

REPORT

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: SCOTTISH CHILDREN'S REPORTER ADMINISTRATION ANNUAL REPORT 2004-2005
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 20 February 2006	Ref: JD/IM/FW	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 To inform committee of the content of the annual report of the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA) and highlight particular implications for North Lanarkshire.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Scottish Children's Hearing System is designed to protect and control children who need care and protection or who have committed an offence. Local authority social work services work closely with the hearing system by carrying out assessments, providing reports to hearings and providing services to children, young people and families involved in the system.
- 2.2 The Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA) is the part of the Children's Hearing System which decides whether children referred to local reporters require to be considered at Children's Hearings or can be dealt with by other measures. The Scottish Children's Reporters Administration is the national body which employs local reporters who will make decisions on Children's Hearing cases.
- 2.3 The Scottish Children's Reporters Administration Annual Report indicates financial statistical and performance information regarding the administration nationally. The full report is available from the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration and is on their website at www.scra.gov.uk. A copy of the report is also available in the Member's library.
- 2.4 Within North Lanarkshire SCRA are represented on a number of partnership working bodies including the Children's Services Strategy Group and its sub groups. SCRA is therefore a key partner in the delivery of integrated children's services.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Nationally, 50,529 children were referred to SCRA in 2004/05. This represents a 10% increase in the number of children referred in the previous year.
- 3.2 Overall, there was a 6% increase of the number of children referred on offence grounds and a 12% increase of the number of children referred on care and protection grounds.
- 3.3 As a whole, 4.3% of the child population was referred to the reporter in 2004/05.

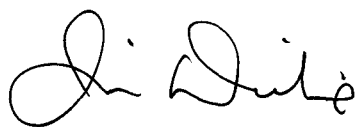
- 3.4 In North Lanarkshire there were 6,825 referrals made to the Reporter over the year. This was the third highest referral level for Scottish local authorities with North Lanarkshire coming after Glasgow and Edinburgh. This indicates high levels of children in need within the North Lanarkshire area.
- 3.5 In breaking down the North Lanarkshire referrals, 2,681 were on offence grounds (39%) while 4,148 were for care and protection grounds (61%). This mirrors the national picture of care and protection grounds being at a significantly higher level than offence grounds.
- 3.6 In 2004/05 there were significant increases in the number of children referred to the Reporter on offence and non offence grounds in North Lanarkshire. The figures indicate an overall increase of 44% in number of children referred which breaks down into a 21% increase of children referred for offence grounds and a 58% increase of children referred for care and protection grounds from the previous year. This significant increase in referrals represents an increase in the workload for Reporters and Social Work, who service Children's Hearings.
- 3.7 Significantly, there was not a large increase noted in the number of hearings held. Hearings in North Lanarkshire increased from 2,121 in 2003/04 to 2,199 in 2004/05. This small increase compared with the large increase in referrals could be explained by the use of diversionary services as alternatives to hearings such as Restorative Justice, as well as new arrangements in place for children experiencing "domestic abuse".

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A rise in referrals to the Reporter results in increased workload for Social Work, as reports and other services are requested.
- 4.2 Multi Agency working arrangements as a result of the Children's Services Strategy ensures that data sharing takes place on a regular basis between SCRA, Social Work and other partner agencies to prepare for changes in demands on services.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Committee is asked to note the content of the SCRA annual report and the implications for Social Work services in North Lanarkshire.



Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
January 2006

For further information on this report please contact Susan Taylor, Manager, Children, Families & Justice (Tel: 01698 332032) or Iain Macaulay, Service Co-ordinator Youth Justice (Tel: 01698 332190)

A copy of the report is available in the Member's library.