

National Third Sector GIRFEC Project



Engage Renfrewshire

Engage Renfrewshire – the third sector interface (TSI) in Renfrewshire - has been instrumental in helping to embed the third sector in the implementation of the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) agenda. Working closely with the National Third Sector GIRFEC project and the Renfrewshire Partnership Project Core Group Team, the TSI has used and strengthened its existing knowledge of the wider third sector to increase the capacity of various organisations so that they are better able to contribute to GIRFEC.

Project Summary

Since November 2013, the Renfrewshire Partnership – chaired by Engage Renfrewshire – has been working closely with the [National Third Sector GIRFEC Project](#). The aim is to strengthen and embed the third sector in local Children’s Services Planning; to increase the opportunities for shared learning and to develop effective mechanisms for engagement.

The Renfrewshire Partnership Project Core Group Team includes the Childcare Voluntary Sector Forum, Early Years’ Forum, Barnardo’s, Renfrewshire Council and Engage Renfrewshire. This cross-sector team meets on a six weekly basis to identify areas for improvement and to develop an action plan for Renfrewshire. Key actions identified to date include:

- Mapping organisations which contribute to outcomes for children and young people;
- Reviewing the existing engagement mechanism and the approach to represent the interest of the third sector;
- Developing resources to support organisations in communicating and measuring wellbeing outcomes.

The Self-Assessment Checklist

As part of the process the Renfrewshire Partnership circulated an electronic checklist which gathered different perspectives on the current progress of GIRFEC in the area. In total 49 organisations responses were received; a third of which were from the third sector.

Overall participants agreed that the partnership was working well. They did identify some areas for improvement though, including:

- The third sector could be more joined up in its approach;
- Ownership of GIRFEC could be shared more widely;
- Communication could be improved, between the partners and the wider sectors;
- Clarifying individual roles and responsibilities to increase accountability;
- Increasing opportunities for third sector to better support the agenda;
- Avoiding duplication and gaps in outcomes for children.

From this it was agreed that the three areas for the Partnership to concentrate on were: communications; focus on outcomes; and the support and representation structure.

Increased accessibility of GIRFEC

The Renfrewshire Partnership realised that there are a number of local voluntary and community groups that deliver the GIRFEC principles but that do not recognise their activities as such. In order to ensure that it's not only the larger organisations that actively engage with service design and delivery a key activity of the project is to improve the mechanism structures for engagement in the agenda at a local level.

It was agreed that smaller organisations don't necessarily need to understand all of the policy language but that it is important they recognise the contribution they're able to make. As a result the links between what organisations do and the national agendas need to be made really visible.

Because of its knowledge of the wider third sector, coupled with its key role in community planning in Renfrewshire, Engage Renfrewshire is ideally placed to do that. Through various communications, supports and forums the TSI has worked to increase engagement in GIRFEC in an appropriate way for different organisations.

Developing a GIRFEC Engagement Matrix

A tool which has been developed by the Renfrewshire Partnership is the GIRFEC Engagement Matrix. This will work alongside Renfrewshire's Community Planning toolkit and will be used to identify what developments need to be undertaken for both strategic and delivery organisations.

The matrix contains 25 questions which are shown in a grid form that enable you to map where your organisation is now and where it would like to be. The TSI is then able to develop appropriate supports to suit your needs.

Engagement is mapped using five functional areas:

- Policy and strategy development;
- Planning and commissioning;
- Service delivery (including the relationship with statutory organisations);
- Capacity building;
- Learning exchange – training and knowledge.

There are also five options for the level of engagement which you have and would like to have. These range from just being informed in decisions to the third sector making the final decisions. This is currently being piloted with a range of third sector organisations in Renfrewshire but it is hoped that the overall outcomes of this checklist will be to:

- Better equip third sector organisations;
- To improve engagement and understanding between statutory sectors and the third sector contribution to GIRFEC;
- Develop a clearer understanding of strategic targets.

It is anticipated that more long-term outcomes will follow from the continuous engagement and capacity building activities with the third sector/community and the development of resources to support the measurement of children's wellbeing.

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