



## **Scottish Women's Convention response to the Scottish Government's: Assessment of wellbeing – draft statutory guidance: consultation.**

**February 2022**

### **Premise**

The Scottish Government seek views on the refresh to their Statutory Guidance. This guidance is for practitioners and managers to embed Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) into their everyday practice. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government's GIRFEC Policy Statement, which refreshes our GIRFEC Values and Principles, and the Core Components of the approach.

The Practice and Statutory Guidance series are designed to provide further information on the key roles of GIRFEC, Assessment of Wellbeing, more detail on how to use the National Practice Model and guide our practice in Information Sharing to provide clarity and confidence. This draft guidance was co-produced with a range of colleagues across local authority areas, health boards, the third sector and national organisations. Its development stemmed from a commitment made by the Deputy First Minister in September 2019. While much progress had been made prior to the pandemic, the more recent updates have purposefully reflected our current landscape.

### **The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC)**

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded to engage with women throughout Scotland in order that their views might influence public policy. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at both a Scottish and UK level.

The SWC engages with women using a range of methods, including roadshow events, thematic conferences, and regional contact groups. This submission provides the views of women, reflecting their opinions and experiences in key areas relevant to women's equality.

The SWC is currently engaging with women through digital roadshows, online surveys, asking women to comment by email, and by telephoning those who want to talk. We are also using our wide network to ask women to collate views in their local communities and forward these to us on a regular basis. We are continuing to review innovative ways of engaging with women throughout Scotland using whichever medium is appropriate to them.

## Consultation questions

1) How clear and easy is the guidance to understand? Completely Mostly Somewhat A little Not at all

- Somewhat

Women told the SWC that although the guidance was clear more could be done to make this an easier read especially for practitioners working in communities where English is not the first language spoken. They believe this should also be in audio for any practitioners who have sight impairments.

2) With regard to the assessment of wellbeing, within the overall GIRFEC approach, does the guidance make practitioners' roles and responsibilities clear? Completely Mostly Somewhat A little Not at all

- Somewhat

Women who spoke with the SWC said that although there was more clarity around the roles and responsibilities it was not always easy to reference them together and that roles and responsibilities were not clear enough in the document. They also advised that having case studies and seeing how these were worked through may help practitioners to understand their roles and responsibilities as many were worried of potentially losing their jobs if the level of understanding was not there.

3) Are the definitions provided for the wellbeing indicators (section 6.1) clear and easy to understand? Completely Mostly Somewhat A little Not at all

- Somewhat

Although these definitions provided for the wellbeing indicators are clear they are still open to bias and interpretation from the practitioner based on their own and previous experiences. Women have advised that they are glad there is more definition as to the indicators but still felt that there were issues regarding how these could be presented in assessments. Women also felt that they would be making judgements on families which may not be a true indication of what was actually happening. One woman told the SWC " I knew a family who on the face of things were coping, if I went through all the well-being indicators I wouldn't have said there was issues but the child was struggling and we could not figure it out. It came to light that the family were struggling financially and not able to afford heating and sometimes food. The stigma and discrimination around the poverty made it hard to spot as they had told the child not to say anything out of shame. It only came to light because the child was so hungry, she broke down and told a dinner lady at the school. We would never have thought her well-being was at risk until this point"

There was also worry around the communication aspect of the indicators as although they were more positive the language used could be indicative of blame if used incorrectly and it

was advised that women thought they could be more child and family friendly especially for looked after children as they may not understand the language being used and may not have responsible adults there to advocate on their behalf. One woman said “when I spoke of safeguarding to the parent, they immediately became defensive I had to explain what we meant by this and why we were using these terms. It was horrible as it had elicited a traumatic response from them as they advised they had been taken into care when they were younger and how they never felt safe and that’s the one thing they tried to do for their child” “It wasn’t their fault, but the parent felt that we were saying we blamed them that the child wasn’t safe when that wasn’t the case”

4) To what extent do you think that the guidance will help practitioners understand how to embed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to protect, respect and uphold children's rights within the assessment of wellbeing? Completely Mostly Somewhat A little Not at all

- Somewhat

The women we spoke to advised that they felt that the policy was underpinned by the UNCRC but felt that although the guidance was there to help practitioners understand and embed the rights of the child it wouldn’t always be possible to ensure that these rights were upheld due to restrictions in the workplace. An example was given of a child stating what was happening in the playground and how this was difficult for them due to their disability. The practitioner decided that it would be best if the child was sent home at lunchtimes and kept in at break times to ensure their safety and the safety of others as they did not have enough staff to ensure everyone’s safety but in doing so took away the child’s right to play which went against one of their rights in UNCRC.

Women felt more examples and case studies would help practitioners embed good practice and also learn from practices which undermined the UNCRC and GIRFEC principles.

5) Can you outline anything specific that would be helpful to add to this guidance to assist the assessment of wellbeing?

Women spoke to us regarding having good practice guides and examples of how this looked. They also suggested putting in learning modules of running through well-being assessments and comparing good examples with bad ones where learning could be taken away.

The women we spoke with also felt that practitioners really needed more training especially for the level of involvement and responsibilities that were going to be placed on them. They felt that the following training should be given to anyone who could be involved in a well-being assessment.

- Trauma Informed Training
- Child protection Training
- Understanding rights training
- Communication Training

- Diversity and Inclusivity Training
- Holistic training

They also felt it was important to have peer mentors especially for younger members of staff especially in Early years settings where they may not have had much training before entering into the field.

6) Are there any areas where the further development of resources or guidance would be helpful in supporting the assessment of wellbeing?

Women felt that it was important that all resources were shared and that understanding was gained before roles and responsibilities were enacted.

They felt that case studies and practical examples were needed to solidify understanding and increase knowledge.

Some women still felt uneasy about the amount of responsibility which may fall on to inexperienced practitioners and were worried that this may prevent them from entering into the industry. They felt it was really important that training was ongoing and refreshed and that money was available to ensure all practitioners could do this.

Women also felt that more resources and guidance around The Promise, The Plan 21-24 and National Child Protection Practice Guidance should be developed to help in supporting the assessment of well-being.

## Conclusion

The SWC is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on Assessment of Well-being – draft statutory guidance. As an organisation, we will continue to work with women from across Scotland to gather voices and experiences relating to such legislation and the effect of this on women's equality.

For further information, please contact

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The Scottish Women's Convention engages with women using numerous communication channels including Roadshow events, Thematic Conferences and regional contact groups. This submission paper provides the views of women and reflects their opinions and experiences in a number of key areas relevant to women's equality.