

SCRA ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

Ensuring positive futures for children & young people in Scotland



ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16

This report covers the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

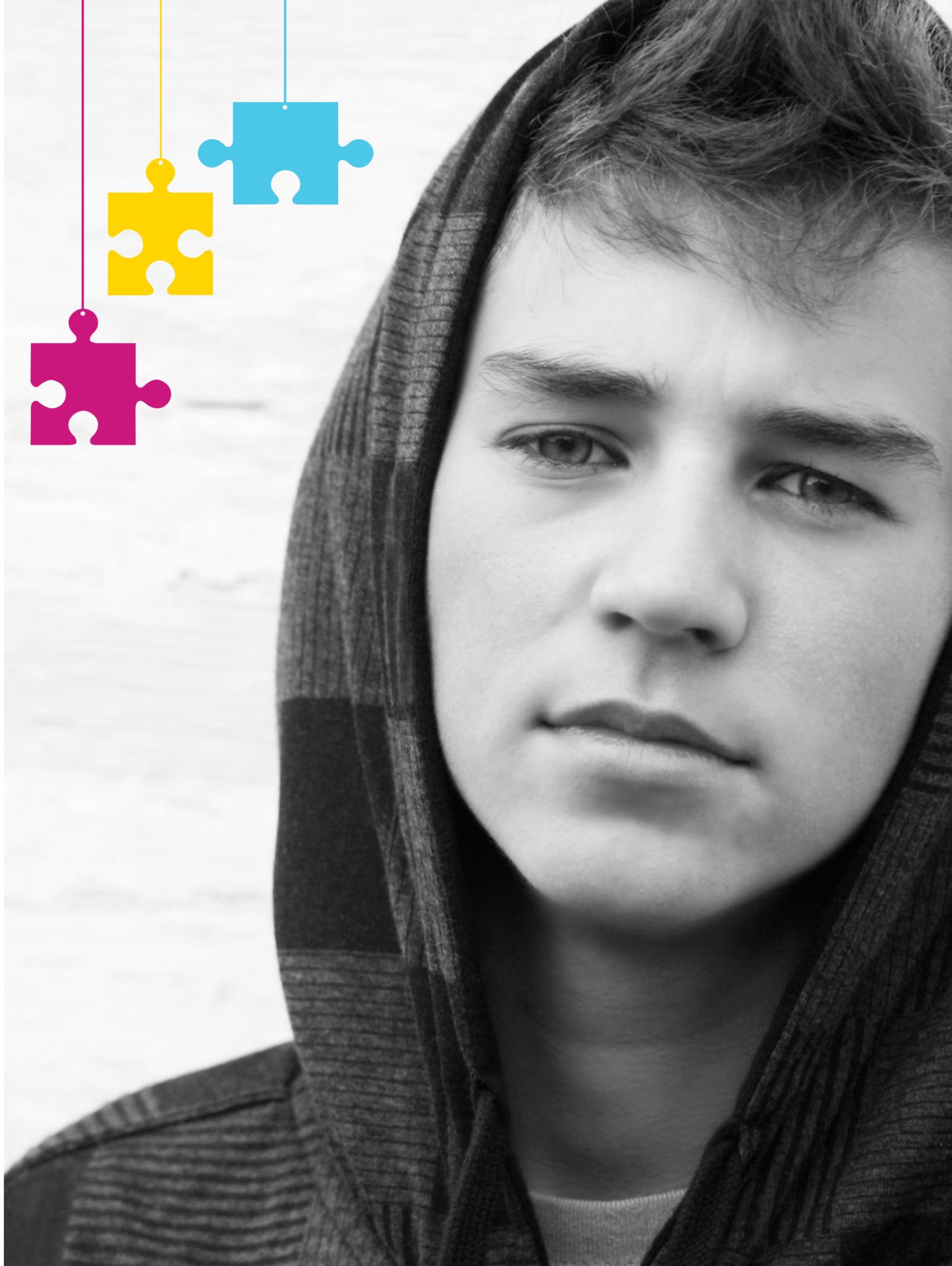
It summarises SCRA's achievements and performance during that period and presents statistical information about children and young people referred to the Reporter.

As part of our continued commitment to the environment and to save on paper and postage costs, we have not printed our Annual Report for several years now.

However, you can still view all our information online, including a full set of our annual audited accounts and our official statistics at www.scra.gov.uk



Produced by
SCRA's Press and Communications Team
October 2016



Foreword:

A welcome message from Carole Wilkinson our Board Chair, looking back on 2015/16.

Vision and Values:

SCRA's Vision, Values, Outcomes and Our Customer Commitment.

Year at a glance:

Some of our highlights from 2015/16.

SCRA's stories:

A round up of some of our key areas of progress and achievements in 2015/16.

Statistics 2015/16:

A summary analysis of data on the children and young people referred to the Reporter in 2015/16.

Our Board:

Information about our Board and members.

Looking ahead:

Reflecting on 2016/17 so far by Neil Hunter Principal Reporter/
Chief Executive

Foreword by Carole Wilkinson, SCRA's Chair

I reported in my foreword to last year's Annual Report the work our partners were undertaking to realise the aspirations and policy intentions of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. This endeavour has continued in 2015/16. There is a shared commitment to working together and a recognition we will only bring about real improvements to the Hearings System if we work in partnership.

Improving services for children and young people remains a key priority for SCRA. We continue to listen and learn from them, and whenever possible action their ideas. As an example of this children and young people now play a key role in designing new Hearings Centres, this is evident in the work on our new buildings in Stornoway and Inverness which opened at the end of 2015/16 and our pilot Hearing room in Glasgow which was launched in the summer of 2015.

During the last year, we also made significant progress in setting up a Young People's Board for the Hearings System, and hope to see this established and up and running later in 2016/17.

There continues to be a decrease in the number of children and young people referred to the Reporter on both offence and care and protection grounds. You will see in Our Statistics section on page 20, that in 2015/16, 15,329 children and young people in Scotland were referred to the Children's Reporter:

- 13,688 on non-offence (care and protection) grounds
- 2,761 on offence grounds

The figure 15,329 represents 1.7% of all children and young people in Scotland. Within this, 1.5% of all children and young people were referred on care and protection grounds and 0.6% of all children and young people aged between eight and 16 years were referred on offence grounds.

Although we have seen a decrease in the number of Child Protection Orders in 2015/16, there still remains concern about the number of very young children referred to the Reporter because of concerns about their welfare.

It has been another busy year for our staff, yet our workforce continue to meet the demands placed upon them. There is no doubt that the circumstances of the children, young people and their families being referred are profound, high risk and complex. This requires from our staff commitment, dedication and resilience - qualities they need in their determination to make a difference and improve lives.

The Board of SCRA acknowledges the hard work of our staff and thanks them for their contribution. We would also like to thank our partners for their shared commitment to driving forward change and rising to the challenges required to improve services.

This Annual Report hopefully gives you a flavour of our work in 2015/16 – we hope you find it interesting and informative.

Carole Wilkinson
SCRA Board Chair



Our Vision

Our vision sets out what we want the world to be like for children and young people in Scotland - "Vulnerable children and young people in Scotland are safe, protected and offered positive futures."

Our Values

Children and young people's experiences and opinions guide us. We are approachable and open. We bring the best of the past with us into the future to meet new challenges.

Our Strategies

Our strategies set out our key priorities for the year. In 2015/16 we had four key strategies – sustainability, improved quality and performance, customer focus and engagement.

Our customer commitment

This is the commitment we give to children, young people, families and our partners about how we will treat them and what they can expect from us.

Year at a Glance

Some of the highlights and key developments across SCRA in 2015/16 ...

April

We become a proud corporate parent on 1 April 2015

We launch our new Customer Commitment setting out our standards for customers

With input from young people, SCRA designs a new look All About Me form for over 12s

May

Our Business Plan for 2015/16 is published

Our new Going to a Hearing film for children and young people is launched

Launch of complaints e-learning course for all staff on Connect, our intranet

June

Our latest research report on Child Protection Orders is published

Made with young people, we launch a series of online podcasts for children and young people

We issue our annual online Staff Survey to all our staff

July

We publish our suite of Official Statistics for 2014/15

Our research team start work to scrutinise the age of criminal responsibility for children in Scotland

August

Two new members of the senior team are appointed - Lawrie McDonald, joint Head of IT for SCRA and Children's Hearings Scotland and Lisa Bennett, Head of Strategy and Organisational Development at SCRA

We publish two new Practice Notes – one on schedule 1 offences involving physical injury to a child and another on section 12 offences

SCRA takes part in Chat for Change event with young people in Inverness

September

An updated version of Guidance on Referral to the Reporter is published

Our third cohort of Modern Apprentices join the organisation

Our latest briefing event for managers is held with a focus on performance and management standards

October

Non-disclosure of information in the Children's Hearings System - a good practice guide is published

The results of our Children and Families Survey 2015 are launched

Our new research report on the 'Well-Being of Supported Young People in Scotland' is produced

November

A campaign to recruit new Board Members gets underway, including a film made with young people

Our new three year Communications Strategy is unveiled

SCRA produces new research on Non-Disclosure Conditions in the Children's Hearings System

Our annual Staff Event is held with Sir Harry Burns, Professor of Global Public Health at the University of Strathclyde as our guest speaker

December

We publish new research - 'Permanence Planning and Decision Making for Looked After Children in Scotland'

Our Health and Wellbeing survey for all staff closes and our Health and Wellbeing programme starts to focus on workload analysis and management

Guidance Note – Helping Me Make Choices written by one of our former Modern Apprentices

January

Updated versions of our suite of 15 fact sheets are published on our website covering topics like Child Protection and Youth Offending

New Practice Direction on Translation and Interpretation published

A review of our Team Briefing System is carried out as part of our three year Communications Strategy

February

Art @ SCRA event held in Inverness with young artists and local partners

SCRA and CHS publish a joint practice note for staff and Panel Members on the recording of Hearings

Court Survey for all Reporter staff is issued to get feedback from staff on the court process

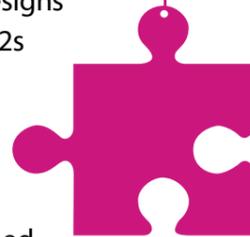
March

SCRA provided Total Rewards Statements for all staff for the first time, which highlights SCRA's reward strategy in its entirety including pay and non-pay benefits

Launch of new website for SCRA with dedicated sections for children and young people

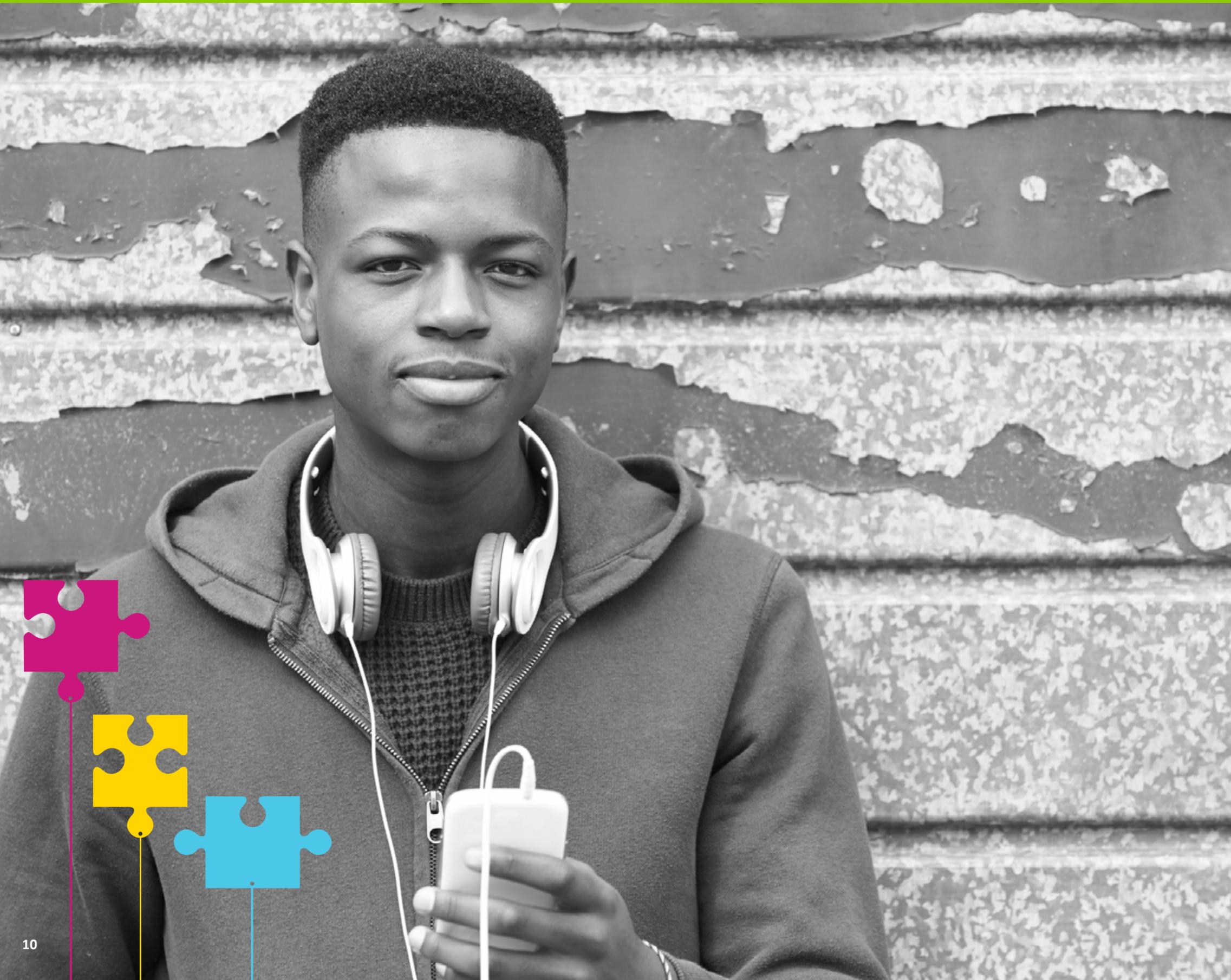
Our two new Board Members are announced by the Minister – Sam Anderson and Martin Toye

'Backgrounds and outcomes for children aged 8 to 11 years old who have been referred to the Children's Reporter for offending' report is published



To find out about our year in more detail, turn to SCRA's Stories section ...

SCRA's stories in 2015/16 ...



SCRA's progress and achievements in 2015/16

Throughout the year, our focus has been on delivering our core outcomes and strategies as outlined in our Business Plan 2015/16.

Our core outcomes

The views of children and young people influence both their individual cases and how to better deliver services that meet their needs now and in the future.

Our decisions are proportionate, timely and make a positive impact on the welfare, safety and protection of children, young people and communities.

We improve the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in Scotland through the earliest and most effective interventions.

Together with our partners we will get it right for every child in the Hearings System.

Our staff and partners recognise SCRA's quality of service and overall performance as continually improving.

Our core strategies

- Sustainability, Quality & Performance
- Customer Focus
- Engagement
- Infrastructure Maintenance & Development

Here are some of SCRA's stories from the past 12 months...

Our performance and targets

Our performance for 2015/16 reflects the work undertaken in 2014/15 and 2015/16 to analyse and improve services to children, young people and families.

This can be seen in the 'percentage of decisions on referrals within 50 working days' indicator which has increased by 9.1 percentage points (pp) from 2014/15. Decisions on cases are therefore being made more quickly, resulting in children and young people receiving a timelier service from SCRA.

Overall, five of the nine targets within our 2015/16 Business Plan were met with the four remaining rated as amber (nearly meeting the target). Of those met, performance in 'percentage of initial Hearings proceeding to disposal' is particularly important for children, young people, and families as this ensures, where possible, decisions about compulsory measures are made at the earliest possible opportunity.

Hearing scheduling has continued to experience pressure, and, despite performance on this measure improving by 3.4pp, the indicator was still below target. Focus on the areas within the scheduling process which can be improved will continue.

Finally, three further targets were missed in the year:

- Revenue savings were 0.1pp below the 2.8% target. This was due to increases in translation costs and backfilling staff absences;
- Compliance with SCRA property standards was 2.8pp below target; and
- Working days lost to absence was 1.3pp above the 4% target; workforce absence continues to be analysed and focused on within the organisation.

SCRA's performance against targets can be seen in detail in Table 7.3 of the [Statistical Analysis 2015/16](#).

Our Practice

2015/16 was a year of consolidating Practice in relation to the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011, including the amendments to the legislation implemented in January 2015. A full schedule of core Practice Training was delivered across the year with additional runs of the Advocacy Skills module (February 2016) and Drafting Statements of Grounds module to meet demand (October 2015). Significant development work took place in relation to several new core modules, and training on Domestic Abuse was finalised in partnership with Scottish Women's Aid for delivery during 2016.

Practice materials continued to be developed and updated. Practice Direction in relation to Translation and Interpretation was developed and implemented following consultation with the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service and the Scottish Legal Aid Board, creating a consistent approach across the country and allowing some significant savings while maintaining a fair approach to effective participation in the Children's Hearings System.

A Practice Note on schedule 1 offences involving physical injury to a child and a Practice Note on section 12 offences were developed and published to support Reporters in their decision making and court work. Detailed Aide Memoires on expeditious management of court cases and support for court cases were developed and published, as were 12 Law Reports on our most significant cases.

In addition, the Practice Team supported local practice events, training and discussions throughout the year across a range of topics. The Practice Team also provided support for individual cases in partnership

with Localities including providing submissions on unusual or difficult issues arising in court and managed appeals and other cases in the higher courts. The Practice Network continued to consider and share practice issues from around the country, identify and support development of new materials and training, and promote high quality practice within Localities.

A considerable amount of partnership and inter-agency working on practice issues took place throughout the year. This included work with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Police Scotland, Scottish Government and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS). The Joint Agreement with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal's Service (COPFS) on jointly reported cases was revised, a Protocol on arranging Hearings for children resident in secure accommodation was agreed with the heads of secure units and a Joint Practice Note was agreed with CHS on the recording of Hearings.

Other significant areas of work were on youth justice, minimum age of criminal responsibility, productions held by Police or COPFS, information sharing with Police and COPFS, models for dealing with domestic abuse, development of Scottish Government Guidance on contact decisions for children, and the process for obtaining independent reports for Children's Hearings. Training continued to be delivered to various partner agencies.

Accreditation Programme

Embedded in our ethos and behaviours is a commitment to continuous professional development and improvement, for SCRA to be a learning organisation. We have a number of tools to support staff development and training including practice training modules, staff appraisal and supervision schemes and coaching and mentoring opportunities.

We also deliver a vocational qualification at SQA level 10 to Reporters and Assistant Reporters. The Professional Development Award for Children's Reporter Practice is a competence-based qualification, performance and standards based and related to realistic work practices. It ensures a consistent standard for Reporters and Assistant Reporters to work towards. It provides opportunities for shared learning, development and mentoring and for colleagues to be supported by an assessor through a structured training programme.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) conducted an extensive inspection of the Accreditation Programme in February 2016 and confirmed that SCRA met every aspect of the SQA Quality Assurance Criteria. SQA also identified areas of good practice and significant strengths in terms of candidate support, internal assessment and verification and resources to support the programme.

We will extend the access routes to the Award later in the year giving all Reporters/Assistant Reporters the opportunity to complete all or part of the qualification. This will provide a platform and background structure for reflective practice – essential to ensuring that experienced staff maintain competence over time. It links to the individual Reporter/Assistant Reporter personal development plans. Maximising current performance in support of organisational requirements, it also improves areas for growth and development and increases interest, confidence, challenges and satisfaction in staff's current position.

Our People

In April 2015 SCRA successfully transitioned to the revised Local Government Pension Scheme. The new Career Average Pension Scheme provided a more realistic contribution rate for part-time members and

gave staff different options about how to make their contribution to the scheme. The voluntary exit scheme remained available to staff following a difficult decision to launch a further round in early 2015. Our commitment to no compulsory redundancies remained in place.

In May 2015, as part of our health and wellbeing programme, we launched SCRA's Mindfulness Programme. Kelly Laing, Support Assistant in our Fife Office, a Relaxed Kids Coach, supports staff to understand, practice and make part of their daily lives, relaxation and stress management techniques.

We concluded the organisational workload recording exercise in May, which gave us robust and rich data on which to focus workforce planning, and information on what we are spending our time at work on. Staff across the organisation engaged well with the exercises and supported the outcomes.

Work over the summer of 2015 saw the conclusion of the review of the Locality Support Manager role, while in September, we appointed Lisa Bennett to the new role of Head of Strategy and Organisational Development.

In November our annual Staff Event was held in the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow. Our guest speaker was Sir Harry Burns, Professor of Global Public Health at the University of Strathclyde, who spoke about the effects neglect has on children in their early years and the longer term impacts as they go into adulthood.

In December 2015, the Board approved our new Succession Planning policy and the 2016/17 workforce plan.

We engaged with Falkirk Council to supplement our learning and development opportunities for staff. Falkirk Council will provide agreed corporate training in areas such as time management, IT skills training etc. A suite of mandatory health and safety e-learning packages was made available to staff to meet our health and safety and health and wellbeing commitments.

In February 2016, we launched SCRA's Management Development Programme. The programme has been developed to equip all managers with the permission, environment, knowledge and tools that they require to develop, fine tune and implement the recognised set of skills that are contained within SCRA's Management Standards. It will be delivered through a range of mechanisms such as development days, action learning, and various forms of self-directed learning that all staff will have access to.

The launch of the programme also introduced us to Coaching - it reaffirmed SCRA's commitment to embed coaching within the culture of what we do. Coaching skills training will now be part of the Management Development Programme and a coaching network will be created to support this.

Also in February, the work of the Board Nominations Committee, saw the recruitment and appointment of two new Board Members who took up post in June 2016. The Scottish Government and other Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) have commented on the successful programme led out by SCRA.

In March 2016, SCRA provided Total Rewards Statements for all staff for the first time, which highlights SCRA's reward strategy in its entirety including pay and non-pay benefits.

SCRA's Equalities Network continues to work towards ensuring that the organisation embraces, acknowledges and is representative of all sections of society; promoting equality and respect for all so that everyone is able to achieve their potential.

The Network has shifted its focus in 2015/16 towards operational and frontline service delivery. Each meeting has taken a protected characteristic as a theme and examined the impacts on, and issues for, children, young people and families. This has been assisted by seeking out inputs from external organisations and from locality staff, as the Network has met in different locality offices around Scotland.

However, this shift in emphasis has not meant losing sight of our responsibilities as an employer. Network meetings have still been able to consider and take action on issues such as women into leadership and staff health and wellbeing. Workshops on women into leadership are currently in the process of being delivered across the organisation and the findings will inform the Network's recommendations going forward.

Our Research

SCRA published reports on five research projects in 2015/16 and started one new research project.

SCRA's research report: 'Child Protection Orders' was published in June 2015. This study examined the cases of 175 children to find out why the children came to have Child Protection Orders (CPOs) made and followed their outcomes in the six months after the CPOs. It raised a number of questions about decision making and interventions to protect children who are exposed to significant risk.

The report: 'The Well-being of Supported Young People in Scotland' looked at the extent to which supported young people considered themselves to be Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, and Included (i.e. the SHANRRRI wellbeing indicators) was published in September 2015. Young people were involved with the survey design, as well as taking part, and were involved with the services provided by: Aberlour, Action for Children, Barnardo's, Includem, Kibble Education and Care Centre, Good Shepherd Centre, and Who Cares? Scotland.

Our research on adoption and permanence 'Permanence planning and decision making for looked after children in Scotland Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007' was completed and the report: (and the supplementary report on children identified as at risk at or before birth) was published by SCRA and the Scottish Government in December 2015. The Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) has established a Permanence Workstream to take forward actions to address the areas of improvement identified by this research.

In March 2016, SCRA published its report: 'Backgrounds and outcomes for children aged 8 to 11 years old who have been referred to the Children's Reporter for offending'. This research was carried out to provide evidence to the Advisory Group on the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility and contribute to the debate on increasing the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from 8 to 12 years old.

In March 2015, SCRA carried out a survey of children, young people, parents and carers attending Children's Hearings and the results were published in October 2015. There were 520 participants – 313 adults, 108 young people and 99 children (including 24 three to six years olds). This is the third such survey by SCRA to assess its performance, and identify areas of good practice and those for improvement. There were a total of 520 participants in the 2015 survey which was lower than previous ones. To improve representation across Scotland and increase numbers of participants, the survey was repeated in April 2016.

To support the work of the Tripartite Group (consisting of SCRA, Children's Hearings Scotland and Social Work Scotland) to improve Children's Hearings, SCRA started a research project which aimed to 'identify

what makes a Hearing work well from the perspective of those involved and from this develop service standards for Children's Hearings'.

The research involved 1 - a literature review on children and young people's views, 2 - focus groups and interviews with practitioners, and 3 - consultation with children and young people on the draft standards. In 2016/17, the research report and proposed standards for Hearings will be presented to the Tripartite Group and CHIP for discussion and endorsement by all agencies involved in the Hearings System.

Participation and engagement

Throughout 2015/2016, SCRA's commitment to improving participation and engagement with children and young people involved in the Hearings System has continued. We have also focused on developing our participation links with parents, carers and professionals. 2015 was a significant year for SCRA in that we saw the beginnings of a Young Person's Board for the Children's Hearings System. In partnership with the Scottish Government, Children's Hearings Scotland, Includem, Young Scot, Who Cares? Scotland and latterly Social Work, Education Scotland and Barnardos, SCRA has led in the creation of this high-level Board who will report to the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership.

In spring 2015, SCRA worked with partners to prepare for the launch of its first Pilot Hearing Room. SCRA worked closely with Hearings-experienced children and young people to develop a more child-and-young-person friendly Hearing room. Glasgow Panel Members were briefed on the introduction of the room and SCRA were supported by CHS in this new venture. In July 2015 the room was launched, and, following on from a successful six month thorough evaluation, the room has been retained and will be replicated throughout SCRA's Hearing rooms on a national basis where possible.

In April 2015 SCRA ran its first of two work-experience opportunities for young people with experience of the Children's Hearings System. These six month placements were based in Glasgow and Stirling.

During September 2015, SCRA's three new Modern Apprentices commenced their posts in Stirling, Kilmarnock and Inverness. This is the third group of Modern Apprentices for SCRA, and we remain committed to offering posts for young people who have been through the Children's Hearings System.

Information podcasts were also launched on our website in September 2015. These podcasts were created with young people who have experience of the Hearings System, and they provide advice to children and young people attending a Hearing for the first time.

During 2015/16, our partnership working with bodies including Children's Hearings Scotland, Education Scotland and Social Work Scotland continued – all with an aim to continue to improve the participation of children and young people in the Hearings System.

In October 2015, SCRA forged strong working relationships with Mentor UK and various foster care organisations to support the roll-out of supportive sessions for carers involved in the system.

Working in Partnership

In common with many other public sector bodies, SCRA has been preparing for the introduction of a range of new statutory duties contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. SCRA became a corporate parent on 1 April 2015 and has been working towards the development of a plan that reflects the

extensive work that has taken place on areas such as improved participation, individualisation of hearings and use of technology.

Training and input from Who Cares? Scotland has been of enormous help in shaping and challenging our thinking. We are also taking on new responsibilities to report on progress made towards improving The United Nations Convention on the Human Rights of the Child (UNCRC) rights and contributing to Children's Services Plans in local areas. More formally, we sit on an advisory group charged with developing the guidance around Part 12 of the 2014 Act.

SCRA continues to lead the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP) sub-group on Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), ensuring that implementation of the Child's Plan, Named Person and information sharing provisions integrate appropriately with the Children's Hearings system.

We have been an active participant in the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility and sit on the multi-agency Youth Justice Improvement Board.

The strategic partnership between Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) and SCRA is a critical one for the ongoing success of the Children's Hearings System. While the independent statutory functions of both organisations are respected, our underpinning visions and values are closely aligned, enabling us to work together constructively in many different areas. We have for instance undertaken joint board meetings to address issues of common interest and produced agreed policy positions on topics such as GIRFEC that reflect our shared expertise and views.

In addition, the joint Hearings Management Group with CHS continues to be a forum for both organisations to influence and develop practice around this important area.

We have worked with Police Scotland on the development of risk and concern hubs, including training for police staff on referral to the Reporter. A revised joint agreement with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) on jointly reported cases was implemented in February and we have also expanded our information sharing protocol with COPFS to include Police Scotland.

Engagement with the voluntary sector has continued to take place on an issue by issue basis, with organisations such as the NSPCC, Children in Scotland, Together Scotland, the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland and Who Cares? Scotland particularly frequently involved.

Property

SCRA is responsible for providing suitable and sufficient facilities to accommodate Children's Hearings. The continuing economic and budget pressures have required us to constantly review how effectively and efficiently we manage our property assets. This means that we continue to reduce our costs wherever possible, whilst aiming to maintain service levels.

Property is central to the delivery of our services and is one of the organisation's key areas of expenditure. In recent years significant steps have been taken to reduce the size of SCRA's estate and surplus property is made available either for sale or lease.

During 2015/16, SCRA sold its former office and Hearings Centre in Stirling and was in the process selling

further surplus premises in Clydebank and Perth. The capital receipts generated from these sales is reinvested into providing improvements to our estate by undertaking priority capital projects.

Key locations were identified for delivering new or improved Hearing and staff facilities during 2015/16. Three significant projects in our Highland and Islands Locality were either completed, or well underway - in Inverness, Lerwick and Stornoway. The new facilities created will provide modern, accessible, fit for purpose facilities that now meet the needs of the Children's Hearings System.

Providing improved facilities in Perth has been a priority for a number of years and the contract to commence the conversion and upgrading of the replacement building was awarded in February. The building will undergo significant internal and external alterations and is expected to become operational in the latter half of 2016.

The integration of our operational teams into modern office premises continues across the country and in Kilmarnock the project to bring the Ayrshire teams together in a single office was successfully completed in December 2015.

Where accommodation is freed up in our properties, as a part of our ongoing estate management, we have taken the opportunity to reduce our running costs by leasing out this space. In the last year we have successfully leased out space in our Arbroath, Dalkeith, Falkirk and Hamilton properties to provide additional revenue that contributes towards the cost of our estate.

Children's Hearings Scotland is our key partner in the delivery of our services and both organisations are committed to finalising our joint Property Strategy during 2016/17. Recent work to improve levels of participation in children's hearings have led to a greater focus on more welcoming and child-friendly Hearing and waiting rooms in our facilities. The pilot Hearing room project in our Glasgow office which was launched in July 2015, has been well received and further changes will be rolled out to our other offices over the course of 2016/17.

Information Governance

The main area of information governance activity in 2015/16 was the preparation and submission of the Principal Reporter's and SCRA's Records Management Plan (RMP) for approval by The Keeper of the Records of Scotland. This is a requirement of the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011.

Preparation of the RMP involved a scoping of all the information held in SCRA's Localities and Head Office and review of all policies and procedures for managing information. The RMP was submitted to The Keeper in November 2015, and was also published on SCRA's web site at that time. The RMP was approved in April 2016: 'The Keeper has agreed that the Records Management Plan you have submitted demonstrates proper arrangements for the management of the public records of the two scheduled authorities Principal Reporter and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration.'

SCRA continued to focus on the management of Non-Disclosure cases and prevention of breaches of Non-Disclosure Orders. SCRA published its research report: 'Non-Disclosure Conditions in the Children's Hearings System' in November 2015. This report has been considered by the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership and the Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) - SCRA Joint Information Governance Group.

An improvement project between Glasgow Locality, Glasgow City Council and CELCIS on management of Non-Disclosure cases started, and is starting to show positive results. Information sharing protocols between SCRA and local authorities on Non-Disclosure cases are being put in place in each local authority area, with this work being led by SCRA's Locality Information Governance Leads.

Technology

2015/16 was a busy one for SCRA's IT services. Following the completion of developmental improvements to the Case Management System (CMS), undertaken as part of the "user inter-face" programme, work on developing a Joint Digital Strategy for the Children's Hearings System which involved ourselves and Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) was completed in spring 2015. This was after a significant period of consultation with staff members, children and young people, as well as the wider stakeholder base.

The strategy identified the need to develop capacity and capability on a number of fronts to realise the true potential of Digital Technology being used more pervasively across the Children's Hearings System. This included, infrastructure, digital skills, business systems and processes and development of a joint online digital service.

In September 2015 a new Joint Head of IT post across SCRA and CHS was recruited and set to work immediately to deliver on the Digital Strategy. The Joint Head of IT would report in as part of the overall Digital Strategy governance arrangements to a Joint Digital Strategy Oversight Board, made up of the two Chief Executive Officers, members of their executive teams and support from Scottish Government Digital Transformation Service (DTS). Given the ambitions for the Joint Digital programme of work it was clear that significant additional funding from Scottish Government would be required to support the program of work.

In order to support the claims for additional funding and with the help of the DTS a detailed high level business case for the programme was produced and presented to Scottish Government for consideration. Although as yet additional funding has not been secured the Digital Oversight Board are confident that the digital ambitions will be funded as the high level business case paints a compelling case for those funds.

More detail around the high Level Business Case will be developed in the form of three program initiation documents supported by their own business cases addressing a particular aspect of the Digital Strategy delivery.

In the meantime the discovery work undertaken as part of the development of the digital programme governance has identified a number of significant upgrades to systems and technical infrastructure across CHS and SCRA which must first be undertaken during 2016/17 to sustain both organisations operations through any period of transition to new Digital Services in the future.

To support this programme during 2016/17 a detailed IT operational plan has been produced for SCRA. This plan focuses on the key IT objectives and the reasons as to why they have been given a high priority for the period.

At the end of March 2016 we launched a new-look website. The new site is modern, easy to navigate and responsive. It includes dedicated sections for children, young people and parents/carers, as well as sections for professionals and a new, interactive statistical dashboard.

Our statistics in 2015/16 ...



This section of our Annual Report includes:

- The number of children and young people referred to the Reporter
- The grounds on which children and young people are referred
- Reporter decisions
- Children's Hearing decisions
- Compulsory measures of supervision

Fuller information about SCRA's statistics can be found in the SCRA Statistical Analysis 2015/16 which is available at www.scra.gov.uk.

Children and young people referred to the Reporter

This section presents information about the numbers of children and young people referred to SCRA. It looks at the reason for referral and ages of children and young people referred.



Children and young people referred decreased by 3.3% from 2014/15



24.9% of children with Child Protection Orders were aged under 20 days

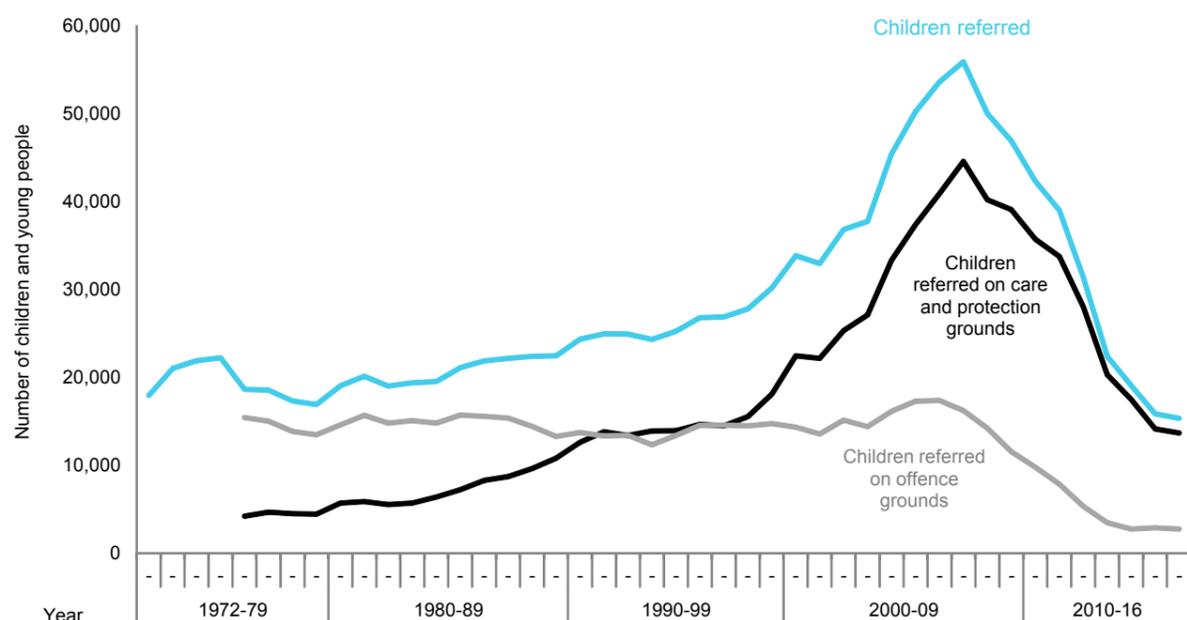
'lack of parental care' was the most common ground of referral

In 2015/16, 15,329 children and young people in Scotland were referred¹ to the Reporter. This is 1.7% of all children and young people in Scotland². It is a drop of 529 children and young people from 2014/15 and the ninth consecutive year of decrease.

Within this, 13,688 children and young people were referred on non-offence (care and protection) grounds, this was 1.5% of all children and young people. 2,761 children and young people were referred on offence grounds³. This is 0.6% of all children and young people aged between eight⁴ and 16 years.

Figure 1 illustrates the changing trends within the system over the past 44 years. Operational processes and counting methodologies have changed over time but overall trends are broadly comparable*.

Figure 1. Children and young people referred, by year



*Please note that offence and non-offence splits are unavailable prior to 1976.

For the 15,329 children and young people referred, 27,340 referrals were received by the Reporter in the year; 20,655 care and protection referrals and 6,685 offence referrals. Most children and young people (73.2%) were referred only once, with 5.4% referred five or more times. The police were the main source of referrals, comprising 74.8% of all referrals to the Reporter in 2015/16, 99.1% of all offence referrals and 67.0% of all care and protection referrals.

1. Reporters decide the category and the grounds of referral at the time of receipt based on information contained within the referral.

2. % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2015 from the National Records of Scotland.

3. These figures include 1,120 children and young people who were referred on care and protection and offence grounds

4. Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children and young people under eight years cannot be referred to the Reporter for having committed an offence. Such behaviour in a child or young person aged under eight years may be referred under another ground.

Child Protection Orders

The number of children and young people with Child Protection Orders decreased significantly, from 754 in 2014/15, to 595 in 2015/16 (down 21.1%). In part, this was due to a focus by partner agencies on ensuring appropriate use of the orders. The granting of a Child Protection Order requires the child or young person to be removed to (or kept in) a place of safety away from home. For this measure to be considered, they must be at risk of significant harm.

Grounds of referral to the Reporter

The reasons (grounds) on which children and young people are referred to the Reporter are those set out in section 67(2) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011. The five most commonly referred Section 67 grounds, for the 15,329 children and young people referred in 2015/16, are shown in table 1.

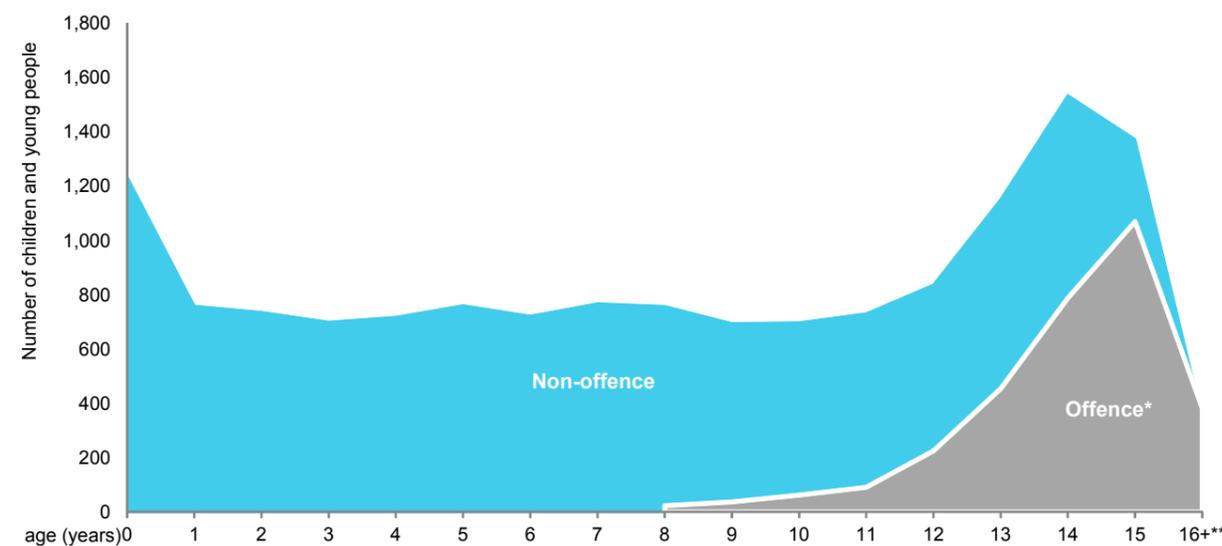
Table 1 Number of children and young people referred in 2015/16, by section 67 ground

| Grounds of referral | Total |
|---|-------|
| (a) Lack of parental care | 5,606 |
| (j) Offence | 2,761 |
| (f) Close connection with a person who has carried out domestic abuse | 2,498 |
| (e) Exposure to persons whose conduct likely to be harmful to child | 1,950 |
| (b) Victim of a Schedule 1 offence | 1,874 |

Age of children and young people referred

The age breakdown of children and young people referred is shown in Figure 2. Fourteen and fifteen were the most common ages of referral for both care and protection and offence grounds.

Figure 2. Age of children and young people referred on offence and non-offence grounds in 2015/16

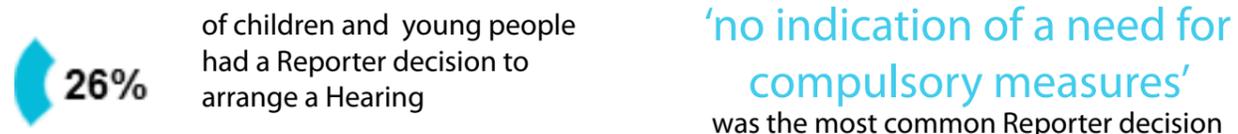


* Eight years is the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland. Children and young people under eight years cannot be referred to the Reporter for having committed an offence. Such behaviour in a child or young person aged under eight years may be referred under another ground.

** Young people aged 16 and 17 years are combined to provide an age group of 16+ years. Young people aged 16 and 17 years can be referred to the Reporter if they are still subject to Compulsory Supervision Orders, are remitted by a court or have an open case which started prior to their sixteenth birthday.

Reporter decisions on children and young people referred

This section presents information about the investigations Reporters within SCRA undertake with partner agencies on children and young people's cases along with the decisions which have been made.



Reporters investigate where necessary when a referral is received to assist them in considering the likely need for compulsory measures. They do so by obtaining information on the child or young person and their circumstances from relevant agencies such as social work, education and health. Some of this information may now be provided at the point of referral rather than requiring to be requested.

Once any required information has been received, the Reporter will analyse the situation and make a decision about whether to arrange a Children's Hearing based on:

- whether a section 67 ground applies in relation to the child or young person i.e. whether there is sufficient evidence such that there is a realistic prospect of the ground being proven in court; and
- whether, if sufficient evidence exists, it is necessary to have compulsory intervention in the child or young person's life.

Where the Reporter has arranged a Children's Hearing, they will, if they have not previously done so, request a report for information about the child or young person from the local authority. Reporters have other options available to them to find the right help for children and young people such as asking the local authority to provide voluntary advice, guidance and assistance to the child or young person, or to take no formal action because other intervention is more appropriate.

Table 2 shows that 25.6% of children and young people (4,059) with cases decided in the year had a Reporter decision to arrange a Children's Hearing on at least one referral.

Table 2 Number of children and young people with Reporter decisions in 2015/16*, by decision

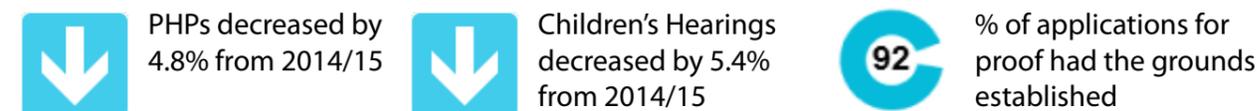
| Reporter decision | Non-offence | Offence | Total |
|---|-------------|---------|--------|
| Arrange a Children's Hearing (on new grounds) | 3,847 | 280 | 4,059 |
| No indication of a need for compulsory measures | 4,715 | 1,027 | 5,574 |
| No Hearing - refer to local authority | 3,504 | 538 | 3,871 |
| No Hearing - measures already in place | 2,444 | 1,254 | 3,061 |
| No Hearing - insufficient evidence to proceed | 1,294 | 210 | 1,489 |
| No Hearing - family have taken action | 711 | 76 | 774 |
| No Hearing - diversion to other measures | 23 | 49 | 68 |
| Total | 14,270 | 2,816 | 15,874 |

* Data in this table relates to cases decided in 2015/16 as opposed to referrals received in 2015/16.

** The totals do not equal the sums as children and young people can be referred more than once in the year and may have multiple Reporter decisions. The totals count each child or young person once.

Children's Hearings and court work

This section presents information about the work undertaken by Children's Hearings and courts. It includes the reasons for Pre-Hearing Panels (PHPs) and Children's Hearings and the outcomes of court work.



Pre-hearing Panels and Children's Hearings held

4,098 PHPs were held for 3,411 children and young people in 2015/16, 207 fewer PHPs than 2014/15. This reflects the decreasing requirement to transfer individuals who had been treated as Relevant Persons under the 1995 Act to being deemed Relevant Persons under the 2011 Act (a 42.6% drop from 1,337 PHPs in 2014/15 to 768 in 2015/16). To consider excusing a child or young person from the obligation to attend a Children's Hearing was the most common reason for a PHP.

34,896 Children's Hearings were held for 15,087 children and young people in 2015/16. This was 2,007 fewer than 2014/15. This was influenced by falling numbers of Child Protection Orders and Compulsory Supervision Orders and changes to legislation about the number of interim orders a Children's Hearing can make whilst a proof application is outstanding. Almost two-thirds (64.5%) of Children's Hearings included a review of a Compulsory Supervision Order.

Child Protection Orders and interim orders

Many short-term decisions made by Children's Hearings will be to address emergency and/or high risk situations where measures have to be put in place immediately to protect children and young people or address their behaviour. These may include Children's Hearings arranged as a result of the Sheriff granting a Child Protection Order.

In 2015/16, Children's Hearings:

- Considered⁶ the cases of 595 children and young people with Child Protection Orders under sections 45 or 46 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011; and
- Made, varied or continued 7,269 interim orders as defined under sections 86 and 140 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 for 2,785 children and young people.

Applications to the Sheriff for proof

If the child or young person and/or their relevant persons do not accept some or all of the statement of grounds for referral which form the basis of the Children's Hearing, or the child or young person does not or cannot understand the grounds, the Children's Hearing may direct the Reporter to apply to the Sheriff to establish the statement of grounds for referral⁷.

6. The Hearing may continue a Child Protection Order, which has already been approved by a Sheriff, with or without a variation to the condition(s). The Hearing may also decide not to continue a Child Protection Order.

7. Under sections 93 and 94 of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.

Applications for proof may require several callings (court dates) before the application is determined. In 2015/16 there were 10,648 callings recorded for 3,068 determined applications. Of these, 92.0% were held to be established by the Sheriff. When an application to the Sheriff for proof has been established, the grounds are referred back to a Children's Hearing to decide what/if compulsory measures are necessary.

In addition, courts made, varied or continued 3,894 interim orders in 2015/16. These orders related to 1,379 children and young people.

Compulsory Measures of Supervision

This section presents information about Children's Hearings decisions and Compulsory Supervision Orders in force. It also covers secure authorisations and non-disclosure measures.



Compulsory Supervision Orders at the 31st March 2016 were 3.3% below the previous year-end

'with parent/relevant person' was the most common type of Compulsory Supervision Order

Compulsory Supervision Orders 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 Compulsory Supervision Orders.

At Children's Hearings in 2015/16, 3,185 children and young people had a new Compulsory Supervision Order made on grounds referred. At 31 March 2016, 10,379 children and young people were subject to Compulsory Supervision Orders. This is 1.1%⁸ of all children and young people in Scotland.

The types of Compulsory Supervision Orders are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Number of children and young people with Compulsory Supervision Orders in place at 31 March 2016, by type

| Types of Compulsory Supervision Orders | Count |
|---|--------|
| With parent/relevant person | 4,522 |
| With other approved foster parent | 3,018 |
| With relative/friend - other | 1,345 |
| With relative/friend - approved foster parent | 615 |
| Children's unit | 332 |
| Other residential placement | 243 |
| Residential school | 229 |
| Other | 45 |
| Other non-residential placement | 17 |
| None recorded | 13 |
| Total | 10,379 |

8. % of population aged under 16 years, based on mid-year estimates for 2015 from the National Records of Scotland.

The number of children and young people subject to Compulsory Supervision Orders has decreased for a sixth consecutive year. The most common ages of children and young people subject to Compulsory Supervision Orders continue to be 14 and 15 years.

Secure Authorisations made by Children's Hearings

Secure Authorisations can be made as conditions of interim orders or Compulsory Supervision Orders where the child or young person presents a risk to themselves or others⁹. In 2015/16, 128 and 127 children and young people respectively had Secure Authorisations made as conditions of Compulsory Supervision Orders and interim orders.

Non-disclosure Measures

A non-disclosure measure is a special provision attached to a child or young person's order in instances when it is considered necessary to protect the address at which a child or young person is required to reside by virtue of the order, due to significant concerns about their safety.

As at the 31st March 2016, 1,105 children and young people had non-disclosure measures attached to Compulsory Supervision Orders and 114 children and young people had non-disclosure measures attached to interim orders. Overall, 53 fewer children and young people (4.2%) had non-disclosure measures in place at the year-end (1,207) than was the case at the 31st March 2015¹⁰.

Appeals and Child Protection Order applications

This section presents information about appeals to the Sheriff against decisions made by Children's Hearings and covers the number of applications to recall, vary or terminate Child Protection Orders.



Children and young people with appeals concluded decreased for the first time in nine years



64% of children and young people with appeals had an appeal refused (Children's Hearing decision upheld) in the year

Children and young people and/or their relevant persons can appeal to the Sheriff against decisions made by Children's Hearings. In 2015/16, 777 children and young people had appeals concluded, with 64.5% having Children's Hearings decisions upheld (i.e. the appeal was refused) by the Sheriff on at least one appeal in the year. This was a decrease of 83 children and young people from 2014/15. Where a Hearing decision wasn't upheld, the most common outcome was for the Sheriff to require the reporter to arrange a Hearing (for any purpose for which a Hearing can be arranged).

In addition, applications can be made to the Sheriff to recall/terminate or vary the conditions on a Child Protection Order. 14 children and young people had applications to recall/terminate or vary Child Protection Orders in the year.

9 The full criteria by which Secure Authorisations can be made are set out in sections 83(5) and 83(6) of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011.
10 Some children and young persons had both Compulsory Supervision Orders and interim orders in place at the year-end with non-disclosure measures attached to both.

Our Board in 2015/16 ...



SCRA Board

SCRA operates under the direction of an eight person Board. As a Non-Departmental Public Body, SCRA's Board - although acting independently - is ultimately accountable to Scottish Ministers, and Board Members are appointed by Ministers.

Our Board Members reflect a wide range of experiences and backgrounds in relation to children and young people. The Board plays a significant role in setting the strategic direction of SCRA, and in challenging the organisation to ensure we deliver our plans.

Chair

Carole Wilkinson (re-appointed 2014)

Board Members

Malcolm Dickson (re-appointed 2012)

Andrew Miller (re-appointed 2012)

Bernadette Docherty (re-appointed 2014)

Andrew Menzies (appointed March 2013)

Douglas Yates (appointed July 2013)

Catherine Robertson (appointed November 2013)

Anela Anwar (appointed December 2014)

In March 2016, the Minister for Children and Young People, Aileen Campbell announced the appointment of two new Board Members for SCRA. The appointment of Sam Anderson and Martin Toye is for four years, and runs from 1 June 2016 to 31 May 2020.

More information about our Board, including a full Register of Board Members' Interests, can be found on our website at www.scra.gov.uk

Looking ahead - reflecting on 2016/17 so far...

2016/17 promises to be another challenging, but exciting year in SCRA and in the wider Children's Hearings System. Major programmes of work are underway now which we hope will begin to deliver change and improvement in the course of the next year.

Our programme of work in reviewing how we can best support Children's Reporters in undertaking their core decision making role for children and young people has led to small scale innovation in different parts of the country.

In 2016/17 we aim to tie a number of these initiatives together to fully modernise our arrangements, supporting role and use of technologies to support Reporters more effectively. Similarly our work in reviewing how we approach Court, ensuring we have the skills and confidence across the workforce and ability to deal with ever more complex and challenging court work will be a key element of our work in 2016/17.

In the course of the coming year we will launch a new approach to learning and development across the SCRA workforce to ensure that we are well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities which change and innovation creates and can adapt to the challenges ahead. Importantly our learning and development work will be a key recognition of the skills of our staff, their commitment to doing the best we can for children and young people and the enormous scope for further improvement through learning together.

This combined with our structured approach to performance review and support, Locality and team planning and development and the effective use of our data and research makes us feel confident and secure about the future for

SCRA as a stable, high performing part of our hugely important child care, protection and justice system in Scotland.

We have been planning for and working through how we will take advantage of digital technologies in the Hearings System – to improve our core processes, ability to share information in support of our decision making and finding new ground breaking ways to allow children and young people to engage more consistently and confidently in the Hearing itself will be a major focus next year. We are very pleased to be working so closely with Children's Hearings Scotland (CHS) and the Scottish Government to deliver the ambitions behind the Digital Strategy for the Hearings System.

SCRA is proud to be a corporate parent and in 2016/17 we aim to continue to be as good a corporate parent as we can be. We will launch our version of a 'Young People's Board' which will provide a consistent and dynamic way to ensure that young people's voices are heard and responded to within the Hearings System – specifically by SCRA and CHS – but also by the wide range of organisations and agencies who play a key part in making the hearings system as responsive to young people's needs as it can be.

We are confident that we can make these step changes giving practical effect to children and young people's rights – much of that confidence stems from the committed partner agencies that we work with in the Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership (CHIP), which has become a dynamic interagency forum for discussion, debate and commitment to making things better for children and young people.

In 2016/17 SCRA will support the launch of a revised vision and values statement to guide the work of CHIP, will support the delivery of a national learning programme across CHIP partners – but delivered at local level, will work collectively to ensure the successful introduction of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, making sure this has the maximum positive impact for young people in the Hearings System.

Over and above this, we expect to support the implementation of new, evidence based standards which will transform the quality of experience for children and young people before, during and after Children's Hearings and as part of this we will revise and recalibrate the Blueprint for Children's Hearings which has been in place for well over a decade – and which will commit all partners to further improvements and accountability for delivery.

In 2016/17 we will contribute constructively to the review of child protection arrangements in Scotland, ensuring, that the importance of the Hearings Systems work as legal decision maker is emphasised. We will continue with our excellent and high impact research programme with a focus this year on compulsory measures at home.

Our Board and organisational governance arrangements will be boosted by the choice of children and young people, by the inclusion of our staff partnership arrangements with UNISON and of course through the Boards' focused commitment to improvement, performance and quality delivery which has been a consistent theme over the last few years.

Neil Hunter
Principal Reporter/
Chief Executive



