

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE: 7 SEPTEMBER 2006

GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Committee of the 'Getting it Right For Every Child' (GIRFEC) policy developments.
- 1.2 To alert Committee to specific proposals that will result in a significant change for Children's Services across Scotland.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A report was submitted to Committee in September 2005 regarding East Ayrshire Council's response to Phase Two of the consultation on the Children's Hearings System - **Getting it Right for Every Child – Proposals for Action**.
- 2.2 The Scottish Executive reported the outcomes of this consultation in March 2006.
- 2.3 An implementation plan resulting from the consultation process was published by the Scottish Executive in June 2006.
- 2.4 The implementation plan now extends **beyond** the initial remit of the Children's Hearing Review and covers a range of critical areas in the delivery of children's services as detailed in Section 3 of this report. A copy of this report is available in the Member's Information Point.

3. DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- 3.1 The GIRFEC agenda now incorporates other important policy agendas including:-
 - Further development of the Child Protection agenda signalling the end of the Child Protection Reform Programme;
 - The Integrated Children's Services Agenda;
 - The development of a multi agency Integrated Assessment Framework for children's services;
- 3.2 These policy and practice agendas will now be taken forward by the Children's Services Steering Group at the Scottish Executive. This group will include key stakeholders from children's services including children's social work services, health, the voluntary sector and police.

- 3.3 The GIRFEC implementation plan will result in important and fundamental changes to the delivery of services to children in Scotland for universal and specialist providers of children's services.
- 3.4 The implementation plan sets out the Scottish Executive's vision of children's services for the 21st Century. It describes a commitment to ensuring that children's services are refocused to ensure that children get the help they need when they need it.
- 3.5 The plan states that services for children should be more child centred and that services should work better together to reduce bureaucracy and ensure that interventions with all children and their families are timely and proportionate.
- 3.6 The implementation plan sets out the tasks for the first three years of the implementation of the GIRFEC proposals. This plan will have a significant impact upon the agendas of joint planning mechanisms for children's services across Local Authority areas. It includes proposals for the development of key areas of joint working including the development of a single assessment record and proposals for legislative change across children's services to facilitate improved communication.
- 3.7 The GIRFEC implementation plan describes a three pronged approach to ensuring the refocusing of services takes place as follows:-

3.7.1 Legislation

- It is proposed that a draft Bill to implement the Getting It Right for Every Child Proposals will be laid before the Scottish Parliament in the Autumn of 2006.
- This Bill will include new duties to cooperate and to share information for all agencies involved in delivering Children's Services.
- It will also detail plans to introduce a new **duty** on professionals to be alert to the needs of children and to take action to meet these needs. The specific nature of this area of legislation is unclear at this point but it is aimed at ensuring that all professionals accept their responsibilities for the protection of children and ensure that services are delivered timeously.
- The legislation will require agencies to agree an action plan for individual children and to ensure that local coordination and monitoring mechanisms are in place to monitor these plans. This will have a significant impact on the universal service providers who will require to evidence **that all that could be done was done within universal services** prior to referring the child for consideration by the Children's Hearings System and/or for specialist services like Social Work.

3.7.2 Practice Change

- The development of a single assessment record and plan will be developed as a single assessment format to be used by all the key agencies. The information will be standardised across agencies and will assist the process of ensuring that professionals are able to access and share relevant information on children efficiently.

- Support for 'pathfinder' projects to work differently with children and their families e.g. Highland Council is currently the Pathfinder authority for the development of the single assessment record and they will develop guidance for practitioners on taking this agenda forward nationally.

3.7.3 Removing Barriers

- Work will be undertaken nationally to address what stands in the way of good joined up working and what prevents timely responses to need. This will include changes to the Children's Hearing Systems to ensure that children get the help they need at the point they need it.
- A commitment has been made to support service redesign where necessary to address these issues.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST AYRSHIRE

- 4.1 The GIRFEC proposals when fully realised will have far reaching effects for the delivery of services to children for all partners involved in the children's service planning process. These proposals will require all partners to examine the manner in which services are delivered particularly to the most vulnerable children. Services will require to evidence that planning and service delivery is inclusive and child centred and that services are provided within the context of universal service provision wherever possible. They will include a proposal for each child to have a named lead professional and those children in touch with specialist services to have an action plan.
- 4.2 East Ayrshire Council has made positive progress towards the integration of children's services and the Learning Partnerships structures offers the Council a solid foundation upon which to take the GIRFEC agenda forward. The proposals will bring new challenges to how we ensure that services are appropriately targeted.

5. POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An Integrated Children's Services and Children's Hearing Bill to implement the GIRFEC proposals is expected to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament in the Autumn of 2006. It is anticipated that the Bill will include important areas of legislative change for children's services and Committee will be advised of the detail of this in due course.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

- 6.1 No clear financial framework has been announced to support the implementation of the GIRFEC proposals. The Scottish Executive has indicated that it will invest in the Pathfinder projects.
- 6.2 The Scottish Executive has also indicated that the redesign of children's services and the streamlining of processes across local authorities and health boards should result in resources being redirected to meet the needs of individual children.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The GIRFEC agenda crosscuts a number of themes of the community plan as it impacts upon the shape of service delivery for all children in East Ayrshire. The Improving Opportunities, Eliminating Poverty and Community Safety themes are important in relation to the protection of children and the inclusion of the needs of the most vulnerable children and their families in service planning across the Council area.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Social Work Committee is asked to:

- (i) invite the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to provide regular updates to Committee on the progress nationally of the GIRFEC proposals;
- (ii) note that these updates will include relevant information in relation to any issues from the Child Protection Agenda, the Integrated Children's Services Agenda and the development of a National Integrated Assessment Framework;
- (iii) request that the Executive Director prepare a strategic response from East Ayrshire Council to the GIRFEC implementation plan;
- (iv) note that this report will be presented to Education Committee on 12 September 2006; and
- (v) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational & Social Services
16 August 2006
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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- (1) "For Scotland's Children – Better Integrated Children's Services" Scottish Executive 2001
- (2) "Getting It Right For Every Child – Proposals For Action" Scottish Executive 2005
- (3) "Getting It Right For Every Child – Proposals for Action: Analysis of Consultation Responses" Scottish Executive 2006
- (4) "Getting It Right For Every Child – Implementation Plan" Scottish Executive 2006

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