

getting
it right
for every child
in Moray

Local Integrated Assessment and Planning Procedures – Consultation Report:
November 2009

Context:

Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) is the Scottish Government's national programme to improve outcomes for children and young people when services work together in an integrated way. The Moray Council's GIRFEC Development Officer has supported and developed the work of the multi agency strategic GIRFEC Group in consulting on and developing Moray's Local Integrated Assessment and Planning Procedures (LIAP). The LIAP Procedures are in place to ensure that professionals working in an integrated way to assess and plan to meet the needs of a child or young person in Moray work to one consistent framework which fulfils the values and principles of the national GIRFEC approach.

Moray's Local Integrated Assessment and Planning Procedures (LIAP):

The LIAP Procedures were widely consulted on in a draft format between September and November 2008 before being refined and implemented in their finished format in April 2009. This implementation was undertaken with the proviso that the period from 1 April 2009 – 30 November 2009 would be one in which professionals used the new procedures in any situation in which two or more services were working together in an integrated way to assess and plan for the needs of a child or young person. The procedures also replaced the then existing Local Assessment and Planning Procedures (LAP).

Consultation Period:

Professionals were asked, during the above period, to use a variety of feedback methods to give their comments and suggestions for further refinement. This period of consultation ended on 30 November 2009. This report is collated from a variety of sources utilised during the consultation period: quarterly audits from Local Integration Support Officers (LISOs) and Local Management Groups (LMGs); direct feedback from individual service users, professionals and groups; observations from practice and training settings; comments from focus groups held during Moray's recent HMIE Child Protection Inspection and comments from feedback and discussion occurring during

meetings of the GIRFEC Group and the SMARTER Theme Co-ordinating Group (STCG) over the period.

Quantity of responses to Consultation:

On 27 August 2009, a report was presented to the STCG by the GIRFEC Development Officer of the first quarterly audit from the LMGs. This covered the period April – June 2009. The LISOs, on behalf of the LMGs, provide quarterly statistics relating to the number of LIAP processes occurring in their areas and return a completed standards audit. They also include any feedback forms from those processes from professionals, children and young people, and parents and carers. At that point in time, they also submitted specific feedback forms which they had issued to professionals in their areas, which requested qualitative feedback directly to LISOs about professionals' experiences of using the LIAP procedures.

From this first quarterly audit, 27 LIAP processes were recorded as having been started across Moray in the period April – June 2009. The majority of these (16) occurred in the Forres/Speyside area.

Of the qualitative feedback forms issued directly to professionals across Moray by the LISOs at this point, there was a return of 48 individual responses. Agencies contributing to this were Social Work, Education, Health, Police, Voluntary Sector and the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration (SCRA). Of those 48 individual forms, only 20 individuals had actually utilised or been involved in a LIAP process. The remaining 28 were offering comment on either having only read the procedures or giving only their perceptions of the procedures.

The second quarterly audit, covering the period July – September 2009 showed a total of 26 recorded LIAP Processes across Moray's Associated Schools' Group (ASG) areas: 18 in Forres and Speyside; 5 in Keith and Buckie; 3 in Milne's and Lossiemouth; 0 in Elgin High or Elgin Academy ASG areas.

The discrepancy in the number of processes is worth further exploration.

Over the consultation period, the GIRFEC Development Officer has attended team meetings, relevant fora, ASG meetings, and met with individuals and groups to seek feedback. She has also had regular and ongoing contact with the LISOs over the period.

There have also been 42 individual or group responses returned to her using the feedback forms in the procedures pack or on the website.

The agency breakdown for these responses is as follows:

Social Work	19	(12 individual responses, 7 group responses)
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Education	14	(10 individual responses, 4 group responses)
Police	3	(3 individual responses)
Health	2	(1 individual response, 1 group response)
Voluntary Sector	2	(2 individual responses on behalf of organisations)
SCRA	2	(2 individual responses)
Housing	0	

Themes arising from the Consultation:

From the above meetings, comments, discussion fora, observations of practice, comments during LIAP and associated training, and anecdotal evidence, there are several clear themes emerging with regard to practitioners' experiences or observations of the LIAP procedures and process:

1. Engagement with Children/Young People and Parents/Carers:

The GIRFEC programme emphasises the need for true involvement in all decision making and planning processes for children and their families. Professionals are required to enable their participation in all processes from the point of identification of need through to review and evaluation of service. The national programme outlines the importance of meaningful engagement in accessing an agreed action plan and focussing on a solution to which all parties can identify.

From comments received, there is evidence to suggest that not all professionals truly engage at the beginning of the process. Engagement with families appears to be, for some, simply about gaining consent to work with other services or to share information and gaining a signature to do so. GIRFEC outlines the values inherent in speaking to the child and family, sharing concerns (when it is safe and appropriate to do so), discussing options and agreeing what is to be done at a single agency stage, gaining informed explicit consent to share information as necessary and involving children and families in the whole process.

There is a lack of evidence of work being carried out to engage the family as described above prior to 'calling' a meeting to plan to meet needs. Comments received suggest that, in many cases, a meeting may be the first real opportunity a family has had to be involved. One suggestion made was that there should be:

"a booklet that incorporates all the information a family needs which can be sent out with a meeting invite letter by the LIAA (Local Integration Administrative assistant)".

The above comment evidences the professional-centric nature of current processes and not the child-centred nature embodied in GIRFEC.

2. Information Sharing, Consent and Confidentiality:

From feedback and comments received, the Pan Grampian Information Sharing Protocol is not widely recognised by professionals from across agencies. This suggests that its guidelines, which are based on the legal framework as well as on best practice, and which all Heads of Service across Grampian have agreed, is not being consistently or effectively used. Comments received during training suggest that some professionals operate a 'blanket consent' policy – sharing all information – ostensibly for the child's best interests, however, not following the agreed guidelines around consent and confidentiality or the legal framework. Again, this suggests a lack of knowledge and a specific training issue.

One suggestion to improve the process was:

“(we should be) able to use the LIAA to arrange meetings through a meeting request form. (This) can incorporate a tickbox to ensure the family have signed a consent to share information form”.

The issues of engagement with families and the issue of gaining consent are separate and individually vital if true involvement is to be achieved.

Another comment was:

“the Lead Professional is ... responsible for securing parental consent ...about a concern which may be juxtaposed to the parental view and....they may be the worst person to secure consent”

The Procedures (and information given during Lead Professional training sessions) clearly state that the Lead Professional is responsible for ensuring that the child and family understand what is happening to enable them to participate. Procedures state that the Lead Professional may require to identify another person best placed to do this directly. Even in situations in which sensitivity is required around raising a concern, issues of consent must be adhered to. Engaging effectively with the child, as well as the parent, is vital in order to gain informed consent – from the child as well as the parent.

3. Paperwork:

The Integrated Assessment Record (IAR) was developed as the single child's plan to which all agencies should integrate their core assessment information to provide one

clear action plan to which all agencies subscribe. It is based on national GIRFEC guidance and the national exemplar. This was issued in Moray with clear guidance regarding its completion. This plan was developed as an evolving document, to be coordinated by a Lead Professional and updated accordingly as the integrated work progresses.

Nevertheless, the format of the IAR was seen by some as 'difficult to use' but there was very little detail to indicate what specifically was 'difficult', aside from some formatting issues which have since been addressed. The document – and its language – was unfamiliar to some and led to comments about it being “*overly bureaucratic*”, “*time consuming to complete*” and “*confusing*”. This Integrated Assessment Record is, in fact, shorter than the previous one. One professional commented:

“...the use of LIAP (will be) largely ignored as hard pushed professionals will find it impossible to comply with the paperwork and pursue the task in hand”

Feedback from the Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration (SCRA) has also been received. The reports being received by both the Reporter and the Children's hearing panel largely do not meet their respective requirements. The Reporter requires evidence to establish the grounds of referral. The Hearing must decide whether or not a child requires compulsory measures of supervision. The current format, which is essentially an assessment tool, is being produced as a *report* as well. SCRA is not receiving the *quality* of report needed for each purpose via the specifically developed supplementary materials. Panel members have reported often having to question report authors during a Hearing for information which should have been evidenced in the report. In some cases, the supplementary materials are not being used at all, or are being submitted with “refer to Integrated Assessment Record” written on it. Some authors merely update the old record by 'cutting and pasting' information – this makes it difficult for readers to establish progress towards outcomes and, often, information is duplicated. Consequently, reports appear to be of very mixed quality. SCRA has also questioned the impact that receiving some of these reports is having on the children and families concerned:

“those who do read them interpret the format in which an earlier report is updated for the review hearing by the addition of new information, as a refusal to acknowledge that they have addressed any of the problems which brought them to the attention of the panel”.

4. Role of Lead Professional:

There is some anxiety about this role, particularly about the perceived increase in workload associated with “*administrative tasks*” for this role. From observation at

training, it appeared that what professionals found time consuming was telephoning other professionals to arrange meetings and sending out invites to these meetings. The LIAP Procedures have always allowed for Lead Professionals to delegate this role to an appropriate administrator, yet some professionals appear to not have acknowledged this.

The GIRFEC sub group for training delivered a series of 8 twilight sessions to raise awareness of the role. One of these sessions had to be cancelled as only one professional turned up. Of the 106 professionals who attended the other 7 sessions across Moray, the agency representation was as follows:

Education:	59	Social Work:	19	Police:	12	Health:	7
Voluntary Sector:	6	Housing:	3				

Lead Professional training has elicited an average 72 % increase in confidence to undertake this role. 25% of professionals said their confidence remained the same and 3% said their confidence decreased but provided no further detailed reasons for this decrease.

Training identified the skills and qualities necessary to undertake the role which most professionals attending agreed was part of their current professional role. The anxiety is closely linked with the 'newness' of the role, the completion of the IAR and the perceived sole responsibility of the role, rather than the combined accountability of the Team around the Child.

"There appears to be an expectation placed upon Education based upon their relationship, not their expertise, control or influence"

Lead Professional training and the LIAP procedures, however, specifically state that the Lead Professional can be a representative of any agency involved but must be the person best placed to take on the role at that time. The training emphasised the changing nature of the role as the child's needs change and the collective responsibility of the whole Team in carrying out agreed actions. Most importantly, the training addressed the need for agreement about this role.

One comment exemplified the confusion:

"I have attended 4 LIAPs and I am unsure of who the Lead Professional is. I am under the impression that some members may even consider me the Lead Professional. If I am this confused, so the child and family must be in the same position".

If current practice regarding the Lead Professional role reflects the above expressed view, there is a real danger in children's needs not being met in an integrated way. If no-one is prepared to take the role of co-ordinating work and acting as a single point

of contact, then there is a risk of duplication of activity and effort, lack of co-ordination and receipt of an ineffectual service by the child or family. If the role of Lead Professional always falls to one agency, then they will, in turn, lose the capacity to operate effectively or to deliver the best service possible to the child and family. If everyone takes on this responsibility some of the time, everyone's work and efficiency improve and the combined service is most effective.

Effectively taking on the GIRFEC programme and utilising the LIAP Procedures means professionals acting on their duty of care and commitment to the child, and taking on this role of Lead Professional when they truly are best placed to do so.

5. Interagency Understanding and Respect:

True integrated working was often seen as difficult to practically achieve or, on occasion, not happening. One professional commented:

"the IAR should not be produced by paraphrasing the comments of other agencies".

There is evidence to suggest that, on occasion, the completion of the IAR was simply that – a collation of reports rather than an integrated assessment and analysis and plan.

"Many other professionals still submit their own reports to meetings", was another comment.

Some comments highlighted issues of resources and even attendance at meetings to identify an action plan:

"there is frustration when a meeting is called and no offer of support is available from agencies involved".

LIAP Procedures have always meant that professionals must streamline meetings' processes to ensure that meetings occur when they are required and that those attending, are those who can specifically contribute towards a solution, together with the child and family. If the person initiating the LIAP process, having identified a need, contacts professionals whom he/she feels should be involved and they cannot offer any assessment expertise, further information or contribute to an action plan, then they need not be involved further. Engagement with the child and family from the outset will assist in identifying those professionals who are able to contribute to an assessment and action plan.

Comments on the difficulties of working in an integrated way were expressed across agencies. Feedback from training suggests multi agency training assists greatly in

breaking down barriers between agencies and clarifies roles and responsibilities, as well as offering genuine networking opportunities. Indeed, one comment spoke about the positive nature of true integrated working:

“it is helpful for social workers and health visitors to write joint reports as it aids good communication”.

Indeed, some felt:

“the ability to have all agencies around the same table and put plans in place at the time is an advantage”.

6. Role of the LISOs and their Administrators:

Prior to the LIAP Procedures being introduced, eight different systems of LAP existed in Moray. Culture, systems and practice evolved differently across those areas and this included the ways in which professionals interacted with their LISO and LIAA. Consequently, in areas in which professionals relied on the LIAA to carry out all inter-agency administrative work and, in doing so, often the LIAAs were the one consistent person with whom the child and family had contact, there is a belief that the LIAP Procedures have stopped this role. In areas where professionals carried out, or delegated, their own administrative tasks, there is not such a strong feeling of loss. In the former, the perception of the “onerous” nature of the LIAP paperwork is strong, in the latter, this is not presenting such an issue. The LIAP procedures allow for professionals to identify administrative support from either within their own agencies or, in consultation with the LISO, from the LIAA. The perception that this system has been removed is incorrect.

In the Team around the Child system, the role of the scribe is a professional task completed by a member of the Team. It is not an administrative role. Some comments indicate confusion of the two elements and the wish to have an administrator carry out this role with an independent chair.

The role of the LISO, however, is a key integral role within integrated working in the local areas and, within LIAP, must be clarified. The GIRFEC Group proposes that the LISOs' role is two-fold:

1. LISOs, in conjunction with LMGs, monitor and audit LIAP processes in their area, and
2. If a professional is struggling with LIAP processes, the LISO can assist him/her to facilitate the process.

7. Definitions of a LIAP process:

The LIAP Procedures make it clear that LIAP is a *process* not simply the name of a *meeting*. This is made clear at training too. Some professionals refer to “*attending LIAPs*”. The GIRFEC national programme is about addressing culture, systems and practice change for all professionals. The previous LAP system was meeting-heavy in some instances, the LIAP system emphasises the *process* before and after a meeting – indeed, that a meeting is not always necessary. Professionals are directed towards the Procedures for further guidance.

8. Solution Oriented Meetings:

This is the overwhelming positive aspect of the LIAP Procedures which appears to be universally welcomed by professionals, children and families:

“They are constructive, an efficient use of time as they are so focussed, all participants are involved in problem solving together instead of the old ‘finger wagging’ type of meetings”.

Feedback directly from young people – although minimal – suggests a positive experience of being included and involved:

“I was able to put my own point across” (young person); one professional identified:

“(parents and young people) can see exactly what is being written about them and they surely feel more confident that nobody is conspiring against them”.

Solution Oriented training has been delivered by the Education Inclusion and Support Service staff and has been delivered to approximately 250 professionals in Moray since January 2009, with two further sessions planned in 2010. The training continues to be over-subscribed whenever it is offered, however, as it serves an integral function within the LIAP process, it is vital that as many professionals as possible are trained in future in the meeting format.

9. Miscellaneous:

- Comments were made about the language used in the procedures not being accessible to all agencies and the need for terminology to be “*agency neutral*”
- The Meeting Agreement format in the LIAP Procedures differs from the format described within the Solution Oriented training so these need to be more aligned for clarity

- Most professionals commented on the need for further training. In fact, a training needs analysis was carried out following the Lead Professional sessions which identified requests for the following further training: how to complete the IAR; how to involve children and young people; understanding partner agencies; solution oriented training; GIRFEC approach; information sharing, consent and confidentiality
- Some comments indicated that professionals had not read the guidance in the written procedures. This is concerning since professionals are accountable, through the LMGs as well as their own agencies, for adhering to the LIAP Procedures, as are Heads of Service for ensuring their implementation
- Some professionals questioned how the LIAP Procedures 'fit' with other procedures and processes in Moray, for example, child protection case conferences, 'Strategy for Supporting Pupil Attendance and Absence'; Moray Interagency Developmental Assessment and Support (MIDAS) etc. All Moray's integrated working processes must be consistent with GIRFEC principles. Pathways through these processes should be as straightforward, efficient, comprehensible and transparent as possible

Current Practice:

From the above information, it is evident that practice is still varied across Moray. Feedback was received to a questionnaire issued by the LISOs recently asking professionals to identify which multi agency assessment and planning processes they are involved in – other than LIAP. These different named processes include:

- Core groups
- Multi agency pupil support meetings
- Review meetings
- Care planning meetings
- IEP and CSP review meetings
- 'multi agency meetings with parents'
- Integrated mental health services liaison meetings

There is no information to clarify how these processes comply with the GIRFEC programme. From information given by the LISOs, there appears to be no written guidance or procedures for many of these.

Concerns and Potential Risks:

From all of the above feedback, observation of practice, anecdotal evidence, reports from professionals and discussion at various meetings, it is evident that, should

professionals fail to implement the LIAP Procedures, there are clear concerns about the services which children, young people and families receive when agencies work together in Moray. There are also risks inherent if this lack of consistency continues. There must be clear governance routes at single agency and multi agency stages otherwise unilateral decision making will continue to be carried out by individual practitioners who, for whatever reason, choose not to follow agreed procedures:

“Staff find the administration of LIAP onerous and are therefore reluctant to engage with the process, preferring to find alternative methods to access support for pupils”.

Some professionals have made the decision to carry out procedures different to those agreed by their Head of Service:

“LIAP procedures are administratively cumbersome – we are carrying out multi agency working in depth via meetings which employ the principles of LIAP (e.g. attendance review meeting, LAP reviews, professional strategy meetings)”.

If staff unilaterally decide not to follow agreed procedures after being directed to do so by their service director, there are clear risks and concerns. Where are the written procedures governing these different meetings? How are they recorded, agreed, reviewed, monitored? How are children and families' needs met and reviewed? Where is the one consistent framework?

The Moray Council will host a second visit from HMIE inspectors for the second part of its Child Protection Inspection in summer 2010. HMIE Inspectors were informed by professionals, including practitioners and senior managers, in the first part of the inspection in 2009 that the LIAP Procedures were integral to Moray's integrated children's services assessment and planning processes and were just being embedded in practice at the time of the inspection.

One senior manager has stated:

“the LIAP Procedures...will be pivotal in Educations' learning curve and are one of the best pieces of work in Moray to date”.

If HMIE Inspectors ask for evidence of progress regarding the implementation of the LIAP Procedures from practitioners, service users and from file audits, as well as seeking evidence from the monitoring of the LIAP Procedures by senior management, they will not easily find this across Moray. This will have significant implications for The Moray Council.

Ways Forward:

The GIRFEC Group, guided by the SMARTER Theme Co-ordinating Group, is proposing the following amendments be made to the LIAP Procedures to further refine the process and address some concerns:

1. The IAR will be replaced by a Single Child's Plan. This will be divided into Child's Plan 1 which will initiate the process, Child's Plan 2 which will focus on assessment and action planning, and Child's Plan 3 which will be a review report and will allow the author to identify achievements and measure progress. This will clarify the modular nature of assessment and planning and emphasise the information required at each stage. Discussions are ongoing to clarify the different information required from an assessment record and a report which reviews progress. This will be further defined by a guidance document for professionals. Amendments will be put forward to the next GIRFEC Group meeting in January 2010 for agreement.
2. A Flowchart of the process of integrated working using these procedures will be developed, consolidated by staged intervention 'cards', which will form a checklist of the main points for professionals at each stage in the process of LIAP. The flowchart and cards will be put forward to the next GIRFEC Group in January 2010 for agreement.
3. The role of the LISO and LIAA must be clarified within the LIAP process. Some suggestions have been put forward to examine a role for them in chairing Solution Oriented meetings, if independence is requested. Further discussion will take place at the next GIRFEC Group in January 2010.
4. A focus group of professionals from different agencies will be brought together to examine these amendments.
5. The Integrated Children's Services Staff Development Officer will work with a small group of practitioners involved in LIAP processes across Moray to observe the process with a view to supporting professionals by disseminating and building on good practice.
6. The GIRFEC Development Officer will continue to refine the LIAP Procedures; develop and deliver relevant training – in partnership with the GIRFEC sub group for Training and relevant other multi agency staff on the above identified training needs; work with other professionals and groups to streamline the alignment of processes in Moray, the next stage of which is 'Looked After Children' procedures; continue to action the agreed GIRFEC Project Plan until March 2010.
7. The GIRFEC Development Officer will continue to work with relevant professionals and groups to develop supplementary materials which will integrate into the core single child's plan for specific purposes. To date, materials have been developed for the Children's Hearing System, Child Protection Case Conferences, and the Integrated Drug and Alcohol Team. Materials which support risk assessment have also been developed contemporaneously with the

LIAP and Child Protection Procedures. This ensured the GIRFEC approach was integral to these developments.

In Summary

The evidence from the above consultation is that there is still much work requiring to be done to lead, develop, implement and support the GIRFEC agenda and the LIAP Procedures across Moray.

Part of the difficulty has been a lack of usage of the procedures following their implementation in April 2009 by those who ignored a direct instruction from their service director. Professionals who should have been using the procedures over that 8 month period appear to not have done so, therefore, the process devised for implementation which would have allowed progress to be made and that process continually refined during that implementation period, has not been allowed to function.

The progress of the GIRFEC programme in Moray will also, therefore, require to take into account remedial work which will have to be undertaken to address concerns which are only now being addressed. The timeline for progressing the GIRFEC approach in Moray will, therefore, be affected.

Gill McGhie

Getting it right for every child Development Officer

The Moray Council

16 December 2009