

Advice for Journalists ...

SCRA is able to provide the following assistance to members of the media:

Research

SCRA regularly publishes research on children involved in the Children's Hearings System which can assist journalists by giving content and background information for articles. Recent research reports include: Background and outcomes for children aged 8-11 years old, Child Protection Orders, Well-being of supported young people in Scotland, Permanence Planning for Looked After Children and Children's Reporter Decision Making.

Publications

SCRA produces an Annual Report (usually published around the end of October) which includes statistics on children referred, performance reports and financial accounts. SCRA also produces some online statistics which provide performance figures broken down into local authority areas, and a Corporate Plan which details the focus and priorities of the organisation over a three year period.

Information

SCRA produces briefing packs, guidance leaflets, films and podcasts for children, young people and families. SCRA can provide factual information on the Children's Hearings System, including the roles and responsibilities of the Children's Reporter and Children's Hearings. SCRA provides a selection of translated materials for children and families.

Statistics

SCRA routinely publishes statistics on its website, such as SCRA's quarterly organisational performance reports and the online statistics mentioned above. Copies of all these reports, information material and research documents can be accessed at - www.scra.gov.uk

Attendance at Hearings

Journalists should contact SCRA's Press and Communications Manager about attendance at a Children's Hearing. There are strict procedures in place regarding media attendance at a Hearing. Please bring along a form of photographic identification, which clearly identifies you as a representative of a newspaper or news agency for presentation to reception staff on arrival and then the Chair of the Panel.

The Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, which came into force on Monday 24 June 2013, covers media attendance at Hearings and publication of proceedings by the media.

Section 78 of the 2011 Act sets out the procedure for media attendance at a Hearing - filming and recording at Hearings is prohibited.

The Hearing has the right to exclude a journalist from part or all of the Hearing, if either or both of the following two conditions are satisfied:

- 1) It is necessary to do so in the interests of the child, in order to obtain the child's views in relation to the case before the Hearing. This covers Hearings where the child is unwilling to speak while the journalist is present, either because the matters are of a personal nature, or the child is afraid the journalist will report his or her views.
- 2) The presence of the journalist is causing, or likely to cause, significant distress to the child.

The decision to exclude a journalist lies with the whole Hearing and the decision cannot be appealed against. The Hearing can decide whether or not to give an explanation if the decision is taken to exclude a journalist, but it is for the Chair of the Hearing to inform the journalist and give any explanation. They may decide not to give an explanation if the matters discussed were particularly sensitive.

Reporting restrictions - Identification

Journalists should be aware that there is legislation which governs the identification of children involved in the Children's Hearings System. Under section 182 of the 2011 Act, it is a criminal offence to publish any information either intended or likely to identify any child concerned or connected with the case, the proceedings or any appeal. It is also a criminal offence to identify the child's address or school. The legislation not only protects the referred child, but any other child who becomes involved in the proceedings, such as a sibling or a child witness. To publish includes: in newspapers, magazines, tv, radio, online, this includes social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

What SCRA cannot provide

Journalists must understand that due to the confidential and sensitive nature of the work undertaken by SCRA and its Reporters, we are not able to provide information on a number of areas. For example, SCRA cannot comment on individual cases or provide details of individual children or young people referred to the Reporter. In addition, we cannot comment on Reporter and Hearing decisions, or on evidence submitted to Reporters, Hearings or court.

Thank you for your co-operation

For further information, please contact:
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Ensuring positive futures for
children and young people in Scotland

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