Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) in West Lothian

Multi-Agency GIRFEC Practice Guidance 2025

West Lothian
COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 'Getting it right for every child' approach, commonly known as GIRFEC, was developed by the Scottish Government to provide a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people.

First introduced in 2006 and refreshed in 2022, GIRFEC is designed to be a 'step-up step-down approach' building from universal health and education services to ensure children and families get the right help, at the right time, by the right person or service.

GIRFEC alongside The Promise and incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law is one of three main pillars which underpin all policy and legislation that relates to children, young people and families in Scotland.

Further information on the policy and legislative context for GIRFEC can be found on the Scottish Government's GIRFEC website.

2. WHO IS THE GIRFEC MULTI-AGENCY PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR?

The Multi-agency GIRFEC Practice Guidance is designed to support practitioners across the spectrum of children's services to take a shared and co-ordinated approach to identify, share and respond to wellbeing concerns.

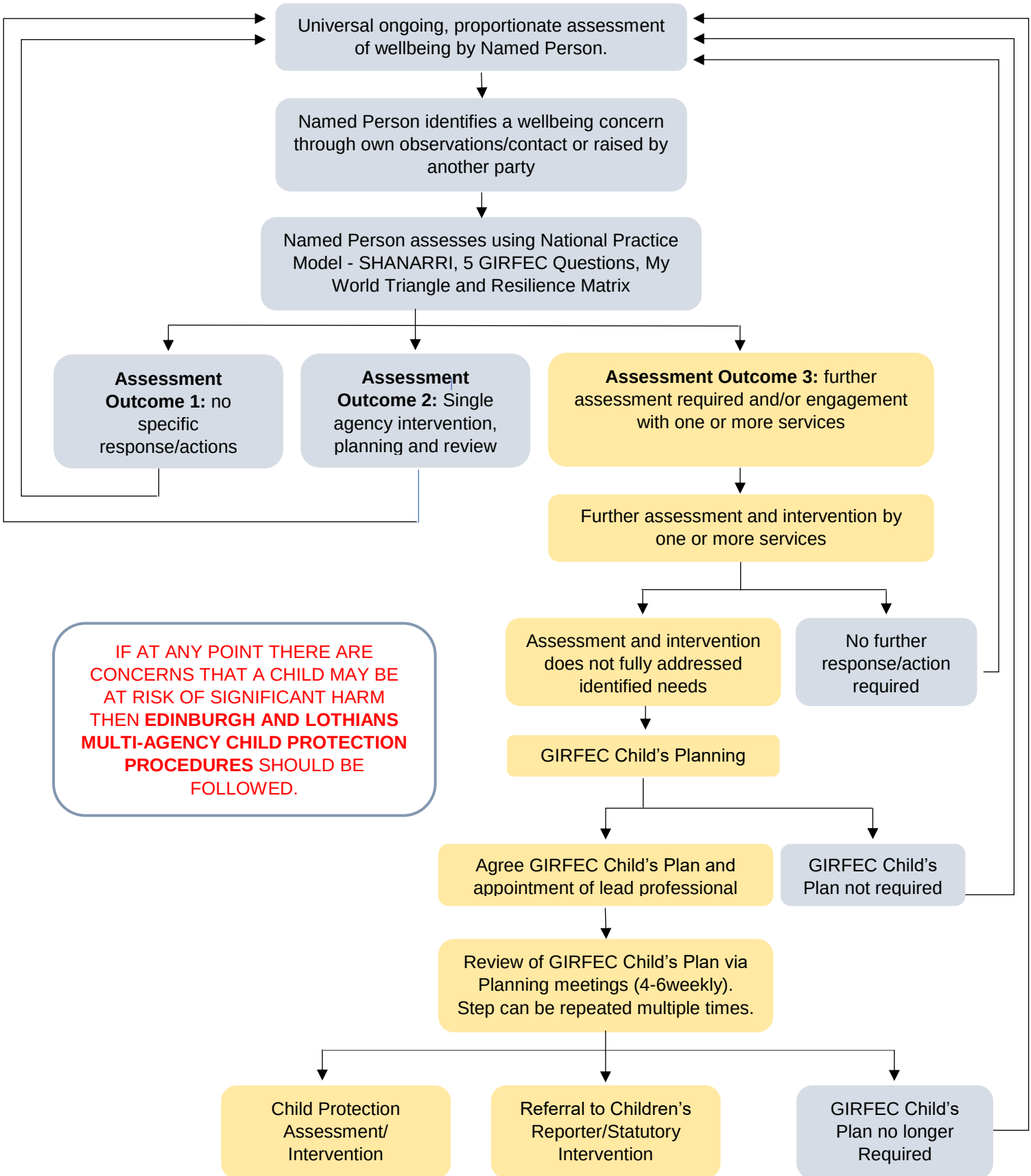
West Lothian's GIRFEC Practice Guidance is also relevant for practitioners working with adults who are parents or carers.

3. GIRFEC PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

GIRFEC is underpinned by the following principles and values:

- placing the child or young person and their family at the heart, and promoting choice, with full participation in decisions that affect them
- working together with families to enable a rights respecting, strengths based, inclusive approach
- understanding wellbeing as being about all areas of life including family, community and society
- valuing difference and ensuring everyone is treated fairly
- considering and addressing inequalities
- providing support for children, young people and families when they need it, until things get better, to help them to reach their full potential
- everyone working together in local areas and across Scotland to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families

4. WEST LOTHIAN'S GIRFEC PATHWAY



5. WELLBEING (SHANARRI)

The GIRFEC definition of wellbeing is drawn from eight key areas that contribute to children's optimal development. These eight indicators of wellbeing, safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included are commonly referred to as SHANARRI.

Safe growing up in an environment where a child or young person feels secure, nurtured, listened to and enabled to develop to their full potential. This includes freedom from abuse or neglect.

Healthy having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices.

Achieving being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community.

Nurtured growing, developing and being cared for in an environment which provides the physical and emotional security, compassion and warmth necessary for healthy growth and to develop resilience and a positive identity.

Active having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport, which contribute to healthy growth and development, at home, in school and in the community.

Respected being involved in and having their voices heard in decisions that affect their life, with support where appropriate.

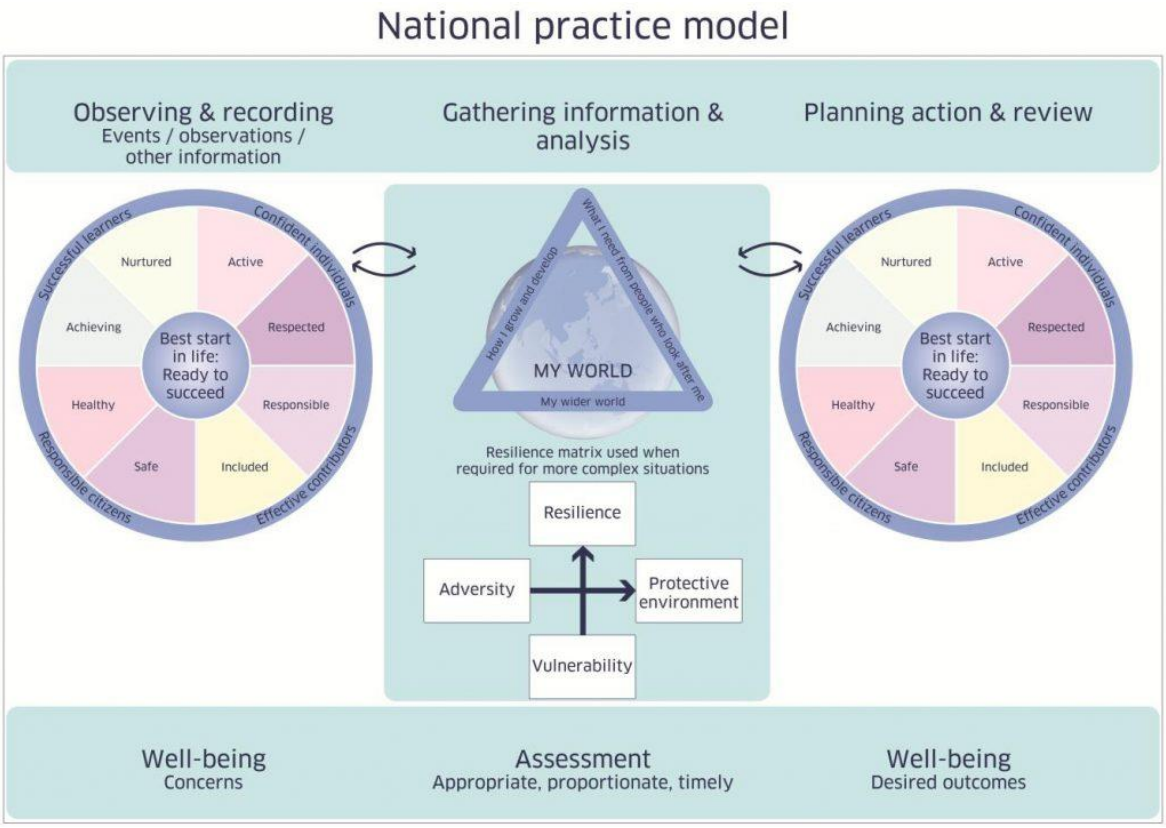
Responsible having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community, and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision.

Included having help to overcome inequalities and being accepted as part of their family, school and community.

When considered together, the wellbeing indicators give a holistic view of each child or young person. They enable the child or young person, and the adults supporting them, to consider strengths, as well as any obstacles they may face to growth and development.

6. ASSESSMENT – THE NATIONAL PRACTICE MODEL

The GIRFEC National Practice Model provides a framework for practitioners across all services to gather, structure and analyse information in a consistent way.



The National Practice Model has four steps:

1. **The Wellbeing Indicators:** Using the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) in the 'Wellbeing Wheel' to observe, discuss and record information which may indicate the scaffolding of support needed for a child or young person.
2. **The 'My World' Triangle:** Helps to understand a child or young person's whole world. It can be used to explore their experience at every stage, recognising there are connections between the different parts of their world. In the assessment process, it can be used to explore strengths, needs and risks.
3. **The Resilience Matrix:** Used in more complex situations, the Resilience Matrix helps organise and analyse information when there is a perceived risk to a child or young person.
4. **Planning, action and review using the 'Wellbeing Wheel'**: When the child or young person's needs are clear, they can be summarised using the Wellbeing Wheel to develop an individual plan to provide support.

Five key practitioner questions:

Robust assessment along with the five practitioner questions allows staff to identify what might be needed to enable planning for the child to begin.

1. What is getting in the way of the child or young person's wellbeing?
2. Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
3. What can I do now to help this child or young person?
4. What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
5. What additional help, if any, may be needed?

Analysis

Analysis is the process of examining and interpreting information gathered about a child or young person's wellbeing - the 'so what?' of assessment. Analysis involves making sense of the information, sifting out the irrelevant to focus on what's important.

What is the information telling you about:

- The child's lived experience;
- The family's strengths;
- The risk to the child;
- The factors that increase the risk (e.g. parent's mental ill-health, substance misuse, learning disability);
- Who or what presents the risk, and;
- Protective factors that mitigate the risk?

The analysis stage in the GIRFEC National Practice Model is crucial for understanding a child's unique needs and developing a tailored support plan that considers their strengths, challenges, and wider context to promote their overall wellbeing.

7. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NAMED PERSON

The Named Person acts as a central point of contact for children, young people and parents/caregivers, with responsibility for providing information and helping them get support when needed. A Named Person is available to all children and young people, however there is no obligation to accept the offer of advice or support.

Children, young people and parents/carers should know who their Named Person is and how to contact them in the event they need any support or guidance.

The role of Named Person does not create any additional authority to obtain information. However, practitioners who fulfil the role of Named Person likely have an existing role in relation to a child or young person (e.g. health visitor or head teacher) and in that capacity may have a lawful basis to process information.

The Named Person is typically;

- Family Nurse (where involved) from birth to age 2;
- Health Visitor from birth to school age; and
- Head Teacher or a senior leadership individual with devolved responsibilities in education for all school children.

The Named Person is responsible for:

- Recording any concerns that children, families, or practitioners in their own or other agencies bring to them about a child's wellbeing;
- Sharing information with another agency where appropriate; and
- Assessing if anything additional needs to be done and any extra help needs to be provided

When Named Person responsibility transitions, for example from the Health Visitor to the Primary School, it is the responsibility of the outgoing Named Person to ensure that where here have been concerns about a child, all relevant information is passed to the new Named Person.

8. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEAD PROFESSIONAL

When multi-agency professionals are involved and co-ordination is required to support a child's wellbeing needs, a Lead Professional should be identified. In most cases the professional who is most involved will undertake this role. In some circumstances the Named Person will also be the Lead Professional. When an there is an allocated social worker involved this worker will typically take the role of Lead Professional.

The Lead Professional is responsible for:

- Working with multiple agencies to coordinate a GIRFEC Child's Plan;
- Acting as the main point of contact for the child, young person, their parents/carers, and practitioners;
- Supporting the child, young person, and their parents/carers to participate in decisions that affect them;
- Ensure the GIRFEC Child's Plan is implemented, reviewed, and kept up-to-date;
- Work with agencies to promote teamwork;

9. GIRFEC CHILD'S PLANNING MEETING (GIRFEC CPM)

A GIRFEC Child's Planning Meeting is convened when wellbeing concerns have not been able to be fully addressed by universal services working alongside the child or young person and their family.

A GIRFEC Child's Planning meeting gathers key professionals, the child and family to discuss and agree a GIRFEC Child's Plan to improve the wellbeing of a child or young person. It offers opportunities for everyone involved to develop increased knowledge and understanding of the child or young person, towards developing agreed aims and targets.

Co-ordination

The Named Person is responsible for arranging and Chairing a GIRFEC Child's Planning until a Lead Professional is identified. Lead professionals are then responsible for arranging further GIRFEC Child's Planning Meetings.

Attendance

The child/young person;

- Parents/carers;
- Advocate for the child;
- Support person/advocate for the parents/carers, identified by the family;
- The Named Person;
- The Lead Professional; and
- Other involved professionals.

The Named Person/Lead Professional should discuss and agree with the family before inviting any professionals who are not currently involved.

Knowledge of the family may also identify other children in the family for whom consideration should be given.

Timescales

A GIRFEC Child's Planning Meeting should be arranged within 28 days of the Named Person/Lead Professional determining that a meeting is required.

Characteristics of an effective GIRFEC Child's Planning Meeting

- all invitees are clear about the purpose of the meeting;
- everyone is supported to contribute in the way that is best for them;
- a solution-focused approach is taken, concentrating on improving the wellbeing of the child or young person;
- the meeting is chaired effectively, ensuring that all perspectives are represented, dissenting views recorded, and actions with timescales agreed and recorded;
- everyone understands their role in helping the child, young person and family;

- the child, young person and family understand what is expected of themselves and other members of the network of support;
- a draft GIRFEC Child's Plan is sent to those in attendance within 14 days to allow them to agree the content before being issued as an accurate record of the meeting;
- a review date is arranged.

Recording

A minute should be taken by a professional not chairing the meeting and provided to the Lead Professional for distribution alongside the GIRFEC Child's Plan.

GIRFEC Child's Planning Meeting's will typically be convened for children and young people who are being supported by multi-agency professionals on a voluntary basis.

Children and Young People subject to Child Protection Registration will have their Child Protection Plan reviewed via Edinburgh And Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures. If it is agreed that a GIRFEC Child's Plan should continue following de-registration then a GIRFEC Child's Planning Meeting should be scheduled to review the GIRFEC Child's Plan.

Children and young people currently 'looked after' at home should have their My Plan reviewed at 4-weekly GIRFEC Child Planning Meetings.

Children and young people who are 'looked after and accommodated' will have their My Plan reviewed via the My Plan process and 4 weekly placement meetings.

10. GIRFEC CHILD'S PLAN

The Lead Professional will co-ordinate a GIRFEC Child's Plan in using their agency's template.

The GIRFEC Child's Plan should include a clear explanation of why the plan has been created with references to the identified wellbeing needs, agreed actions to be taken and the expected improvement for the child or young person.

Every GIRFEC Child's Plan should include and record:

- the views of the child and their parent(s);
- details of the action to be taken;
- the service(s) that will provide the support;
- the way in which the support is to be provided;
- the outcome that the plan aims to achieve; and
- when the plan should be reviewed.

Implementing and Reviewing the GIRFEC Child's Plan

The practitioners named in the plan are responsible for carrying out their own interventions within the agreed time-frame and sharing relevant information with the Lead Professional prior to the review of assessment.

11. PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) is a Scottish Government program that encourages full participation of children and young people in decisions that affect them. GIRFEC is based on the idea that children and young people should be at the centre of any work to support them.

Children have the right to be involved

Children have the capacity to be competent commentators on their lives

12. INFORMATION SHARING

To ensure that children and families get the right help at the right time it is essential that the right information is shared between agencies in a timely manner.

In determining whether and when to share information it is important to consider what is necessary, proportionate, lawful and relevant.

Information shared must relate to your concern, be necessary for the specific purpose and should be the minimum necessary to achieve that purpose.

You must keep a record of information you have shared, with whom, and for what purpose so that you can demonstrate that you have complied with data protection legislation.

National Guidance regarding information sharing (2022) is available to support practitioners to understand the lawful, fair and proportionate information sharing requirements which complies with all relevant legal requirements.

Transparency

Children, young people and families must be informed, from the outset, what personal information the organisation will require, why and what they do with the information. If any routine information sharing is necessary, children, young people and their families must be informed with whom it is shared, why and what the recipient will do with the information.

If the organisation shares information without consent in certain circumstances, for example where a child shares details of an alleged crime perpetrated by their parent it may be necessary for social work to share this with the police before the parent is informed, this should be explained in a way that they understand.

Consent

You should only ask for consent when this will genuinely affect whether the information is shared, and you will be relying on consent as the lawful basis for sharing information It is important that you do not give the impression that you are asking for consent if there is a

lawful basis for sharing the information without consent and you have decided to share the information in the best interests of the child or young person.

There is no lower age limit on the right of the child or young person to express their views, data protection legislation provides that in Scotland, children aged 12 or over are presumed to be mature enough to have legal capacity to provide their own consent or exercise the rights conferred by data protection legislation. A determination of their capacity would be required to assert this is not the case. Advocacy, translation or communication support may be helpful, or in some cases essential, to ensuring children, young people and families fully understand and are able to provide informed and freely give consent.

13. CHRONOLOGY

An accurate and up-to-date chronology supports the collation and analysis of key information about significant events in children and young people's lives and the single and/or cumulative impact these can have on their wellbeing.

Individual agencies may have their own chronology for a child or young person. A multi-agency chronology should include information collated from these that is relevant and proportionate to support the planning for the child or young person.

Where a GIRFEC Child's Plan is agreed this should ordinarily be supported by a multi-agency chronology.

The Lead Professional is responsible for maintaining the multi-agency chronology on their agency template.

Where the family are challenging the accuracy of information, the Lead Professional will seek clarity from the author of the original single agency chronology to ensure there is evidence to support its inclusion in the multi-agency chronology.

14. REFLECTIVE PROFESSIONALS' MEETING

When there is agreement amongst professionals that the Child's Plan has become 'stuck' and is not achieving the desired outcomes, consideration should be given as to whether a Reflective Professional's Meeting should take place.

Reflective Professionals' Meetings are NOT planning meetings without family members but meetings designed to support practitioners undertaking complex case work gain knowledge and understanding from each other, discuss practice concerns and identify where practitioners are overly optimistic or pessimistic. The family are not included in this discussion in order to facilitate professional dialogue and planning.

Arranging a Reflective Professionals' Meeting

Any professional can make a request to the Lead Professional to convene a Reflective Professionals' Meeting.

The Lead Professional will be responsible for scheduling and arranging the meeting.

The Lead professional's Team Manager/Line Manager who will identify an independent chair from a multi-agency pool (Health Visiting/Family Nurse Team Leaders, Social Policy Team Managers, Head Teachers).

The chair will be responsible for:

- Creating a safe space for multi-agency reflection and analysis;
- Creating an emotionally informed thinking space;
- Encouraging thinking before acting;
- Promoting respectful uncertainty and healthy scepticism;
- Encouraging open and honest professional conversations
- Enabling professional thinking and challenge appropriately
- Enabling professionals to embed trauma informed practice
- Maintaining neutrality in the process
- Facilitating group discussion to agree how the discussion will be shared with the family e.g. if the group decides that the plan's direction needs to change or other professional views or involvement should be sought.
- Recording and sending the minutes to the involved professionals
- Encouraging the group to escalate issues via their line managers if there is serious disagreement or resource issues.

15. PROFESSIONAL CURIOSITY

In the implementation of GIRFEC multi-agency practitioners are encouraged to be professionally curious.

Professional curiosity is a combination of looking; listening; asking direct questions; checking out and reflecting on information received. Professional curiosity is about exploring and understanding what is happening with a child, young person and their family. It is about enquiring deeper and using proactive questioning and challenge. It is about understanding one's own professional responsibility and knowing when to act, rather than making assumptions, or taking things at face value.

Professional curiosity means not taking a single source of information and accepting it at face value. It means triangulating information from different sources to gain a better understanding of family functioning which, in turn, helps to make predictions about what is likely to happen in the future. It means seeing past what appears to be obvious. It is about respectful scepticism and challenge.

16. CHILD PROTECTION

If at any time a child or young person is considered to be at risk of significant harm, Edinburgh And Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures should be followed without delay.

17. GIRFEC IN ACTION IN WEST LOTHIAN

GIRFEC Governance

The governance structure for GIRFEC in West Lothian is the Children and Families Strategic Planning Group and the Child Protection Committee. Both are multi-agency governance forums consisting of senior managers. GIRFEC developments are reported to these forums.

West Lothian's GIRFEC Working Group

West Lothian's GIRFEC planning group meets regularly to review and plan GIRFEC activity and practice. Members include representatives from Social Policy, Health, Education, and the Third Sector.

GIRFEC Practitioner Forum

A bi-monthly online practitioner forum is run by West Lothian's GIRFEC Working Group to deliver short touch-point presentations by local organisations working with children and families. This is a networking and information sharing forum.

GIRFEC Practitioner Annual Event

An annual face to face event is run by West Lothian's GIRFEC Working Group to bring multi-agency practitioner's together to receive GIRFEC updates and practice presentations. It also includes opportunities to network and participate in topical practice discussion groups.