

Parents hiring private eyes to spy on teenagers

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RECORD numbers of parents have recruited private investigators to check up on their tear-away teenagers.

Detective firms across Scotland have been inundated with requests from worried parents who fear their children have become involved in drugs, crime or underage drinking.

Cliff Atkinson, chairman of the Scottish Investigators Forum, said: "There are quite a few issues that parents have to be worried about - even the best areas have their problems. Parents can't keep an eye on their kids all the time so this gives them peace of mind."

Surveillance experts in one of Scotland's largest firms blamed the trend on changes in society and soaring rates of binge drinking, teen pregnancy and drug abuse. Stephen Grant, partner at Grant and McMurtrie Professional Investigators, said

'Society has changed. Parents are more concerned, which is natural'

the number of cases every year had soared from zero to 20 in the last five years.

He said: "Society has changed and parents are worried. They are keen to see exactly what their children are doing. If kids were

bad before it was for scrumping apples or knocking on doors and running away. But now they have more opportunity to get involved with drink and drugs. Parents are more concerned, which is totally natural."

Parents can expect to pay a

flat fee of about £200 followed by around £40 an hour to discover if their sons or daughters are where they said they would be. The tracking service makes up at least 5% of the annual turnover for some firms.

One fifth of 15-year-olds admitted using drugs and nearly three-quarters said they had been drunk at least once, according to Scottish Executive figures.

Grant said: "We have to be very careful because we don't want to put the children who are under investigation into a state of shock or unnecessary distress. Sometimes the parents are invited along covertly so they can see for themselves what their children are doing."

Rosemary McIlwhan, spokeswoman for the Scottish Centre for Human Rights, said: "Whilst not breaching any laws it's not likely to foster a strong family relationship."

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