

Children, Young People and Social Care Directorate
Safer Children, Stronger Families Division

T: 0131-244 5320 F: 0131-244 1475
E: Boyd.mcadam@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Fiona Lees
Chief Executive
East Ayrshire Council
Council Headquarters
London Road
KILMARNOCK
KA3 7BU

100709CE16

Ag Item 6 16.

Additional

East Ayrshire Council
Chief Executive's Office

Passed to _____
For info For action
File



Your ref: FL/MON
Our ref: BMCA/PC
7 July 2009

Dear Fiona,

It is with considerable embarrassment that I find myself writing to you only now in response to your letter of 6 April and for the documents that you emailed in support. I can only apologise for the delay in getting back to you.

I was very interested to read about the East Ayrshire Early Information and pre-referral screening group pilot and particularly the evaluation of the work completed by Superintendent Douglas Robertson last year. This is itself a very robust evaluation that identifies many of the issues that we in the GIRFEC team are becoming aware of around this type of development. From other areas we are particularly aware of two aspects: time constraints on staff to maintain the process and sustainability beyond the pilot period.

The shift from reactive to responsive services for children appears an initially expensive process and the promise of long term savings are difficult to appreciate when the need is here and now. In one of the areas we are linked with some of this has been managed by chief officers looking at where the financial "winners" and "losers" are in the short term and taking a decision to shift resources to support the losers in the interim. In one case this has involved social work and health agreeing to provide resources for the police to support their multi-agency work.

As you will be aware, the *Getting it right for every child* team here works with an evaluation team from Edinburgh University who have been mapping both the pathfinding process in Highland from the outset and exploring how the *Getting it right for every child* approach might be measured both in terms of improvements in multi-agency working and in improved outcomes for children. This has meant developing the evaluation as the *Getting it right for every child* approach itself has evolved – an iterative evaluation process. Now that the Highland pathfinder development phase is ending we expect a report on the emerging building blocks and "green shoots" of *Getting it right for every child* over the summer, to be followed in the autumn by a report on how children's outcomes have been improved by the approach to date.

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
www.scotland.gov.uk



This work and the emerging thinking around both the role of scrutiny agencies post-Crerar is coming together alongside consideration of the scrutiny system which might apply in respect of children's service at the end of the second round of child protection inspections. We are looking at how the lessons from evaluation might inform a self-evaluation framework which would not only support community planning partnerships in their implementation of *Getting it right for every child* but which also might inform the scrutiny process in future years.

You will no doubt be aware of the recently published report on early and effective intervention - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/crimes/youth-justice/young-people/EvaluationReport>.

This report identifies some of the benefits and gains to be secured through multi-agency working and may help re-enforce the messages you have taken from your own evaluation.

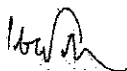
With all of this underway, I regret that we are unable to respond positively to your request for support for an independent evaluation of your project. In *Getting it right for every child* we are keen to ensure that we evaluate not only multi-agency working but how the combined elements of the *Getting it right for every child* core components come together to improve outcomes. It is the combination of business process redesign, the use of a common language and shared understanding as part of a single planning process, with agencies coming together when appropriate and in a proportionate way that remains the focus of our interest.

In the longer term, as you begin to make the other changes that will help East Ayrshire move to a *Getting it right* model of practice, one implication is that the screening/referral group may have less to do as universal services and children's services take more responsibility for gathering information prior to making decisions and plan. The screening group should only need to address the really difficult cases where multi-agency plans require more coordination and resources than are available in routine work. The Highland business process model and practice manual both clarify how this works in practice and in newer developments the *Getting it right for every child* in Edinburgh practice model (previously Team Around the Child) similarly only utilises the higher level multi-agency meeting format for more complex work with children and families.

Other support will come in time from the deployment of the eCare /i2 electronic information sharing that is being developed in tandem with the planned rollout of GIRFEC, but these are yet some way off and unlikely to help in the short term.

We would appreciate being kept abreast of GIRFEC developments in East Ayrshire and we are very happy to offer any support to you in implementing that programme that we can. I regret, however, that that offer of support cannot extend to an independent evaluation.

Yours sincerely



Boyd McAdam
Head of *Getting it right for every child* team

Chief Executive: Fiona Lees

Direct Dial: (01563) 576019 Fax: (01563)576200
Email: fiona.lees@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

6 April 2009

Our Ref : FL/MON

Boyd McAdam
Care and Justice
Scottish Government Area 2A (N)
Victoria Quay
EDINBURGH
EH6 6QQ

Dear Boyd

GIRFEC PRE-REFERRAL GROUP: EVALUATION

East Ayrshire Council Child Protection Committee agreed to the establishment of a GIRFEC Pre-referral Group in June 2008 as a pilot project. At that time, it was agreed to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Group after 6 months. This evaluation was duly completed by Superintendent Douglas Robertson of Strathclyde Police and this was considered by the East Ayrshire Child Protection Chief Officers' Group and the East Ayrshire Council Child Protection Committee on 22 December 2008 and 9 February 2009, respectively.

In general terms, the evaluation concluded that the pilot had been successful in improving communication and consideration of child protection cases across agencies. The evaluation also concluded, however, that there were resource implications for the agencies in supporting the work of the Group.

For your interest, I have enclosed a copy of the evaluation report and the minutes of the meetings of the Chief Officer's Group and Child Protection Committee.

Following the recent SWIA inspection of the Council's Social Work Services, Margaret Anne Gilbert, Lead Inspector, wrote to Kay Gilmour, the then Acting Executive Head of Social Work, to relay the main points of the discussion you had with her colleagues in relation to information sharing. Your advice, that the information had to be relevant and for a specific purpose, has been shared with members of the GIRFEC Pre-referral Group and an initial internal review has concluded that the arrangements that are in place, are appropriate.

My purpose in writing to you is to request your assistance with an independent evaluation of the pilot. Given the work that the Scottish Government is currently undertaking in relation to evaluations of other similar pathfinder projects, it was felt that such independent scrutiny of the Council's pilot would be of great benefit to our arrangements going forward.

If you would like to discuss this proposal then I would be very pleased to meet with you at a mutually convenient date and time. In the meantime, I look forward to hearing from you and I hope that you will be able to assist us in this important matter.

Yours sincerely

Fiona Lees
Chief Executive

COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS
L O N D O N R O A D
KILMARNOCK KA3 7BU
TEL: 01563 576000
FAX: 01563 576500
www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk