

Alcohol and Drugs

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

Welfare

In 2019/20, 75 children and young people were referred to the Reporter because of concerns about their welfare caused by alcohol or drugs misuse (42 as a result of alcohol misuse and 39 as a result of drugs misuse)¹. Some children and young people were referred on both grounds in the year - this is out of 10,823 children and young people referred on non-offence grounds.

Children and young people referred on the ground of drug and/or alcohol misuse are recognised to be at risk and require intervention for their own care and protection.

Offending

Children/young people are also referred to the Reporter because they have been charged by the police for drugs or alcohol offences².

Parents

Parental alcohol and/or drug misuse is often a major factor in the backgrounds of children/young people referred to SCRA.

¹ Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 sections 67 (2) (k) and 67 (2) (l)
² Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 sections 67 (2) (j)

SCRA research has shown that for children on supervision for 5 or more years – the main reasons that they first came to the attention of services were due to the poor levels of care and protection they received from their parents. Over half had at least one parent with problematic drug and/or alcohol use³.

Parental drug and/or alcohol misuse is even more prevalent in the lives of very young children referred to SCRA. SCRA research found that two thirds of children under two years old referred to the Reporter have parents with drug and/or alcohol addictions. Alcohol was often the dominating factor in the domestic abuse incidents⁴ in these children’s homes, particularly when their father was intoxicated⁵.

3. *Children on Supervision Requirements for five or more years – decisions and outcomes (SCRA, 2012)*

4. *SCRA (2009) Children aged under two years referred to the Reporter*

5. *Care and Permanence Planning for Looked After Children in Scotland. Supplementary report – children assessed as at risk at or before birth (SCRA, 2011)*



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