

## Child Protection

### Focused on children most at risk, our fundamental purpose is to:

- make effective decisions about a need to refer a child to a Children's Hearing
- enable children and families to participate in Hearings
- provide suitable accommodation for Children's Hearings
- disseminate information and data to inform and influence improved outcomes for children and young people

## Background

There are a number of different grounds on which a child may be referred to the Children's Reporter. One of these is that they have allegedly committed an offence. The others relate to concerns about the child's welfare and are collectively known as "care and protection" or "welfare" grounds.

In 2008/09, 39,105 children were referred to the Reporter on care and protection grounds (a decrease of 2.7% on the previous year).

The two most common grounds for referral remain:

Ground	Number of children
Lack of parental care	15,320
Victim of a schedule 1 offence*	18,621

\*Schedule 1 offences include bodily injury (796 children) lewd and libidinous practices (476 children) and sexual offences (338 children). By far the majority of children referred under this ground are victims of cruelty (17,234 children).

Despite the overall reduction in care and protection referrals, we are seeing increasing numbers of children requiring compulsory measures of supervision and emergency measures of protection. This is particularly true of very young children and is a cause for some concern.

## Compulsory measures of supervision

As at 31 March 2009, there were 13,523 children subject to Supervision Requirements - an increase of 2.3% on the previous year.



## Child Protection Orders

A Sheriff may grant a Child Protection Order (CPO) to address emergency and/or high risk situations where measures need to be put in place immediately to protect a child. For this measure to be considered, a child must be at risk of significant harm.

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Children with CPOs	535	617	504	661

## Very young children

41% of all children with CPOs are under the age of 2 years. This figure has increased by 25% over the last four years. 94% of children of this age group with a CPO go on to require compulsory measures of supervision.

SCRA's research into the particular vulnerabilities of this age group discovered that most referrals come from the police, with relatively few coming from health or social work professionals.

## Working together

In November 2009, SCRA hosted a Child Protection summit for partners in the Hearings System. One of the key topics discussed was the importance of ensuring that the right children are referred to the Reporter at the right time, and that the right interventions are made to improve outcomes and life chances.

Partners also discussed the vital importance of the early years in children's development and the need to develop the best possible national responses to children exposed to chaotic parenting and neglect, especially in the first 2 years of a child's life. Other themes covered included the need to co-operate over training, to share research and disseminate information, as well as making sure that all partners in the child protection system have a complete understanding of each others' roles and responsibilities.