

**Quality Improvement through Professional Engagement
Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
Record of Visit**

Education Authority	South Ayrshire
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Date of visit	30 January, 2 February and 1, 2 and 12 March 2012
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Details of visit

Education managers/Partners (Strategic managers)	Senior managers in education and community including Head of Children's Services and Head of Curriculum and Service improvement Senior NHS manager
Education managers/Partners (Operational managers)	HT focus group
Additional sources of evidence Children's records, policy documents etc	Range of policies, action plans, and the GIRFEC resource folder

Names of HMI/team members	Anna Boni
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Context of the education authority

South Ayrshire has a population of 111,670, making it the 17th largest local authority in Scotland. Seventy per cent of the population live in the towns of Troon, Prestwick and Ayr. The rest of the area is predominantly rural, including the smaller towns of Maybole and Girvan,

Unemployment has been in line with the Scottish averages at around 5% in 2007 but the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance has doubled since 2008. Of the 13,000 families in South Ayrshire with dependent children, around 20% experience poverty, compared to 25% nationally. However, among workless households with children in the area, as many as 70% have low incomes. Many of these are lone parent households, which make up 21% of all families with dependent children in the Council area. 30% of children from the recognised areas of deprivation live in workless households.

Education Scotland visited the following schools and centres across South Ayrshire Council as part of the GIRFEC task work:

Carrick Academy
Straiton Primary School
Maidens Primary School
Invergarven School
Doonvale Private Nursery School
Granny Smith's Nursery

Education Scotland collected evidence on the readiness of each school and centre to take forward the Getting it right agenda and local authorities overall progress in implementing GIRFEC. We reported on the impact of the GIRFEC agenda on the education authorities' culture, systems and practice in relation to meeting the needs of children. In doing so, we framed our engagement around the core components of Getting it right for every child.

Getting it Right for Every Child -The Ten Core Components

1. Focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, based on shared understanding of wellbeing. (CULTURE)
2. Common approach to gaining consent and sharing information where appropriate. (CULTURE)
3. Integral role for children, young people and families. (CULTURE)
4. Coordinated approach to assessing needs, agreeing actions and outcomes, based on the *Well-being indicators*. (SYSTEMS)
5. Streamlined planning, assessment and decision making leading to the right help at the right time. (SYSTEMS)
6. High standards of co-operative working and communication. (PRACTICE)
7. A named person for all children and a Lead professional to coordinate multi agency activity. (PRACTICE)
8. Maximising the skilled workforce within universal services. (PRACTICE)

9. A confident and competent workforce. (PRACTICE)
10. Capacity to share demographic, assessment, and planning information electronically. (SYSTEMS)

CULTURE

What is strategic vision for GIRFEC in the authority area?

- The strategic vision for GIRFEC is well integrated into the South Ayrshire structure for service delivery that is focused on delivering for people. The focus of the directorate is clear and unified. There is a strengthening locality focus driving service delivery with a greater emphasise on cluster working at school level.
- The authority recognises that progress in implementing GIRFEC has been slower than they would have wished. Early developments in 2007 focused on the needs of the most vulnerable and were overly focused on social work. This approach has been reviewed and revised and the focus has been to change the perceptions of staff from the needs of the most vulnerable to those of all children, young people and families.
- A new culture is now emerging, supported through training and supportive documentation. The CP inspection helped to improve the culture and develop a unified purpose.

How do you focus on improving outcomes?

- The council is becoming progressively more outcome focused across all of its services; this is supported through the new executive structure. The authority is keen not to reinvent the wheel in implementing GIRFEC but to build on strong practice, particularly in its pilot work in Prestwick and Troon.
- South Ayrshire highlighted the positive impact of the Youth diversion project, which has been running over a two year period. They report that as a result of the project over 90% of young people involved in the project have not gone onto reoffend.
- Staff are moving away from simple figures, the impact now relates to the life stories of young people and changes to their circumstances
- South Ayrshire are developing a 'family firm' approach to meeting the needs of LAC young people for example, no LAC young people are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation.

What progress are you making through interagency groups in developing common approaches, for example in consent and sharing information?

- South Ayrshire recognises that there are boundary issues which can impact on successful interagency working. Each of the Ayrshire Councils delivers GIRFEC in a different way. This presents considerable strategic challenges for the one health authority. They are working in collaboration with health to address these issues.
- Over 2000 staff from across professional groupings have been trained on

GIRFEC approaches including in the use of initial assessments, the risk matrix and chronologies.

What are the key issues for education in relation to developing a working culture which reflects GIRFEC?

- South Ayrshire have focused on a number of key priorities for all schools including reducing exclusion, improving attendance and improving NQ outcomes and sustained positive destinations for all.
- Senior officers recognise the importance of robust data analysis and are looking to develop a range of measures to demonstrate impact for all young people.
- Staff displayed a strong commitment to joint working in processes and approaches to aim to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

How are these issues being taken forward? (Include consultation with service users, and child centred approach)

- The authority is working to strengthen the voice of the child. Staff make good use of surveys and attendance rates at meetings.
- Staff were keen to emphasise that children, young people and families are better engaged with than previously. They identified examples of how they engaged better with service users.

What is your understanding of GIRFEC, core components, values and principles?

- Within all schools and centres visited, staff were clear about the key principles of GIRFEC. Staff recognised the importance of working together towards a more integrated approach. In some schools, senior managers conveyed a strong understanding of GIRFEC.
- The wellbeing indicators were used in some settings as a planning and assessment framework for individual children. Taking forward GIRFEC approaches has formalised staff practice and given them a clear shared agenda with other agencies. The paperwork helps to focus on priority areas in a child's life. Staff use a common language in considering children's needs.
- Two other areas were identified as needing further development, streamlining planning and achieving a single plan. However, GIRFEC was seen in a number of settings as putting a "structure" around already effective practice.

How has your understanding of GIRFEC and any training/development you have undertaken, changed how you approach meeting the needs of children, if at all?

- Training has impacted on practice and supported a more explicit understanding of the principles and tools of GIRFEC. Staff had undertaken a range of useful training from the authority and within schools that had been helpful in progressive implementation of GIRFEC principles, practices and use of tools.

Can you give examples of improved outcomes for children, or how you focus on improving outcomes for children?

- Operationally it varied as to how well staff were able to clearly identify improvement in outcomes for children and young people. Staff found it easier to focus on how well they had improved processes or support and readily spoke of better inter-agency working and better understanding of the contribution of other services.
- In relation to impact, staff identified a number of examples of children who had been extremely vulnerable and were now making better progress. Parents and practitioners spoken to supported this view.

To what extent has GIRFEC affected attitudes to gaining consent and sharing information and involving children young people and families?

- School staff report that in best practice, professionals are much more open about sharing information, families appreciate everyone is working together to help them. Young people and families are now more likely to attend meetings as information has been previously shared with them and they feel less threatened. Families also feel that their voices are being heard. They value the role of the lead person to co-ordinate information, this has made a difference as they no longer have to go around so many people and repeat their stories.
- Generally, staff felt a developing culture which was more children, young people and families centred. They viewed services as being more responsive, flexible, willing to consider needs of users in respect of the involving them in approaches and gaining consent to ensure meetings and approaches worked for them.
- The culture for information sharing is improving and working relationships are stronger. However, the practical solutions do not yet exist to allow better information sharing. Schools make extensive use of pastoral notes in SEEMIS. However, other professional have different systems which are not yet compatible.

SYSTEMS

What progress has been made in developing systems or adapting your systems which take account of GIRFEC?

- At the strategic level, closer inter-agency working involved the promotion of positive aspects. Staff were becoming more confident in taking action to further improve practice.
- While staff were positive about the vision and the approach, real concerns were expressed about the workload and associated paperwork requirements.

Have you got an implementation plan within the authority? How do you evaluate progress in implementing new systems?

- The South Ayrshire GIRFEC Framework provides a clear vision and guide operational practice in implementing the GIRFEC agenda.
- Evaluation processes explored above under culture.

To what extent have developments in systems led to a more coordinated approach and more streamlined planning, assessment and decision-making? How do you know?

- South Ayrshire is moving towards one format for assessment. All services now undertake an initial assessment. Senior officers report that the quality of assessment has improved. The move to a single chronology is underway, although senior managers recognise that further work is required with schools. Staff raised concerns about the process and as they saw it, the associated bureaucratic paperwork. A number of staff were not convinced that the more formalised changes for example the one plan, shared chronologies were worthwhile.

To what extent have you systems in place to share demographic information, assessment and planning information with partners/other services?

- Currently practice is variable. There are a number of positive strands of evaluation, review and audit that contribute towards gaining a more comprehensive mapping of success in outcomes for children and families - see culture As yet this is not systematic at all levels between strategic and operational and the good practice is not yet embedded.

How do GIRFEC principles/core components fit with other approaches in the school, for example CSPs, ASPs, arrangements for pastoral care?

- Schools and school staff were positive about the reduction in duplication of services. The move from GIRFEC being focused on the most vulnerable to the developing more a universal approach required further work. Staff felt they understood the rationale behind the changes but felt the process of change was challenging.
- Relationships between CSPs and IAF can be complex and some staff are seeking further guidance, including from the legal department.
- Overall staff spoke positively about the staged intervention process and its linkage with GIRFEC.

How have you had to adapt or change school systems? Has this improved your systems for supporting children?

- Staff in schools mentioned improved culture of inter-agency working, better across services planning, assessment and review were seen as having benefit to young people. Schools are seen as services that parents readily engage with to pass on information or concerns.
- However, a few were concerned about the increased expectations of education and the associated workload issues particularly in the secondary sector.
- Issues were raised in relation to denominational schools. localities and interagency working. Staff teaching in denominational schools would welcome further discussion.

Does the authority have a system for children having a single *Child's Plan*?

- In their documentation Getting it Right for Every Child in South Ayrshire, the authority has provided helpful advice and guidance on planning and the GIRFEC tools. Staff reported that they were aware of the developments, but had used the new system at the time of the Education Scotland visit.
- Some staff reported that there were inconsistencies with how often other agencies are recording information, further improvement is still required.
- Staff agreed that a single plan is desired outcome, however, currently the IEP is separate, as are Pastoral Notes from SEEMIS and Referral form for JST.

Do your approaches to planning for children take account of the indicators of wellbeing/the My World triangle, or the resilience matrix?

- Staff are aware of the full range of GIRFEC tools including the My world triangle, the resilience matrix and the well being indicators. Staff usage is variable with most staff have used at least one of the tools. It would be helpful to review and evaluate practice in this area as not all staff find it easy to use the tools.

What impact (if any) had on inter-agency working at the local level or on school systems? (more coordination, more streamlined planning, right help at right time?)

- Staff in a number of establishments and in different services were able to identify a series of effective joint working in place and developing to ensure success with a GIRFEC approach. As a result support is more focused and parents and children are more involved in the process and determining the outcomes.

PRACTICE

To what extent has practice changed because of GIRFEC? What would you expect us to see in schools and early years establishments?

- Strategic staff were clear on the markers of success in taking forward GIRFEC approaches including:
 1. a strong basis of collaborative working and good practice, understanding of GIRFEC policy;
 2. utilising the wellbeing indicators in practice;
 3. streamlining processes and paperwork towards a one plan format and developments; and
 4. a shared inter-agency chronology being used to serve staff in meetings.

What steps have you taken to promote cooperative working and good communication between and across services, and to support staff?

- Training is being rolled out and further addressed through extending training for trainers across services. The work in pilot localities is helping shape the training focus.

- Although the GIRFEC model was reviewed the impact on collaborative practice as a result of the early work has provided a sound foundation for further development.

Have you experienced any changes in communication and cooperative working with other professionals and services?

- Staff felt that communication and partnership working was strong. However, GIRFEC practices and tools have sharpened the focus on children's wider needs and promoted more common use of language.

Are the concepts of named person and lead professional used in your school? If so has it changed your practice, and in what way?

- The concepts of lead professional and named person were well understood by staff in discussion with Education Scotland.
- A number of staff feel that other professionals feel it should be the school which takes on these roles.
- A few staff would welcome further clarity on the role and operational expectations required in fulfilling it.
- A number of staff are concerned about the additional work load for education in taking on these roles and the lack of partnership in sharing the roles across other services.

Can you give any examples of how this has helped a child?

- School managers felt that support levels and responses are improving through more effective joined up working.

Has practice in making decisions about how to help children at authority level, i.e. children with high levels of need changed? If so in what way?

- Changes in decision making practice at authority level are impacting positively on the way professionals are working together for the benefit of the child e.g. parents being more closely involved in decisions being made and having nursery staff present at meetings, who they know and trust, to represent their child's views.

How do you consult children and involve them in planning?

- Some schools are making active use and were very familiar with the concepts and tools in GIRFEC. Not all staff in schools were making extensive use of My World Triangle in preparing children and young people but were working well with outcome indicators in discussion with children and young people.

What training has been provided for headteacher/staff to develop practice in line with GIRFEC? (single or multi-agency training)

- Training was valued staff across the authority. It was felt to have led to a

common language, approaches and better use of GIRFEC principles and tools.