

The vital importance of
**getting it right for every child
and young person**



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Giving me the
best possible start
in life will make
a huge difference
to me later on”



The Scottish
Government

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The people who look after me need to make sure I am loved. They need to give me healthy food, treat me with respect and give me a safe, warm home to live in. They need to make sure I am alright.”



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What they do when I'm very young should mean I'm ready to succeed in life when I'm older... and that I am better able to deal with the challenges life brings me.”

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Children and families are valued and respected at all levels in our society and have the right to have their voices sought, heard and acted upon by all those who support them and who provide services to help them.

Article 12 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Getting it right for every child

Taking care of our children's well-being and making sure they are alright – even before they are born – helps us ensure the most positive outcomes for them later in life. It gives them the potential to grow up ready to succeed and play their part in society.

The benefits of taking good care of them are significant – both for the individual and for our society as a whole.

Getting children's rights right

Every child and young person in Scotland has the right to play, to be healthy and happy, to learn new things and to be looked after and nurtured – whether they live at home or not. These rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is an international law that seeks to make sure the voices of children and young people are taken into account in families and children's services.

Responsibilities

The Scottish Government is committed to providing a consistent, supportive approach for all Scotland's children and their families. It's called 'Getting it right for every child' and is being used with families, nurseries, schools, health care, social work, law enforcement, housing and some support services for adults. In fact as a way of working it is designed to thread through all services and areas that involve children and young people of any age.

Children and their families

Children and their families say that what works best for them is co-ordinated support when they need it, so that they are not passed around from one agency to another, or having to repeat their story several times over. The Getting it right approach helps make sure this happens.



Practitioners

Getting it right is important for everyone who works with children – as well as many providers of adult services. Professionals need to work together to support families, and where appropriate take early action at the first signs of any difficulty, rather than only getting involved when a situation has already reached crisis point. This means working across organisational boundaries and putting children and their families at the heart of decision making.

How does it work?

To promote the Getting it right approach teachers, health and social workers and others should all consider a child's well-being in the same eight areas.

How do you measure a child's well-being?

The Getting it right approach looks at eight areas of 'well-being'. These are recognised as areas in which children and young people need to progress in order to do well now and in the future. They allow those responsible for the care and support

of children – including members of their own families – to look at a situation in a structured way that will help them identify any needs and concerns and plan with the child and family any action they need to take. The eight well-being indicators are:

- Safe
- Achieving
- Active
- Responsible
- Healthy
- Nurtured
- Respected
- Included

The approach gives them a common language and a way to gather information about a child's world, making sure the child is growing and developing, and has everything they need from the people who look after them both at home and in the wider community. It also encourages practitioners to think about who else might need to be involved (for example a teacher might need to contact other professionals to make sure that an education improvement plan with the child and family was meeting all the child's needs).





Improving outcomes

A better outcome for Kirsty

The police picked up 12-year old Kirsty late one evening in her local town centre, where she had been drinking alcohol for several hours putting herself at considerable risk. They took her straight home and talked to her and her parents. The officers decided that this was a one-off incident. Their usual next step would have been to refer her to the Children's Reporter to consider the need for compulsory measures. From this point it would have taken a few months before a children's hearing was held, if one was considered necessary. There would have been a lot of waiting and uncertainty for Kirsty and her parents.

Instead, using the Getting it right approach, officers completed a concern form and agreed with Kirsty and her parents that the information would be shared with her school.

A plan to support her was prepared where her parents agreed to monitor her activities more closely and her guidance teacher explored with her what she had done. Kirsty deeply regretted her behaviour, accepted the support offered and understood that the school would also be monitoring her behaviour.

The approach avoided bureaucracy, resulting in improved outcomes and speedier action. Referral to the Children's Reporter would still be an option but was not needed at this point.

Nine months later there had been no further reported incidents and Kirsty had settled down very well. She was safer, taking more personal responsibility and not putting her health at risk.

Realising benefits

The Getting it right approach has already been shown to reduce bureaucracy and save time – both for those who work with children, and for children and their families. For example, in a long-term ‘pathfinder’ exercise in Highland, there was a 75 per cent saving in time needed for meetings, a 50 per cent reduction in social work caseload, and administration was reduced to 10 per cent of total activity.

When public spending is under pressure, early intervention can be an extremely cost-effective approach. There is clear evidence of positive economic return from making sure children thrive in their early years. The alternatives are costly: over £200,000 per year for providing intensive secure care for a teenager, for example.

By the age of 28, the cumulative cost of public services for someone with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is over 10 times higher than for someone without these additional needs (on average over £70,000 compared to £7,500 for a young person who had not experienced any problems).

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The real question is how to use available funds wisely. The best evidence supports this policy prescription: invest in the very young and improve basic learning and socialisation skills.”

James Heckman, 2000 Nobel Laureate in Economics
(Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children in an Economically Efficient Policy)

Getting it right in the red book

In health practice there is now a standardised parent-held record for every child. The Personal Child Health Record known as the ‘red book’ adopts the Getting it right approach and works in the same way no matter where a child lives, or what part of the health service they are involved with.

It is ‘owned’ by the child’s parents or main carers and filled in by them and the healthcare professionals who are their main point of contact in the early years of life. The Getting it right national practice model allows people to assess what the child needs, and who else might have to be involved to give appropriate support.



Early and effective intervention in Angus

Early and effective intervention is well-established in Tayside Police Force's Angus division. A number of multi-agency, early and effective intervention initiatives in the area are showing significant results

between 2008/09 and 2009/10, youth crime figures fell by 37 per cent while the number of children and young people referred to the Children's Reporter over the same periods dropped by 53 per cent.



Young people who offend (all recorded crimes)

Year	Total (male and female)
2008/09	1,076
2009/10	680

Offence Referrals to the Children's Reporter

Year	Total (male and female)
2008/09	733
2009/10	342



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Scotland is way ahead of England in realising that the first few years of life are crucial to children's future success.

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Times Educational Supplement Scotland

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Research is now clearly indicating that children born and brought up in difficult and deprived circumstances are more likely to experience physical and mental health problems later in life.

By supporting their parents and by providing a range of services which increase stability in their lives, children are more likely to perform better at school, become more resilient in their response to challenge and develop into healthy adults.

Dr Harry Burns, Scotland's Chief Medical Officer

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FURTHER INFORMATION

www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright
www.scotland.gov.uk/earlyyears

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