

Kids as young as 8 referred for housebreaking

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Hundreds of children, some as young as eight, have been reported for housebreaking in the last three years.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have revealed the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) have received 517 referrals since 2014/15 for under 18s.

Of those, 186 occurred last year, a figure that has remained much the same for the past three years.

At least one eight-year-old in both East Ayrshire and the Highlands was referred for breaking into someone's house, as well as at least three children aged nine and seven aged 10.

The local authority area with the most children reported for housebreaking was Glasgow, with 79 reports over three years, followed by Edinburgh with 65 and North Lanarkshire with 42.

The statistics, gathered through Freedom of Information, revealed 15 was the most common age for a youngster to be referred for housebreaking to the SCRA, with 208 instances over three years.

Shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said it was essential work was done with those referred to ensure housebreaking wasn't an offence that would be repeated in later life.

In September, it was revealed by Scottish Government statistics that housebreaking has a police clear-up rate of just 22.5 per cent.

Last month, the Scottish Government outlined its intentions to increase the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland from eight to 12.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Liam Kerr said:

"Being broken into and robbed is one of the most upsetting things that can happen to a household.

"For victims, it's irrelevant what age the perpetrators are, it remains terrifying and can leave a lasting impact.

"It's alarming that hundreds of children have been referred for this crime across Scotland in recent years, and the trend isn't improving.

"We need to get in and ensure these youngsters are put on the right path,

because once people start out on this road to a career in crime, it's extremely hard to get them off it.

"When children who haven't even reached their teens are being referred for this, questions really do have to be asked about the parents too.

"Housebreaking generally is a problem across Scotland, with an extremely poor clear-up rate.

"Having hundreds of under 18s contribute to this only makes things worse."