



Newsletter 3

GIRFEC in Action: Listening, Slowing Down and Getting It Right.

Spotlight: A young person's journey through secondary school

This edition highlights how GIRFEC principles guide decisions when a child's wellbeing is under pressure. When Amelie* started secondary school in Falkirk, the transition coincided with a period of significant emotional distress linked to early trauma, family change and heightened anxiety. Although academically able and eager to learn, the school environment quickly became overwhelming.

From the first days of S1, Amelie's presentation showed she was struggling to cope with the demands of school life. Despite initial supports and bespoke plans, her wellbeing deteriorated both in school and at home. Attendance reduced and behaviour became increasingly challenging, signalling that the approach needed to change.

Using GIRFEC principles, professionals, family and Amelie herself worked together to prioritise wellbeing before expectations. The decision to pause school attendance was taken jointly, recognising this as a protective step rather than a failure. A key relationship with a trusted school staff member was maintained through regular home visits, keeping connection, aspiration and trust alive.

Through co-ordinated planning, Social Work, CAMHS, Aberlour, school staff and family shared information and aligned around a single goal: helping Amelie feel safe, heard and supported. Importantly, all steps towards re-engagement were led by Amelie, at her pace.

Today, Amelie attends school most days on a flexible, bespoke timetable, engages positively with learning, and speaks confidently about her future. She is making good academic progress and has clear career aspirations.

Why this matters

- Wellbeing was prioritised over compliance and attendance targets
- The young person's voice guided decisions and timing
- Services worked together with shared responsibility and trust

This is GIRFEC because...

support was child-led, proportionate and coordinated, with decisions shaped around wellbeing, safety and long-term outcomes rather than short-term pressures.

*Name changed for privacy.