

Survey of Children and Families in the Hearings System

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

The Children's Hearings System in Scotland is central to the protection of children and young people and in addressing their behaviour. Children who require compulsory measures of supervision are referred by Children's Reporters to Children's Hearings to decide what interventions are necessary to protect them and promote their welfare. 31,653 Children's Hearings were held in 2018/19.

SCRA research

In 2008 SCRA conducted its first national survey of children and families in the Children's Hearings System. SCRA's aim was to collect baseline information about how well it served its community and identify areas that needed improvement. The fourth national survey* was carried out in April 2016 in Hearings Centres in 30 towns and cities across Scotland. A total of 636 people took part – 388 adults, 122 young people and 126 children (including 26 three to six year olds).

Information for Hearings

- 71% of children had received a letter from SCRA to invite them to their Hearings, and 74% of them said it was either quite easy or very easy to understand.
- 91% of young people and 93% of adults had received a letter; and 84% of young people and 87% of adults had received their Hearings papers. 88% of young people and 82% of adults said they had received enough information for the Hearing.
- 33% of both children and young people said that they did not receive the All About Me form to help them give their views to their Hearing. Of those who received the form, 28% of young people and 67% of children had completed it.

Preparation for Hearings

- 63% of children, 92% of young people and 98% of adults said that they understood why they were at a Hearing.

- 56% of children, 61% of young people and 58% of adults said they had spoken to someone before coming to the Hearing. The majority of children, young people and adults who had done this said that it helped them prepare (at least a bit). Social workers were the professionals who were most often spoken to by all age groups. Children and young people also spoke to their parents, family members and carers; and adults to legal professionals. Very few participants had spoken to the Children's Reporter before the Hearing or indicated that they wanted to.

Participation in Hearings

- Children/young people were asked whether they had things to say at the Hearing, and 33% said that they did. When asked about their last Hearing, 45% of children/young people said that they had spoken at it.
- 77% of children/young people felt like they were the most important person at their last Hearing, and 76% said that they had given their views. Of those who gave their views, 74% said they had felt listened to.

Equalities

- 94% of children/young people and 98% adults felt that they were treated with dignity and respect by SCRA staff at the Hearings Centre.
- 93% of adults and children/young people said that they didn't need any help with accessing the Hearings Centre.
- 88% of adults and children/young people would prefer to come to Hearings on a weekday, and for the Hearing to be held in the morning (43% of adults and 36% of children/young people) or in the afternoon (30% of adults and 44% of children/young people).

Children's feelings about being at Hearings

81% of young children (three to six years) indicated that they were 'happy' to be at their Hearing, 12% said they were 'OK' and 7% said they were 'sad'. Of children aged seven to 11 years, 63% said they felt 'OK' to be at the Hearing, 33% felt 'happy', and 4% felt 'sad'.

You can view the full survey findings from the 2016 survey (and previous ones) on our website within the Publications/Research section.

*National Survey of children and families 2016 (SCRA, 2016)



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