

Getting it right for young people who offend

# **Multi-Agency Early and Effective Intervention**

## **Implementation Guidance**

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## **Introduction**

This guidance has been produced to assist local teams in Scotland to implement on a realistic and systematic basis, the Early and Effective Intervention process (EEI) in their area. It has been designed as a practical guidance to implementation. Although the focus is on early intervention, which takes place long before any consideration of a Children's Hearing, this guidance makes reference to the options which involve the Hearings System and therefore assumes a high degree of knowledge and familiarity with their structure and operation. The main focus of the guidance is on offending behaviour and how referrals to the Reporter might be addressed. It is important in looking at the needs and risks to any such child or young person that the holistic needs are identified and addressed which emphasises the importance of appropriate multi-agency involvement where relevant. The guidance is designed to prompt discussions, developments and ways of working in local areas which are tailored to their particular local context or circumstances. As such it is not intended to represent detailed practice guidance for practitioners nor is it intended to be taken as a list of mandatory elements required to implement a successful EEI process; neither is it intended as a re-statement of policy.

We are aware that partners in some areas will already have multi-agency processes in place to address the needs and risks presented by children and young people. We would not suggest that areas need to establish new or separate multi-agency processes if what they have in place already fulfils the functions set out here. What we would recommend is that these processes are reviewed in the light of this guidance and the findings of the evaluation, and in due course the *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) evaluation, to ensure that they are completely fit for purpose.

This guidance will continue to evolve as practice develops across the country and readers are advised to check the Scottish Government website <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/crimes/youth-justice/young-people> for latest updates. Examples of documents and reference sources produced by other local teams will be posted on the website to provide the most valuable source of support and information for other areas. The Early and Effective Intervention Process evaluation report is also available on the Scottish Government website.

## **How this guidance was developed**

The guidance has been designed to inform both the strategic and operational workings of the EEI and draws primarily on evidence gathered via an independent evaluation of new ways of working which have been developed and tested in five areas of Scotland, namely: Dundee City, The City of Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow South and Renfrewshire. The key aspects of the way that EEI has been implemented in each of these areas has been distilled and the impact that they have both on the interventions being delivered to young people and on the organisations delivering those interventions has been tested. The over-arching result of this evaluation is that a number of key findings and principles have been identified which suggest that Early and Effective Intervention as described in this guidance is a positive development for young people, practitioners and the way that responses are delivered to, and for, them. Guidance can take us only part of the way: a key factor in successful delivery of improved outcomes for children is training across all agencies to improve understanding of each other's roles, build trust and establish common practice values and performance. This has been borne out from the evaluation of the EEI pilots and elsewhere under GIRFEC and other non-offence activity.

## **The benefits envisaged for local areas**

There are a range of benefits envisaged for young people and local partners through the implementation of an EEI process. These include:

- More timely and effective intervention with a young person, coming together on a multi-agency basis as appropriate;
- Access to a broader range of interventions which offer better opportunity of improved outcomes through greater inclusion of partners;
- A release of operational staff time back to front-line services through a reduction in bureaucracy as demonstrated in the EEI evaluation;
- Potential to more effectively undertake an audit of local need in respect of the services and interventions required at a local level.

## **Acknowledgements**

This document has been produced by Philip Mackey of Consulted Ltd and is based on the original draft guidance produced by Chief Inspector George Nedley of Strathclyde Police and Kellie Hannah of Fife Police in their capacity as professional advisors to the Scottish Government. Thanks are also due to those area and agency representatives who have provided comments on earlier drafts of this document.

## **Key Contact Details**

If you require further information regarding this guidance or any aspect of Early and Effective Intervention please contact in the first instance:

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## Context

Preventing Offending by Young People – A Framework for Action sets the context for this guidance. This partnership Framework is formally owned by the Scottish Government, COSLA, ACPOS, SCRA, ADSW and COPFS, as key delivery agencies. The Framework is also endorsed by the relevant inspectorates and professional organisations: HMIE, Care Commission, SWIA, HMIC; and welcomed by a range of third sector organisations. The framework seeks to embed the principles, values and core components of the Scottish Government’s *‘Getting it right for every child programme’*<sup>1</sup> in approaches to dealing with young people who offend. The *Getting it right for every child* practice model supports practice to ensure action can be taken on an individual basis to improve outcomes for the child or young person.

## Getting it right for every child

Over a number of years areas have been testing out models to improve the way in which agencies come together to consider referrals to the Children’s Hearings System (CHS), primarily in respect of offence referrals. These models have been described as the Early and Effective Intervention process (EEI). Evaluation of these models indicates that there are benefits to be gained in improving the response to young people who offend and in respect of whom a referral to the CHS is being considered. This guidance sets out a generic approach which areas are invited to consider adopting now or for the purpose of comparison with their existing multi-agency arrangements.

In parallel with this work the *Getting it right for every child* (GIRFEC) programme has been developing and gaining experience from pathfinding activity looking at how children and young people’s needs and risks are identified at the earliest stage, assessed and analysed and acted on appropriately. These needs and risks may arise from offending behaviour or from other concerns about well-being, including issues around child protection and domestic abuse.

The GIRFEC practice model which is being promoted applies both within a single agency as well as for multi-agency activity where necessary. As GIRFEC is implemented locally, the relationship between governance and accountability mechanisms which GIRFEC requires will need to be considered alongside any EEI or multi-agency forums which exist locally. This introduction therefore sets out some of the wider GIRFEC work into which EEIs will eventually be incorporated.

The GIRFEC approach would expect any practitioner in an agency encountering concerns about needs and risks of a child in the first instance to consider what action they or their organisation can do to support the child. The 5 questions practitioners should ask themselves are set out on page 24 of the GIRFEC guide. If the needs and risk are high, immediate action in line with locally agreed protocols will have to be taken (e.g. for child protection). If immediate action is not required and the needs and risks (whether for offence or non-offence reasons) cannot be addressed by single agency action, multi-agency consideration is likely to be required. It is at this stage that the EEI process described in this guidance may provide may be helpful to local areas.

This guidance concentrates on those children and young people for whom offence referrals to the CHS are being considered. The GIRFEC approach as it develops will require similar multi-agency

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/22091734/0> - Scottish Government ‘A Guide to Getting it right for every child’ 2008

consideration where necessary depending on the needs of and risks to the child, whether or not offending is a concern. As locally agreed protocols are established for governance on information sharing, the EEI or other pre-existing multi-agency processes will need to be incorporated into the generic GIRFEC approach for acting on all children's needs and risks if the principles, values and core components of GIRFEC are to be applied.

Central to all activity is the need for a shared understanding and common language across agencies. GIRFEC supports the recording of information in a consistent way that allows it to be collated when needed to provide that shared understanding of the needs of the child or young person. Work on how electronic information sharing systems can be developed to support this best practice is being taken forward over 2009-10 through the eCare development programme. All this work is being based on the GIRFEC practice model. The extent to which local arrangements can align with the practice model approach and the developing information sharing model, based on the well-being indicators, will facilitate the sharing of information nationally. The GIRFEC Learning Community is the forum through which practitioners can exchange information on best practice and access the pathfinder tools and materials which have been developed to date, including data capture and child concerns forms which are shared across agencies.

The Highland Pathfinder has established a single planning process for all concerns about children and young people. The pathfinders for children and young people experiencing domestic abuse are also providing valuable learning which is available on the Learning Community. The emerging experiences of the Learning Partners who are moving to implement the GIRFEC approach are each adding to our understanding of effective change processes, effective engagement with families and effective partnership between services. The evaluation of the GIRFEC pathfinding activity to date is expected in the autumn.

The EEI process will help move areas towards the GIRFEC approach for all children. The evaluation indicates that there are benefits which can be gained now and this guidance has been produced to help areas who wish to move forward to do so within a tested and structured framework.

## High level pictorial representation of the Early and effective Intervention Process

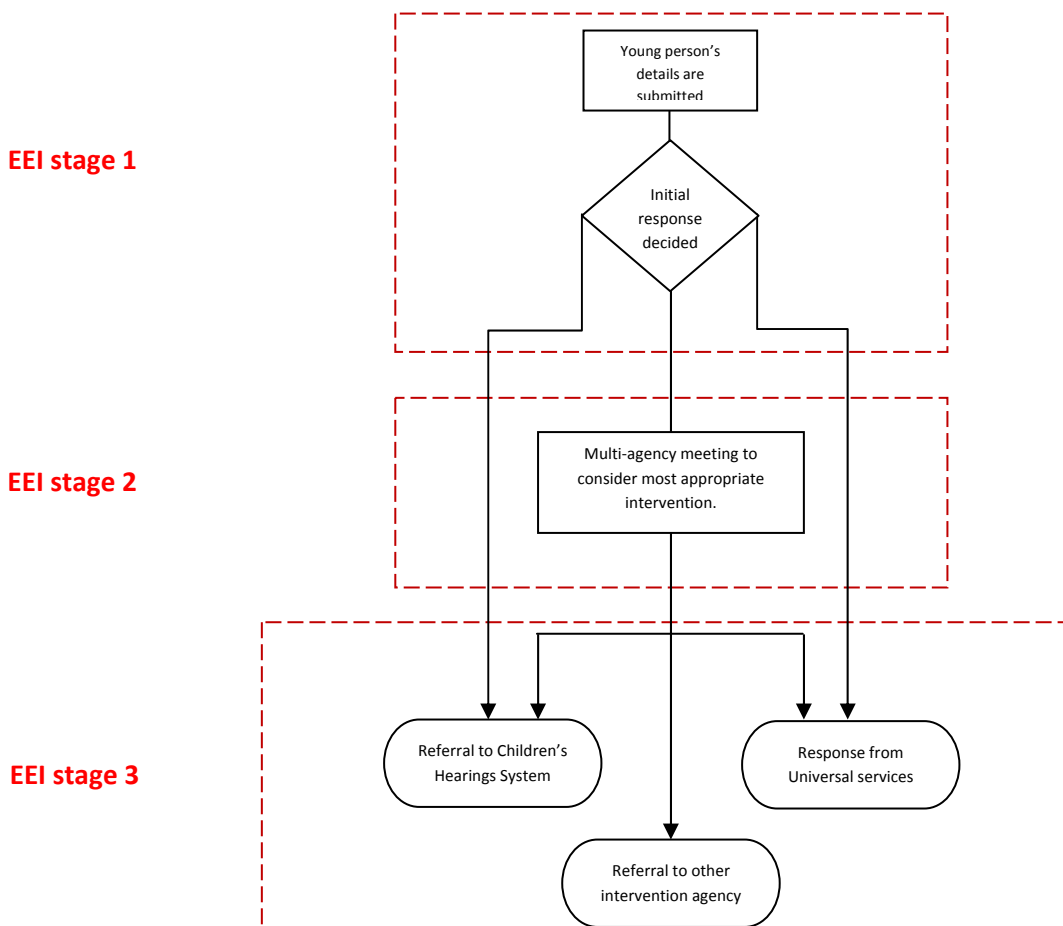
The following flowchart reflects the essential alterations to the standardised process for dealing with a young person who presents concerns on offending grounds. It presumes that and pre-EEI activity has been undertaken first wherever possible. Ideally this pre-EEI work should be aligned with the GIRFEC approach using the holistic approach to assessment, analysis and planning for children's needs/ risks. As the GIRFEC approach develops in practice, there will be opportunities for cross-pollination of best practice and production of hybrid models. Local multi-agency governance under GIRFEC should align these into a single planning process. It should also be noted that the possibility of taking no further action remains valid at each stage of the EEI process. The flowchart is included for illustrative purposes and has been highly simplified to meet this requirement.

**The Early and Effective Intervention Process essentially consists of three main stages:**

**EEI stage 1:** A young person who presents concerns is brought to the attention of a coordination function. That function determines the most appropriate avenue for initially engaging with that young person and ensuring the best route for appropriate interventions to address need and risks.

**EEI stage 2:** Those young people who have not immediately been referred either to the Children's Hearings System or to a Universal Service or who have not been intervened with directly by the police are discussed at a multi-agency meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to determine the most effective intervention for the young person and to identify a lead agency.

**EEI stage 3:** An intervention is delivered to a young person or the case is referred to the Children's Hearings System



## **Positioning Early and Effective Intervention within the areas current structure and processes for engaging with young people**

### **Introduction**

As has been demonstrated through the evaluation of the Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) process implementing the new approach has enabled the evaluated areas to enhance the way in which they engage with young people and include them in decision making. The GIRFEC approach allows single agency action on early intervention to address initial concerns if that is appropriate. A key principle of EEI is that, where multi-agency activity is required it is wholly reliant on effective partnership working to realise the benefits.

To realise the benefits associated with the EEI it is important that there is clarity as to how the process will work both strategically and operationally. This section deals with the types of issues that need to be addressed strategically, subsequent sections will deal with the relevant detail of operational implementation. At the heart of operational delivery will be a focus on individual planning activity centred on the needs and risks of the child/young person using appropriate assessment, analysis and planning, taking into account all relevant information shared proportionately between agencies ideally based on a common language.

### **Suggested key stages in developing the strategic governance arrangements**

#### **Identification or review of the partners to be involved in the EEI Process**

Within the areas that have implemented the EEI processes to date there is significant variation as to the number and range of partners involved in the discharge of EEI. What has been clear however is that there has been an underlying principle in each area that partners should be involved if they can either **provide information that is relevant to making a decision on how best to intervene** with the young person or they can actually **offer an intervention** which will assist in engaging with a young person.

The range of partners currently actively participating in EEI in the areas involved in the evaluation include: Police, Social Work, Education Department; Health, Anti-Social Behaviour, SACRO and other voluntary and charitable intervention bodies. It should be noted that the evaluation of the EEI process has demonstrated that all partners are able to accrue benefits from implementing the multi-agency approach. The types of benefits evidenced include the ability to deliver interventions in a more timely and importantly in a more effective manner due to improved access to contextual information about the young person. Agencies have also been able to reduce the complexity and bureaucracy of their recording and reporting processes in response to the EEI process.

It should be noted that in line with guidance produced by the Scottish Children's Reporters Administration nationally, local Reporters should not normally attend the meeting as a regular member. However, in newly constituted groups the Reporter may have a role in assisting or training other agencies in a non-case specific way; and although the Reporter may engage in discussion about a case, the purpose of the discussion will be to assist the other person to decide whether to

refer the child to the Reporter, and the Reporter may not prevent nor require a referral. The involvement of the local Reporter in this way is encouraged.

### **Agree the terms of reference of the EEI process**

The status of the EEI process is one which needs to be formally agreed and signed off at the local level. It is important that Partners establish the remit of the process including its locus for considering particular cases. The EEI process has been proven to have a positive impact for dealing both with young people who offend. As GIRFEC processes develop, the EEI approach could provide valuable learning to influence models and practice for non-offence grounds and the holistic planning for children's needs. As stated earlier, this will take time to achieve.

Clearly articulating the aims and objectives of the EEI process and the outcomes that it is intended to deliver for young people is a useful first step in agreeing the terms of reference. Setting objectives such as achieving beneficial change in the lives of children in trouble, helping children to change their behaviour and diverting children and young people away from offending behaviour in the context of meeting the wider needs of the child, will help inform the specifics of how the EEI process will work.

### **Set out the involvement of Partners and the terms of reference of the EEI process in a single protocol document**

It is important that having reached agreement as to the partners to be involved in the EEI process and its terms of reference that these are specified in a single protocol document. This document should also include the key working principles for the process in the area covering aspects such as attendance at meetings, commitment of resources, exchange and sharing of information and data etc.

A key learning point is that areas should ensure that the protocol is signed off at senior level as this has benefits for accessing support and services.

### **Establishment of data sharing protocols**

The effective exchange of data and information is a fundamental principle of the EEI process. If data is not appropriately exchanged between partners it creates a significant barrier to the ability to identify the most appropriate intervention for a young person. There have been a number of examples cited via the evaluation of information shared by a partner in a multi-agency meeting which has led to a differing intervention or focus of intervention being agreed than would otherwise have been the case.

In most cases the requirements of the EEI process can be integrated into the over-arching partnership data sharing protocols already agreed for an area, however, if there are additional requirements these should be set out as part of the protocol and terms of reference. Local arrangements are encouraged but should take cognisance of the national eCare Data Standards as they develop. Areas will also have to ensure compliance with relevant data protection standards and the Government Protective Marking Scheme

### **Establishment of audit and quality assurance process**

Whilst the EEI process has realised a number of benefits for a number of areas it is important to recognise that a rigorous audit and QA process has been a central element in delivering improved interventions. The key aspects of the audit and QA process which seem to have proven particularly effective include:

- Monthly monitoring of the volumes and types of case being managed within the EEI process. This monitoring includes aspects such as the proportion of cases dealt with via the differing intervention options, the volumes and types of cases being considered (either offences or causes for concern) and the demographics of the young people being dealt with.
- Quarterly case review and audit of cases which have been managed within the EEI process to test the effectiveness of the decisions being made at each stage. This is another area where the local Reporter can play a valuable role as their independence from the operational aspects of the process (particularly any multi-agency meetings) allows them to perform an independent audit or dip-sampling function if they are able to do so.

A key learning from the evaluation areas is that the value of the audit and QA process is only as great as the response to the strengths and weaknesses identified. In areas where the findings are used to inform discussions between the operational representatives and the strategic oversight function a genuine ethos of continuous improvement has been developed.

### **Promote the new process**

The EEI process may be a wholly new concept to strategic and operational managers within an area. Whilst the benefits have been evidenced [ref to evaluation] and implementation across the whole country appears to be an obvious next step, the evidence from the five areas demonstrates that the process has to be sold to each agency and at all of the levels within the agency for the full benefits to be realised. Therefore it is strongly recommended that when the decision is made to implement an EEI process a programme for promoting EEI is drawn up which is accompanied by appropriate literature and briefings to ensure that it is fully understood. This is particularly important at the front-line, for example with operational officers being informed why the reporting process is being changed, for social workers to appreciate why a young person is now in their case load and for health workers to be comfortable with providing sensitive information for consideration at a multi-agency meeting. This is a further consideration for training.

### **Conclusion**

Each of the stages or elements described above is best developed through negotiation and dialogue between partners. The materials provided on the Scottish Government website are a useful starting point; however, there is value in each area going through a rigorous process of review or set-up to ensure that the process developed fits their local needs and that all partners commit fully to the new process.

## **Setting up an effective coordination process**

### **Introduction**

Having addressed the strategic intent and oversight of the Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) process we now move on to the operational aspects of the process. The first key change in the EEI process is that to the role of the coordinator including the decisions that they can make and the role that they play within the overarching process.

### **Suggested key stages in setting up an effective coordination process**

#### **Identify the coordinator**

It is clear from the experiences of the areas already operating an EEI process that a coordinating role is pivotal to the successful operation of the approach. As Referrals will be made to the coordinator who makes an informed decision based on all known information about the child or young person as to the most appropriate disposal the 'skill set' of the coordinating role becomes critical. The coordination role ideally avails of:

- An understanding of the holistic needs of a child or young person
- Ability to discern which interventions are the most appropriate to tackle offending behaviour (if the cases being dealt with are those of young people who offend)
- Good levels of organisation and administration
- Ability to engage with and influence partners

It may be that the coordination function does not necessarily reside with a single individual if these skills are not immediately available in one person. The coordinator function might be performed by a combined resource.

#### **Agree information feed into the coordination function**

Redesigning the role of the coordinator provides an opportunity to review the information that is provided.

From a police perspective the fact that within the EEI process a significant proportion of cases will not be referred into the local Reporter lessens the requirements for information from operational officers to be supplied via a Standard Prosecution Report (SPR). In a number of instances the coordinator is supplied with an initial crime report which includes additional information such as parental or guardian details. Only in those cases which are either directly referred into the local Reporter or which are subsequently referred following multi-agency discussion is an SPR required. This change in practice has led to considerable release of operational officer time back to front-line duties.

In addition to the potential alteration of the police feed into the coordination function, thought should also be given to other sources of relevant information that the coordinator should reference prior to making a decision. Examples of the types of information that should be referenced may include:

- Scottish Children's Reporters Administration Database (RAD) to identify a child or young person's previous engagement with the Hearings System.
- Local authority social work administration systems to identify current interventions with a child or young person and their family.
- Local authority education services administration systems to review the child or young persons school attendance or behaviour
- Health, including attendance by school based Educational Psychologists, School Based Nursing staff, etc can provide an added dimension

Ideally the coordinator will have direct access to local systems or relevant networks to allow for more rapid decision making, however, particularly in respect of accessing information from the Reporter this is typically via telephone with a designated administrative contact and this does not appear to seriously impinge upon performance. The most relevant information to be obtained from the Reporter is whether the child is currently the subject of a supervision requirement or an open referral (as both should give rise to a presumption that the child is referred to the reporter).

All aspects of the information to be accessed by the coordinator and the access channels should be referenced in the strategic protocol and in the data sharing agreements.

### **Agree coordination criteria and interventions channels**

Having accessed as full a set of information as possible about the young person it is important that the coordination criteria and interventions open to the coordinator are specified and agreed by all partners. Examples of the courses of action currently open to the coordinator in the areas operating the EEI process include:

#### **No action**

Potential reason why no action would be taken include the child or young person already being monitored by single agency or co-ordinator and as there are no wider concerns present no additional action should be taken if the ongoing work is continuing as there is no need for disruption. No action may be appropriate if there is a previous plan in place that is already addressing needs. Lead professional would be informed of additional offence. The term 'no action' should not be viewed as disregard for the child's behaviour, which in fact is being appropriately addressed.

#### **Police Disposal as per the Flexible Scaled Approach to Offending Behaviour Guidelines<sup>2</sup>**

##### **Response from Universal Services agreed**

Where initial investigation reveals no concerns wider than the individual offence and the offence itself does not merit more intensive activity; and agreement from named contact within Universal Services leads to the concern being factored into routine service provision within education/health setting.

**Referral to Early and Effective Intervention multi-agency meeting provoking a full discussion resulting in an agreed decision as to the most appropriate and effective intervention.**

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<sup>2</sup> Flexible Scaled Approach to Offending Behaviour – Guidance on Police Warnings. When this guidance is finalised it will be made available on the Scottish Government website.

### **Direct referral to SCRA as there is reasonable cause to believe that compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary**

Where a child or young person has failed to engage with services provided or whilst engaging, the pattern of behaviour continues to escalate, requiring compulsion. Concern regarding the care & welfare of the child or young person continues to be a concern. If a child or young person is subject to a supervision requirement but the nature of the offence is such that it would normally be considered by the Early and Effective Interventions group, there should be a presumption that the child is referred to reporter.

### **Direct referral jointly to the Procurator Fiscal Service and to SCRA.**

Where the offence is of such a serious nature a referral or report must be made in line with the Lord Advocate's Guidelines to Chief Constables on the Reporting of Children.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence suggests that the broader the range of options available at the coordination (screening) stage the better as this maximises the chance of the correct response being selected for an individual child or young person. Obviously the broader the range of options made available at this stage the greater the requirement for the coordination function to avail of the appropriate skill set. The decisions made at the initial coordination stage and the proposed interventions should be informed by the following principles that they:

- Relate directly to the needs and behaviour of the child or young person.
- Take account of the impact on others, and make reparation and restoration where appropriate.
- Support parental and child responsibility.
- Be appropriate, proportionate, timely and fair.

Indeed these principles will be relevant to decisions made at each stage of the EEI process.

### **Establish administration process**

The coordination stage will be the first point at which specific documentation and information will be produced for a young person within the context of the EEI process. Up to this point the documentation produced will on the whole have been required regardless of the existence of the EEI process.

Based on the option or intervention selected at the coordination stage there will be a range of differing administrative requirements. It is important that these are clearly specified and documented with ownership clearly assigned to individual roles. The administrative response to each option will be relatively standard across areas and are relatively self-evident particularly in respect of options such as joint referral to Procurator Fiscal and Reporter or utilising a restorative warning. However, when it is determined that the child or young person should be discussed at a multi-agency there is currently no standardised method for communicating this fact to partners. Therefore areas will have to agree the process for communicating the children or young people who will be discussed at a multi-agency meeting in line with their own requirements. There are however two key principles that should be taken into consideration when designing their communication process, namely:

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.copfs.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/13547/0000235.pdf> .

- Identification of the minimum data set that is required to enable partners firstly to identify the correct young person within their systems and subsequently to identify the relevant information within their system to inform the discussion on appropriate intervention, and which takes account of the developing national eCare technical standards.
- Avoidance of duplication of already available information.

Having identified the pre-requisite information in this respect the most efficient, timely and appropriately secure communication method should be identified, which is often email and suitable timescales identified for the communication of the details. The timetable for communication will be informed by the scheduling of multi-agency meetings. As a general rule of thumb areas should allow at least 24hrs between a partner receiving the details of the children or young people to be discussed and attendance at the multi-agency meeting. This is to ensure that all relevant information is available for the meeting to allow an informed and appropriate decision based on need.

### **Agree the information that will be sent to the victims of youth offending**

Consideration should also be given at this stage to the information that will be distributed to the victims in those cases which are considered by the EEI process and where the case is not subsequently referred to the Reporter. The provision of information to victims should be informed by Section 53 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act and the guidance materials produced by the Victim and Community Confidence Sub-Group under the auspices of the Preventing Offending Framework. Consideration is usefully given in each area to aspects such as the content, format, timing and responsibility for communicating with the victims of youth crime. The outputs from this consideration should be documented in the overarching protocol that governs the EEI process.

### **Establish a robust data management system**

From the point of coordination onwards it is vital that data and information is captured in a consistent and robust fashion. Essentially this will involve developing some form of database to capture those children and young people managed via the EEI process and the outcomes of the decision making process at each stage. In a number of areas the current technological solution is excel based however one or two areas are currently developing a database based on the access platform which is proving a more effective solution providing storage and search capabilities. Areas implementing the EEI process would be encouraged to consider the development of a suitable data management system to assist with the management of the information produced by the process. Ultimately, the national multi-agency system for data sharing will be eCare and ideally any local systems developed should take account of its development and data standards, whilst meeting local operational requirements.

## **Conclusion**

The effective establishment of a coordination process is pivotal to the successful operation of the approach. For the coordination to work effectively it is vital that the coordinator is properly skilled which may require input from partners, and that partners are equipped to respond quickly to requests for information from the coordinator.

## **Convening the multi-agency meeting**

### **Introduction**

The multi-agency meeting is concerned with determining the appropriate intervention for a child or young person who has been referred to it on offending grounds. The multi-agency meeting is not a case management or case conferencing forum. This is an important distinction as it has an important bearing on the information that is provided by individual partners, the degree of research that is required in respect of previous professional contact and the expectations of the outcomes that the meeting will deliver. The following are the key elements that have been distilled from the effective multi-agency meetings that were part of the evaluation of the EEI process. Practitioners may also wish to look at the guidance developed by the GIRFEC Highland pathfinder on the roles of the named person and lead professional within the single planning process which has been developed there under GIRFEC.

### **Suggested key stages in the establishment of an effective multi-agency meeting**

#### **Agree the representatives at the meeting**

Based on the assumption that the partners to be involved in the Early and effective Intervention (EEI) process have been determined at the strategic level there is an equally important requirement for each partner to be appropriately represented. Consistency of representation and the correct level of authority (either real or delegated) are the essential pre-requisites for attendees.

It is vital for the effective working of the multi-agency meeting and its ability to identify the appropriate intervention for a child or young person that the representatives around the table have the ability to take work away with them for their agency. If an individual attending the meeting does not have the authority (or delegated authority) to commit their service or agency to work with a child or young person then they are not the right representative. This point should be viewed as non-negotiable in the establishment of the multi-agency meeting as the biggest single risk to its long terms effectiveness will be instances where agencies commit to work with a young person and fail to deliver against that commitment. Consideration may want to be given by agencies to the ring fencing of resources even if only on a part-time basis to ensure that the EEI process is serviced properly. The benefits accrued from the operation of a successful EEI process would appear to justify this ring fencing.

Having identified the appropriate representative it is important that they are able to consistently attend the meetings. The evidence from meetings in all of the areas reviewed reflect that there is an implicit reliance on professional judgement to reach a decision on a particular child or young person and that this is made much easier when a certain level of trust has been established between partners. Consistent attendance aligned to the authority levels referenced above is the key criteria in establishing this trust.

### **Establish the logistical aspects of the meeting**

Whilst clarity in logistical aspects is of a much lower level of importance than ensuring partners are appropriately represented they do represent their own challenge. Aspects that need to be addressed include:

Meeting schedule – it is recommended that a meeting is held at least weekly to ensure that cases are dealt with as quickly possible when it has been determined that they should be discussed at a joint meeting. In the majority of the test areas the meeting is scheduled for two hours each Friday morning. Initially the meeting length may be longer as partners get to grips with the process; however, the observed meetings were all concluded in less than two hours with no detrimental impact on the level of discussion or debate. In one area meetings are currently held twice per week (Mondays and Fridays) to allow for management in the surge of cases resulting from the weekend.

Chair of the meeting – whilst each attendee at the meeting will have equal right and opportunity to contribute to the discussion identifying a chair to help manage the meeting and the associated logistics is advisable. Currently based on importance attached to the coordination function and the fact that they are the only agency that will have a contribution to make on all cases, the police representative currently chairs all of the EEI multi-agency meetings that were involved in the evaluation. The police representative chairing the meeting is not necessarily the coordinator as often they are concerned with provider and recording information.

### **Agree and sign-off discussion and operating process**

It is evident from the experience of the five areas that decisions are based on a collective professional judgement based on consideration of all the available facts. The anecdotal statement that every case is different is born out by the fact that no area has been able to create a standardised decision making matrix to inform the selection of an appropriate intervention. Indeed many of the professionals interviewed within the evaluation felt that trying to standardise the decision making process too much would be detrimental to the objectives of the multi-agency meeting. As the outputs from the multi-agency meeting will be discussion based it will be necessary to develop an approach to managing the discussion for each area. The exact details of how the meeting will run and the approach taken to inviting and considering contributions will differ from area to area based on the personalities involved at the meeting and the volume of cases to be considered. There are two key principles that should be considered when developing an approach to the meeting, namely:

- Sufficient time should be provided to all partners to input relevant information which will assist in a collective decision being reached on the best intervention to be utilised;
- Participants should be encouraged to freely exchange as much information as possible that is relevant to the particular child or young person.

### **Identify meeting recording process, decision sign-off and review process**

Irrespective of the preferred method for managing the consideration of each case, it is important the ultimate decision is recorded and that this information is stored for review and future reference. This is important not only from the perspective of informing future discussion of a particular child or

young person but also from the perspective of establishing an audit trail in support of defensible decision making.

A particularly effective development in a number of areas is the existence of a simple recording sheet which logs the essential case details, the collective decision reached and the agency charged with intervening with the young person. Under GIRFEC West Lothian is a learning partner examining how this key significant information (chronology) might be brought together electronically using the GIRFEC practice model. This should bring together relevant information into every child's plan, the detail of which will depend on the intensity and complexity of the child's needs and risks.

Under the EEI process the lead professional has responsibilities for ensuring the individual child's plan is developed, intervention is delivered by relevant services and that action is reviewed with the date set for review – and that all these issues are recorded.

Subsequent to this sign-off the cases details are updated electronically by the coordinator and emailed to all partners.

### **Establish a conflict resolution process**

Whilst the absence of a standardised decision making matrix is cited as being a positive aspect in terms of encouraging a full discussion on the facts of the case for each individual young person or child, it also means that from time to time agreement may not be reached between partners. There is a high probability that this situation will occur and it is therefore prudent for areas to identify conflict resolution measures. We would encourage areas to explore appropriate conflict resolution measures that could pre-empt or compliment a referral of the case into the Reporter.

### **Conclusion**

The key priority in this stage of development of the EEI process is to ensure that the multi-agency meeting offers a workable environment in which to properly consider the facts of a case and to subsequently reach an appropriate decision. The experience from the areas reviewed within the evaluation is that this situation is best achieved through discussion between the representatives who will attend the meetings rather than being dictated from the strategic group of by individual senior managers. The experience also suggests that the effectiveness of the multi-agency meetings will improve over time as relationships improve and trust is fostered between individuals and in the EEI process itself.

# **Continually improving the Early and Effective Intervention process**

## **Introduction**

One of the most pleasing aspects of the Early and Effective Intervention (EEI) process is that it has genuinely been developed by local areas and professionals in response to an identified weakness in partners' responses to children or young people who offend. This has resulted in the development of a process which realises benefits at each stage and for each of the agencies involved both strategically and operationally. There is anecdotal evidence that the EEI process is also improving the interventions being delivered to young people which is positively impacting their circumstances. A longitudinal study being undertaken by SCRA will seek to evidence the impact that the EEI process is having on the outcomes for children and young people.

There is a significant risk with any development that delivers positive results and which is being recommended for wider roll out and embedding into business as usual that it is viewed as being optimal and therefore no further developmental work is required. This is rarely the case and often the contrary is true with effective ways of working being unnecessarily overtaken by other procedural or process developments. Adopting an ethos of continuous improvement and self evaluation in line with current Inspection regimes at the implementation stage is a particularly effective way to mitigate against this risk.

## **Suggested key stages in the development of a continuous improvement ethos**

### **Establish operational performance indicators**

Whilst it is suggested that there should be a range of indicators developed at the strategic level to enable ongoing quality assurance of the process, it is also possible that these indicators can be used for operational performance management. This would involve filling out the range of indicators to include those that may not be immediately relevant at the strategic level but which could provide useful insight into operational delivery.

These indicators should be collected on a regular basis and analysed at least monthly to ensure that performance consistently improves and to provide an early warning system for any unexpected changes in the trend of the cases being managed.

### **Agree upward reporting lines and timescales**

Again this will largely be influenced by the requirements of the strategic oversight function, however, it's suggested that the operational representatives ensure that the reporting lines and timescales also satisfy their requirements. Particularly in the early stages of implementation it may be necessary for more regular dialogue between the differing levels of authority and decision maker both within individual agencies and on a multi-agency basis. It may be necessary to moderate the initial design of the EEI process or to alter protocols to make them more reflective of what is proving effective and this should be addressed as soon as practicable, again this is with a view to transparency and audit.

### **Identify operational performance champions**

Initially the fact that the concept and working of the EEI process will have been alien to the vast majority of strategic managers and operational staff should be addressed by an area wide selling campaign. However, to ensure that compliance with the requirements of the EEI process particularly in respect of the information supplied by front-line operational staff it is worthwhile identifying performance champions. This may involve engaging with front-line supervisory staff on a regular basis or co-opting a key individual in a particular locality to advocate the process through normal communication channels such as weekly briefings or staff e-zines.

### **Schedule bi-annual review sessions**

Scheduling regular review sessions with the sole agenda item of analysing performance both in respect of the process of delivering EEI and the outcomes being achieved will ensure that the EEI process is critically analysed.

All of the operational and strategic partners involved in the active delivery and oversight of the EEI process should be involved in this review process to ensure that the fullest range of insights, observations and opinions. This is another area where areas should consider involving the area Reporter to provide an informed external view of how the approach is working.

### **Conclusion**

Rigorously applying the principles of continuous improvement to a process which is already demonstrably working is a challenge for many of those at the strategic and operational level as they will be reluctant to tweak something that is working. However, the benefits of continually reviewing and refreshing the approach will be evident in the signal that it sends to the partners that the process remains important and warrants continued support and investment.