# Guidance for GIRFEC Reports and Child’s Plans

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**Introduction:**

This guidance is intended to support practitioners in the completion of GIRFEC assessment reports and the development of Child’s Plans, now known as My Plan required to support planning for children within the authority. This is a single format report that can be utilised for a range of different meetings – Children’s Hearings, Child Protection Planning Meetings, Care and Risk Management Meetings, and statutory reviews, now known as My Plan Meeting or My Plan Review.

The guidance is also intended to support the awareness and implementation of United Nations Convention on Rights of a Child **(UNCRC)** as incorporated by The UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. UNCRC places a duty on local authorities to:

* To protect children’s rights to the fullest extent and to not act in a way that is incompatible with UNCRC requirements
* There are 52 articles in UNCRC, 42 cover all aspects of a child’s life, the remaining set out how adults and governments must work together to make sure children can enjoy all their rights.
* Four of these are considered to be special, known as ‘general principles’ which support other rights to be upheld.
  + Rights should be applied without discrimination (Article 2)
  + Best interests of the child to be a primary consideration (Article 3)
  + Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
  + Right to express a view and have that view taken into account (Article 12)
  + Example of other articles relate to the right of children and young people to have: freedom from violence, abuse and neglect (Article 19); the right to a proper house, food and clothing (Article 27); access to primary and secondary education (Article 28); the right to play and rest (Article 31)
* Methods to embed children’s human rights approaches in practice include involvement and ensuring their views are included in decision making; inclusive communication; awareness raising; participation of children; and advocacy.
* The Children & Young People’s Commissioner for Scotland has created a helpful resource to help children and young people to understand their rights <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/rights/uncrc/articles/>

Aligned to UNCRC and The Promise you will note changes to language and a focus on more inclusive practice with children and their families in planning. The National Care Review recognised that language associated with the ‘care system’ is cold, stigmatising, and impersonal. Clackmannanshire’s Language of Care Policy has been co-designed by young people and families in Clackmannanshire and contains four principles to help ensure non stigmatising, warm and inclusive language and practice. These principles are:

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| **Non Judgemental** | Language should be inclusive, thoughtful, and free from judgement |
| **Transparent** | Young people should be able to see and hear themselves within anything that is written about them. |
| **Easy to Understand** | Language should be clear and use of abbreviations and acronyms limited |
| **Culture and Values Align** | It is not enough just to change our language. These changes need to be reflected in our work with children and their families. |

This policy should be revisited often when considering our language, communication and practice with children and their families. https://www.clacks.gov.uk/document/7073.pdf

**Getting it Right - Values and Principles:**

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is about safeguarding, supporting and promoting children and young people’s wellbeing, and ensuring support is provided if and when this is needed. GIRFEC is:

• Child-centred

• Holistic

• Accessible and responsive to needs identified

• Embeds the use of the National Practice Model to inform assessment and planning, using shared language and a common framework within which to consider children and young people’s wellbeing

• Multiagency planning – bringing together the child or young person, family, professionals and third sector agencies to ensure that assessment and intervention focuses on strengths, needs, risks, and support networks informing a co-ordinated child’s plan.

• Ensure accountability across partner agencies, confident in identifying wellbeing needs, and aware of their roles and responsibilities

• Promotes UNCRC – We have a legal duty to ensure that the voice and rights of the child are central to assessment and planning. The views of the child or young person must clearly documented throughout the assessment and plan. How this is achieved will be in line with their age and level of understanding. Family and others who are significant in a child or young person’s life will also play a role in supporting this. Reports written to the child are an effective way to communicate information in a more child centred and accessible way, also considering the impact of care experienced adults accessing records in later life.

• Viewpoint should be completed with the child or young person by the most suitable person – either social worker, or most appropriate person identified. Viewpoint is not just a tool to gather the views of a child or young person, the outcomes should inform planning for children based on what is important to them.

Please refer to Forth Valley GIRFEC guidance for further information on GIRFEC and how this approach is utilised locally. <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/fvpp/girfec-roles-responsibilities-national-practice-model/>

**Completing a GIRFEC Assessment:**

The assessment is broken down into the following sections, it should be compiled with input from the child, their family, care givers, and other professionals working as part of the team around the child and family. Care should be taken in the language used, writing as if the child was in the room beside you. Please refer to Language of Care Policy to support practice in relation to how we write and speak about children and their families.

A full GIRFEC assessment should be provided for Children’s Hearings, Child Protection Planning Meetings, Care and Risk Management Meetings, and for an initial My Plan Meeting. For reviews a full report should be provided for Child Protection Planning Meetings alongside completion of the progress sections within the My Plan. For My Plan reviews only the completed “*progress/for review sections”* in the My Plan should submitted. A full chronology should be submitted for all meetings. **See quick guide contained on page 10 for easy reference to what is required to be submitted for each type of meeting.** Consideration should be given to providing a full assessment for My Plan reviews where there has been a significant change of circumstances or where the review is to consider a plan for permanence.

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| Report Section | Associated Guidance |
| **Child/Young person’s name, D.O.B. address and location.**  **The term location has been favoured by young people as an alternative to accommodation type.**  **Legal Status** | Please ensure that the Child/Young person’s name is correct at the time of writing the report along with their date of birth and address.  If the child is looked after their current address may be different to their home address.  **Please ensure that non-disclosure addresses are not provided.**  Please use drop down to select the type of care arrangement in which the child is living.  Provide full detail of legal status including any conditions |
| **Meeting Type** | **Note the change in language**  Use drop downs provided:  Initial Child Protection Planning Meeting  Review Child Protection Planning Meeting  My Plan Meeting  My Plan Review  Children’s Hearing  Care and Risk Management Meeting  Care and Risk Management Review |
| **Date, Time, Venue of Meeting** | Provide detail of meeting and venue |
| **Parent/Caregiver Details** | Ensure parent/caregiver details are also correct |
| **Brothers and Sisters name and addresses** | Brothers and Sister’s names and address should also be provided this will help all involved establish where each child resides if they are not currently living with their parent/s or carer.  You should check the sibling register as children may have half siblings or adult siblings living elsewhere.  **Please ensure that non-disclosure addresses are not provided.** |
| **Appreciated Adults**  **This term is preferred by young people** | Within this part ‘other significant adults’ may be extended family, friends, carers, professionals and advocacy. Anyone who is thought to have an important role in the child/young person’s life. |
| **People involved**  **This is preferred term by Young People replacing Professionals involved** | Please detail all current professionals involved and their up to date contact details. |
| **Reason for the Report** | Provide an outline of the reason this report is being provided this should be linked to the type and purpose of meeting, any relevant legal status, and any decision making process or concern which has led to the report being required e.g an ICPPM following an IRD. |
| **Views of the Child or Young Person** | This is the child’s view of his or herself and their family situation. Children’s views on family, school, and community should be considered.  Views should be sought in a way that is appropriate to the child’s age e.g for young children you may use observations and comment on their interactions and responses.  This section should never have “N/A”. Regardless of the child’s age and ability to verbally express their views; professionals should be able to give a clear representation of the child’s view.  The views of children and young people who don’t have English as a first language should be sought in a way that is accessible to them e.g using an interpreting service. Reports and invites may need to be transcribed to their first language. Similarly if a child has a disability or sensory impairment alternative means should be sought to support their participation and access to the planning and review process.  Please refer to “NSPCC The Voice of Child” [document](https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/learning-from-case-reviews/voice-child#:~:text=Listening%20to%20and%20capturing%20the,to%20support%20or%20safeguard%20them.) for further information if required.  Please liaise with Who Cares? if they are working with the child/young person, and consider a referral if the young person does not currently have an advocacy worker. |
| **Views of Parents and Caregivers** | This should include views of current carers and any separated parents. It may also be relevant to include the views of extended family members. Note views and responses regarding the current situation.  As above care should be taken to ensure that arrangements are made to ensure that parents and care givers are able to participate and provide their views. Barriers to this could include not being confident in English as a second language, literacy, sensory impairments or disability. |
| **About My Family**  **This is a preferred term expressed by Young People to replace Family Background** | This section is intended to be read alongside a child’s chronology so should not seek to replicate the chronology. There should be a focus on the impact of significant events and how this has impacted the child, their wellbeing and development.  This section should take a summarising and thematic approach to providing the reader an overview of relevant family history while also provide a brief outline of Social Work involvement.  This section may need to be reviewed at times to ensure it doesn’t grow to become overly long, irrelevant, or become too detailed - particularly where a family may has had a long history of involvement with services. |
| **Current Assessment:** | This section asks the writer to provide an assessment which is based on consideration of each of the wellbeing indicators which are a central part of the National Practice Model and Risk Framework, along with any other tools, models or frameworks that have been used, such as The Neglect Toolkit, Safe and Together, IPSU etc. Please make the links between these frameworks and how this is informing your assessment as well as considering impact on parent and child. Revisiting tools and frameworks allows you to measure change and progress to provide evidence of improvement, or to consider barriers to achieving the desired outcomes.  An overview of various frameworks and tools which can be used to inform assessment is provided below at **page 10**. This is not exhaustive.  The Wellbeing Indicators help to frame observations, and to highlight areas of strength or concern when considering each indicator. A child or young person’s wellbeing is influenced by everything around them, and will change at different points of their life, depending on evolving developmental needs and the degree of positive or adverse childhood experiences. Concerns for a child or young person’s wellbeing may arise due to their own individual growth and development, wider environmental factors ,or from the impact of a family member or other significant person’s circumstances  This section should include information gathered from relevant professionals and agencies involved within the child’s life. Focus on the wellbeing indicators alongside other aspects of the practice model will support the reader to gain a full understanding of the child’s experience, as well as supporting the development of an outcomes focused My Plan aimed at ensuring the child’s safety and achieving identified outcomes for the child in a more holistic way.  Information should be presented in a way that is evidence based, highlights areas of strength and risk, recognises unmet needs, and considers what this means for the child and their family. |
| **My brothers and sisters and Significant Relationships** | This offers an opportunity to summarise any information relation to a child’s siblings and family relationships which may well have been referred to within the current assessment.  This invites the report writer to provide specific analysis around sibling relationships and family time which may inform planning and recommendations. The importance of understanding sibling relationships at an early stage of involvement with a family cannot be emphasised enough, and ensures that the needs of siblings are known and documented if required in the future. You should also give consideration to children that a child may consider to be a sibling e.g an unrelated child they may have grown up with in foster care, or a best friend who a child may leave behind if moving.  Are there any family time arrangements in place? How the family time is facilitated (social work, family). How is the relationship between each child/young person and does the child/young person benefit from the current family time. How are relationships promoted out with planned family time?  Consideration should also be given to other significant people in the child’s life, particularly when planning transitions and considering how to maintain significant relationships e.g significant friendships, sibling like relationships, the significance of family pets etc.  Please refer to [Keeping Connected Briefings](https://afkascotland.org/our-resources/staying-connected-toolkit/briefing-papers/) in relation to kinship care, permanent foster care and adoption where relevant to support thinking about relationships and transitions. |
| **My World Triangle (Using resilience matrix and toolkit)** | The My World Triangle supports a holistic assessment of a child or young person’s situation by gathering and analysing information in the context of their wider world, in recognition of the connections between the different areas in a child’s life.  How I live and grow  My wider world  What I need from the people who look after me  The Resilience/Vulnerability Matrix tool supports analysis of assessment information and looks at what impact this has on that individual child or young person, by considering the balance of resilience and strength factors against adversity, vulnerability, and risk.  This section allows the reader to gain an understanding of the strengths and adversities that exist in relation to each part of the child’s life.  For further info you should refer to:  [GIRFEC National Practice Model](https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/national-practice-model/)  [National Risk Framework](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-risk-framework-support-assessment-children-young-people/) |
| Analysis of Risk, Recommendations and Support | This section should evaluate the risks and mitigating factors highlighted in the previous sections. Consideration should be given to duration, frequency and severity in assessing risk. Note the impact on the child. Comment should be made regarding the suitability of the recommendation proposed and a contingency plan should be recorded should alternatives need to be considered. Highlight any immediate concerns.  Revisiting the Wellbeing Indicators and the Matrix toolkit helps us to analysis all the gathered information, form a recommendation and focus action planning and review progress. By agreeing desired outcomes for an individual child or young person you identify what specific actions are required and by whom, to improve the child or young person’s circumstances.  Analysis should consider evidence and take a ‘what does this mean for the child?’ approach. |

**Chronologies:**

A full chronology should be provided for all meetings. Please refer to Chronology Guidance for guidance around chronologies and good practice. Chronologies should be reviewed regularly to ensure accuracy and relevance. Regular review will ensure that inaccuracies do not migrate into reports, allow aspects of chronologies to be shortened and summarised as time passes, and ensure that chronologies are used as a valuable tool to inform assessment.

**Planning:**

Planning for children should be outcomes focussed and SMART.

When considering outcomes focused planning think about a cake. The outcome is the cake – you need to consider the right ingredients and the right recipe i.e what will it take to make the cake.

Outcomes should be identified in partnership with the child and their family. Wellbeing indicators can be used to work with the child and family to consider areas of priority to improve safety and wellbeing. The child’s view point questionnaire may also generate outcomes to be included within the child’s plan.

**My Plan Progress:** (for all review meetings)

Progress should be updated in relation to the specific outcomes identified within the child’s plan. Focus should be on the review period. It is helpful to recognise what has been successful, why it has been successful and to acknowledge strengths and approaches which have contributed to this. Where outcomes have not been met consider why this is, what have the barrier been to achieving this, and what has been tried to overcome barriers. Parents and young people should be involved in contributing to the progress sections of My Plan also utilising any other tools such as view point or outcomes stars. The IRO will be responsible for updating the plan to reflect the outcomes and agreed actions for the next review period. Social Workers only require to provide a draft plan for the first review.

It should be clear in the My Plan what the overall goal is for the period ahead .g a period of assessment and review, a plan for rehabilitation, or a plan for permanence.

**Quick Guide to Assessment Tools:**

The Clackmannanshire Learning and Practice Development Sub Group, Clackmannanshire Child Protection Committee provide training that supports and develops practitioners’ knowledge, understanding and skills of the following assessment frameworks: (this list is not exhaustive)

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| **Identification of Need, Risk and Desired Outcomes** | This one day multi-agency training covers the elements in the National Practice Model: My World Triangle, SHANARRI Wellbeing Indicators, Resilience Matrix and the National Risk Assessment Framework to help evidence and analyse what a child’s lived experience is |
| **Impact of Parental Substance Abuse** | This half day multi-agency training introduces the IPSU Assessment Framework and Guidance where there is parental substance use. The training focuses on the principles of using the framework and reflects on the voices of both those living with substance use and from a practitioner perspective when conducting an IPSU assessment with parents/carers. |
| **Neglect Toolkit** | This half day multi-agency training introduces the principles and content of the Action for Children evidenced based Neglect toolkit. The training helps practitioners consider agreed thresholds and values when assessing concerns of neglect - Physical care, home safety and love, relationships and self –esteem. |
| **Safe & Together Briefings**  **Safe & Together Core Practice** | This multi- agency briefing is a 2- hour presentation on the principles and components of the Safe & Together framework in cases of domestic abuse.  This 4-day multi-agency training develops practitioner’s knowledge and skills on improving better outcomes for families for those living with domestic abuse utilising the Safe & Together practice model. The training covers knowledge and skills in assessment, interviewing, documentation and safe planning. |
| **Outcome Star** | This training promotes a family of evidence-based tools for measuring and supporting change when working with people. It is a way to measure impact when undertaking interventions.  The Star is underpinned by three values – empowerment, collaboration and integration. The values that inform the Outcomes Stars are similar to those of person-centred, strengths-based and co-production approaches. |
| **AIM 3: Assessment of Adolescents who display Harmful Sexual Behaviour** | Risk assessment tools used predominantly in a Youth Justice context. A small number of workers will have specific training to undertake these assessments. |
| **START-AV Short -Term Assessment of Risk and Treatability: Adolescent Version** | Risk assessment tools used predominantly in a Youth Justice context. A small number of workers will have specific training to undertake these assessments. |
| **LSCMI** | Risk assessment tools used predominantly in a Youth Justice context. A small number of workers will have specific training to undertake these assessments. |

**Quick Guide to Reports and Documents Required for Meetings:**

**Papers should be submitted 5 working days before My Plan Meetings/My Plan Reviews and CPPM or CARM reviews. Papers for initial CPPM’s will be accepted three working days before the meeting. It is expected that parents and young people where appropriate will have received papers and the contents discussed prior to submission.**

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| **MEETING TYPE** | **REPORTS TO BE SUBMITTED BY SW** | **COMMENTS** |
| Initial CPPM or CARM | Full GIRFEC Report  Draft My Plan  Full Chronology | Decisions will now be documented within minute of the meeting.  An agreed My Plan will be generated from the meeting with agreed actions. |
| Review CPPM or CARM  Or Joint RCPPM/My Plan Meeting | Full GIRFEC Report  Progress/Review Section of My Plan completed.  Full Chronology | No new plan requires to be presented, the progress updates/sections for review will support the creation of an updated My Plan by the IRO at the review.  It is important that the family are involved in completion of the progress/review sections of the plan to help inform priorities for the next review period.  A review CPPM may also be a joint My Plan meeting where a Child has become looked after during a period of registration. In this instance the submissions for a joint meeting will be the same for a review CPPM. The views of the child, parent, carer and updated assessment and recommendations will inform the plan discussed and agreed at the meeting.  Agreed My Plan to be distributed with the minute following the meeting and recorded on the system. |
| Core Group/Team Around the Child Meeting | Current My Plan  Full Chronology | For all Core Group Meetings the progress/for review sections of the My Plan form a template for the Core Group Meeting and should be completed by the Chair, and updates/additions to the plan should be documented.  The meeting type – Core Group Meeting should be selected.  This will be saved as Core Group Minute (Date) and circulated as the minute of the Core Group Meeting.  Same principles apply for a TAC Meeting – selecting appropriate meeting type to provide a template for a minute. |
| My Plan Meeting | Full GIRFEC Report  Draft My Plan  Full Chronology | The IRO will produce an agreed My Plan which will be distributed and recorded on the system. |
| My Plan Review | Progress and review sections of the current plan are completed and submitted.  Full chronology | The My Plan will be updated and issued by the IRO to form a new plan for the review period ahead.  Agreed My Plan to be distributed with the minute following the meeting and recorded on the system. |
| Children’s Hearing | Full GIRFEC report  Full Chronology  The current My Plan issued at last My Plan Review if one is in place. | No change to process.  The progress section of My Plan does not need to be completed for a Children’s Hearing – the current agreed plan should be sent for reference. |
| Supplementary Report (IAF form 5) | No change to process. For use when a Hearing is continued, or while awaiting grounds being established if a written update is required. |

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|  | **The GIRFEC assessment and MY Plan was reviewed and agreed by Our Clacks Voices on 27 February 2024. These documents were issued alongside this guidance in June 2024** |