

REPORT TO ABERDEENSHIRE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD 10 May 2023

TRANSITIONS FROM CHILDREN TO ADULT SERVICES

1 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Integration Joint Board (IJB):

- 1.1 Note the scoping work on transitions from Children's to Adult Services undertaken by Aberdeenshire's GIRFEC Children with Disabilities Thematic Group**
- 1.2 Agree to receive a further report as work on the Transitions Charter, Pathway and Guidance progresses.**

2 Directions

- 2.1 No direction requires to be issued to Aberdeenshire Council or NHS Grampian as a result of this report.

3 Risk

- 3.1 IJB Risk 8 – Risk of failure to deliver standards of care expected by the people of Aberdeenshire in the right time and place – continued focus is required on increasing positive destinations and improving outcomes for young people in their transition to adult services.

4 Background

- 4.1 The Aberdeenshire Children and Young People's Services Plan 2023-2026¹ (the Plan) is a 3-year Plan that provides information on how local services plan and deliver support to children and young people and families across Aberdeenshire, to ensure that they get the right support, at the right time, by the right people.
- 4.2 There are five priorities in the Plan:
 - Children and Young People's Mental Health is promoted and improved.
 - Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs and/or Disability and their families are well supported to achieve their potential.

¹ <https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Aberdeenshire-Children-and-Young-Peoples-Services-Plan-2023-2026.pdf>

- Aberdeenshire’s Care Experienced Young People will have a good loving childhood, where their needs are met, and outcomes are improved for them through ensuring that The Promise² is kept.
 - Whole Family Wellbeing is promoted and improved by enabling families to get the right support early and effectively.
 - Children and young people are safe, valued and listened to in our communities.
- 4.3 These priorities are being driven forward by the established and effective model of Aberdeenshire’s GIRFEC (Getting it Right for Every Child) Thematic Groups. Each Thematic Group is focusing on one of the priorities, bringing a range of partners together to jointly consider the need, share resources and plan interventions.
- 4.4 The Plan has been informed through a thorough evaluation of a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment³ which captured data and trends pertaining to the experiences of children and young people living in Aberdeenshire. It was also informed by wide consultation with children, young people and their families, public services, Third Sector organisations and Funded Providers.
- 4.5 Transitions is a key area identified, through consultation in the development of the Plan, as an important aspect of a young person’s experience that we require to improve in Aberdeenshire.
- 4.6 Aberdeenshire’s GIRFEC Children with Disabilities Thematic Group is focusing on the second of the five priorities outlined above and is working to achieve the following aim and actions in relation to targeted support for young people transitioning to adult life:
- Aim – you will be supported to transition from school to young adult life and receive all the support you need to thrive and succeed.
 - Actions – we will support young people (aged 14-25) through improved planning and delivery of support and will create a Transitions Charter, Transitions Pathway and Guidance; we will monitor and evaluate the transitions experienced by young people.
- 4.7 The GIRFEC Children with Disabilities Thematic Group (hereafter referred to as the GIRFEC Thematic Group) presented a report to Aberdeenshire’s GIRFEC Strategic Group towards the end of 2022, outlining progress made within the group with regards to transitions, and this forms much of the basis of the next section of this report.

² <https://thepromise.scot/>

³ <https://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Aberdeenshire-Joint-Strategic-Needs-Assessment-JSNA.pdf>

5 Scoping Work on Transitions by GIRFEC Thematic Group

5.1 Existing Guidance and Transitions Groups

5.1.1 There is existing Aberdeenshire Guidance for Transition from Children to Adult Social Work Services, but further work is required to ensure more effective collaboration and joint working across all services that can provide support to young people when transitioning to adult services.

5.1.2 The current guidance was developed for Social Work practitioners in Aberdeenshire on the process to support vulnerable young people through their transition into adult services. This guidance focuses on the 7 Principles of Good Transitions⁴, and outlines the role of Social Work Transitions Groups, Eligibility Criteria for Adult Services, and those Adult Social Work services/teams that the guidance relates to.

5.1.3 The guidance broadly categorises young people in transition into three groups:

- Group 1 – These young people are likely to have profound and complex needs. Their needs are likely to continue throughout their lives and may be associated with a learning disability or diagnosed mental health disorder. They may lack capacity and require Welfare and/or Financial Guardianship in adulthood.
- Group 2 – These young people may have additional support needs, are making a transition back to their communities and who, along with their families, continue to require advice, guidance, and assistance. Young people in this group are likely to have capacity, but face difficulties in progressing to a positive destination in adulthood.
- Group 3 – These are vulnerable young people who may be at risk of harm from others or themselves. They may have additional learning needs or no diagnosed mental or physical health issues. However, they may have experienced a disrupted childhood and in some cases trauma which has impacted on their emotional development and health. These young people may be hard to reach, disengaged from services, have difficulty in keeping themselves safe, display risk-taking behaviours or make poor choices for themselves. They may be supported by Children's Services Throughcare and Aftercare practitioners but are struggling to transition into adulthood due to their vulnerabilities. They may face significant barriers preventing progression to a positive destination in adulthood and may also be at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

5.1.4 There are currently three Transitions Groups – in North, Central and South Aberdeenshire. Each of these groups work in quite different ways, for example, in terms of number of meetings held over the course of the year, group membership and the degree of collaboration between services. Of

⁴ [Principles of Good Transitions - Scottish Transitions Forum](#)

particular note is the North Transition Group, membership of which is wider and includes education and health staff, as well as social work staff.

- 5.1.5 The GIRFEC Thematic Group has obtained verbal feedback in relation to the Transitions Groups. Feedback from North group members has been positive and education staff in particular saw this as a good model with the young person at the centre and the team around them very much working together. Some school staff in Central and South have felt that it would have been helpful to be included in the Social Work transitions meetings in these areas, but this practice is not as embedded in these areas as it is in North, and further work is required.
- 5.1.6 It has also been noted that in some areas, there are regular transitions meetings being held between Adult Services and Head Teachers of Special Schools, but not with mainstream schools. Awareness of the current Aberdeenshire guidance has been raised by the GIRFEC Thematic Group to ensure that everyone understands and follows the process and efforts are being made to embed transition practice in both Adult Services and Children's Services, as opposed to protocols sitting solely with Children's Services.

5.2 Consultation and Data

- 5.2.1 A consultation with young people and parents/carers took place between April and June 2022 to find out their thoughts. This involved young people with a disability who were still at school and those who had left who had been identified by schools and adult services. Data was collected from those who were undergoing transition at that time. Unfortunately, no data was gathered by Adult Services from those who had left school.
- 5.2.2 The data that the GIRFEC Thematic Group gathered from those still at school showed that when young people were asked who supported them when leaving school, the vast majority named education staff, although Skills Development Scotland got the single largest mention. Social Work, Community Learning and Development and college staff were mentioned the least.
- 5.2.3 Most young people found out about their choices from school staff and a very small number had gained information from other agencies. Most of the young people had a plan with almost half saying they had a written plan. Most said that planning had started in S4 or S5. Just under half of the respondents thought that the process had gone well and were happy with the support they were receiving.
- 5.2.4 Those that identified things that could have gone better with regards to their transition planning made reference to specific, individual matters which could be grouped under three key headings:
- Support
 - Communication
 - The need to start discussions about transitions earlier



5.2.5 During 2021/22 data on transitions was also provided to the GIRFEC Thematic Group by Skills Development Scotland. Skills Development Scotland aims to promote and support partnership working to support learner pathways for the maximum risk young people. The data provided showed that there is an identified gap for this group of young people, particularly where they do not meet the criteria for support from Adult Services.

5.3 The Principles of Good Transitions 3

5.3.1 The Principles of Good Transitions referred to in 5.2.1 above was developed as a result of a Scotland-wide consultation in relation to transitions and was produced by the Association for Real Change (ARC) Scotland in collaboration with the Scottish Transitions Forum. It provides a framework to inform, structure and encourage the continual improvement of support for young people with additional needs between the ages of 14 and 25 who are making the transition to young adult life.

5.3.2 As noted in 4.6 above, the GIRFEC Thematic Group are currently developing a Transitions Charter, Transitions Pathway and Guidance (which expands on the existing “social work-social work” guidance) to support these Principles. These Principles are based on what the law says about transitions plus what research tells us works best to support young people with additional support needs making the transition to adulthood in Scotland. They highlight what organisations should be doing to make sure young people and their families have a good experience of leaving school and moving on to adult life.

5.3.3 The draft versions of the Transitions Charter and Transitions Pathway based around the Principles of Good Transitions continue to be worked on by the GIRFEC Thematic Group. This group is also evaluating current practice using the 7 Principles in order to more clearly identify the gaps across Aberdeenshire. This group is in a place to move forward with joint working and a common aim.

6 Summary

6.1 There is existing Aberdeenshire Guidance for Transition from Children to Adult Social Work Services, for practitioners supporting vulnerable young people through their transition into adult services. This guidance states that ‘We should strive to achieve the best outcomes for our young people moving into adulthood, through GIRFEC which is a child-centred partnership approach’.

6.2 Aberdeenshire’s GIRFEC Children with Disabilities Thematic Group is leading on improvements in transitions from Children to Adult Services, and as noted in the Aberdeenshire Children and Young People’s Services Plan 2023-23, this work remains a priority.



- 6.3 The GIRFEC Thematic Group undertook scoping work in 2022 with regards to transitions and presented a report to Aberdeenshire's GIRFEC Strategic Group towards the end of last year. As part of this work, the group noted that there are many examples of good practice across Aberdeenshire, but this needs to be further developed to achieve positive, well-planned transitions for all regardless of a young person's disability or where they live.
- 6.4 There are young people who do not meet the eligibility criteria for adult services who will still need support at transition, and so there are gaps that need to be addressed. More work is needed to ensure equity of provision across Aberdeenshire for those with disabilities leaving school.
- 6.5 It is proposed to take a future report to the Aberdeenshire IJB to update on the transitions work that the GIRFEC Thematic Group are leading on, including the progress with the development of the Transitions Charter, Transitions Pathway and Guidance.
- 6.6 The Chief Officer, along with the Chief Finance Officer and the Legal Monitoring Officers within Business Services of the Council have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated within the report.

7 Equalities, Staffing and Financial Implications

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the recommended actions in this report are not considered at this stage to have a differential impact on people with protected characteristics.
- 7.2 There are no staffing or financial implications arising directly as a result of this report.

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