

1 KEEP THE CHILD AT THE CENTRE

"In all actions concerning the child, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration".

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3)

Oftentimes the context within which a child lives can be complex. Historically educational outcomes for the child, family or community may be poor, but without the child at the centre little can be achieved.

The voluntary sector believes that support for the child - with the intention of impacting on wellbeing and engagement, achievement and attainment at school - requires the child to be at the centre of all considerations and actions.

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PEN PICTURE: Jeely Piece Club

Over the past twenty-five years knowledge and understanding of child development has been enriched by research into attachment between a child and primary carer. Current policy and guidance, for example Pre-Birth to Three, Curriculum for Excellence, Building the Ambition and the National Child Protection Guidance, reflect and promote the significance of emotional attachments and the impact from environmental influences.

Scotland's Practice model GIRFEC encapsulates this ethos by keeping the child at the centre of services. The Jeely Piece Club Nursery applies these principles on a daily basis. This nursery has been operating in the community of Castlemilk, Glasgow for 40 years. The organisation was founded by local parents, and continues to support families and any individual who has an important role in making childhood memorable, happy and successful.

Case study

Jim and Joan are teenage partners with additional support for learning needs. The couple met at school, and over time were looking forward to the birth of their first baby. Social work completed a pre-birth assessment, housing support identified accommodation, and the family was referred to the Jeely Piece Nursery.

GIRFEC provides principles of practice which are used to gather and collate information for each family in order to ensure a personalised response from integrated services. Jim and Joan were encouraged to consider their needs by focusing upon current issues, protective factors, and identifying potential difficulties in the post-birth period. The couple immediately joined the Jeely teen-parents' programme, and participated in a First Aid course, 'Cooking on a budget', and were introduced to Glasgow Life leisure facilities with their peer group.

The first few weeks and months of caring for their baby daughter were busy and stressful for the couple. A baby in the family meant that the couple had to learn new skills, and gain understanding of their responsibilities, capabilities, support mechanisms, and the means to access guidance. The baby girl attended the Jeely nursery on a part-time basis from an early age. Jim and Joan stayed in the nursery for several sessions a week, and the key worker showed the couple how to interact positively with their daughter. The Jeely sensory room provided a relaxed atmosphere in which Joan could feed the baby, develop a secure attachment relationship, and discuss any anxieties with experienced staff. A Jeely home-play worker facilitated play in the home environment and created an effective link with nursery. The Positive Start team liaised with the Jeely, sharing information, discussing concerns, and identifying the best approach to supporting this couple and extended family to care effectively for the little girl.

Jim and Joan were visited by a housing worker who ensured that their accommodation met the needs of the family. The Jeely senior worker attended regular social work core group meetings with the family, and latterly supported Jim to take his daughter to an orthoptist appointment. This family is achieving potential.

The Jeely nursery children are kept at the centre of our integrated service, and we create partnerships with families which promote inclusion, and support every child to achieve.

PEN PICTURE: Speak out Stay Safe: NSPCC Schools Service

Our experience in delivering ChildLine shows us that most children who contact the helpline for advice and support are over the age of 11. For many of these children, who talk about the abuse and harm they have suffered, their experiences started at a much earlier age, but many of them did not know who to turn to, nor had the confidence and understanding of how to get help.

Sadly, that pattern and presentation of contact has not changed significantly over the last 30 years. With this first-hand experience of dealing with the impact of abuse on children and young people, NSPCC Schools Service seeks to reach out to younger children in order to make sure they have this understanding at an earlier age and that they get advice and support when they need it.

With the help of our mascot Buddy, the programme provides child-friendly, interactive assemblies and workshops to help children understand abuse in all its forms, recognise the signs of abuse, know how to protect themselves from all forms of abuse and crucially know how to get help, and the sources of help available to them, including ChildLine. These messages are delivered through an assembly for all children from P1, with additional workshops for P6 and P7 classes.

The *Speak Out Stay Safe* programme is delivered at no cost to the school although some schools then decide to fundraise to support the work of the NSPCC. *Speak Out Stay Safe* can help schools fulfil several of the requirements of the Rights Respecting Schools Award, Curriculum for Excellence and Getting it Right for Every Child. Working alongside the four capacities in the Curriculum for Excellence, particularly as part of health and wellbeing programmes.

An important part of *Speak Out Stay Safe* is that NSPCC staff are supported in the delivery by over 100 committed local volunteers working throughout Scotland. Volunteers are trained and supported to offer a high standard of delivery.

Moira is one of our volunteers. This is what she says about being part of our team.

"My favourite part of volunteering is working with the children. I really enjoy interacting with them and seeing how they engage and enjoy the deliveries, whilst learning about an extremely important issue. They never fail to surprise me with their answers and their maturity in discussing difficult issues. I still get nervous before a delivery, particularly with an assembly, however, I have found my confidence has improved with experience and a better knowledge of the materials. I look forward to volunteering for the NSPCC School Service for many years to come"

More about *Speak Out Stay Safe*: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/working-with-schools/speak-out-stay-safe-service/>



PEN PICTURE: Teen Talks: Royal Caledonian Education Trust

RCET is Scotland's Armed Forces Children's Charity, supporting the education and wellbeing of children and young people from Armed Forces families. At the RCET we are committed to listening to the voices of young people and keeping them at the heart of everything we do.

In Autumn 2017 thanks to funding from the Armed Forces Covenant RCET ran 3 *Teen Talks* conferences in Edinburgh, Helensburgh and Inverness to give young people from Armed Forces families the opportunity to come together and discuss issues important to them. Why do we need to create such opportunities? Well, young people themselves tell us that adults – professionals and in the home and community – need to be better at listening to and understanding the life of an Armed Forces child, from their point of view. At the *Teen Talks* conferences young people told us that it can be difficult when a parent is on deployment, this can happen with little notice and the young person understands they may be in danger. When a parent is away they miss important family events and experiences. Then of course, many Armed Forces children move regularly and have to cope with changes in school, losing friends and engaging with new learning environments where the adults do not always understand their circumstances or learning needs. As with all young people our Teens also told us that they want a level of understanding, but respect for their privacy too.

"We are proud to be part of an Armed Forces Family".

"Listen to us and don't assume you know what we are going through".

There is a general perception, confirmed by young people themselves, that if you are from an Armed Forces family you are expected to be resilient and just get on and deal with any issues. While this is possible for many young people, for others it may not be so, or there may be times where support or understanding is needed. Working with Armed Forces families tells us that many young people live, at times, with worry and heightened anxiety. We know that unaddressed high levels of anxiety over long or repeated periods can affect mental wellbeing. At RCET then we want both adults and young people to understand that there are times when we must stop and listen to what this sometimes over-looked and potentially vulnerable group of young people have to say. What better time to do this than in the Year of Young People?

As a result of the *Teen Talks* events an information leaflet has been produced summarising the issues raised and offering some Top Tips on what families, schools and communities can do to improve the experiences of Armed Forces children. The leaflet is being distributed to all secondary schools to help raise awareness of the issues faced by some learners. There will also be a film showcasing the issues raised and what can be done to address them.

RCET strongly supports the Rights of the Child and is committed to keeping children and young at the heart of all our work. We offer opportunities to be listened to, resources and training and through the Grants Programme offer financial support to help with school uniform, after school clubs, equipment and tuition, school trips, living expenses for higher and further education or advice and signposting to other support agencies.

More about *Teen Talks* here: <https://www.rcet.org.uk/education-pupil-participation/>