

### The Vision

The Vision for all children in Scotland is that they are:

- successful learners
- confident individuals
- effective contributors
- responsible citizens

To achieve this, every child's / young person needs to be:

**Safe:** protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community

**Healthy:** having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare, and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices

**Achieving:** being supported and guided in relation to learning and development of his/her abilities at home, at school, and in the community

**Nurtured:** having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting, or where this is not possible, in a care setting suitable for him/her.

**Active:** having opportunities to take part in activities, which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community

**Respected:** having opportunity to be heard & involved in decisions which affect him/her

**Responsible:** having appropriate guidance, supervision and control; having the opportunity to be heard and involved in decisions that affect him/her

**Included:** being accepted as part of the community in which he/she lives & learns

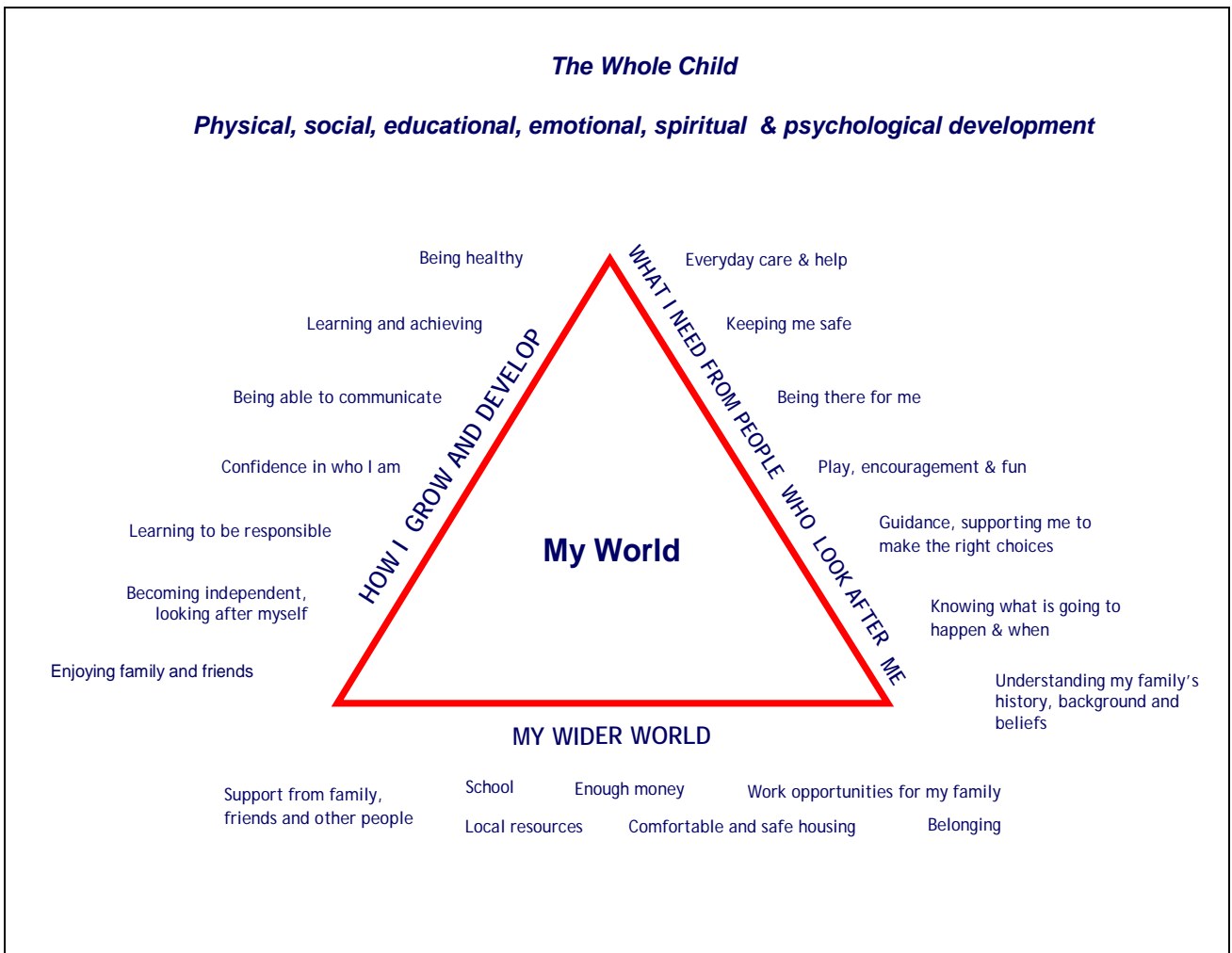
# GUIDANCE ON THE CHILD'S / YOUNG PERSON'S PLAN

## The child's / young person's plan

The child's / young person's plan has been designed to help **all** practitioners think about the needs of a child / young person.

The child's / young person's plan is for use with **any** child / young person whenever there is a concern that a child's / young person might not be as safe, health, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included as they should be.

When planning and thinking about a child's / young person's needs, **every** practitioner should think about the **whole child / young person**. The assessment triangle focuses on the child / young person and what is needed for the child's / young person's development and wellbeing. Adults who are parents or carers may have needs or problems that could affect children, and these problems should be addressed.



## Section 1: Planning

### Why plan?

- to help children / young people
- to achieve goals
- to ensure everyone, including the child / young person, understands what is expected; what is to be done, by whom and by when
- to show, through the proposed action, commitment to improving a child's or young person's situation

### What is the purpose of the plan?

The plan can:

- help children / young people, families and agencies think about what children / young people need
- ensure that agencies, families, children / young people are all clear about what help is already being given or is planned for the child / young person
- help monitor a child / young person's progress
- put in place arrangements to manage risk
- co-ordinate and integrate help
- ensure successful change when a child or young person moves from one circumstance to another, and needs additional help (e.g. from one school or household to another, to or from a refuge, from child to adult services, between institutions such as children's homes, secure units or prison)
- outline why compulsory measures may be necessary
- ensure that arrangements are place to address and manage future risks and needs when a Children's Hearing (Panel) discharges a supervision requirement

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## When should there be a child's / young person's plan?

- Whenever a child / young person, family or professional think a plan would help to identify and meet needs. It is a tool to help children / young people, families and professionals understand what action is needed
- The level of detail in any plan should be proportionate to the complexity, concerns or needs identified
- There **must** be a child's / young person's plan when
  - agencies are working together to meet the needs of a child / young person and co-ordination of action is required
  - a child or young person is at significant risk or presents a significant risk to others and a risk management plan is required
  - compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary.

## Who starts a plan?

- **Anyone who wants to improve matters for a child / young person.** The format of the child's / young person's plan is designed to be used by parents, carers, all professionals and children / young people themselves if they wish to think about what strengths exist around the child / young person and what might be needed to make the child's / young person's life better
- **Agencies** when they have to work together. Agencies may be voluntary or statutory. They may provide services for children / young people (e.g. education / health) or for the adults in the child's / young person's life (e.g. disability services or drug misusing services).
- **Certain professionals or agencies** when the law *requires* them to plan

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## Who should be involved in planning?

- **Children / young people** should be involved in planning according to their age, stage and understanding. Some children / young people may need help to explain their thoughts and views; sometimes a person whose job is to ensure the child's / young person's views are taken into account may do this
- **Parents.** Where a parent has any contact with a child / young person, and subject to safety considerations (e.g. where the child may be exposed to domestic abuse), they should be involved in the child's / young person's plan. Where there is no contact, their future role or contact with a child's / young person's needs to be considered. In some cases involving absent parents in the child's / young person's life and plan may be key to a child's / young person's well being
- **Carers** who have day to day care of children / young people (e.g. kinship (family), foster or residential carers)
- **Professionals** who can contribute to the child's / young person's wellbeing or risk management, whether they work directly with the child / young person (e.g. teachers), or with the adults who care for the child / young person (e.g. GPs)
- **Others** such as extended family and friends, depending on the nature of the plan and the child's / young person's circumstances. In some circumstances (restorative meetings) relevant members of the community or victims of an offence who can contribute to understanding and improving matters

## Is a child's / young person's plan always necessary?

- **No.** Schools and health services routinely assess children / young people's health and development. Routine assessments or checks should not be accompanied by an elaborate and detailed assessment or plan
- All families, carers and professionals should respond at the earliest possible moment to concerns. A prompt response that can resolve the issues quickly will not generally require a child's / young person's plan
- A requirement to plan should not prevent children / young people getting the help they need when they need it

## How many plans should there be for a child / young person?

- **One** - which develops as required to meet needs and risks and is fit for all necessary purposes

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## Which plan format should be used?

- **Ideally, the child's / young person's plan as set out in this document.** The law does not at present require this. However it has been designed to meet the needs of most children / young people when there are concerns that they might not meet their full potential
- Some children / young people are subject to assessments and plans required by current law (Looked After Child Reviews, Coordinated Support Plans are examples). The child's / young person's plan should meet all statutory planning requirements. Where the child's / young person's plan addresses needs that require assistance from a range of agencies, any specialist assessment must be integrated within the plan to meet all the child's / young person's needs
- Whichever format is used, the same data standards should be used by all agencies to record relevant information so that it may be shared with others when necessary

## How flexible can a child's / young person's plan be?

- As flexible as necessary to respond to meeting children / young people's needs and to meet current statutory requirements
- The key elements to the child's / young person's plan are:
  - A summary of needs to be addressed
  - What is to be done?
  - Who is to do it?
  - How will we know if there are improvements?

## What is a good quality child's / young person's plan?

The child's / young person's plan should

- be as simple as necessary and written so that it can be clearly understood by parents or carers.
- set out the child's / young person's needs and both strengths and risks relevant to those needs.

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- emerge from an assessment and analysis of the child's / young person's world – see Section 2.
- be practical, feasible and achievable.
- be regularly monitored and reviewed, and amended as needs or circumstances change.

The plan or action based on the plan need not await completion of all aspects of an assessment. Action should be taken to improve matters for a child / young person and reduce risk as soon as possible based on the information and evidence available.

### Who can the plan be shared with?

- Information within a plan should usually be shared with those who contribute to a plan
- Access to a child's / young person's plan should be discussed and decided with the child / young person and family at every stage of planning and any consents to share information recorded
- The purpose of sharing information is to improve matters for a child / young person. Information should not be shared if this would pose a risk to a child / young person or others such as a parent or carer
- Some young people may not want parents to have access to the entire plan. Young people themselves may, for example, seek help on contraceptive advice or wish to obtain contraceptives without their parents being aware. They are able to do this in confidence without this being agreed by parents and without the information being passed to parents
- Where a child / young person is at serious risk of harm or causing harm to others, information that might assist in their protection or the protection of others must be shared with those who have a responsibility for protecting the child / young person or others
- Children or young people moving from one circumstance to another may want plans to be shared in advance with those people who will have responsibility for them in the future.
- Families should be advised that where compulsion may be needed, the child's / young person's plan will go to the Reporter and may go to a Children's Hearing.
- Families should also be told that the child's / young person's plan will go with the young person if the young person moves away from home into foster care or into an institution such as a secure unit or prison.
- In some circumstances, there will be legal reasons which control when information can and should be shared

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## Can parents 'appeal' a child's / young person's plan?

- In most cases the child's / young person's plan should be jointly agreed between children or young people, parents and professionals.
- If the child's / young person's plan is prepared under the Additional Support for Learning legislation, parents have a right to appeal.
- All parents and children / young people have a right to complain about the content or delivery of specific services and their views should always be taken into account. In some cases the law allows them to complain to Scottish Ministers.
- Occasionally, professionals may insist on or recommend something to which parents or young people object. If the matter is critical to the child's / young person's well-being a professional may need to seek compulsory measures and the matter may have to be resolved at a Children's Hearing.

## How long does a child's / young person's plan last for?

- A child's / young person's plan can be for any length of time, determined by the needs of the child / young person and exposure to risk, and any statutory requirements for review
- where a child is identified as being at risk or causing a risk to others, reviews should be sufficiently frequent to ensure that action can be taken quickly should the risk escalate. Plans, for example, for a new born baby with drug misusing parents may need to be reviewed weekly whilst plans for a teenager with a complex but stable long term disability may need to be six monthly.

## Section 2: Developing and writing the plan: assessment

### How should a child's / young person's plan be developed?

There are a number of ways.

- Some parents or children and young people may have a clear view about what needs to be addressed. Others may need help with this.
- There should be active partnerships between professionals and families in developing a plan. These need to take account of relationships within the family, especially where domestic abuse may be an issue.
- Family Group Conferencing or Restorative Meetings can be a useful way to get families to take the lead on a child's / young person's plan. These approaches can ensure the inclusion and participation of those most affected by the concern.
- A few children and young people may need in depth or specialist assessments before action can be planned. The preparatory work should be proportionate to risk and needs.

### Who writes the child's / young person's plan?

- Normally, the child's / young person's plan should be written by the person best placed to write it.
- All those involved can take part in writing the child's / young person's plan – children, families or professionals.
- The headings of the child's / young person's plan should allow people to record it in language suited to their needs.
- Where a child's needs are complex, or there are a number of agencies or professionals involved, one individual (a lead person) will need to co-ordinate the involvement of others and ensure there is a written plan. Professionals and the family should consider who this person should be, bearing in mind the needs of the child, the child's relationship with various professionals and the complexity of the coordination task.
- At present the local authority (generally social work) is responsible for the provision of reports to the Children's Hearing and education staff are responsible for a co-ordinated support plan. The report can be written by others.
- In some cases the law requires certain people to write plans

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## How are a child's needs and risks to be assessed?

- Everyone working with children should think about a child as a whole person.
- The assessment triangle identifies key factors important to the development of all children. It can structure thinking, information gathering and analysis to guide discussion and decisions ensuring the right action for the child.

## When is an assessment needed?

- An assessment is needed whenever people need a better understanding of the child's needs and risks in order to be able to plan to improve matters.
- Each person involved in developing the child's / young person's plan, including the child / young person and family, will have something important to say to complete the picture of what is happening in the child's world.
- All planning and action should be based on an assessment of need and risks. Most parents and professionals assess and act intuitively, moment by moment, and will not record their actions or the reasons for action (assessment).
- When a child or young person moves between one set of circumstances or services and another, the assessment should cover what the child or young person needs to manage this successfully.
- A **multi-agency assessment and plan** should only be needed when
  - the agency that first identifies a concern is unable to resolve it without the help of another, and
  - the child's / young person's life, needs or risks are sufficiently complex or significant to require co-ordination of efforts.
- As new information is sought or becomes available, the assessment of needs and risks may have to change.

## When is a recorded assessment needed?

- A recorded assessment is needed when anyone has to *stop and think* about what they or others should do next.
- A fuller, recorded assessment is likely to be needed when a child's situation is complex, the parent or the professional does not have the whole picture of the child / young person or the 'moment by moment' decisions do not seem to be improving matters.
- An assessment of the strengths, protective factors, vulnerabilities, pressures and risks from everyone's point of view should be recorded. These factors will help to identify the impact on the child's development, behaviour and wellbeing. They will help to identify the child's and family's needs and assess resilience and potential for change.
- The greater the risk, the greater the detail needed to manage the risk. When a child / young person is exposed to serious risk or poses a serious risk to others the nature of those risks, the likely triggers and the circumstances in which those risks might occur should be described.

## Should I use an assessment tool?

- It is unlikely that all aspects of a child's life will be addressed by a single tool but children should not be subjected to a number of assessment tools or approaches.
- Where a child's needs are complex, professionals will have to decide collectively which tool might best assist in each case and how the analysis of all the professionals' work can be combined into one assessment of needs and risks.
- Specific assessment tools may aid assessment, for example, speech and language testing, psychological development and milestones, parenting capacity and motivation, risk of serious harm.

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## Section 3: The child's / young person's plan

- Whether a child's / young person's plan is short and simple or more complex and detailed, the plan should be written down and kept.
- Information that is written down should include:

**Concerns or matters to be addressed** - Why agencies or families believe a child / young person may need action, help or support, including any issues of concern to be addressed and risks to be managed.

**Partners to the child's / young person's plan** - The name and designation of all the partners to the child's / young person's plan including parents and children.

**Summary of analysis of child's circumstances** - The analysis should be based on the assessment triangle and cover:

- how the child / young person is growing and developing (health, education, physical and mental development, behaviour and social skills);
- what the child / young person needs from people who look after him or her (needs, strengths and risks); and
- the child's wider world of family, friends and community (strengths and pressures).
- an assessment of risk including details of the nature of the risks, triggers for harmful behaviour and circumstances in which risk is most likely to occur. The level of risk – low, medium or high – should be noted as should the likely impact of the child / young person on others

Where the risk is high this must be recorded on the front sheet of the plan.

If any assessment tools have been used, these should be noted in this section.

**Desired outcomes and milestones for achievement** - The child's / young person's plan should

- identify practical goals, for example improved safety, achievements, nurturance, improved dental health; leading an active life
- identify short and longer term goals and specify what activity is expected from whom
- where a child / young person is at risk or poses a risk to others, identify the minimum requirements or standards of care, safety, nurture or behaviour to ensure a child / young person is safe or that the safety of others is protected
- encourage ambition for children and their families

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**What should be done to improve a child's circumstances** - The child's / young person's plan should set out

- action to promote future wellbeing, inclusion and achievement (for example, social, training or employment opportunities, education - including good citizenship and how to be safe). The action should be identified from a range of options known to work in improving longer term outcomes for children
- action to strengthen the child / young person and the family's support network (for example, parenting classes, respite services, youth services, self-support groups)
- any changes that need to be made in the child's living situation to keep him or her safe (for example, the provision of mobility or lifting aids such as hoists, or the separation of a child / young person from their parents)
- action to make good any harm already caused or to help a child / young person catch up with their peers (for example, extra educational input, counselling or health treatment; young carer peer support groups)
- consideration of the need for compulsion where this is thought necessary
- any other action that will help the child / young person and family manage their situation as independently as possible (for example, care or support for dependent parents to relieve a child)
- action that can reduce risk to the child / young person and others

**Agreed action to be taken** - by whom (to include the family, the child / young person and agencies) and by when.

**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 child's / young person's plan should be recorded and suitable alternatives offered.

**Contingency plans** - A statement of what will happen if milestones or agreements are not reached, or if risks or circumstances change. An agreement should be recorded about actions to be taken if the child / young person or others continue to be at risk of harm or impairment, or difficulties escalate rather than improve.

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## Monitoring, review and lead professional arrangements

- the name and contact details of the lead professional who is the key contact for the family and who is responsible for monitoring the child's progress and the implementation of the child's / young person's plan, and how this will be done
- the name and contact details of the person who is responsible for co-ordination, communication and undertaking review arrangements, if different from above
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the child's / young person's plan and how this will be undertaken (where and in what form (eg paper, electronically), when this will be undertaken (including the date of the first review), who should participate and the need for prior assessments or review reports
- **The child's views (and those of their parents or carers)** about any or all of the elements of the child's / young person's plan
- **Compulsory measures** - where compulsory measures (e.g. a supervision requirement, an ASBO or parenting order) are needed, the reasons for these should be recorded and the evidence attached to the child's / young person's plan.

## Section 4: Review

- Children's plans should be reviewed within a timescale agreed at the outset and within statutory timescales.
- No child or young person should have to experience unnecessary reviews.
- Reviews should be held as often as necessary, considering the risks in each case. In periods of instability or when a number of agencies are being very active in supporting the child's / young person's needs, the plans are likely to be reviewed or renewed frequently.

Reviews should detail:

- **How well the child / young person is doing** – a review of progress against agreed outcomes and milestones.
- **New information or change of circumstances** – to include changes in living circumstances, schools, new incidents or concerns.
- **A summary of contacts with the child and family** – this should include contacts or appointments kept/not kept with the child or young person and their parents.
- **Has everyone done what they set out to do?** – accounting for any changes to the agreed actions.
- **Have these actions had the desired effect?** - recording the actions that have had an impact on progress or outcomes (positive and negative) and those that appear to have had no impact.
- **Is there a need for further action?** – identifying what is the current level of needs and risks and what, if anything else, needs to be done and by whom.
- **The child's / young person's views (and those of their parents or carers)** about any or all of the elements of the child's / young person's plan and review.

When the child's / young person's plan is reviewed, new different outcomes may need to be set. It may be that issues have been resolved and no further action is needed. Alternatively, It may be necessary to revise the assessment of the child / young person and family's circumstances setting new timescales together with a date for the next review.