



getting it right for every child

The Highland Pathfinder Project



- together with Voluntary Sector Agencies

What are we trying to achieve?

Highland Council, NHS Highland, Northern Constabulary, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and the Voluntary Sector Agencies are working together, with the support of the Scottish Government, to implement improved multi agency ways of working to meet children's needs, initially in the Inverness area. This is building on existing integrated practices across Highland, but it is evolving so that the universal services of Health and Education have the means and the support to recognise and meet children's needs earlier.

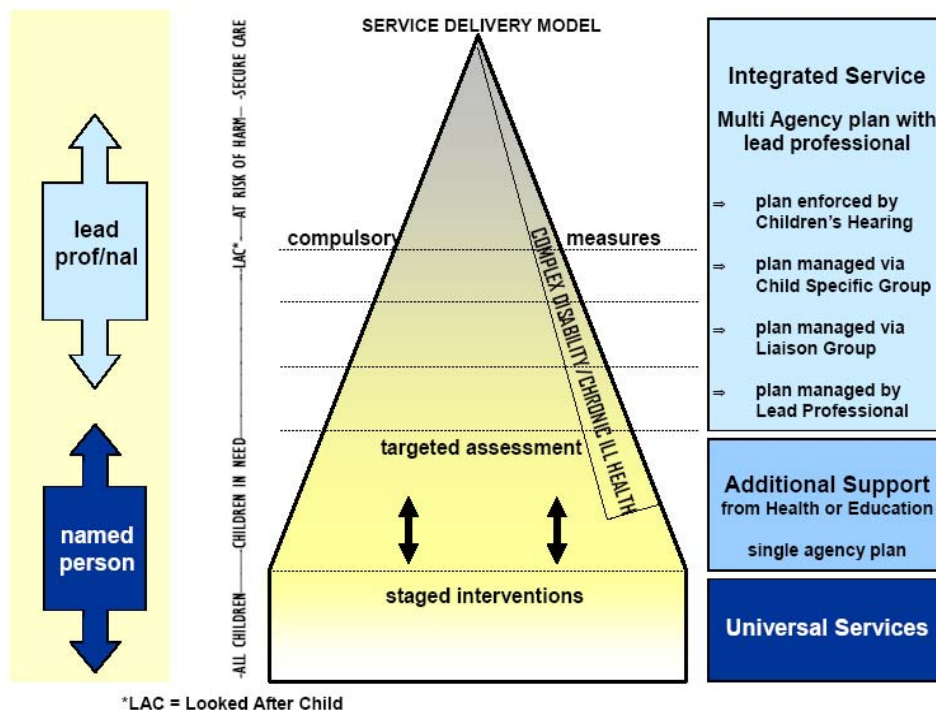
This will be done through a commonly understood framework, using the same language, assessment and planning process, and in a way in which children, young people and their families feel fully involved. It will be supported by an electronic framework so that information can be shared effectively across the agencies, without duplication and repeated gathering and recording of the same information. The project is working to break down the barriers to effective and uncomplicated multi agency working and is working to the following set of principles;

- 1 Staff take responsibility for action to improve children's lives.
- 2 Changes in culture occur with different ways of working to deliver effective children's services within a unified approach; responses that deliver the Vision for Scotland's Children and strengthen children and families' capacities to care for their children well and meet their needs.
- 3 When there are concerns about a child, a proportionate, appropriate and timely response is taken with a clear approach to staged intervention within Police, Health and Education services, and there are clear routes to multi-agency involvement and compulsory measures should that be necessary.
- 4 Where more than one agency is or needs to be involved, one assessment and plan of action is created and a lead professional is appointed.
- 5 There is a clear message for children and families, about what they can expect, what is expected of them, and how the professionals involved with them will help.
- 6 There will be reduced bureaucracy for children and their families, and for staff, and there will be one meeting process and one plan for a child who needs extra help. Where children need to be referred to the Children's Reporter, that decision will be made on a multi agency basis, will be based on thorough assessment and one multi agency assessment report will be submitted to the Reporter.

What have we done so far?

Implementation of *getting it right for every child* has involved a long period of planned changes to processes and practice across all agencies, and some of these are listed below:

- The Service delivery model has been developed showing how services are organised and delivered across the agencies, and how children and their families can access help without bureaucracy or barriers. This is reproduced below:

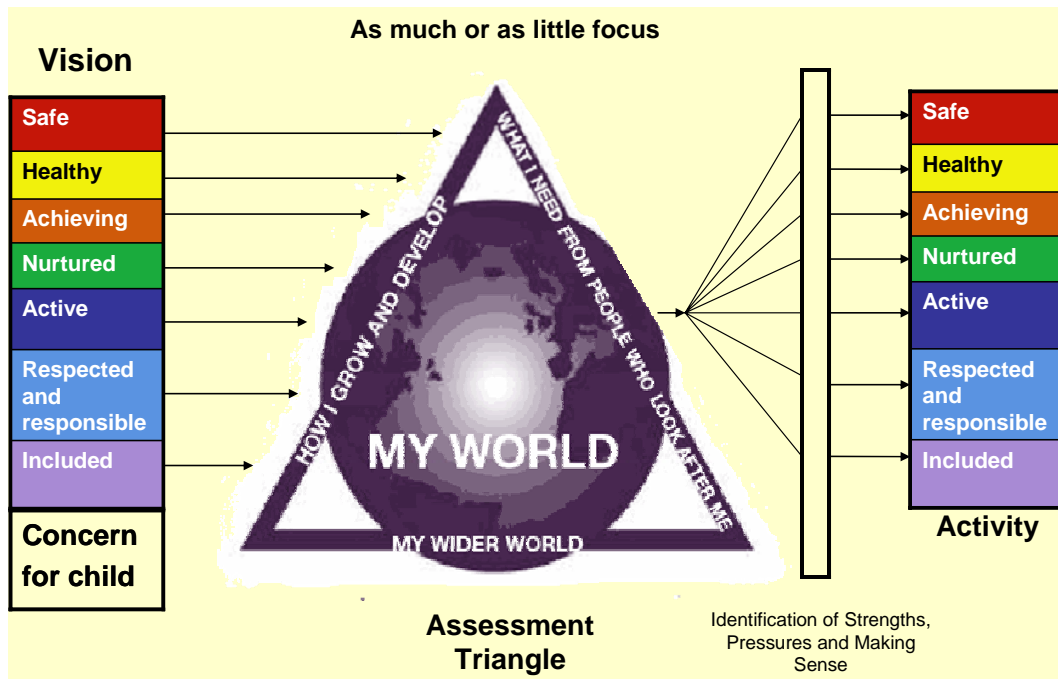


- The child's record has been developed, and incorporates all of the common elements for use by any agency as well as those elements that are agency specific, such as: attendance and academic attainment in education; specific child and family health information that is commonly recorded by midwives, health visitors and school nurses; and Child Protection and Looked After Child information. Some of these documents can be viewed on the website at <http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/>
- The public health element of the child's record is now in use for all new born children, and for those children whose additional needs are being managed by a public health nurse.
- Where children come to the attention of the police, if the concerns are in respect of welfare/non offence matters, referral to the children's reporter is no longer routinely made. Instead, the information gathered in the new assessment format is being shared with health and education practitioners

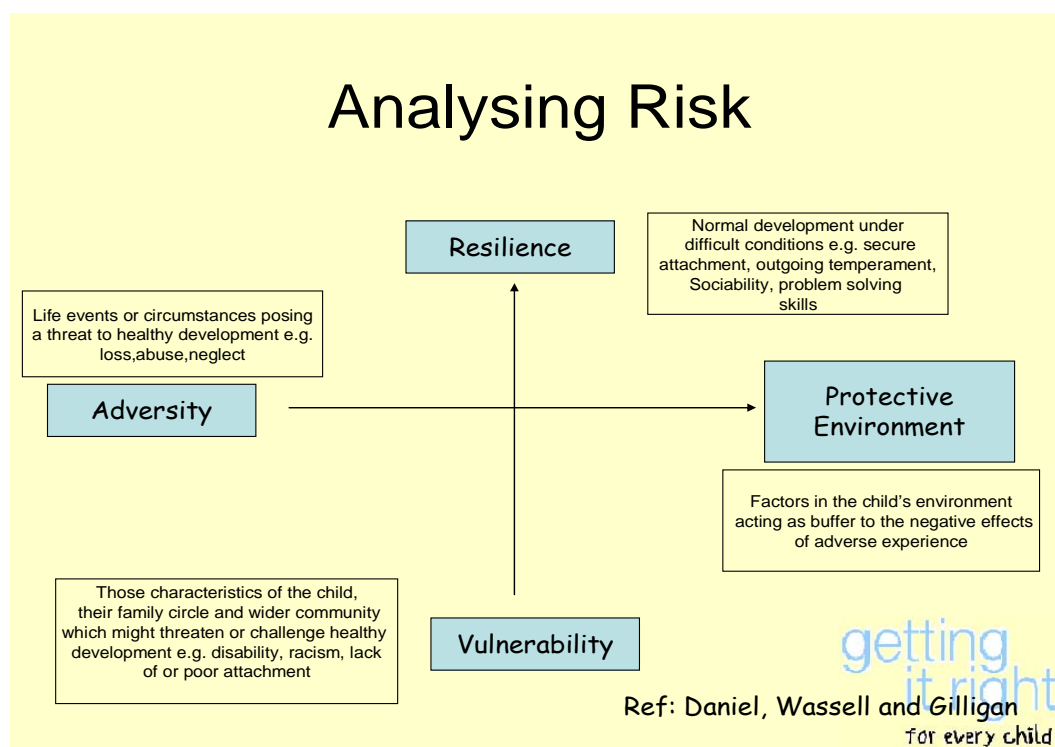
and workers, discussion is taking place with them as to the child's needs, and early plans are being made by the universal services to support that child. Where a child is believed to be at risk, then Child Protection Procedures are followed, and the social work service is immediately notified. Having been tested out in the Inverness area, the new process is being rolled out throughout the Police command area, and from October 2007, this process will be extended to incorporate those children who come to the attention of the Police through offending behaviour.

- The education element of the child's record has been drafted and consultation is taking place with education staff before moving to wider consultation.
- The single child's plan has been developed in tandem with the development of the new electronic social work recording and assessment system (Carefirst) and is being tested with children and their families in reviews where there are looked after child and child protection issues, including registration. This plan is now to be tested for children who have less complex needs.
- When children have complex needs and these are currently being reviewed at different meetings, reviewing officers are bringing those meetings together to ensure one meeting and one plan.
- The team is working on generic 'child concern' information that can be used across all the agencies, both statutory and voluntary to capture and record concerns about a child in a common format, using shared language and in such a way as to be able to be exchanged electronically.
- Practitioner guidance has been written for public health workers and police officers, and social work and education guidance is under development. The overarching, multi agency guidance is now at an advanced stage and will shortly be available for wider consultation
- Basic manager training (Programme One) on the key processes has taken place and is now being cascaded to all staff in the pathfinder area, and training packs have been produced. These will shortly be available on the Website at
<http://www.forhighlandchildren.org/htm/girfec/girfec-agencydocs.php>
- Single agency training has been taking place (Programme Two) to help practitioners understand how *getting it right for every child* sits and fits with their own agency requirements and responsibilities and what practice change will occur.
- Detailed training for those practitioners who will be named persons or lead professionals has been mapped out and will be delivered to relevant staff between October and December in preparation for the next phase of implementation. In addition to understanding the new processes, all staff will be able assess children's needs in an evidence based way, using the vision for children - safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected and

responsible, and included (SHANARI), and linking these to the assessment triangle as illustrated below.



- A risk assessment and management framework has been agreed, and will be included in the practice manual to support staff in the assessment process. This also incorporates understanding of resilience and vulnerability and is produced below:



- Local multi agency liaison arrangements are being redesigned to reflect the *getting it right for every child* model, that is, greater strength to the universal services to be able to organise or commission services from other agencies without bureaucracy.
- The purpose and focus of local senior inter-agency managers groups has been redesigned and expanded to respond to children's plans where need is complex. This group will also focus on the most persistent offenders in an area, to ensure that plans are effective and being delivered on.

What is the impact of the changes so far?

Where assessment and planning has begun to be organised within the *getting it right for every child* process, with one meeting for any child, feedback from children and families and from practitioners has been positive.

Families say that they have been better involved in the preparation of their child's report and they can see their views recorded. They say that this has made them feel more included and confident in the system. They say that they don't look at the 'label' for a meeting, for example Looked After Child, Child Protection, Child's Support Plan, but that they want their child's needs discussed, by the 'right people' and in a way that they can contribute properly. In the new structure, they say this is happening more often and that as a result, the process is easier for them. They say that they like the new plan as it is easier to understand, it is clearer who is taking responsibility for what, and that it leads to more co-ordinated help.

Staff are finding that the reduction in meetings means that they have more time to include families in the preparation of reports and to prepare them for those meetings that do take place. As a result, meetings are shorter, more focussed and more effective, less time is spent on explanation and procedure, and more is spent on discussing relevant information and in finding solutions. The role of the reviewing officer has become clearer to children and their families who now understand their independence in the meeting and from the person who has prepared that report.

For those children who have come to the attention of the Police, for child welfare/non-offence matters, there is an average 70% reduction on referrals to the Children's Reporter - that is for every 10 who would routinely have been referred, only 2-3 have been. For those referrals actually made, the decision to make that referral has been based on discussion between the Police and other agencies.

More importantly, for those children who were NOT referred as a result of the early sharing of information with health and/or education staff, most received extra help from those agencies and plans were put in place.

Health and education staff have said that they have found the earlier sharing of information useful, despite some initial apprehension. They say that it has helped them understand and make sense of what is happening for a child and that they have therefore felt more confident in knowing what to do to help.

In delivering training on the basic principles and processes of *getting it right for every child*, education staff are telling us that this is helping them understand and link all of the other processes and imperatives, such as the ASL Act and the Curriculum for Excellence, and they can see the benefits for their practice.

These findings are early but significant and formal evaluation is also taking place. The project team will continue to consult and monitor what is happening, and based on the feedback received, the model and processes will continue to be refined and to evolve.

When does 'getting it right for every child' start in Highland?

getting it right for every child has already started. In all kinds of ways and in all sorts of environments, people are working to reduce bureaucracy, and to move towards a co-ordinated assessment, meetings and planning process. Information is being shared earlier, and plans are being put in place. Within health, education, social work and the police, the required elements of the record have been detailed and some are being used across the Highland Council area, the police force command area, and the health board area and we are also working with the voluntary sector to take this forward with them. Area manager meetings have been realigned to reflect the multi agency decision making ethos, and local liaison arrangements are changing to reflect the *getting it right for every child* model

Practitioners have received training already, and between October and December, more specific training will be put in place to help workers feel confident in their roles as lead professionals. Further training in more depth and detail will take place thereafter.

In Highland we've spent a lot of time working out new and better ways of doing things. Joint working might not always be easy, and there have been times when the business process mapping and change management agendas have raised emotions or caused sore heads. But across Highland we are clear that we do want single plans, a clear pathway, and better outcomes for children - with less bureaucracy for staff. We are pleased we are starting to make this happen.



Head of Children's Services, The Highland Council

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Who are the project team members?

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Web Site: <http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/htm/girfec/girfec.php>