

CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Engagement feedback

In 2019, the Deputy First Minister informed the Scottish Parliament that new Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) policy and practice guidance was to be produced. Well developed drafts were shared with stakeholders in late 2019/early 2020 but work was paused by the pandemic. Co-production working groups then updated these materials and these were shared with stakeholders.

Stakeholders were asked for their views on the revisions to the following documents: Policy Statement, The role of the named person, The role of the lead professional, Practice Guidance - using the National Practice Model, Getting information sharing right for every child and the Information Sharing Charter. This engagement took place between 1 November 2021 and 10 December 2021 and attracted responses from 49 organisations.

Alongside this work, sixteen engagement events took place; eight with stakeholders and eight with children, young people and families.

The final document in this suite, *Statutory guidance on Assessment of Wellbeing*, was shared with the public for comment and the results of this consultation are captured in a separate report.

This summary combines the views gathered on individual guidance documents with reports from the engagement events to present a picture of the key issues raised through stakeholder engagement.

Policy Statement

Clarity and accessibility of the Policy Statement

The vast majority of organisations that participated in the consultation felt that the policy statement was “completely” or “mostly” easy to understand. Some organisations and children and young people consulted indicated that the tone was directed at professionals, not children and families, and that the easy-read version could be further simplified. Suggestions for addressing this included using infographics to explain policy, adding a contents page to help navigation, a quick reference summary of the changes made to the policy statement and a child-friendly version produced in collaboration with speech and language therapists.

Clarity on the refreshed values and principles of GIRFEC and its core components

Among the organisations responding to the consultation, the majority indicated that the policy statement did provide clarity on the refreshed values and principles of GIRFEC and its core components. Some organisations noted that GIRFEC sat at the centre of a complex web of policies and legislation around children and families. They wished to see a clear explanation of where GIRFEC sat among these, and how each slotted into one another. There were suggestions that an infographic/flow chart could be used to best illustrate the wider policy landscape.

Practitioners' roles and responsibilities

Responses in relation to the question 'Does the statement give practitioners confidence in the importance of embedding and implementing GIRFEC to improve outcomes for children and families?' produced the most varied responses from stakeholders, with mixed views about whether it gave them confidence in this respect. The question, "To what extent do you think that the statement will help practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights?" also produced varied responses.

Organisations noted that the statement lacked examples of turning policy into practice. They wanted to see examples on a general level - how to embed the principle of GIRFEC into practice; and on a specific, individual level - who should deliver, and be responsible, for each aspect of the guidance. They also wanted to see best practice, and an outline of expected standards to be met. They noted the possibility that different interpretations of policy at a local level could result in different outcomes and wanted to see overall expectations that should be met. Organisations indicated that the importance of partnership working and co-ordinated support planning was not sufficiently emphasised. Contributors were also keen to point out that the effective delivery of GIRFEC relied on sufficient resources to do so. This related to both communicating about the refresh itself, and in delivering on the promises made in the guidance.

The importance of the voice of the child and family

While most organisations indicated that the statement reflected the importance of the voice of the child and family, some organisations noted that the policy statement needed to place greater emphasis on the voice of the child and on effective mechanisms for hearing their voice. It was also noted that the guidance needed to be clearer that parents, families and children should lead the way, not professionals.

Organisations also noted the need for practical guidance around transition from child to adult services and a version of GIRFEC guidance for use by those in adult services. They noted that the age definition for a child varied and this needed to be better defined.

The role of the named person

Clarity and accessibility of the document

Most organisations felt that the guidance on the role of the named person was easy to understand. Organisations did note, however, that the guidance was too long and should be reduced in length. A few organisations expressed concern over the accessibility of the guidance documents for children, young people, and parents/carers with additional support needs, or sensory loss.

Clarity of the role of the named person and other professionals in the implementation of GIRFEC

The majority of organisations involved in the engagement indicated that the guidance provided clarity around the role of the named person and other professionals in implementing GIRFEC. However, some organisations wished to see a clearer picture of the role of the named person. They also expressed concern over the level of expectation being placed on a named person. Organisations further noted that there was a lack of guidance on how the named person will be supported and how they will gain the skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out the named person role.

Organisations noted the need for more clarity in the guidance around the expectations of the named person at certain key points throughout a person's life and that the guidance would benefit from strengthened focus on roles and responsibilities during key periods of transitions. Additional comments were made concerning strengthening the guidance around named persons dealing with children that were homeschooled or from the travelling community.

Organisations also noted that the named person needed to have a clear understanding of inequalities.

When asked if the guidance helped provide confidence and understanding for practitioners working in the role or alongside the named person, the 46 responses were more varied, with mixed views on whether the guidance helped provide sufficient confidence and understanding.

The rights and voice of the child and family

Stakeholders were asked whether they thought the guidance will help practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights within the role of the named person. Responses to this question were varied, with some organisations comfortable that it did so, and others indicating that it only helped to do so a little.

When asked if the guidance reflects the importance of the voice of the child and family, the vast majority felt that it did so.

The role of the lead professional

Clarity and accessibility of the document

The majority of organisations indicated that the document provided clarity and was accessible. Likewise, the majority of organisations indicated that it provided clarity on the role of the lead professional and other practitioners in implementing GIRFEC.

Some organisations wished to see a clearer description of the role of the lead professional and wanted clarification on who should carry out this role. They also expressed concern over the level of expectations being placed on a lead professional, noting a lack of guidance on how the lead professional will be supported and how they will gain the skills, knowledge and understanding to carry out the role.

When asked about whether the guidance helped provide confidence and understanding for practitioners working in the role or alongside the lead professional, the majority of organisations indicated that it did so. Stakeholder feedback suggested that in some organisations there was a lack of clarity between the roles of the named person and the lead professional and more guidance was needed to clearly distinguish between them.

The rights and voice of the child and family

Stakeholders were asked whether they thought the guidance will help practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights within the role of the lead professional. The majority indicated that they believed it would do so completely or mostly. When asked whether the guidance reflects the importance of the voice of the child and family, over the vast majority of organisations felt that it did so. Some organisations commented that the document would benefit from providing greater detail around the child's plan and that the process for making a change to a lead professional needed greater explanation.

Practice guidance – using the National Practice Model

Clarity and accessibility of the document

The majority of organisations consulted believed the document was clear and easy to read. Some organisations suggested that clearer guidance on how to use all elements of the National Practice Model was required, especially on whether the full suite of tools should always be used when assessing wellbeing.

Clarity in using the National Practice Model as a key part of the GIRFEC approach

While the majority of organisations indicated that the guidance document did provide clarity in using the National Practice Model, feedback suggested there was confusion over Section 10 which describes the four main ways that a child or young person's wellbeing needs may lead to accessing support. Some organisations also reported that the process for raising a wellbeing concern was onerous, especially

for someone who is not a practitioner, that there were unresolved issues over information sharing, and that the role of the named person was not clear.

Some organisations reported that the resilience matrix was complex and more guidance on how best to use it, and when, would be welcome. Opinion was divided on whether it should always be used as part of an assessment or used only when other tools had not covered every consideration.

Further feedback suggested the guidance created confusion about the issue of consent to share information and that reference back to the accompanying guidance *Getting information sharing right for every child* may prove useful here.

The rights and voice of the child and family

While the majority of organisations who commented on whether the guidance helps provide confidence and understanding for practitioners when including children and families in discussing the areas of the National Practice Model thought it did so, some organisations felt that more could be done to improve the guidance in this respect. Responses to the question over whether guidance will help practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights while using the National Practice Model were also varied.

Organisations noted that the voice of the child and family must be enabled in practice and the guidance should make greater reference to doing so, and the mechanisms around this.

Getting information sharing right for every child

Clarity and accessibility of the document

The majority of organisations felt that this guidance document provided clarity and accessibility.

Clarity on the practice of information sharing within GIRFEC

While the majority of organisations felt that the guidance did provide clarity in this respect, further feedback suggested a number of issues in the practice of information sharing:

More clarity needed on consent: The guidance generated confusion about the issue of consent to share information. The earlier part of the guidance suggests consent is a legal basis to share information, the latter part states the reverse and that public task is a more likely reason.

Wellbeing and child protection: Organisations noted that guidance was clear on information sharing about child protection but that earlier sharing of information about wellbeing was vital in preventing child protection issues occurring.

Creating a full picture: Some organisations noted that most of the guidance referred to sharing between individuals rather than agencies and that more information was needed about building a full picture and multiple agencies having access to the same information. Feedback suggested the role of the named person or lead professionals in triangulating

information needed greater emphasis.

Decision-making: Organisations made clear that there needed to be more practical guidance on decision-making in different scenarios, rather than just providing the legislative backdrop to such decisions.

The rights and voice of the child and family

Contributors were asked to what extent they thought guidance will help practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights within the practice of information sharing. Of the responding organisations responses were varied and while a majority felt it did help practitioners' understanding in this respect, some organisations felt more needed to be done. Organisations noted that the voice of the child and family must be enabled in practice and the guidance should make greater reference to doing so, and the mechanisms to enable this. They also suggested that the balance of power was a confusing concept and needed greater clarification on when an imbalance existed and what it meant in terms of consent and information sharing.

Information Sharing Charter

Clarity and accessibility of the charter

Most organisations indicated that the Information Sharing Charter was easy to understand. Feedback indicated that the language used is mostly child and family friendly, however further feedback suggested the creation of two versions, one for parents and carers, and one for children and young people, and involving children further in the creation of the charter. Other suggestions included the creation of a graphic version, the use of Plain English throughout and a glossary to explain key words, roles and policies.

Clarity on roles and responsibilities when informing children and families how their information will or will not be shared

The majority of organisations indicated that the guidance on roles and responsibilities in relation to information sharing was reasonably clear. Feedback suggested that further clarification on why information would be shared was needed. Organisations also suggested the charter should make clear information would be shared to allow people access to supportive services.

The rights and voice of the child and family

The majority of organisations indicated that the guidance helped practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights while sharing the charter with children and families. There was also consensus that the charter reflected the importance of the voice of the child and family.