

Practice Briefing 6

Using the *National Practice Model IV*: The *Child's Plan* - one child, one plan

This is the sixth of several Practice Briefings that have been written to help practitioners and managers put *Getting it right for every child* into practice in their agencies. The Practice Briefings should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government's *Guide to Getting it right for every child (2008)*, the *Guide to implementing Getting it right for every child (2010)*, and the *Getting it right for every child* Evaluation Themed Briefings (2010), all of which can be found on the *Getting it right for every child* website. www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright

The *Guide to Getting it right for every child (2008)* spells out the Values and Principles of the approach, the key roles, the Core Components and the *National Practice Model*. These practice briefings are designed to provide further information on the roles of the *Named Person* and the *Lead Professional* and more detail on how to use the *National Practice Model*, including when children may be in need of compulsory measures. Further briefings will be added as *Getting it right for every child* becomes embedded and practice examples from across Scotland become available.

The Practice Briefings

Practice Briefing 1. The role of the *Named Person*

Practice Briefing 2. The role of the *Lead Professional*

Practice Briefing 3. Using the *National Practice Model I*: Identifying concerns using the *Well-being Indicators*

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Assessing and planning to help children

Assessment and planning are part of the everyday processes practitioners employ to help children and their families. Practitioners work with children and families to ensure they are linked to the most appropriate help to meet their needs. Within the *Getting it right for every child* approach, these activities will be available for every child. Health visitors, for example, will assess children's development and plan with parents to ensure their needs are met. Similarly, within schools, *Curriculum for Excellence*¹ expects that the educational progress of every child will be charted and The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended by the 2009 Act² places duties on local authorities to identify, assess and meet the needs of children who require additional support to make the most of their school education. Making and recording plans in the day-to-day context will always inform this work, however informally this is done.

One plan

Getting it right for every child introduces the concept of **one plan**, no matter what the child's needs, to be used by a single agency or several agencies working together to support the child. The *Getting it right for every child* principle is that each child who requires support whether from a single universal service or several agencies will have this support coordinated and recorded within a single plan. For a child who has complex needs, The *Child's Plan* is generally discussed and reviewed in a single forum: The *Child's Plan Meeting*, while less complex plans involving fewer people may be put together without the need for a meeting at all.

As *Getting it right for every child* is being implemented nationally, the *Child's Plan Meeting* is streamlining the functions of existing forums, such as Looked After Children Reviews, Child Protection Case Conferences, reviews of children's health and co-ordinated support plan reviews. The format and attendees of the *Child's Plan Meeting* will reflect the complexity of the child's needs and circumstances. The *Child's Plan* is recorded and co-ordinated by a *Lead Professional*.³

¹ Scottish Executive (2006) *Curriculum for Excellence*, Edinburgh, Scottish Executive

² Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009

³ See Practice Briefing 2 *The Role of the Lead Professional*

Plans are underpinned by assessment

The plan describes the child's needs, based on an assessment guided by the *Getting it right for every child National Practice Model*. The plan must include the views of the child and family be proportionate to the child's needs and include reference to long term, medium and short term goals. It will be constructed from the analysis of information gathered in assessment.

In a single agency plan, it may be enough to construct a plan from assessing concerns about a child's well-being, keeping in mind the whole of a child's world from the *My World Triangle*.

Where there is a multi-agency plan, it is likely that this will have involved the gathering of more complex information, using the *My World Triangle* and incorporating any specialist assessments from different professionals and agencies. *Getting it right for every child* looks to practitioners to work in accordance with legislation and guidance. Agencies should think beyond their immediate remit, drawing on the skills and knowledge of others as necessary in a broad, holistic way⁴.

It is the role of the *Lead Professional* to make sense of all the inputs into the assessment from the child, the family and practitioners. The *Lead Professional* analyses the information in terms of the impact of needs and risks on the child. The *Lead Professional*, with all the partners to the plan, will then make a summary of the assessment, making sure all the relevant strengths and pressures have been recorded.

Out of this summary will emerge the *Child's Plan*, which can be structured under headings of the appropriate *Well-being Indicators*, detailing what needs to change. This will be brought to the table of a *Child's Plan Meeting* and actions designed to improve the child's outcomes will be agreed.

⁴ See Guidance on partnership working between allied health professionals and education. www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/welfare/partnershipworking

Components of the plan

Every plan will have the following components:

The views of the child (according to age and stage of development) and the family/carers

- Who is a partner to the plan
- Reason for the plan
- Summary of the child's needs against the well-being indicators
- Desired outcomes
- Resources
- Timescales for action and change
- What needs to be done and by whom
- Any contingency arrangements, if necessary
- Arrangements for reviewing the plan.

All children who need services and for whom action is being taken will need a plan.

The relevant eight *Well-being Indicators* should be used as a framework to construct a description of what needs to change and the actions to be taken to improve the child's circumstances. Actions should be proportionate to the child's needs and situation. Plans should be made and put into action with as little delay as possible.

When is a *Child's Plan Meeting* necessary?

In less complex cases, it may be unnecessary to hold a *Child's Plan Meeting* to put a plan in place and it should be possible for multi-agency help to be organised and delivered without a formal *Child's Plan Meeting*.

In many cases, it will be a positive choice to hold a formal meeting to make decisions and construct the *Child's Plan*. If a meeting is to take place, then practitioners need to consider:

- **What is the purpose of the meeting?**
- **Who needs to be at the meeting?**
- **When will the meeting take place?**
- **How will children and families be prepared for the meeting?**

- **How will the meeting be organised?**
- **Who will chair the meeting?**

Careful consideration should be given to the timing of meetings to accommodate the needs of children and families. In addition, children and their families will need to be carefully prepared for any meeting and it is the role of the *Lead Professional* to make sure that this is done.

Local authorities will have different meetings processes and procedures for constructing a *Child's Plan* where there are statutory procedures to be followed and practitioners should follow their local procedures in these cases.

Recording plans

Whether the plan is single or multi-agency, and whether it is short and simple or more complex and detailed, a clear record of the plan must be made, which ensures that it includes what needs to change in the child's life, why, what will be done, by whom and when.

A multi-agency *Child's Plan* will inevitably be more complex than any plan for action constructed in a single agency. Where there is a multi-agency *Child's Plan*, then alongside the components of the plan above, other factors will need to be included. In summary, therefore, a multi-agency *Child's Plan* should include:

- **Reasons for the plan**
Why agencies or families believe a child needs a plan, including any issues of concern to be addressed
- **Partners to the plan**
The name and designation of all the partners to the plan including parents and children and how they can be contacted. This will also include the *Named Person* and/or *Lead Professional* and any members of the core group who will be taking actions forward
- **The views of the child and their parents or carers**
The views of children and their families about all of the elements of the plan should be recorded, preferably in a way that is accessible to children and

families and includes them in the constructing of the plan. Children and families are central to the plan and to making sure it succeeds.

- **Summary of the child's needs**

The summary of the assessment is constructed from an analysis of information gathered using the *My World Triangle* and any additional specialist information. It should highlight the positives in the child's world as well as the needs and risks, to provide an evidenced, balanced, view of the child that builds on strengths. The needs should be expressed in terms of what is missing to make the child safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected and responsible, and included. In most cases only some areas of well-being will be identified as having needs.

- **What needs to be done to improve the child's circumstances**

The plan should identify both short and long term desired outcomes and the priorities for immediate action.

- **Details of action to be taken**

By whom (to include practitioners, the family and the child).

- **Resources to be provided**

By whom and within what timescale. (Any difficulties agencies may have in providing resources of the type or level required by the plan should be recorded).

- **Timescales for action and for change**

These timescales should relate directly to a child's circumstances and to the help practitioners will be providing.

- **Contingency plans**

A statement of what will happen if agreements, actions and outcomes are not met, or if circumstances change.

- **Arrangements for reviewing the plan**

Building in details of how the plan will be reviewed makes sure everyone knows how and when this will be done.

For a multi-agency *Child's Plan* it will also be necessary to include:

- **Lead Professional arrangements**

It should be clear in the plan who is the lead professional and how he or she can be contacted. The *Lead Professional* is critical in planning as the person who has responsibility for co-ordinating various actions and making sure they have been carried out.

- **Details of any compulsory measures**

Where compulsory measures of supervision are needed, the reasons for these and the evidence to be placed before the children's hearing should be recorded within the plan. This will include circumstances where a decision has been previously made by a children's hearing and is being implemented (see Practice Briefing 7).

Monitoring and reviewing the *Child's Plan*

When action is taken or practitioners provide services for a child and family as part of any plan for a child, it is essential to know how well the child is doing. This includes whether practitioners and family members have done what they set out to do, whether the plan has achieved the desired outcome, and, if not, what else now needs to be done. The monitoring and reviewing arrangements will have been set out and agreed during the writing of any plan for a child. The *Lead Professional* or *Named Person*, depending on the nature of the plan, is responsible for monitoring that the plan is being acted upon.

A multi-agency *Child's Plan* might need to fulfil the requirements of a range of statutory processes including different timescales for review. Where, for example, a child who has a Co-ordinated Support Plan becomes looked after, it will be necessary to align reviews to ensure that the child has **one meeting** which addresses his or her needs and fulfils the obligations of both statutes. This will mean there will be times when meetings will need to be brought forward.

As a principle, no more than six months should go by without any plan being reviewed but arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the plan should be proportionate. In most cases, where the child's needs are met within the single

agency, it may not be necessary to have a formal meeting. Discussions may take place in variety of ways whilst ensuring the child and family are fully involved, the plan is working effectively and the outcomes are being achieved.

In the original plan, what needs to change will have been described within the context of the eight *Well-being Indicators*. In the review, the *Well-being Indicators* should again form the framework for detailing the impact on the child of the help that has been given.

The essential questions for the *Named Person* or *Lead Professional* to review are:

- **What has improved in the child's circumstances?**
- **What if anything has got worse?**
- **Have the outcomes in the plan been achieved?**
- **If not, is there anything in the plan that needs to be changed?**
- **Am I the most appropriate person to continue to manage the plan?**

At all times, it must be remembered that, while planning is an important part of offering appropriate help, it should not be an end in itself. It is the actions that arise from the plan and the outcomes these produce for an individual child that matter most.

Everyone who is involved in reviewing the single agency plan or multi-agency *Child's Plan* should consider how well the child is doing, whether there is any new information or change of circumstances, the impact of the help provided and whether the intended changes and desired outcomes have been or are being achieved. It may be necessary to revise the original plan in the light of new information or circumstances. If this needs to happen, new timescales should be set and the date for the next review agreed.

Everyone, including parents and carers, should pay particular attention to any transitions the child may be experiencing, such as a change of household, a change of address, moving from one school to another, or transition from children's to adult

services, so that these can be included in the review of the *Child's Plan* to ensure there is no gap in service.

Practitioners need to be vigilant about any new information that changes a child's circumstances and respond appropriately and flexibly without having to wait until the next review date. The actions taken for the review of the multi-agency *Child's Plan*, including whether or not there has been a *Child's Plan Meeting*, should be recorded. In cases where there is a statutory requirement for a review, the agency should use appropriate procedures to make sure the requirement has been met.

The *Lead Professional* has a key role in co-ordinating and collating summaries of the work that has been undertaken, achievements and progress made, and any setbacks in the review period, including outstanding work or difficulties encountered by the child or family. Information for a review should be shared in advance with the child, family and other practitioners, so that, if there is to be a formal meeting, all those attending are fully prepared. The child and family's views are a critical contribution to the review.

The review may show one of three options:

1. The child's circumstances have improved and the plan is no longer required
2. The child's circumstances have improved but the plan needs to continue
3. . Concerns have increased, and the plan is no longer working, so needs to include different or more targeted support.

1. The child's circumstances have improved and the plan is no longer required

Where the outcomes of a multi-agency *Child's Plan* have been achieved, it is important that the partners to the plan hold a final review of progress since the plan was made. Everyone should be clear about how a child and family can get in contact again with the *Named Person* if they need to do so. Everyone needs to be clear that the *Named Person* **will resume sole responsibility** for the child within the universal services of health or education, according to the child's age. The ending of targeted work with children and families requires careful management and planning.

2. The child's circumstances have improved but the plan needs to continue

It is sometimes tempting, if there has been progress in some areas, to assume that this will stand for the outcomes from the whole plan. It is also tempting, in cases where there has been a high level of activity by different agencies, to regard this as an indicator that the plan is working. Practitioners need to look carefully at the content of the plan and make sure that all aspects of the plan have been addressed. This requires a review that is focused on the child and looks at the whole child. Progress in one area will not necessarily transfer itself to another without additional help.

3. Concerns have increased, and the plan is no longer working, so needs to include different or more targeted support

In a single agency plan, the review may reflect that there is a level of complexity that cannot be managed in universal services. Further or more specialist assessment may be needed. It may also be necessary to appoint a *Lead Professional*.

When a multi-agency plan is reviewed and outcomes are not improving or the where a situation has deteriorated, the review may also be an opportunity to look at whether compulsory measures are appropriate, particularly if children are seen as at risk of harm or are a risk to themselves or to others.

The reviewed plan, in any circumstances, whether in single or multi-agency context, together with any reports from the practitioners involved, should always be carefully recorded and communicated to all the partners to the plan including the child and the family. If a plan has included concerns about a child's safety or well-being, it is important to include in the review of this type of *Child's Plan* a summary of contacts or appointments kept or not kept with action taken. This may suggest the value of reappraising the original assessment.

If there is a multi-agency *Child's Plan* and a child moves without warning or goes missing, the *Lead Professional* is normally responsible for ensuring that the most recent assessment and planning information is sent to the receiving area as soon as possible and should follow their own agency procedures to make sure this is done.

The relationship between the *Child's Plan* and other planning processes for children's well-being

The *Child's Plan* incorporates the requirements for a care plan for children who are looked after by the local authority. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 which amends the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 deems that all looked after children and young people have additional support needs unless the authority are able to demonstrate that an individual child or young person does not require additional support in order to benefit from school education. In addition, the Act requires education authorities to consider whether each individual looked after child or young person requires a co-ordinated support plan. These deliberations need to be a considered part of a *Child's Plan*.

The relationship between *Getting it right for every child* and the Co-ordinated Support plan is spelt out in paragraphs 101-105 of the *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice* (Revised edition).⁵ Specifically, the relationship between the *Child's Plan* and the Co-ordinated Support Plan is explained in paragraphs 104-105:

104. The co-ordinated support plan is an educational plan which involves, and notes the commitments by, other agencies providing significant additional support to enable the child or young person to benefit from education. It needs to be included along with the child's plan (or be readily extractable from the child's plan as a stand alone document). The date of the co-ordinated support plan is based on the date it is sent to parents and young person where appropriate. Education authorities must be able to produce this stand alone document to demonstrate adherence to legally specified processes and timescales and also copies have to

105. Clearly there are significant similarities between the contents of the child's plan and the co-ordinated support plan. However, one important difference is that the co-ordinated support plan is concerned with the additional support a child or young person requires in order to benefit from education. The child's plan, however, potentially covers a wider range of issues related to promoting a child's or young person's wellbeing and it will, therefore, refer to matters not contained in the co-ordinated support plan such as, for example, issues relating to compulsory care measures or child protection. However, it is important that the process of

⁵The Scottish Government (2010) *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice* (Revised Addition), Edinburgh, The Scottish Government, paragraphs 101-105

developing the co-ordinated support plan is integrated fully with the planning and review of the child's plan so that, for example, the annual review of the co-ordinated support plan dovetails with the review of the child's plan and so that assessment is carried out in a holistic way as illustrated by the *My World Triangle* in Chapter 3. As noted in paragraph 66, the co-ordinator may be the lead professional working with the family under the *Getting it right for every child* approach

Planning for child protection is another area where there is clear guidance provided. National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010⁶ sets out the way child protection is embedded in *Getting it right for every child* processes:

Where a child is thought to be at risk of significant harm, the primary concern will be for their safety. The planning process must reflect this. The 'child protection case conference' – the CPCC (see Part 3 for more information) is the term applied in this guidance to the single meeting in respect of a child about whom there are concerns about significant harm. It will be for the chair of the meeting to ensure that the discussion stays focused on specific concerns about the safety of the child, the actions required to reduce risk and whether the case should be referred to the Children's Reporter.

Child Protection Plan

388. When a Child's Plan is converted into a Child Protection Plan or when a new Child Protection Plan is developed for the first time, the plans should set out in detail:

- the perceived risks and needs;
- what is required to reduce these risks and meet those needs; and
- who is expected to take any tasks forward including parents/carers and the child themselves.

Children and their families need to clearly understand what is being done to support them and why.

389. In addition, Child Protection Plans need to clearly identify:

- key people involved and their responsibilities, including the Lead Professional and named practitioners;
- timescales;
- supports and resources required (in particular, access to specialist assistance);
- the agreed outcomes for the child or young person;

⁶ The Scottish Government (2010) *National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland*, Edinburgh, The Scottish Government

- the longer term needs of the child and young person;
- the process of monitoring and review; and
- any contingency plans.

390. Responsibility is shared for the Child Protection Plan. Each person involved should be clearly identified, and their role and responsibilities set out. To preserve continuity for the child and their parent(s)/carer(s), arrangements should be made to cover the absence through sickness or holidays of key people. All Child Protection Plans where there are current risks should have specific cover arrangements built in to make sure that work continues to protect the child. As part of this continuity, children and young people who are on the Child Protection Register should not be excluded from school unless there is a multi-agency discussion to identify risk factors and strategies to address these.

391. Any interventions should be proportionate and clearly linked to a desired outcome for the child. Progress can only be meaningfully measured if the action or activity has had a positive impact on the child.

392. Participants should receive a copy of the agreed Child Protection Plan **within five calendar days** of the CPCC. It is recognised that a full comprehensive risk assessment may not be achievable within the timescales of the initial CPCC or the first core group. Therefore, it should be recognised that the early Child Protection Plan may need to be provisional until a fuller assessment can be undertaken.

The *Child's Plan* can be used to provide evidence to the Reporter to decide whether compulsory measures are needed. In these cases, it is important the plan indicates where the concerns relate to grounds for referral to the Reporter. If the Reporter decides there are sufficient grounds to proceed to a children's hearing, a *Child's Plan*, which will incorporate the grounds for the hearing, can be used to inform the hearing's decision-making. This is described in Practice Briefing 7.⁷

Getting it right for every child team

The Scottish Government

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⁷ See Practice Briefing 7. The Contribution of *Getting it right for every child* to the Children's Hearings System.