

Summary briefing paper

Home Compulsory Supervision Orders -
effectiveness of decision making and outcomes



Home Compulsory Supervision Orders - effectiveness of decision making and outcomes - Research briefing

New research commissioned by the Scottish Government and carried out by the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration asks: Do Compulsory Supervision Orders where a child is looked after at home (home CSOs) work?

Home CSOs are the most common type of CSO made by Children's Hearings, and in 2018 there were 4,270 children and young people on a home CSO. In recent years, questions have been raised about the effectiveness of home CSOs but there has been little research on this or if home CSOs can improve outcomes for children and young people.

This research looked at this from the perspectives of those involved and most affected – young people, parents, social workers, Children's Panel Members and Children's Reporters; by following the cases of 343 children and young people from when their CSOs were made to up to two years later; and by a developing tool to measure levels and changes in wellbeing concerns for children and young people on home CSOs.

Home CSOs are being used:

- As a flexible legal measure to help keep children and young people safe.
- As part of a tiered approach to child protection.
- To provide children, young people and their families with the support they need.
- To provide a legal means to protect children and young people with the least level of interference in their family life.
- To secure a child's residence with one of their parents and control their contact with those who are a risk to them.
- To address a wide variety of circumstances and risks.

Home CSOs work best:

- As short to medium term measures.
- As tailored interventions to address specific needs.
- When they come at the right time for a child - but they can be made too late to make change needed, this is especially true for young people not going to school or involved in offending.
- When young people and their parents engage with the supports provided, but not all do so.

Decision making:

- Hearings are making decisions based on levels of risk, with home CSOs being made where risks are lower than for children who are accommodated, and terminated when risks reduce.
- Hearings decisions are dependent on the evidence provided to them. Most Hearings are making decisions on basis of no plans or only short term ones, with only a fifth of care plans presented to Hearings having clear timescales.
- The child's age in terms of attachment, resilience and ability to express a view; type of risk (cumulative vs. acute); and thresholds for intervention are key considerations in recommendations for and decisions to make home CSOs.

Outcomes for children and young people:

- Children and young people on home CSOs have complex individual needs. Young people involved in offending have higher levels of risk across all the wellbeing indicators than others on home CSOs.
- Outcomes for children and young people (measured as reductions in wellbeing concerns) improved over the time they were on home CSOs.

Could home CSOs be seen as a strength of the Scottish Children's Hearings System? This research shows that home CSOs have an integral place as part of a tiered and flexible approach to child protection, providing legal safeguards to regulate contact and secure residence, and helping young people and families get the support they need. Home CSOs can be seen to support the 'minimal intervention' principle of the Hearings System, and the 'proportionality' principle and right to family life of the European Convention of Human Rights. It may be time to re-consider how home CSOs are viewed within policy and guidance.

The full research finding are available in these reports:

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| Report 1. | Residence and contact conditions [link] |
| Report 2. | Wellbeing outcomes for children and young people [link] Care |
| Report 3. | planning and interventions [link] |
| Report 4. | Professional trust and relationships in Children's Hearings |
| Report 5. | [link] Decision making in Children's Hearings [link] |
| Report 6. | The views and experiences of young people and parents [link] |

Two further analyses of the data from this research will be reported separately. These are on 1. levels of educational attendance before and after home CSO made for young people referred to the Children's Reporter on non-attendance grounds; and 2. volume and seriousness of offending before and after home CSO made for young people referred on offence grounds.



Paul Rogon, Gillian Henderson and Indiya Kurlus
Scottish Children's Reporter Administration
March 2019

Dedicated to Dr Paul Rogon, 1979 to 2019, who led on this research.