by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration on data it holds. The aim of this analysis is to help our understanding of children who have had Supervision Requirements lasting for five or more years and from this clarify what more we need to know on the outcomes for these children.

Main findings

Referrals to the Reporter

- 20% of children had no referrals to the Reporter over their five or more years of their Supervision Requirements.
- 80% had referrals, and the overall numbers of referrals increased by 28% over the period on Supervision Requirements.

Types of Supervision Requirements

- After five years, 61% of children who were first placed on Supervision Requirements with their parents were accommodated away from home.
- 60% of those first placed in foster care were in foster care after five years. Very few been returned to their parents.

Number of moves

- 19% had no moves between placements over their five (plus) years on Supervision Requirements.
- Of the 81% of children who experienced moves, on average they experienced 2.9 moves. 41% had three or more moves over the five years.

This analysis raises questions of the consequences to children of being on Supervision Requirements for large parts of their lives.

1. Introduction

For most children who are looked after, the legal basis of this is a Supervision Requirement (Scottish Government, 2010). Looked after children, on average, have poorer educational outcomes than others, and this is especially the case for children looked after at home (SWIA, 2010). They also are more likely as adults to have negative experiences such as homelessness and mental health problems (Audit Scotland, 2010).

Children's Hearings make Supervision Requirements when they decide that a child is in need of compulsory measures to protect them and/or address their behaviour. Local authorities have a statutory responsibility to implement Supervision Requirements and any conditions attached to them.

A Supervision Requirement must be reviewed by a Children's Hearing at least every 12 months. Early reviews of Supervision Requirements can be held at request of social work, parents or the child.

The numbers of children with Supervision Requirements have increased by 25% over the past five years to 13,829 children at 31 March 2010. (SCRA, 2010).

15.5% of children who have Supervision Requirements have had them for at least five years. In 2010, this was 2,150 children. Little is known about the outcomes for children of being on long-term Supervision Requirements. This analysis was carried out to help our understanding of children who have had Supervision Requirements lasting for five or more years and from this clarify what more we need to know on the outcomes for these children.

This report explores the characteristics and histories in the Children's Hearings System of children who have had Supervision Requirements for at least five years. The information used for this report is held in SCRA's Referrals Administration Database (RAD)¹ and was generated from SCRA's Data Warehouse. Further analysis was carried out using MS EXCEL.

The information presented relates to children who were subjects of Supervision Requirements at 31 March 2010 and who had been continuously on Supervision for at least the five previous years.

¹ RAD's first full year in operation was 2003.

2. Age² and gender of children with Supervision Requirements for five or more years

Of the 2,150 children, just over a half (58%) are 12 to 17 years old. All on the children have therefore been subjects of Supervision Requirements for significant periods of their childhoods.

Twenty eight (1.3%) are five years and 93 (4.3%) are six years old – this means that they have been on Supervision Requirements virtually their whole lives.

The average age of children with Supervision Requirements of five years or more is 11.9 years old.

955 are female and 1,195 are male. Numbers of males and females are similar for the under 12 year olds – 428 girls, 475 boys. Males are more represented in the over 12 year olds – 720 boys and 527 girls.

3. Numbers in each local authority area

Across Scotland 15.5% of children on Supervision have had their Supervision Requirements for five or more years. For the population under 16 years old, 2.4 of every 1,000 children in Scotland are on long-term Supervision Requirements.

There is variation across Scotland in the numbers of children on Supervision Requirements for five or more years (this is shown in detail at Annex 1):

- Glasgow has the highest number of children on long-term Supervision Requirements – 668 children, which is 21.4% of all children with Supervision Requirements. At 6.9 per 1,000 children, Glasgow also has the highest proportion of its under 16 year old population on Supervision for five or more years.
- Scottish Borders has the lowest proportion of children on Supervision for five or more years at 5.1% of children with Supervision Requirements. This is 0.3 per 1,000 children in Scottish Borders.

4. Referrals to the Children's Reporter

Children are referred to the Reporter if they are considered to require compulsory measures of supervision³. In 2009-10, 42, 532 children were referred to the Reporter. Most children (35,735) were referred on non-offence grounds, most commonly because of lack of parental care or because they were victims of abuse or neglect; 10,012 children were referred on offence grounds (SCRA, 2010).

² Age at 31 March 2010

³ s52(2) and s53 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

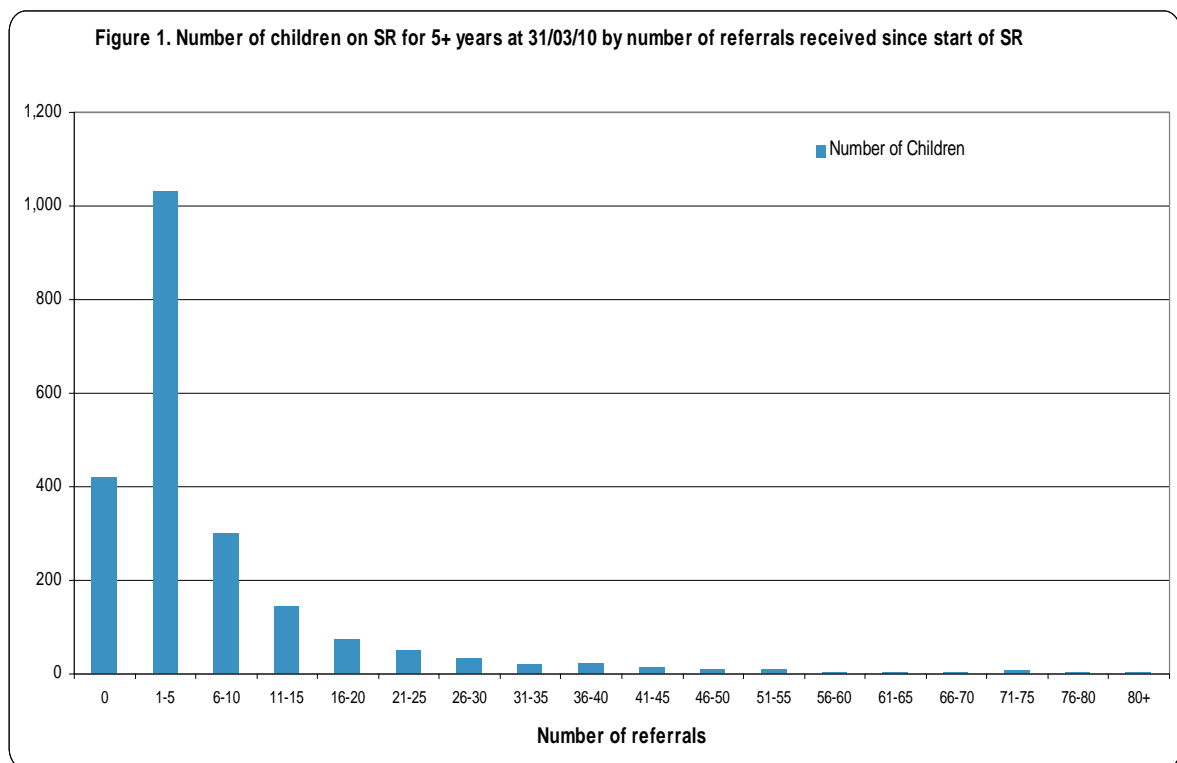
Children with Supervision Requirements are subject to compulsory measures to protect them and/or address their behaviour. The numbers of referrals to the Reporter after a child is placed on a Supervision Requirement may give an indication of its effectiveness:

20% (n=420) of the 2,150 children had no referrals in the five or more years from the start of their Supervision Requirements.

1,730 children (80%) were referred at least once over their five or more years on Supervision:

- 59% (n=1,029) had between one and five referrals;
- 17% (n=299) had between six and 10 referrals; and
- 23% (n=402) had over 10 referrals.

Figure 1 shows the numbers of referrals to the Reporter for the 2,150 children over the five or more years they had Supervision Requirements.



It is also possible to look at the numbers of referrals to the Reporter every year for children who have long-term Supervision Requirements.

Table 1 shows the numbers of referrals in each year on Supervision Requirements for the 1,730 children who had referrals.

Table 1. Number of referrals per year

Year of SR	Number of referrals	Referrals/child
0 - 1 year (1 st year)	1,609	0.93
1 - 2 years (2 nd year)	1,754	1.01
2 – 3 years (3 rd year)	1,815	1.05
3 – 4 years (4 th year)	1,943	1.12
4 – 5 years (5 th year)	2,058	1.2

N=1,730 in each year

This shows that over the course of the five years of the Supervision Requirements, the numbers of referrals to the Reporter increased in each year. Overall numbers of referrals increased by 28% over the five years the children had been on Supervision Requirements.

5. Types of first Supervision Requirements and those after five years

The most common type of Supervision Requirement is at home with parent(s)/relevant person(s), supported by services. This is the case for all children with Supervision Requirements – 52%⁴. It is also the case for those who go onto be on Supervision for five or more years when they were first placed on Supervision Requirements – 56%.

The types of Supervision Requirement changed over time. The numbers of children whose type of Supervision Requirement was at home with their parents was reduced by almost a half over the five years. Instead, foster care was the most common type of Supervision Requirement after five years (Table 2).

⁴ i.e. 7,136 of the 13,829 children subject to Supervision Requirements in 2009-10 (SCRA, 2010)

Table 2. First types of Supervision Requirements and those after five years

SR type*	First SR		SR after 5 years	
	Number of children	%	Number of children	%
Parent/relevant person	1,216	56	644	30
Foster parent	550	26	763	35
Relative/friend (other)	209	10	225	10
Relative/friend (approved foster parent)	149	7	167	8
Local authority home	19	0.9	117	5
Not recorded	16	0.7	42	2
Residential school	10	0.5	113	5
Other	3	0.1	17	0.8
Other residential placement	3	0.1	45	2
Independent living	0	0	12	0.6
Total	2,150		2,150	

*Categories with less than five children are not included

Children whose first type of Supervision Requirement was at home

Looking specifically at the destinations of the 1,216 children who began their Supervision Requirements at home with their parents, after five years:

- 39% (n=471) are at home with their parents
- 31% (n=372) are in foster care
- 8% (n=94) are with relatives/friends
- 7% (n=86) are with relatives/friends (approved foster parents)
- 6% (n=71) are in residential schools
- 4% (n=53) are in local authority homes
- 2% (n=26) are in residential placement (other)
- 0.5% (n=6) are living independently

Children whose first type of Supervision Requirement was in foster care

Most of the 550 children, whose first type of Supervision Requirement was with foster parents, were in foster care after five years:

- 60% (n=324) are in foster care
- 13% (n=69) are with their parents
- 7% (n=38) are in local authority homes
- 6% (n=31) are in residential schools
- 5% (n=30) are with relatives/friends (approved foster parents)
- 5% (n=29) are with relatives/friends (other)

Children whose first type of Supervision Requirement was with relatives or friends

Most children who were first placed on Supervision Requirements with relatives or friends (i.e. kinship care) remained within their families. After five years, the types of Supervision Requirements for the 209 children who were first placed with relatives or friends are:

- 36% (n=76) are with relatives/friends (other)

- 30% (n=63) are with their parents
- 12% (n=25) are in foster care
- 11% (n=22) are with relatives/friends (approved foster parents)
- 6% (n=12) are in local authority homes

6. Number of moves

Stability and continuity are among the key factors that lead to successful outcomes for looked after children and the Scottish Government has been encouraging local authorities to reduce the number of placement moves that children experience (Audit Scotland, 2010). There is a National Performance indicator of '*looked after with 3 or more placements*' that inspection agencies use to assess the performance of local authorities. In 2007-08, 31% of looked after children had experienced three or more placements (SWIA, 2010).

Number of moves for children on Supervision Requirements for five or more years

The number of changes in types of Supervision Requirements was used to estimate the number of moves the children had experienced⁵.

Children who had no moves

19% (416 children) had no moves over the five years or more they were on Supervision and were placed with:

- 52% (n=217) were children whose Supervision Requirement was with their parents
- 38% (n=158) were with foster carers
- 8% (n=32) were with relatives or friends (other)
- 1% (n=5) were with relatives/friends (approved foster parents)
- 1% (n=4) were in local authority homes.

Children who experienced moves

81% (1,734 children) experienced at least one move over the five or more years they were on Supervision Requirements. The average number of moves was 2.9.

41% (877 children) experienced three or more moves over the five or more years they had Supervision Requirements (Table 3). This is a higher proportion than the 31% of looked after children with three or more moves reported by SWIA (2010), but perhaps not surprising as the latter covers all looked after children.

⁵ These figures are likely to be underestimates as RAD only records type of Supervision Requirement, for example for a child in foster care a move to a new foster carer would still be recorded as 'foster parent'.

Table 3. Number of children who experienced three or more moves in the five years of their Supervision Requirements

First SR type	Number of children with 3 or more moves*	% of children
Parent/ relevant person	483	40%
Foster parent	198	37%
Relative/friend (other)	89	43%
Relative/friend (approved foster carer)	79	56%
Local authority home	11	65%
Residential school	6	67%
Totals	877	41%

* Categories with less than five children are not included
N=2150

Some children experienced many moves. The maximum number of moves was experienced by one child who had 16 moves over the five years of their Supervision Requirement.

It was relatively common for children to be moved between being in their parents' care and being looked after away from home over the course of their Supervision Requirements. This is difficult to quantify as each case is unique. The following examples of cases, where the first Supervision Requirement was with parents, are provided to try to illustrate the pathways between different types of placements that children can experience.

Boy now six years old

First placed on Supervision Requirement with his parents shortly after birth. Within a year he was moved to foster carers. He stayed in foster care for the next two years, and then moved back to his parents. He spent 18 months with his parents before being moved again to foster carers where he has remained.

Girl now six years old

First placed on Supervision Requirement with her parents shortly after birth. Within two months she was moved to foster carers. After seven months in their care, she was returned to her parents. She spent six months back in her parents' care before being placed with foster carers where she has stayed for past five years.

Girl now 15 years old

First Supervision Requirement was when she was nine years old and was with her parents. After two years she was moved to foster carers for a few months, then returned to her parents. After nine months she was moved from her parents to foster carers where she has remained.

Boy now six years old

First Supervision Requirement was made before he was one year old and was with his parents. When he was three years old he was moved to a relative/friend (approved foster carer) for a few months. He was then placed with foster carers (non-relatives) for another few months before being

returned to his parents. After six months with his parents he was moved again to foster carers (non-relatives), where he still is.

Boy now nine years old

When he was three years old he was placed on a Supervision Requirement with his parents. After less than a year he was moved to a local authority home for a few months before being moved to another residential placement. After six months in this placement he was moved to foster carers where he has lived for past five years.

Boy now 12 years old

Placed on Supervision Requirement with his parents when he was six. After a year he was moved to a residential school where he stayed for over two years before being moved to foster carers where he was remained.

Girl now 13 years old

First Supervision Requirement was when she was six years old. This was with her parents. After four years she moved to relative/friend (approved foster carer) for 18 months and was then returned to her parents.

Boy now seven year old

First placed on Supervision Requirement with his parents as a baby. After a year he was moved to relative/friend (approved foster carer) for 18 months and was then returned to his parents. He was in his parents' care for eight months before being placed with foster carers (non-relatives). After three months he was returned to relative/friend (approved foster carer) for eight months before being moved again to foster carers (non-relatives). After three years with his foster carers he was returned to relative/friend (approved foster carer).

7. Conclusions

Children on long-term Supervision Requirements have different experiences in terms of numbers of moves and lengths of placements. Only 19% experienced no moves. Types of Supervision Requirements changed over time with, after five years, only 30% of children were living with their parents. Many children on long-term Supervision Requirements will therefore have experienced separation from family and other primary care givers.

Twenty percent of children had no further referrals to the Reporter once they were placed on Supervision Requirements. This could raise questions on whether the Supervision Requirements were still needed.

Most children were referred to the Reporter during their period on Supervision Requirements, and overall the number of referrals increased. For some children then, their Supervision Requirements did not prevent the same or other concerns arising that required referral to the Reporter. It cannot be determined from these data whether these concerns were reduced or greater than they would have been had the children not continued to be on Supervision Requirements.

This analysis raises questions of the consequences to children of being looked after for large parts of their lives, and we need to understand more about this. SCRA intends to carry out research to investigate more fully the reasons why children remain on Supervision Requirements for five years and longer, and the impact of this on them.

8. References

Audit Scotland (2010). Getting it rights for children in residential care.
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (2010). Annual Report 2009-10.
Scottish Government (2010). Children Looked After Statistics 2008-09.
Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) (2010). Improving Social Work in Scotland.

Children with Supervision Requirements for five or more years – by local authority area

	% of total SRs in place	Number of children	Rate per 1,000 of population aged under 16 years	Average age (years)
Aberdeen City	15.0%	85	2.5	11.2
Aberdeenshire	12.0%	49	1.1	12.2
Angus	9.6%	22	1.1	10.8
Argyll & Bute	9.9%	24	1.6	11.3
Clackmannanshire	10.6%	22	2.3	11.3
Dumfries & Galloway	9.9%	38	1.5	12.3
Dundee	10.8%	58	2.4	11.5
East Ayrshire	11.7%	50	2.3	12.7
East Dunbartonshire	8.7%	11	0.6	11.8
East Lothian	14.5%	25	1.3	12.1
East Renfrewshire	10.6%	14	0.8	10.6
Edinburgh, City of	19.1%	193	2.7	11.2
Eilean Siar	6.1%	<5	0.7	12.7
Falkirk	7.1%	26	0.9	13.4
Fife	12.9%	88	1.4	12.4
Glasgow	21.4%	668	6.9	12.1
Highland	7.4%	31	0.8	12.6
Inverclyde	10.3%	31	2.2	10.7
Midlothian	17.1%	39	2.5	10.9
Moray	8.3%	14	0.9	11.6
North Ayrshire	18.5%	94	3.8	11.8
North Lanarkshire	14.4%	100	1.6	12.4
Orkney	7.1%	<5	0.6	13.0
Perth & Kinross	12.6%	18	0.7	11.5
Renfrewshire	17.4%	123	4.0	11.8
Scottish Borders	5.1%	6	0.3	10.8
Shetland	13.3%	<5	0.9	10.0
South Ayrshire	16.1%	52	2.9	12.9
South Lanarkshire	18.7%	113	2.0	11.6
Stirling	10.1%	19	1.2	13.8
West Dunbartonshire	13.6%	47	2.9	12.0
West Lothian	20.9%	76	2.2	11.7

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