



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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“Non offence” referrals to the Children’s Reporter

Inter agency referrals framework: Implementation

This letter seeks your engagement with your partner agencies to review and reform, where it is considered necessary, local practice in meeting the needs of children and referrals to the Reporter.

Following a significant rise in the number of children referred to the Reporter during the first half of last year and Ministers’ concerns that the investigations generated by referrals would divert significant resource onto report writing and away from helping children, the Scottish Executive set-up a Ministerial Task Group¹ on ‘non offence referrals’ to the Reporter. The Group considered how best to ensure children get the help they need and only refer those that required compulsion to the Children’s Reporter.

Background

The Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) has reported an increasing trend in the number of referrals made to the Reporter. In 2005-06, there was a 6.6% increase with 53,883 children being referred to the Reporter. Of these, 40,941 were referred on care and protection grounds which represents a 9% increase in non-offence referrals from the previous year.

¹ With representatives from ACPOS, ADES, ADSW, COSLA and Health.



The main referring agency continues to be the Police Service accounting for 87% of all referrals during 2005-06. The majority of referrals, however, did not go onto a children's hearing because the criteria for compulsory measures was not met. In 2005-06 only 6255 children were referred to a hearing as they were deemed to be in need of compulsory measures of supervision.

We need to find ways of ensuring that those children who need help get it and those children who need compulsory measures are reaching a Hearing as quickly as possible.

Getting it Right for Every Child

You will be aware of the reforms proposed by Getting it Right for Every Child. This will require all agencies to work together to meet the needs of children and only refer children to the Reporter where a need for compulsion has been identified as likely by the relevant agencies.

The work of the Task Group is a step towards Getting it Right for Every Child but takes account of agencies' current situations and practices.

Resources

We recognise that some additional transitional resources will be necessary to assist agencies to move quickly into any new methods of working.

Expectations

It is essential that where any agency has concerns about a child appropriate action should be taken to address these. Scottish Ministers encourage all agencies to share information, make assessments and take action. Where agencies consider that compulsory measures of supervision may be required, then a referral should be made to the Children's Reporter.

It is for agencies to determine locally how they respond to concerns about children and refer matters to the Reporter only when it is necessary to do so. The Task Group has developed a proposed model (attached) which will be helpful to local areas when considering changes locally.

I therefore commend the Framework to you and urge agencies to act to bring forward new ways of working where they are considered necessary.

ROBERT E BROWN



Letter and enclosure issued to:

Chief Constables
Chief Executives of Local Authorities
President of COSLA
Chief Executives of NHS Boards

Copied to:

Chairman, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)