

## 8 BE CRITICAL AND BUILD THE EVIDENCE BASE

*"Research demonstrates that investing time and resources into improving relationships and behaviour in establishments leads to positive outcomes around inclusion, engagement and achievement in the short term and community safety and cohesion in the long term."*

Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour, Scottish Government

The voluntary sector works to define models of reflective practice which sit alongside a culture of targets, outcomes and inspection. The sector is growing in its capacity to seek and present evidence of our impact; and build programmes and interventions on what we can learn from each other. While the difficulties faced by a child may be complex, we need to know that our intervention makes a positive difference to the child's learning and experience of school.

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## PEN PICTURE: Children 1st

It's just some sugar, butter, eggs, flour and a bit of icing. But the cake baked in this 16-year-old's kitchen during a home visit was a turning point. It was the moment a young mum realised that baking wasn't all that hard. It was fun actually, and something she wanted to do more of. It sparked a passion for cooking – prompting her to stay on at school and study Home Economics because she would like to pursue a career in catering.

In Girvan and Maybole CHILDREN 1ST supports families with children from birth to age 12 who are facing challenges. Often children have a developmental delay. Many have a physical disability. All need the attention and nurture of loving parents or carers. For some parents this isn't easy. Maybe they've had poor parenting role models, a traumatic event in their own childhood, or lack confidence for things such as going to the baby group at the local library. Without interaction and play children struggle to learn. And if their brains aren't learning this can hold back their physical, emotional and psychological development.

When families are referred to the service we ensure an action plan for the child is put in place. This reflects the Scottish Government's 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) approach, and specifies outcomes – the positive changes we're aiming to achieve – that match one or more of its wellbeing indicators: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included. Through talking to parents and carers, children and referrers, and using tools such as 'Parenting Daily Hassles', a 'Strengths and Difficulties' questionnaire, and the GIRFEC 'Wellbeing Wheel,' we agree a package support to meet the family's needs. Good communication with local partners is essential. For our 16 year old we were able to offer child-care for her baby around her school timetable thanks to information from the Deputy Head Teacher.

The action plan is flexible. It's reviewed every three months. Some outcomes may be achieved, new ones may be agreed. To gauge progress, we record observations; for example if part of our support is to encourage a child to 'try and play nice' with their sibling, can they then give an example of having done so? We talk to local partner agencies. We gather data, both 'hard,' such as school attendance figures, and 'soft,' for example 'is mum parenting more confidently?' At each review we plot progress against the wellbeing indicators.

Where does this information go? Into the CHILDREN 1ST Integrated Information Management System, along with data from almost every other local and national service we deliver. So in making statements such as 'in 85 percent of instances where we aimed to improve family relationships, across our services, we were successful,' we can do so with confidence.