

Child Protection

Focused on children and young people most at risk, SCRA's fundamental purpose is to:

- Make effective decisions about a need to refer a child/young person to a Children's Hearing
- Prepare for and participate in court proceedings where Statement of Grounds or Hearings findings are appealed, and ensure the wellbeing of children and young people – particularly vulnerable witnesses – are protected throughout the court process
- Support Panel Members (though we are not involved in making Hearing decisions) and ensure fair process in Hearings
- Enable children, young people and families to participate in Hearings
- Disseminate information and data to influence and inform the wider Children's Services community
- Provide premises for Hearings to take place
- Work collaboratively with partners to support and facilitate the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) agenda

Background

There are a number of different grounds on which a child or young person may be referred to the Children's Reporter. One of these is that they have allegedly committed an offence. The others relate to concerns about the child/young person's welfare and are collectively known as "care and protection" or "welfare" grounds. In 2016/17, 13,254 children/young people were referred to the Reporter on care and protection grounds.

The most common grounds of referral are: lack of parental care, close connection with a person who has carried out domestic abuse and exposure to persons whose conduct is likely to be harmful to a child.

Although the figures can fluctuate each year, there continues to be a significant number of children and young people who require protection and compulsory measures of supervision in their lives. This is particularly true of very young children and is a cause for concern.

Compulsory measures of supervision

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 these. As at 31 March 2017, there were 9,996 children/young people subject to CSO's - a decrease on the 2016 figure of 10,379.

Child Protection Orders

A Sheriff may grant a Child Protection Order to address emergency and/or high risk situations where measures need to be put in place immediately to protect a child/young person. For this measure to be considered, a child/young person must be at risk of significant harm.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Children and young people with CPOs	743	734	754	595	687

In 2016/17, Children's Hearings:

- Considered the cases of 687 children and young people with CPOs under sections 45 or 46 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

Proportionately, more CPOs are granted for very young children, reflecting their greater vulnerability and requirement for immediate protection. Of the 687 children and young people with CPO referrals to Children's Hearings in 2016/17, 177 (25.8%) were aged under 20 days at the date of receipt and 336 (48.9%) were aged under two years.

SCRA's research into the particular vulnerabilities of this very young age group discovered that most referrals come from the police, with relatively few coming from health or social work professionals.

Interim Orders

In 2016/17, Children's Hearings:

- Made 2,787 children and young people subject to 7,191 interim orders as defined under sections 86 and 140 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

Child Protection Research 2015

In 2015 SCRA published a research report looking at Child Protection Orders (CPOs) in Scotland. This research was carried out to look at why children come to have CPOs made and their outcomes following the CPOs. The research looked at SCRA's case information on 175 children, who had CPOs made between 1 October and 31 December 2013. The study covered: The child's history prior to the CPO - the CPO and the six months after the CPO. You can read the full report in the research section of our website.



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