



Newsletter 7

GIRFEC in Action: Safe Spaces at the Right Time

Spotlight: Breathing Space

This edition highlights the importance of timely, compassionate support during periods of crisis. Breathing Space, opened in January 2025 in Grangemouth Town Centre, provides a short-term, trauma-informed place of safety for children and young people experiencing crisis. Funded through Scottish Government Whole Family Wellbeing funding, the service was created in response to a clear gap in local crisis provision.

Frontline staff were increasingly concerned that young people in acute distress were being held in inappropriate settings, such as police stations, social work offices or school buildings after hours, simply because there was nowhere else safe to go. These experiences often increased distress and risk, and sometimes led to unnecessary escalation into statutory processes.

Breathing Space offers a calm, therapeutic environment where young people can eat, rest, play and regulate while professionals work together to agree safe next steps. The service is accessed by Police Scotland and Falkirk Council Children's Services and operates as a test-of-change initiative grounded in rights-based, relational practice.

Crucially, Breathing Space was co-designed with young people, through the Inside Out Group and the Falkirk CHAMPS Champions Board, ensuring the space reflects their views on dignity, safety and participation.

Why this matters

- Young people avoid police custody and unsuitable waiting environments
- Distress is reduced and wellbeing stabilised during crisis
- Professionals are able to coordinate safe, proportionate plans
- Escalation into formal systems is prevented wherever possible

This is GIRFEC because...

It provides the right support at the right time, prioritising safety, dignity and wellbeing, and enabling coordinated planning around the child or young person when they are most vulnerable

20 Years of GIRFEC in Falkirk – What These Stories Tell Us

Over the past few weeks we've shared a small number of Falkirk GIRFEC in Action stories, highlighting work across early help, wellbeing, rights, education, employability and Corporate Parenting.

While each story is different, they share the same foundations: trusting relationships, early and proportionate support, shared responsibility across services, and a focus on what matters to children, young people and families.

As we reflect on around 20 years of GIRFEC, these stories show that GIRFEC is not about process or paperwork. It is about how we work, listening, slowing down when needed, working together and keeping wellbeing at the centre of decisions.

Thank you to colleagues across Falkirk who continue to live these values every day. These stories are a reminder that GIRFEC remains as relevant now as it was when it began.