

# ***Dumfries and Galloway GIRFEC Practice Guidance***

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## ***Introduction***

***GIRFEC**, is a strengths-based approach, seeks to realise children’s rights on a day to day basis and is therefore underpinned by key values and principles. The following refreshed values and principles were developed together with stakeholders including children and young people from across Scotland.*

*This guidance gives an outline of the core components of the policy, including refreshed values and principles, and ambitions for how we can do more in practice. The guidance will help support practitioners to understand what is expected and to work towards excellence so that every child and young person in Scotland can reach their full potential.*

### **The principles of GIRFEC:**

- Placing the child or young person and their family at the heart, and promoting choice, with full participation in decisions that affect them
- Working together with families to enable a rights respecting, strengths based, inclusive approach
- Understanding wellbeing as being about all areas of life including family, community and society
- Valuing difference and ensuring everyone is treated fairly
- Considering and addressing inequalities

- Providing support for children, young people and families when they need it, until things get better, to help them to reach their full potential
- Everyone working together in local areas and across Scotland to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families

Based on these principles, GIRFEC is about enhancing the wellbeing of all children and young people as well as building a flexible scaffold of support: where it is needed, for as long as it is needed. This is delivered through the core components of:

- A named person who is a clear point of contact for children, young people and families to go to for support and advice. A named person can also connect families to a wider network of support and services so that they get the right help, at the right time, from the right people.
- A shared and holistic understanding of wellbeing and a single model of how this can be considered and supported.
- A single, shared and rights-based approach to planning for children and young people's wellbeing where support across services is needed, co-ordinated by a lead professional.

This guidance aligns itself with Keeping the Promise and the UNCRC

## **The Promise**

### **What is The Promise?**

Scotland's promise to care experienced children and young people is that they will grow up loved, safe, and respected and this guidance aligns itself with the principles of keeping the promise.

### [The Promise](#)

For GIRFEC to be applied using a rights-respecting approach, the views of children and young people should be sought and listened to. There must be a compassionate and caring decision making culture focused on children and young people and those they trust. Children and young people should be meaningfully and appropriately involved in all matters which affect them, including in decision making about their care.

## United Nations Convention on the the Rights of the Child

GIRFEC puts the rights of all children and young people at the heart of good practice. Children's rights and wellbeing are intrinsically linked and are mutually reinforcing. When a child's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled, their wellbeing improves; equally restricting access to their rights may have a negative effect on their wellbeing. Where a child's wellbeing is flourishing and their rights are respected, they are better able to enjoy and defend these rights, as well as those of others.

The United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) is an important agreement by countries who have promised to protect children's rights.

The Convention explains who children are, all their rights, and the responsibilities of governments. All the rights are connected, they are all equally important and they cannot be taken away from children.

[What are Child Rights? - BBC What's New \(youtube.com\)](#)

## Getting it Right for Every Child Policy Statement – 2022 - What is new?

**The refreshed Policy Statement contains a number of key changes throughout the document:**

- Use of the phrase children and young people;
- A change in tone, using positive language, building from the impact of GIRFEC in Scotland;
- An emphasis on working together;
- Further clarity in order to provide confidence for practitioners in delivering GIRFEC through a policy, legislative and practice context;
- A focus on children's rights as an underpinning principle of GIRFEC, ensuring policy and practice protects, respects and fulfils the rights of all children and young people;
- Alignment to key policy areas, for example: The Promise and a continued commitment to eradicate child poverty;
- Highlighting that all children and young people may benefit from the GIRFEC approach;
- An uplifting, visionary statement in relation to Achieving our Ambition, recognising the gaps and opportunities; and,
- A commitment to ongoing participation of children and young people to ensure that they fully understand, and are involved in, all areas of GIRFEC.

**Wellbeing** sits at the heart of the **GIRFEC** approach and reflects the need to tailor the support and help that children, young people and their parents are offered to support their wellbeing.

**We all want our children and young people to be fully supported as they grow to be:**

- **Safe** - Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.
- **Healthy** - Having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare and support in learning to make healthy, safe choices.
- **Achieving** - Being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community.
- **Nurtured** - Having a nurturing place to live in a family setting, with additional help if needed, or, where possible, in a suitable care setting
- **Active** - Having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, at home, in school and in the community.
- **Respected** - Having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions that affect them.
- **Responsible** - Having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community, and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision, and being involved in decisions that affect them.
- **Included** - Having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities, and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.

**Assessments of wellbeing will be required in a wide and varied range of circumstances. Local authorities, health and social care partnerships, directing authorities, other service providers and related services have local training, policies and procedures in place to support their employees in assessing wellbeing. All practitioners should know how to identify a wellbeing need.**

In Dumfries and Galloway a wellbeing need may be identified by the child or by anyone who knows or supports the child/young person and can be identified for many reasons, such as (but not limited to) the following:

- a) A child may be worried, anxious or upset about an event/set of circumstances, including socio-economic circumstances.

b) A parent(s)/carers or family member may have noticed a change in the child's behaviour, demeanour or developmental progress.

c) A parent(s)/carers or family member may have concerns about the impact on their child of an event or set of circumstances.

d) A practitioner may have concerns for a child's health, or may have noticed a change in their behaviour, demeanour or development.

e) A child may be offending, or putting themselves at risk of harm. Any indication that a child's wellbeing is, or is at risk of being adversely affected, can constitute a wellbeing concern:

- The wellbeing need will arise from observation or assessment which indicates that one or more aspects of wellbeing is, or is at risk of being, adversely affected or subject to an effect by factors related to the child.
- Professional judgement based on experience and training and information about the child and their circumstances, will be key to identifying wellbeing needs.
- In some cases a single observation or incident may be judged to represent a risk to wellbeing and be considered a need.
- In other cases the context of the observation or assessment and wider knowledge of the child's general wellbeing and circumstances, may either heighten or reduce the need.
- The nature of the need will be specific to the individual child, their age, stage of development and circumstances, so what represents a wellbeing need for one child, may not be judged a need for another child.
- Consideration should be given to whether or not these wellbeing needs should be communicated to the child's Named Person

### **National Practice Model**

The National Practice Model diagram summary below brings together the My World Triangle, Resilience Matrix, eight wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) and the four contexts for learning within Curriculum for Excellence, to support overall assessment.

It is intended to provide a structure to support practitioners, working together with children, young people and families, to make effective use of assessment information.

This information will likely have been gathered from multiple sources, including regular information gathering processes on the progress of a child or young person with full participation from the child or young person

## **The National Practice Model brings together:**

Using the National Practice Model 2022 - [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 1 - Using the National Practice Model - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#):

- **The Wellbeing Indicators:** Using the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) in the 'Wellbeing Wheel' to observe, discuss and record information which may indicate the scaffolding of support needed for a child or young person.
  - **The 'My World' Triangle:** Helps to understand a child or young person's whole world. It can be used to explore their experience at every stage, recognising there are connections between the different parts of their world. In the assessment process, it can be used to explore strengths, needs and risks
  - **The Resilience Matrix:** Used in more complex situations, the Resilience Matrix helps organise and analyse information when there is a perceived risk to a child or young person.
  - **Planning, action and review using the 'Wellbeing Wheel':** When the child or young person's needs are clear, they can be summarised using the Wellbeing Wheel to develop an individual plan to provide support.

Making sense of the information is a crucial step before making a plan which supports a child or young person. Using the National Practice Model allows practitioners together with the child or young person and their families to undertake an assessment, construct a plan and provide appropriate support.

This will then allow for a regular and consistent review of the plan.

## **Overview of key changes:**

The refreshed National Practice Model contains a number of key changes throughout the document:

- Greater emphasis on child-centred, rights-respecting, strengths-based practice and the inclusion of children, young people and their families at every stage of the process.
- Simpler language identified which can be used when working together with children, young people and families.
- A deeper understanding of the impact of trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in considering the My World Triangle.
- Further detail provided on the Resilience Matrix.

## The Wellbeing Indicators (SHANARRI)

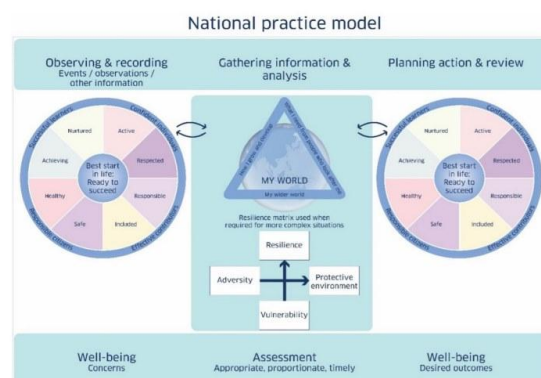
### The Wellbeing Indicators:

- Using the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) in the 'Wellbeing Wheel' to observe, discuss and record information which may indicate the scaffolding of support needed for a child/young person.
- Planning, action and review using the 'Wellbeing Wheel': When the child/young person's needs are clear, they can be summarised using the Wellbeing Wheel to develop an individual plan to provide support.

Wellbeing is considered and assessed across the aspects of children and young people being Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. These are the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) as referred to within section 96(2) in Part 18 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

There are five key GIRFEC questions that practitioners should ask themselves when considering a child or young person's wellbeing needs, whilst maintaining a focus on the rights of the child. The child or young person should fully participate in discussions when considering these questions:

- 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 that is needed and appropriate to help this child or young person?
- What can my agency or organisation do now to help this child or young person?
- What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?



Making sense of that information is a crucial next step before making a plan which supports a child or young person. A resilience-based approach fits closely with the aims of GIRFEC to build on the strengths in the child's whole world, always drawing on what the family, community and universal services can offer.

## My World Triangle

Practitioners should support children, young people and families to fully participate in discussions about what is happening in a child or young person's world. The importance of supportive and trusted relationships can be explored using the triangle.

Using the 'My World Triangle' allows practitioners, together with children, young people and families, to consider:

- How the child or young person is growing and developing;
- What the child or young person needs and has a right to from the people who look after them; and
- The impact of the child or young person's wider world of family, friends, community and society.

The 'My World Triangle' examines key aspects of the child or young person's wellbeing across the three sides of the Triangle. These enable practitioners, together with children and young people, to think about what is happening in a child or young person's whole world.

If practitioners are concerned about harm or significant harm related to a child or young person, refer to the [Child Protection Guidance \(2021\)](#).

### **Essential questions for practitioners to consider during an assessment:**

- What are the views of the child, young person and their family?
  - What are the strengths, talents and needs of this child or young person?
  - Which aspects of family relationships promote the child or young person's development and wellbeing?
  - How can the parent-child relationship be strengthened?
  - What other factors are influencing the child or young person's wellbeing and development?
  - What would help the parents to support the child or young person to reach their full potential?

### **Using the information to assess a child or young person's needs:**

Practitioners routinely gather some of the information across the sides of the 'My World Triangle' through their work with children, young people and families. The information

gathered, alongside any assessments undertaken, should determine the need for and right to additional support.

Remember to consider that what is happening on one side of the Triangle may have a significant impact on another side. There may be overlap between the different sides of the Triangle.

Use of The My World Triangle should be proportionate to the need identified.

For further support on the 'My World Triangle' - [Supporting documents - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 1 - Using the National Practice Model - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2017/06/Supporting_documents_-_Getting_it_right_for_every_child_(GIRFEC)_Practice_Guidance_1_-_Using_the_National_Practice_Model_-_gov.scot) ([www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot))

## The Resilience Matrix

The Resilience Matrix enables practitioners, together with children, young people and families, to consider characteristics that may cause vulnerability and factors that can contribute to adversity, alongside factors that create a protective environment and resilience within the child or young person.

The aim of this process is to consider the actions needed to support the child or young person by **strengthening protective factors** and **resilience** and **reducing adversity and vulnerability**. **Using 4 areas will help to assess how well a child or young person will be able to cope with the challenges of life:**

**Resilience** - Things that help a child or young person cope when difficult situations happen. This can include feeling good about themselves, strong family relationships and problem solving skills.

**Adversity** - Things that make a child or young person's life more difficult. This can include poverty, abuse and parents who use alcohol or drugs.

**Vulnerability** - Things that can make a child or young person more vulnerable. This can include minority, disability, bad care experiences or abuse.

**Protective environment** - Things that protect the child or young person from difficult times. This can include a good school experience, supportive adults, community connections, and leisure activities.

The resilience matrix - a framework for thinking - [Resilience Matrix \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

The concept of resilience is fundamental to children and young people's wellbeing and is used in assessments by practitioners from many agencies. Resilience in this context is

understood as the process of children and young people adapting well in the face of adversity, stress and trauma. A focus on resilience is not to suggest that adversity can be overcome by individual effort or that children and young people should be able to be resilient in the face of severe abuse and neglect, or multiple adversities; it is rather to recognise children and young people's achievements despite such experiences.

Evidence shows that a resilience approach should look beyond individual coping characteristics and should focus on changing environmental hazards and stressors, as well as enhancing individual, family and services responses and support. Research has identified a range of protective factors which support resilience, which include: support from a trusted adult, education, safe schools and neighbourhoods, financial security, participation in sports and community activities, and supportive social networks and communities

**Making sense of information:** Practitioners should understand that any assessment is likely to require information from several sources and a lot of information may be gathered for this purpose. Making sense of that information is a crucial next step before making a plan for action. Analysis can often be missed out in assessments, but it is a critical part of understanding what all the information means. Careful analysis and interpretation of information is essential to enable practitioners:

- To identify challenges or difficulties.
- To explain why these have arisen.
- To understand the impact of strengths and pressures on an individual child or young person.
- To consider the needs of the child and young person.
- To consider how these needs relate to the child or young person's rights.
- To help children, young people and families to discuss and agree with them what support they can access.
- To describe desired outcomes and the impact of proposed support, with measurements in place to review over time.
- To construct the child's plan.

Many children and young people who need additional help are experiencing difficult conditions. This may relate to their health, their progress at school or what is happening in their family or community. A resilience-based approach fits closely with the aim of GIRFEC to build on the strengths in the child or young person's whole world, always drawing on what the family, community and universal services can offer

## Developing a Plan for Support

Summarising needs against the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI): When the child or young person's needs are clear they can be summarised using the wellbeing indicators to develop a plan for action. Wellbeing indicators can be used to identify priorities, describe what needs to change to improve the child or young person's wellbeing and identify the expected outcomes.

Planning, taking action and reviewing: In the GIRFEC approach, any child or young person who requires additional support should have a plan to address their needs and improve their wellbeing. This could be a single-agency plan or a multi-agency plan co-ordinated by a lead professional.

GIRFEC promotes an integrated and co-ordinated approach to multi-agency planning. It looks to practitioners to work in accordance with legislation and guidance but also expects agencies to think beyond their immediate remit, drawing on the skills and knowledge of others as necessary and thinking in a broad, holistic way. For example, a care plan for a child or young person looked after by the local authority, a health care plan, or an individualised education plan should be incorporated within the child's plan where the child or young person's circumstances require this.

### **Every plan, whether it is single- or multi-agency, should include and record:**

- The views of the child or young person and their family.
- Reasons for the plan.
- Partners to the plan.
- A summary of the child or young person's needs.
- What is to be done to improve a child or young person's wellbeing.
- Details of action to be taken.
- Resources to be provided.
- Timescales for action and for change.
- Contingency plans
- Arrangements for reviewing the plan.
- Lead professional arrangements where they are appropriate.
- Details of any compulsory measures if required.

Reviewing a child or young person's progress should be an essential part of a child's plan. It will be useful to revisit the Resilience Matrix as part of the review, while also revisiting the

five key GIRFEC questions in considering a child or young person's wellbeing needs. Ensuring the full use of the National Practice Model leads to the action required to improve wellbeing for the child or young person and their family:

## The Named Person

Scottish Government's commitment to the UNCRC is built on practical foundations, including through the universal services of health and education.

Children, young people and families need to know who they can contact when they need access to relevant support for their own or their child or young person's wellbeing; this is the role of the named person.

Within the GIRFEC approach, these foundations are carried out through the role of a named person who is able to provide a clear point of contact within universal services, if a child, young person or family want information, advice or help.

**The support of a named person is available to all children, young people and their families. However, there is no obligation on children, young people and families to accept the offer of advice or support from a named person.**

A decision not to access this support at any particular time does not prevent support being accessed in future. Likewise accepting support at any particular time does not create an obligation to continue to accept support. Local arrangements and the term used to describe this role or function may vary from area to area.

## What will the named person do?



The named person promotes good wellbeing and forms relationships through the provision of a universal service. They are a clear point of contact for anyone concerned about the child

or young person's wellbeing; whether that is the child or young person themselves, parents, family members or others working with the child or young person. All practitioners providing a service to children, young people and families, should be aware of and know how to contact the named person.

A named person will be available to listen, advise and help a child/young person and their parent(s)/ carer(s), provide direct support or help them access other services. For example: a health visitor might request assistance from a speech and language therapist, or a guidance teacher may put parents in touch with a local bereavement counselling service.

The named person should contribute to the assessment and planning process for children and young people who need extra support at key transition points.

The named person is primarily provided by health and education services and is usually someone who is known to the child, young person and family and who is well placed to develop a supportive relationship with them. At times the named person may be involved in multi-agency working to support a child or young person's wellbeing:

**Health:**

- From birth to beginning primary education, the named person for all children is usually their Health Visitor or Family Nurse. Health Visitors responsibilities include the named person role and function.
- Where there is a family nurse supporting a young mother they should take on the role of the named person until the child is two years old, at which point the role should be assumed by the Health Visitor.
- It is important to highlight that during pregnancy, while midwives do not have a named person role, they do embed GIRFEC and its values and principles into practice when supporting expecting parents and giving their unborn child the best start in life.

**Education:**

- During primary schooling, the named person role is usually fulfilled by a principal teacher, depute or head teacher (or other promoted teacher), depending on the size of the school. The local authority, in conjunction with their Children's Services Planning Partnership, should have clear ways of informing children, young people and families of the transition from their Health Visitor to their new named person, across their child's primary education, regardless of whether they have engaged with the named person previously.

- When attending secondary school, the named person role is usually fulfilled, as in the primary school, by a principal teacher, depute or head teacher (or other promoted teacher).

#### **How do parents and carers know who the named person is for their child?**

- Information should be provided that makes it clear to the child, young person and family who their named person is and how they can contact them in the event they need any support or guidance. It is the responsibility of the named person to make contact with the child, young person and their family to offer the support and assistance necessary to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

#### **What if parents do not wish to accept the offer of support from a named person?**

- There is no obligation on children, young people and families to accept the offer of advice or support from a named person. A decision by a child, young person or their family not to accept advice, help or additional support offered is not, in itself, cause for concern. This decision should not affect the provision of services children, young people and their families are entitled to, for example, health visiting. In most cases, the person identified as the named person will be involved with the child, young person or family as another part of their role.

#### **What if there is more than one named person?**

- Some families may have access to more than one named person, e.g. health visitor, primary school and secondary school, due to the ages of their children. These named persons should work closely to assess, plan and deliver support to meet the needs of the child, young person and family, if support is required.

#### **Who is the named person for gypsy travellers and children/young people who are educated at home?**

An education officer will take on the role of the named person for them.

#### **Young people leaving school before the age of 18?**

A named person will be available for all 16-18 year old. However the professional acting as the named person will vary depending on the circumstances of the young person.

#### **Home educated children/young people and children and young people from the Gypsy/Traveller community?**

The local authority will allocate a named person and inform the child or young person and their family of the support available to them.

#### **What happens during the school holidays?**

Should a child, young person or family require support from a named person out with school term time, contact should be made with the Education Safeguarding Manager (ESM). The ESM will assume the named person role during holiday periods.

**In addition the named person will:**

- Be a point of contact for the child/young person and/or parent(s)/carer(s) seeking information or advice or wishing to discuss a concern;
- Ensure that the views of a child/young person and families are sought and recorded at every stage;
- Be the person who ensures a child/young person and families are fully involved in decisions that affect them;
- Ensure, when information needs to be shared, that a child/young person and families know why this information should be shared, and that agreement has been given and recorded, unless, in exceptional circumstances, there is good reason not to for example in child protection cases.
- Carry out wellbeing assessments and may be a partner to a child's plan or be the lead professional for the plan.
- Work with the lead professional, when there is one.
- If concerned that the child is at risk of significant harm, follow child protection procedures for Dumfries and Galloway.

## **What knowledge and skills are required to deliver the role of the named person?**

**The values and principles underpinning the GIRFEC approach:**

- Wellbeing and the use of the National Practice Model (please see Practice Guidance 1) for the Assessment of Wellbeing (please see Statutory Guidance);
- Taking account of children's rights in line with the UNCRC;
- Recognise, evaluate and respond proportionately to a wellbeing need using a strengths based approach;
- Work together with children, young people and families, including supporting them to fully participate, including where communication barriers exist, how to access appropriate support if required;
- Lawfully record and process information, in line with information sharing guidance;

- Develop, use and manage a chronology;
- Recognise when the response to a wellbeing need(s) demonstrates a requirement for a child’s plan;
- Be aware of the grounds for a referral to the Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration (SCRA) and recognise when a referral is appropriate in relation to the child or young person;
- Understand the relationship between a wellbeing need and a child protection concern and how to follow local child protection procedures.

The skills, knowledge and understanding required to carry out the named person functions should be developed and maintained through professional learning. At the heart of this professional learning should be the Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the “Children’s Workforce” in Scotland that cross-refers to the Guiding Principles of the UNCRC.

[Supporting documents - Common Core of Skills, Knowledge & Understanding and Values for the "Children's Workforce" in Scotland - gov.scot](#)

## **The Lead Professional**

During childhood there may be circumstances where children, young people and families require the support of a child’s plan. This is where a lead professional will be needed. The lead professional is an agreed, identified person within the network of practitioners who are working alongside the child or young person and their family (examples are given at section 7). In most cases, the professional who has the greatest responsibility in coordinating and reviewing the child’s plan will undertake this role. Throughout a child or young person’s journey, this person may change depending on the child or young person’s needs, but there should always be a lead professional identified when there is a multi-agency (see glossary) child’s plan. All decision-making about support and the child’s plan should seek and act on the views of the child or young person and their family, where appropriate, in accordance with their best interests and in consideration with their full spectrum of rights

## **Who will the lead professional be?**

Any practitioner or professional providing support to the child or young person could be identified as the lead professional.

This includes any person working across the universal services of health, social work and education (including early years), as well as a person from a third sector organisation or specialist service. For example:

Health Visitor

Community Children's Nurse

Pupil Support Teacher

Head Teacher or a Depute

Social Worker

Health Professional eg from CAMHS

Allied Health Professional

Young Carer practitioner.

**The list is not exhaustive so the following should be considered when choosing a lead professional:**

- The child, young person and/or family's needs.
- The best interests of the child or young person.
- The child, young person and family's full participation in decision-making.
  - Previous contact or positive relationship with the child, young person and family.
  - Any statutory obligation defined in law towards a child or young person, for example when a child or young person needs a Coordinated Support Plan under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

The named person who may have previously overseen a single agency plan for the child or young person and their family may become the lead professional if they are the most suitable person to fulfil that role

## **What does the lead professional do?**

**The Lead Professional will:**

- Support children, young people and families to fully participate in discussions about what is happening in a child or young person's world, where this is in their best interests and in consideration with their full spectrum of rights.
- Ensure as far as possible, that the child or young person and their family understand what is happening at all times and support them to participate in decisions being made.
- Act as a main point of contact for all, particularly to ensure the child or young person and their family are not required to tell their story multiple times to multiple professionals.

- Oversee the implementation of the child's plan and check that it is reviewed, accurate and kept up-to-date.
- Ensure that targeted support is helping to improve agreed outcomes for the child or young person.
- Promote teamwork between agencies, and work in partnership with the named person.
- Support the child or young person and their family during key transition points, particularly any transfer to a new lead professional.
- Have an awareness and understanding of the working practices of other agencies
- Ensure other practitioners are clear about the different roles they have and the contributions they make to implement the child's plan; they are not responsible for the actions of other practitioners or services.

**The lead professional is accountable to their own agency for:**

- Meeting individual professional tasks.
- Achieving the responsibilities which the lead professional role entails as above.

## **The role of the lead professional and the child's plan**

- The lead professional has a pivotal role in coordinating and collating the information that informs the child's plan, working alongside the child, young person and their family.
- This information should be gathered from the child, young person and their family and provided by the other agencies involved with the child or young person, in accordance with the requirements set out in the information sharing guidance.
- Information can also be drawn from any other plans a child or young person may already have in place, provided it is lawful and proportionate to do so. Using the National Practice Model.
- The lead professional should coordinate the wellbeing assessment required, including information from any specialist assessments, make sense of that information and lead on constructing the child's plan.
- All agencies involved have a joint accountability to ensure the plan is progressed and reviewed to meet the needs of the child or young person and agreed outcomes.

## The role of the lead professional & taking forward a child's plan

### When the child's plan has been agreed, the lead professional will:

- Be a point of contact with the child or young person and their family in relation to the plan to ensure it is working well and achieving the agreed outcomes, ensuring they have accessible information relating to their plan.
- Be a point of contact for all practitioners who are delivering support for the child or young person to feedback progress on the plan or raise any issues.
- Ensure that the support provided is consistent with the child's plan, aligning with the outcomes and the outcomes that the child, young person, family and practitioners have agreed.
- Promote team work between agencies, to avoid duplication and drift.
- Work with the child, young person and family and the practitioner network to make sure that the child, young person and family's rights are respected, they are able to fully participate in the plan, and, when necessary, link the child or young person and family with specialist advocacy services.
- Ensure the plan is informed by an awareness that children and young people can experience multiple and overlapping inequalities and address these in a child-focussed manner.
- Support the child or young person and their family to make use of support from practitioners and agencies.
- Monitor how well the child's plan is working and whether it is improving the child or young person's wellbeing and achieving agreed outcomes.
- Coordinate the provision of other help or specialist assessments which may be needed, with advice from other practitioners where necessary, and make arrangements for these to take place.
- Arrange a joint review including the child or young person and their family, all agencies involved, and amend the child's plan, when required.
- Support the child or young person and their family through key transition points and ensure a careful and planned transfer of responsibility where roles change. For example, children, young people and families should be supported to fully participate when another practitioner is to become the lead professional and when a multi-agency child's plan is no longer needed, meaning that the lead professional role is no longer required.

## What if there is a disagreement between the practitioners supporting the child, young person or family?

- In some cases there will be statutory processes in place. Where there are no statutory requirements.
- If there is disagreement among practitioners supporting the child, young person or their family, the lead professional should seek to achieve a consensus that gives due consideration to the views of the child or young person, in accordance with their age and capacity, and in full consideration of their best interests, and wider rights.
- **Failure to make progress:** In some cases there will be statutory requirements and escalation processes in place. Where there are no statutory requirements, if practitioners involved are not fulfilling their professional role as part of the child's plan, this should be escalated in line with the authority's GIRFEC escalation framework.

## What if the child, young person or family does not want the identified lead professional?

- There may be situations where a child, young person and/or family no longer wish to continue to work with the individual who has been identified as the lead professional and will seek someone else for that role.
- While circumstances will vary, the child, young person and family could approach their named person to discuss this and reasonable steps to identify and offer another suitable individual should be taken.
- The child or young person, in accordance with their evolving capacity, and their family should be supported to fully participate in discussions and decision making to identify an appropriate new lead professional.

## The Child's Plan

### What is the child's plan?

A personalised child's plan is a non-statutory plan which should be considered when those working with a child or young person and their family, identify that they need a range of extra support beyond universal provision to be planned, delivered or co-ordinated.

- The child's plan should offer a simple planning, assessment and decision-making process which leads to the right help, at the right time.

- The child's plan should reflect the voice of the child or young person at every stage and include a clear explanation of why the plan has been created, the personalised actions to be taken and the expected improvement for the child or young person.
- The lead professional (or relevant practitioner within a single agency plan) should work with children, young people and their families, and all of those involved in the child's plan to ensure that the support provided is regularly reviewed and evaluated for its effectiveness in the improvement of outcomes for the child or young person.
- It should reflect the voice of the child or young person at every stage and include a clear explanation of why the plan has been created, the personalised actions to be taken and the expected improvement for the child or young person.

### **Please note**

Acceptance of a child's plan within GIRFEC along with the advice, information and support which are offered is **voluntary**: Unless compulsory measures are otherwise justified, if the intervention requires co-operation from children, young people and their families, they will be free to reject any proposed interventions. The lead professional should ensure that children, young people and their families are aware of this.

Specialist statutory plans such as a Co-ordinated Support Plan (CSP) for education, Adoption Support Plan, Looked After Child's plan or Young Carer Statement may form part of the child's plan, where a child's plan within GIRFEC is accepted. This will help everyone working with a child or young person and their families to consider what other support their respective agencies could offer to help promote the child or young person's wellbeing and reduce repetition for families. If the support of a child's plan within GIRFEC is not accepted, these statutory plans may still be considered

## **When should a Child's Plan be considered?**

**Children and young people have the right to appropriate support from their families and communities to enable them to reach their full potential across all aspects of wellbeing.**

- If additional support is required for the child or young person and this can be provided by the agency that has identified the wellbeing need, a single agency child's plan can be initiated with agreement of the child or young person and their family. For example, to modify a child or young person's learning environment if a need has been identified within their education setting, or to coordinate a number of different health supports.
- If it is assessed that the additional support required involves more than one agency, the practitioner should discuss the benefits of arranging a meeting between multi-

agency partners with the child or young person and their family. If they agree, a meeting can be arranged and a lead professional appointed.

- Where the support of a named person is accepted by the child or young person and their family, the named person should remain a key partner to the child's plan regardless of whether they are the agreed lead professional. There is no obligation on the children, young people or their families to accept the support of a named person acting in that role alone, however, they may still have a role within the child's plan, for example as a guidance teacher on behalf of the school or as health visitor.
- When support is needed to help a well planned transition. The child's plan can help to support with moving schools, preparing to leave or moving from one local authority to another.
- An assessment of wellbeing should seek to identify all the factors in the child or young person's life which may be affecting their physical, mental or emotional wellbeing. This will help establish how best to support the child or young person. This process should also include an assessment utilising the My World Triangle and Resilience Matrix as outlined in Practice Guidance 1 - Using the National Practice Model, and the agreement of shared, desired outcomes using the Wellbeing Wheel, which will form the basis of the multi-agency child's plan.

## **Who should be involved in the development and the review of the child's plan?**

- Any practitioner or professional providing support to the child or young person can be identified as the lead professional.
- This includes those working in universal services such as health and education; specialist services such as CAMHS and social work, or in third sector organisations, for example, those supporting family wellbeing in community settings or offering support for children with complex conditions.
- If a child or young person is Looked After or their name is placed on the child protection register, the lead professional will often be a social worker.
- Whilst the plan is co-ordinated by the lead professional, they must work with the named person, where appropriate, and other practitioners involved in the provision of the child's plan.
- All decision-making regarding a child's plan within GIRFEC should seek, have regard to and act on the views of the child or young person and their family.

**Please remember..** Acceptance of a child's plan within GIRFEC, unless compulsory measures are otherwise justified, is voluntary and children, young people and their families are free to reject any proposed intervention which requires their cooperation and they should be advised of this.

## Involving the child or young person

- Children and young people have the right to take part in and influence decisions on issues which affect them, as set out in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- It is essential that practitioners providing support to children, young people and families have the skills, knowledge and understanding to build relationships, provide advocacy and deliver GIRFEC effectively; and to make sure children, young people and families understand their rights and how these rights will be respected, protected and fulfilled.

## Chronologies

### What is a chronology?

A chronology is a timeline of child, young person and family circumstances. It provides a record of key events in the order that they happened. Chronologies may be put together by one or more agency to help them understand how to support a child, young person or family. Chronologies can help prevent people having to keep repeating what has happened in their lives. Guidance on chronologies will be provided in guidance on planning for children within the GIRFEC approach. In brief, you should give the same consideration to the information shared within chronologies as you give to other information sharing.

### When contributing to, developing, sharing or storing a chronology you should consider the following principles:

- Only the minimum amount of information should be shared that is necessary for the identified purpose;
- Information should not be further shared or processed in any manner incompatible with the purpose(s) specified;
- Information should not be kept longer than is necessary for the purpose identified to the individual to whom it relates; and

- If sharing or use of information may negatively interfere with an individual's private and/or family life then this interference must be legitimate, appropriate and proportionate to the concerns

### **Chronologies are a critical part of a child's plan.**

- A single-agency chronology highlights significant events, both strengths and concerns, in a child or young person's life to date. It provides a summary of information which supports further dialogue and exploration with a child or young person, their family and practitioners working with them to develop a better understanding of how these events may impact the child or young person's wellbeing.
- A multi-agency chronology is produced where two or more agencies have an involvement with a child or young person and support is being provided through a child's plan, co-ordinated by a lead professional.
- Chronologies can be used from pre-birth to transitions into adulthood to help inform an assessment of wellbeing or planning for support. Practitioners can best support families, and assist the lead professional, by ensuring that important information is gathered systematically, in a consistent way and that the outcomes and impact of decisions made, such as offers of support or referrals to services, are clear.
- Over time, practitioners should review their single agency chronology to ensure that it is up to date and continues to be a practical tool for supporting a child or young person's wellbeing. They should also analyse the information for any significant patterns of need or risk which they may wish to share with a family, within their agency or, where appropriate, the named person and lead professional.

### **Information sharing**

- Sharing relevant information at the right time is an essential part of promoting, supporting and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people including protecting them from neglect or physical, mental or emotional harm.
- We must ensure that the right information is shared at the right time and that those close to children and heard. The starting point for any decision must be how to best protect relationships that are important to children.
- This guidance aims to clarify the circumstances in which information can be shared with another agency the considerations that need to be taken into account to ensure sharing information with another agency is appropriate, and the importance of involving children, young people and families in the decision to share information.

## Key considerations when sharing information

- You must be fair and transparent (ICO provide guidance on this at Principle (a): Lawfulness, fairness and transparency)
  - The information sharing must be necessary for the specific purpose.
  - There is no other reasonable way to achieve that purpose that interferes less with people's privacy
  - You must keep a record of what information you have shared, with whom and for what purpose so that you can demonstrate that you have complied with data protection legislation.
  - If you decide not to share information, keep a record of your rationale.
  - You must be clear about what information you intend to share (e.g. whether it includes special category or criminal offence data) and the intended purpose -
  - There must be at least one appropriate lawful basis
  - If you are sharing special category data then you must also have an article 9 condition for processing .
  - If you are sharing special category data then you must also have an article 9 condition for processing (see glossary and section 11)
  - You must process personal data securely, with appropriate organisational and technical measures in place.
  - The information that is shared must be the minimum necessary to achieve that purpose.
  - The information sharing must not be against the common law duty of confidentiality; and
- To comply with ECHR Article 8, the information sharing must be in accordance with the law and necessary in a democratic society.

For more advice visit - <http://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781804357774>

## What information does your agency hold and should this be shared?

- Ascertain what information you hold, the purpose for which you hold it and what benefit or outcome would be gained by sharing the information. Then consider what information sharing is necessary to achieve that outcome.

- Once you have identified your purpose and the relevant data to be shared you need to ensure that you can comply with all the other data protection principles. Early sharing of appropriate information about wellbeing can be vital in preventing child protection

## Sharing information in an emergency -

- **Where there is a child protection concern, relevant information should be shared with police or social work without delay, provided it is necessary, proportionate and lawful to do so.**
- If you are concerned about a child or young person's wellbeing or a possible child protection issue, you should follow your agency's child protection procedures.
- In an emergency situation (e.g. safeguarding children or young people) you should go ahead and immediately (and without consent) share information as is necessary and proportionate. You should record the reasons why you have done as soon as possible afterwards.
- In many cases, legislation places a duty on practitioners to take appropriate action, including sharing information to ensure the wellbeing of a child or young person.
- In many situations information will need to be shared to enable a child, young person or their family to access a service or support that they have requested or agreed to. Sharing information in this way can prevent a child, young person or their family from being asked to repeat themselves.

## Consent

- Practitioners should only ask for consent when this will genuinely affect whether the information is shared, and you will be relying on consent as the lawful basis.
- It is important that practitioners do not give the impression that they are asking for consent if there is a lawful basis for sharing the information without consent and they have decided to share the information in the best interests of the child or young person.
- Practitioners can still seek a child, young person or families' views on sharing their personal information and use that to inform their decision making. Relying on a lawful basis other than consent does not preclude practitioners from seeking their views.

- It is appropriate to ask for consent where information sharing would enable a child, young person or family to access support that, while possibly helpful, is entirely optional.
- In an emergency situation (e.g. safeguarding children or young people) practitioners should go ahead and immediately (and without consent) share information as is necessary and proportionate. Practitioners should record the reasons why you have done as soon as possible afterwards.

**FAQs - Abbreviated responses but for more detailed information visit - [getting-right-child-practice-guidance-4-information-sharing-2022.pdf \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/publications/2022/02/22-getting-right-child-practice-guidance-4-information-sharing-2022.pdf)**

**Can you share this personal information without consent?**

- Under data protection legislation you may share information without consent if in your judgement there is a lawful basis to do so. For example, if there is a child protection concern.
- When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear about the basis upon which you are doing so.
- Where a decision to share information without consent is made, a record of what has been shared should be kept.

**Should the child, young person or family be asked for their views?**

- It is good practice, and in keeping with taking a child's rights-based approach to give the child or young person the opportunity to say what they think about the sharing of their information.
- Their views should be taken into account and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, as part of any decision making process. This approach is rights-respecting and helps to ensure services respect the rights of children and young people.
- Advocacy, translation or communication support may be helpful, or in some cases essential, to supporting children, young people and families to contribute their views.

**Should the child, young person or family be informed?**

- The child, young person or their family should be informed about what information about them is being shared, with whom and for what purpose.

- There are circumstances where you may not have to inform the child, young person or family that you intend to share information eg for the purposes of safeguarding or child protection.
- You should not routinely rely on exemptions; you should consider them on a case-by-case basis. You should justify and document your reasons for relying on an exemption.

If in doubt about sharing information seek advice from your line manager.

## Transparency in information sharing

Where possible, children, young people and families must be informed, from the outset, what personal information the organisation will require, why and what they do with the information. If any routine information sharing is necessary, children, young people and their families must be informed with whom it is shared, why and what the recipient will do with the information. If the organisation shares information without consent in certain circumstances, this should be explained in a way that they understand.

## Professional judgement

- Professional judgement is always required about the needs, risks or concerns in each set of circumstances and what information, if anything, is relevant, proportionate and necessary to share in relation to these.
- The needs, risks or concerns must be placed in the context of available observed and recorded information about the child or young person in their current circumstances.
- You should share information that is adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing the information. In deciding what to share you should also consider the rights of the child under Articles 12 and 16 of the UNCRC.

## Request for Assistance Form

The Request for Assistance Form is the format to be used by all services to seek assistance from another professional within their own or another agency, to include referrals to social work, health partners, and partners within education's Support for Learners team.

The Request for Assistance is to help the referring agency to liaise with other partners to ensure that children, young people and their families are able to access the right support, at the right time and from the right people.

Before making a Request for Assistance it is expected that the Named Person will have carried out a detailed assessment of wellbeing eg - My World Triangle/Boxall Profile or the resilience matrix.

It is assumed that the GIRFEC questions will be asked before a RFA is made and it is good practice to discuss a referral with the child/young person, their family and the agency you are referring to.

## **Making a Request for Assistance (RFA)**

When requesting support from another partner the named person or lead professional in conjunction with the child or young person and their family will have identified the wellbeing need/s that need addressing. Planning and undertaking some assessments ahead of completing a request for assistance may help practitioners to focus on the support that is being asked.

### **Before making a RfA it is good practice to:**

- Communicate, practitioners should discuss with one another prior to making a RfA to help determine which support service will be the most appropriate for the child or young person and their parent/carer.
- Discussion the submission of the RfA with the child, young person and their parent/carer will have taken place before the RfA is made. Their views and consent will also be sought.
- Complete the form electronically & store appropriately, remembering to update chronologies.

## **Website Links**

[Getting it right for every child: Policy Statement - 2022](#)

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 1 - Using the National Practice Model - gov.scot](#)

[getting-right-child-practice-guidance-2-role-named-person-2022.pdf](#)

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 3 – The role of the lead professional - gov.scot](#)

[Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 4 - Information sharing - gov.scot](#)

[Supporting documents - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\): child's plan - practice statement - gov.scot](#)

[Getting it Right for every child in Dumfries and Galloway](#)

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/dg/girfecdg/>