

Getting It Right for Every Child

Refreshed policy statement summary

Foreword

This document provides a high-level summary of the [GIRFEC policy statement](#), including details of key changes. It is designed to serve as a tool for practitioners to better understand the basic principles and objectives of GIRFEC, and why it is important for improving the lives of children, young people, and families across Scotland.

Where possible, the language of the original documentation has been used, to provide an accurate account of its content. Additional content has been added for clarity where required.

Introduction

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the Scottish Government's commitment to provide all children, young people, and families with the right support at the right time, so that every child and young person in Scotland can reach their full potential. Through GIRFEC, everyone in Scotland can work together to build the scaffold of support children and young people need to grow up loved, safe and respected.

First introduced in 2006, GIRFEC is deeply embedded within work with children, young people, and families across Scotland. It applies to all children and young people in Scotland and aims to ensure that adequate support is received when needed, including through prevention and early intervention work. [Refreshed guidance](#), introduced in Autumn 2022, aims to clarify existing policy commitments, introduce several changes, and highlight the importance of collaborative working.

Key Changes

The refreshed guidance contains several key changes to GIRFEC, including the following:

1. Usage of the term children and young people.
2. A move towards positive language which builds on the impact that GIRFEC has had in Scotland.
3. Emphasis on working together.
4. Clarification of existing policy, legislation, and practice guidance, to promote greater confidence amongst practitioners.
5. A focus on protecting, respecting, and fulfilling children's rights.
6. Alignment with key policy areas, such as The Promise and child poverty eradication.
7. Clarification that GIRFEC may have benefit for all children and young people.
8. A visionary statement which details gaps and opportunities for GIRFEC.

9. A commitment to ongoing participation work with children and young people, ensuring that they understand, and are involved in, all areas of GIRFEC.

Values and Principles

The following updated values and principles have been developed in collaboration with children and young people:

1. Placing the child or young person and their family at the heart, and promoting choice, with full participation in decisions that affect them.
2. Working together with families to enable a rights-respecting, strengths-based, inclusive approach.
3. Understanding wellbeing as being about all areas of life including family, community, and society.
4. Valuing difference and ensuring everyone is treated fairly.
5. Considering and addressing inequalities.
6. Providing support for children, young people, and families when they need it, until things get better, to help them to reach their full potential.
7. 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:

1. 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. They will predominantly be based within health or education services, usually in the form of a lead teacher or health visitor.
2. A shared and holistic understanding of **wellbeing** and a single model of how this can be considered and supported, the **National Practice Model**.
3. 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**. The lead professional is an agreed, identified person within the network of practitioners who is working alongside the child or young person and their family. In most cases, the professional who has the greatest responsibility in coordinating and reviewing of the child's plan will undertake this role.

This is supported by use of the **National Practice Model** which sets out a shared framework and approach to identification, assessment and analysis of wellbeing needs. It provides a consistent way for practitioners to work with children, young people, and their families to understand the child or young person's individual

growth and development in the context of their rights, unique family circumstances and wider world, exploring strengths, resilience, adversities and vulnerabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The UNCRC is a United Nations treaty. It is a holistic framework for the rights of all children and is the most widely ratified international treaty in the world. The UNCRC Articles set out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of every child. The Articles should be considered universal, inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent. This means that they apply to everyone under the age of 18, cannot be taken away, are of equal importance, and depend on each other to provide a single framework that is essential to upholding the rights of children.

Children have the same rights as all other human beings as well as additional rights that recognise childhood as a special time that requires additional protection. A child's fundamental human dignity as an individual, a family and community member must be upheld in order for them to have the quality of life they need for their wellbeing and development.

Underpinning GIRFEC with the UNCRC and other existing children's rights protections, will help to create a Scotland where all children and young people are recognised as individuals and rights holders, where their human rights are embedded in all aspects of society: a Scotland where policy, law and decision making takes account of children's rights and where all children and young people have a voice and are empowered to be human rights defenders.

Key rights underpinning GIRFEC include:

1. The right not to be discriminated against (Article 2)
2. The right to have their best interests accounted for as a key consideration (Article 3)
3. The right to survival and development (Article 6)
4. The rights to have their views heard and considered (Article 12).

Scotland is currently working towards full incorporation of the UNCRC into domestic law. The UNCRC (Scotland) Bill was passed unanimously by the Scottish Parliament in 2020, but is however currently being challenged by the UK Government.

Wellbeing (SHANARRI)

GIRFEC provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people. Through a common understanding of wellbeing, it recognises that children and young people need to grow up safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (SHANARRI), so that they can become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners, and responsible citizens.

It is an evidence-based, internationally recognised approach, grounded in children's rights. It aims to be locally embedded and positively embraced by organisations, services, and practitioners across Children's Services Planning Partnerships, with a focus on changing culture, systems and practice for the benefit of babies, infants, children, young people and their families.

Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIA)

The Scottish Government's Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) is a key tool that those engaging with children and young people in Scotland can use to strengthen their child rights-based approach. The CRWIA is a purpose-built policy and legislation impact assessment primarily designed for use by the Scottish Government, but public bodies and children's services can also make use of it. CRWIAs suggest the use of both UNCRC and GIRFEC frameworks to assess the potential impact of a policy or measure on children's rights and wellbeing.

The CRWIA covers individual children and young people, and groups of children, up to the age of 18. The use of CRWIAs also encourages decision-makers to seek the views and participation of children and young people in decision-making about the policy or measure under consideration. It is intended to help champion the interests of children and young people, think about the forms of evidence used to assess this, as well as challenge all of us to think about what more we can do to place children and young people at the heart of policies.

Children's Services Planning

Within Children's Services Planning, Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 seeks to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland by ensuring that local planning and the delivery of services is integrated and focused on supporting and promoting children and young people's wellbeing. It places a renewed emphasis on acting early, prevention and working together using the values and principles of GIRFEC.

Scaffold of Support

With the right support at the right time, every child and young person can reach their full potential. The GIRFEC approach is about getting the right support to all children and young people, including those with particular support needs.

Within the GIRFEC framework is a range of support from universal, additional, specialist and intensive services, which can be delivered through single agencies or jointly through an integrated approach. This scaffold of support consists of:

1. Family and community provide everyday support and care.
2. Universal provision supports development and builds resilience.
3. Additional support works to overcome disadvantage and supports learning.
4. Specialist and intensive help is able to address more complex needs, needs which impact health and wellbeing.

5. Compulsory intervention ensures action to overcome adversity and risk.

Key Policies

GIRFEC is designed to consider and align with several existing key policies in Scotland, such as:

1. [The Child Poverty \(Scotland\) Act 2017](#), and the subsequent [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plans](#)
2. [The Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services](#)
3. [The Independent Care Review](#) and [The Promise](#)
4. [The Additional Support for Learning Review Action Plan](#)
5. [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021](#)
6. [The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

Addressing the social and economic circumstances in which people live is essential to supporting children, young people, and families. Addressing multiple and overlapping inequalities is key to preventing long term adversity and trauma.