

Child Protection and *Getting it right for every child*: What are the Connections?

Those attending this conference include leaders in Scottish child protection policy, management, practice and research. The Scottish Government recognises that child protection is an exacting and complex field which has been subject to rapid development and improvement over the past decade and which remains a focus of public attention against a changing wider context of social care for children. This note seeks to draw the connections between child protection and one aspect of that wider context, *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC).

Safety in context: Safety and protection of children is a national, inter-agency priority. Safety is considered as a headline in the context of other vital and connected indicators of wellbeing. *Getting it right for every child* is the national programme, which provides an approach, which sets safety in the context of wellbeing. As such it is relevant to all children on a continuum of need and risk from a slight concern to the most vulnerable. Distinct procedures will always be needed to guide immediate action to protect children and keep them safe. GIRFEC principles and the practice model do not cut across current local inter-agency procedures.

Child's rights and child's wellbeing in practice: *Getting it right for every child* provides a practice model, which promotes holistic assessment and planning for children, centred upon indicators of wellbeing. The indicators of wellbeing are about each child's path, potential and *right* to be healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included and above all, safe.

Policy congruence: The protective role of universal services is the starting point for necessary teamwork between health, education and other agencies in each child's situation. GIRFEC is about intervention as early as possible and provision of the right help at the right time. This is systemic and far sighted child protection. The *Early Years Framework* and *Equally Well* provide illustrations of the connection between preventative and protective systemic and practice change. The GIRFEC policy and practice model is also of crucial relevance to adult services (such as those for parents misusing substances), as reflected in current national strategy set out in *The Road to Recovery: a New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem*.

Outline and evidence: An outline and guide to the principles and core components of the GIRFEC approach is available at the GIRFEC section of the Scottish Government website. A summarised discussion of the evidence base for GIRFEC upon which the approach is founded is outlined in a paper by Professor Jane Aldgate also available there as is a detailed and thoroughly referenced paper on assessment and management of need and risk in the context of the GIRFEC practice model by Jane Aldgate and her Open University colleague Wendy Rose which draws together the lessons from many years of practice and research in the UK, and in their advisory role to the Scottish Government.

Fit with child protection procedures: The Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram has made it clear that the current review of the national (1998) child protection guidelines should aim to secure a safe and robust transition towards locating the protection of children at risk within the general approach set out by the GIRFEC practice model. This process will be assisted and informed by lessons from and evaluative work with GIRFEC Pathfinders and Learning Partners, and by consultation with Child Protection Committees, COSLA and other stakeholders in the process of development of revised child protection guidance. Moira McKinnon (Principal Officer – Child Protection, Glasgow Council) has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to look in detail at the applicability of the GIRFEC practice model's approach to risk assessment from the perspective of the child protection practitioner.

Child and family experience of GIRFEC: The GIRFEC approach incorporates a set of underpinning values and core components, which are now being tested and evaluated. Despite the complexity of evaluating culture, systems and practice changes across agencies that are value-based there are some core components that already make practical sense in the experience of children and families, and in terms of partnership in safeguarding children. This is apparent, for instance, when:

- Children and families are engaged in assessment and planning and are supported in taking a leading role in solution finding
- Children and families are not subject to multiple assessment and decision making processes
- Children who require multi-disciplinary action to meet their needs have one child's plan
- A lead professional is appointed to co-ordinate and monitor implementation of a child's plan when inter-agency co-operation is required
- A shared approach to information sharing with consent (and without consent when appropriate)

Related developments and developing relationships: The GIRFEC approach places emphasis upon on what is done *with* rather than *to* families, and the manner in all the core components fit together is described in more detail (in the guide referenced above). Implementation of such changes is a long term process. Recommendations about national workforce development and training and about related inspection processes are being considered in parallel. They have the potential to support a consistent direction for improvement, while local authorities and local partnerships design their own structures and allocate their own resources in the context of Single Outcome Agreements and Children's Services Plans. Meanwhile the national eCare Framework is being supported by the Scottish Government as a vehicle rather than a driver for inter-agency collaboration in future.

In summary the *Getting it right for every child* approach is about practical action to improve a child's wellbeing in the short, medium and long term, as necessary, through addressing the relationships between need and risk. Child protection activity should always be set in the context of a child's welfare, wellbeing and well-becoming.

Relevant Web Links:

- **GIRFEC:**
www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright
- **Summarised discussion by Professor Jane Aldgate of the evidence base for GIRFEC upon which the approach is founded:**
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrensservices/girfec/Practitioners/ToolsResources/PromotingWell-being
- **Paper on assessment and management of need and risk in the context of the GIRFEC practice model by Professor Jane Aldgate and Wendy Rose:**
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrensservices/girfec/Practitioners/ToolsResources/AssessmentRisk
- **Early Years Framework:**
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-years-framework
- **Equally Well: Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities**
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/06/25104032/0
- **The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem:**
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/05/22161610/0