



THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND GIRFEC IMPLEMENTATION

A PINS SEMINAR

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT
GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD TEAM

**SEMINAR REPORT
OCTOBER 2010**

ABOUT GIRFEC

Getting it right for every child is often referred to as GIRFEC. The overarching concept of GIRFEC is a common, coordinated approach across all agencies that support the delivery of appropriate, proportionate and timely help to all children and young people as they need it.

The commitment underpinning GIRFEC is that, no matter where they live or whatever their needs, children and families know where they can seek help, what help is available, that the help is appropriate to their needs and will be delivered to the highest possible standard.

In practice GIRFEC is the foundation for work with **all** children and young people and will also affect practitioners in adult services who work with parents or carers.

ABOUT THE PINS SEMINAR

PINS works to connect voluntary sector practitioners with developments and debates in Scottish education; with a particular focus on the most vulnerable, disaffected and excluded pupils.

In October 2010 PINS facilitated a seminar that addressed the voluntary sector's connection to the GIRFEC agenda with the specific intention of exploring how working together within a GIRFEC model improves outcomes for children and young people.

This report presents the key messages from speakers and from delegates.

Further material from the seminar is also available on the PINS site; this includes speakers PowerPoint presentations and case studies used as examples of practice. On the PINS site GIRFEC pages there is also more information about GIRFEC, including Scottish Government produced guides to implementing GIRFEC and news of GIRFEC implementation across the country.

Follow the links from www.pinscotland.org

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KEY MESSAGES FROM THE SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Our speakers identified a number of themes and challenges which the voluntary sector and others involved in meeting the needs of vulnerable and excluded young people must consider.

- 1. GIRFEC is not another policy but the delivery mechanism** for a range of policies including the Early Years Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and More Choices More Chances. As the delivery mechanism GIRFEC should be seen as delivering **transformational change**.
- 2. The Scottish Government GIRFEC Implementation Team has several functions:** to support Community Planning Partnerships with implementation; to embed GIRFEC in relevant national policies; to support practice improvement; to embed GIRFEC in the new scrutiny regime.
- 3. Evaluation of the GIRFEC Pathfinder in Highland shows benefits for children and young people** including: improved attendance and behaviour at school; reduced risk taking; enhanced attainment; improvements in personalised curriculum to meet personal goals; young people feeling more listened to. (More on implementation in the Highlands on the PINS site GIRFEC thematic pages).
- 4. Evaluation of the GIRFEC Pathfinder in Highland shows benefits for agencies** including: improved targeting and more efficient use of resources; fewer meetings and less bureaucracy; improved information sharing; better relationships between agencies; a clearer focus on outcomes.
- 5. GIRFEC supports services which have traditionally focused on adult issues to recognise the needs of children in vulnerable or excluded families** too. Work emerging in different locations sees more formalised and child focused relationships developing between different providers across Health, Education, Children's and Families Services and Housing.
- 6. Whatever the stage GIRFEC implementation is locally every voluntary sector service provider needs to get "GIRFEC ready"**. This might include changing practice in areas such as information sharing and assessment, engaging more with other providers and being proactive locally with statutory sector colleagues leading implementation.

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KEY MESSAGES FROM THE SEMINAR DELEGATES

GIRFEC frames our response to improving outcomes for Scotland's children and young people, including educational outcomes. Reflecting on what they heard from speakers delegates also considered the **challenges which GIRFEC poses for voluntary sector practice and services**. Delegates identified that:

1. Across Scotland there is great variance in the statutory sector's understanding of what the voluntary sector does, how it does it and why so. Delegates recognised that local umbrella organisations such as Voluntary Organisations Councils have a role to play in connecting the sector with local GIRFEC implementation. If developing understanding and effective partnerships, underpinned by GIRFEC, is a job to be done this may need to be resourced.

Delegates proposed: **There is work to be done to build knowledge and promote partnerships between statutory and voluntary sectors in the best interests of vulnerable children and young people.**

2. In order to participate in the transformational change described voluntary sector providers need to be made aware of the values and principles and vision for culture, system and practice change which is viewed as fundamental to GIRFEC implementation. Once aware and informed, they then need to be kept in the loop.

Delegates proposed: **Local Authorities must take responsibility to engage voluntary sector providers with this agenda. Scottish Government should promote best practice in the development of statutory/voluntary sector partnerships which best deliver GIRFEC locally.**

3. Implementing GIRFEC draws attention to the need for training and development which supports practitioners, managers and volunteers in the voluntary sector to better understand GIRFEC and make connections to the changes in relationships and practices which are required. Key issues such as confidentiality, information sharing, voluntarism and the balance between the views of the child and the views of the professional will need to be explored.

Delegates proposed: **At the local level training should be provided which skills and supports the voluntary sector to engage with GIRFEC implementation.**

4. The roles of named person and lead professional are fundamental to GIRFEC implementation and improving outcomes for children and young people. There are concerns that where statutory sector colleagues assume these roles voluntary sector provision might be marginalised. Evidence from speakers at the PINS event points to these roles working effectively, but delegates identified the need for improved inter-agency relationships and a genuine valuing of the role which the voluntary sector plays in the lives of vulnerable children and families.

Delegates proposed: **Voluntary sector providers need more information about the role of named person and lead professional and how this works in practice.**

5. Information sharing within the GIRFEC model remains a concern for delegates. While participants recognised the necessity for changes in practice which would mean less repetition for the child and family, better systems to protect the vulnerable and improved decision making they also have questions about where responsibility lies, who accesses information and identifying best practice in the development of universal models of information gathering and sharing.

Delegates proposed: **All service providers need to consider what being 'GIRFEC-ready' means in relation to this key area. Agencies need support to consider how their practices can and must change. Further information and guidance on this issue would be welcome.**

6. Presentations on the day of the seminar touched on what happens when implementing the GIRFEC model does not work at the level of the individual child. Delegates expressed concerns about what happens when the named person or lead professional fails to fulfil that role effectively or efficiently; or where a key partner does not implement action which has been identified as being in the best interests of the child.

Delegates proposed: **Scottish Government and Local Authorities need to describe best practice but also address 'what if' scenarios where the key roles of named person or lead professional are not being delivered or where partners do not deliver on agreed actions; clarifying how conflict and disagreement between partners is addressed and resolved with the GIRFEC model.**

7. Delegates identified the complexity of understanding and managing their response to GIRFEC implementation across 32 Local Authorities. For voluntary sector agencies working nationally or across LA boundaries differences in approaches to policy implementation and service design and delivery have always been a challenge. In a culture of shrinking budgets but increased need there can be difficulties in diverse approaches to this national agenda.

Delegates proposed: **Scottish Government can support the voluntary sector by raising awareness, promoting voluntary sector engagement and sharing good practice. Scottish Government can promote a common approach across Local Authorities, which values the role of the voluntary sector, so that GIRFEC focuses on the needs of the child, wherever they live.**

8. The voluntary sector is diverse. Whilst supportive of GIRFEC there are concerns for smaller agencies that they might not be considered fully in local implementation. They may not have the connections or resources which gets them a seat at the table.

Delegates proposed: **Where local umbrella organisations such as Voluntary Organisation Councils are part of implementation they should make efforts to engage the smaller agencies. Larger voluntary sector agencies can seek out and support the smaller agencies locally. Local Authorities should clarify in publicity and on-line who is responsible for implementation locally and how they can be contacted.**

THANKS

Thanks to the delegates and speakers at the PINS seminar, particularly thanks to:

- **Claire Stevens:** Third Sector Liaison, Scottish Government GIRFEC Implementation Team
- **Mike Mawby:** Service Manager, Action for Children, Gael Og, Inverness
- **Jessie Crawford;** Children's Service Policy and Practice Coordinator, Shelter Scotland

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT PINS AND GET INVOLVED

The voluntary sector is a diverse alliance of agencies that impact on all aspects of Scottish life. The sector has a particular interest in improving outcomes for some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people and families in Scotland.

When it comes to education too many children and young people are left behind as others achieve. In the context of a commitment to making all children and young people successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors strong partnerships are needed between formal and informal sectors to address vulnerability and exclusion.

The **Pupil Inclusion Network Scotland** brings together voluntary sector agencies and statutory sector colleagues who share a commitment to improving educational outcomes for all children. Over the past five years the Network has grown and through the PINS on-line resource and a series of seminars and workshops a body of knowledge has been built which captures what we need to do, in partnership, to make a difference.

PINS has a website at www.pinscotland.org Membership of the Network is free and registration is via the PINS homepage.

PINS is supported by the Scottish Government and managed jointly by the Scottish Government (Learning Directorate) and voluntary sector agencies. On a day to day basis the Network is facilitated by the TASC Agency.

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