

## Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and Additional Support for Learning Act (ASL)

### *How they work together*

#### *What is GIRFEC?*

GIRFEC is a national programme that promotes a shared approach to supporting children's needs for practitioners across services. It encourages partnership between families and services in order to meet the needs and promote the wellbeing and potential of all children. Wellbeing is conceptualised broadly in terms of 8 fundamental and inter-related indicators – **healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included and safe**. These indicators combine to realise the overarching goal for central and local government - that every child in Scotland will be supported to become **successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors** - that are part of both ASL and GIRFEC.

GIRFEC is based on a set of core components, a focus on improving outcomes for all children, promoting a coordinated approach to identifying, assessing and planning to meet needs and risks *with* children and families, to streamline processes and provide help at the right time.

#### *What is ASL?*

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (the Act) aims to ensure that all children and young people with additional support needs receive any necessary help to ensure that they benefit fully from education.

Like GIRFEC, it **promotes collaborative working** among all professionals supporting children and young people's learning. Like GIRFEC, it reflects a wider range of policies designed to further **improve the quality of provision** for young people with additional support needs.

The Act is supported by a **Code of Practice** that is consistent with local development of integrated assessment and planning. The Act lays a range of duties on education authorities to support children's learning and it also gives parents and carer's rights regarding their children's education. The ASL Act lays duties on education authorities to make provision for some children from birth and introduces a statutory planning framework, the coordinated support plan, for certain children.

#### *Working with GIRFEC and ASL to Identify Concerns about a Child*

Teachers will often be in the best position to recognise concerns about aspects of a child's wellbeing. Working in partnership with parents as far as possible, education staff can take the initiative in bringing services together to make a joint plan to help child and family as necessary.

When any professional has a concern about a child, there are some basic questions, which have shared application. The questions provide a strong practical link between the purposes of GIRFEC and ASL:

- What is getting in the way of this child or young person's wellbeing?
- Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
- What can I do now to help this child or young person?
- What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
- What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?

#### *Working with GIRFEC and ASL to Assess Wellbeing of a Child*

GIRFEC principles stress the importance of meeting the needs of all children in a proportionate and timely way and reviewing the outcome of intervention to ensure it has been effective. It provides a **generic practice model** for all practitioners in any agency or service to enable the identification of concerns, appropriate gathering and sharing of information, recording and making sense of information, planning action, decision making and review of plans for a child.

The ASL Act sits within the overall GIRFEC approach but with a focus on children's learning in the broadest sense. It provides very clear expectations in relation to addressing, and keeping under review, the arrangements for providing for the additional support needs of all children and young people for whose education an education authority are responsible. The type of support provided will depend on what is needed. The Act also empowers parents and children.

## ***Working with GIRFEC and ASL to Plan Action to Improve Wellbeing***

In school, learning plans, such as individualised educational programmes, may be used to help plan the learning of children and young people with additional support needs or if there are more complex needs a coordinated support plan may be produced.

These plans **contain the same elements of information** as a GIRFEC **Child's Plan**. This makes it easy for the plans to be integrated for a child with a number of concerns that need addressed in a coordinated way, linking a care plan for a child who is looked after, or on a supervision order, or a protection plan for a child on the protection register. Together, where needed, all of these plans will form part of a **Single Child's Plan**, which will be coordinated by a **Lead Professional** to ensure that all the child's needs are addressed in a holistic way, for care, for safety, for accommodation and for education.

This does not negate the need for clear plans within the services and agencies to ensure they meet legislative requirements but it does mean that the plans need to be **similarly structured and use common language** so that it can be shared and viewed as part of the whole when necessary.

## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

***Q. Does GIRFEC mean we have to involve other agencies when a child has/may have ASN?***

*A. No: it will make sense to consider whether other agencies can help with the ASN or other needs, but if the school system can deal with the child's needs on its own that is getting it right for that child.*

***Q. Do we need a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) and a GIRFEC plan?***

*A. Where the conditions exist for a CSP it is a statutory requirement to prepare one. Where there is multi-agency intervention, GIRFEC principles point to having a single plan for the child, shared by all the agencies. The plans in a CSP form part of the single plan, along with other information, to support better outcomes for children. Alternatively the assessment and plans in the single plan can be the foundation for a CSP if the child's support needs reach the criteria to trigger a CSP.*

## ***Working with GIRFEC and ASL to Streamline Meetings and Reviews***

Sometimes children and their families have to attend meetings to plan or review progress. This may be a child protection review case conference, a looked after review meeting or a coordinated support plan review. These meetings are often with the same people but in different offices in different days and with different agendas although all of them purport to be about improving the child's wellbeing in some way.

GIRFEC seeks to streamline these processes so that the child's wellbeing is looked at in the round and action in one area supports and enhances action in other areas of the child's life. Where sometimes before they have conflicted and caused confusion and placed extra stress on already difficult situations.

## ***So do GIRFEC and ASL Principles and Components Fit Together?***

The values, principles and practical elements of ASL and Getting it right are mutually supportive and the objective of improved outcomes for all children are congruent. Although Getting it right is not just about support for learning, support for learning is not just about the work of education professionals. The ASL Code of Practice is intended to ensure that agencies take a holistic approach to meeting children's learning needs.

Getting it right means building on the scope and principles behind ASL, and the guidance and training which has supported ASL implementation to ensure an approach that works for all children whatever their needs.

There is work to do on the manner in which plans are integrated locally and on agreeing processes around responsibilities of the lead professional but this has begun in the GIRFEC pathfinders and learning partners and will continue as the programme is taken up across the country.

***This paper is produced to support staff in joining up thinking around ASL and GIRFEC. Please let us know if you have found it helpful, have comments or if you need more information.***

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*In the Highland pathfinder the GIRFEC wellbeing indicators from the **generic practice model** are being used to identify and record concerns in schools and to share with schools concerns or issues identified by other agencies. Using the My World assessment framework and the resilience matrix where necessary schools (and other agencies) can decide whether they can provide support themselves or within their agency, or if support is needed from other agencies.*