

The Educational Institute of Scotland
Work Associated with GIRFEC and Children's and Young People's
Planning Meetings

Background

The 2017 AGM passed the following Resolution which was subsequently assigned to the Education Committee to take forward.

"This AGM instruct Council to investigate and report on:

- (a) the workload associated with GIRFEC and young person's planning meetings across all schools in Scotland;**
- (b) the level of support available from external agencies."**

In addressing the terms of the Resolution, the Committee:

- conducted a sample survey, including time audit, with Primary and Secondary members, and members who teach in Special Education, seeking information on GIRFEC-related workload impact
- established an online network of Pastoral Care specialists to provide insight into current GIRFEC practices and associated workload for Pupil Support teachers
- consulted the HT & DHT and ASN Networks
- arranged a meeting with members in one local association in which Pastoral Care and GIRFEC related workload was of particular concern
- discussed the matter within a focus group convened to discuss ASN provision.

This report reflects the key findings from the various sources outlined above, all of which point to a significant increase in workload arising from GIRFEC related activity in schools and low levels of support from external agencies.

Findings from the GIRFEC Workload Survey

A short survey was sent to random samples of 1000 Primary, 1000 Secondary and 250 Special Education teachers. Within a four-week window during which members selected received several prompts, 169 responses were received from across 29 Local Associations. This amounts to a 7.5% return rate which is very low, meaning that the results require to be treated with some caution.

That said, however, the responses overwhelmingly highlight the workload challenges that those EIS members who responded to the survey are experiencing in meeting the demands associated with GIRFEC-related practice and planning

meetings. While the number of respondents is relatively small, it is unlikely that the experiences of the wider membership vary significantly from those reflected by the survey results.

In response to the question: ***Have you found that GIRFEC-related practice and children's and young people's planning meetings have led to an increase in your workload?***

87% of respondents answered yes, and only 13% no.

This suggests that the implementation of GIRFEC practice, in the vast majority of cases, has brought additional workload responsibility without the additional staffing resource required to address it. Rather, it would appear that the expectation has been that the additional work is to be absorbed by teachers in all sectors and across the range of roles, in addition to existing workload.

Respondents provided detail on the nature of the additional workload demand, some examples of which are below.

- More and more cumbersome paperwork- requirement to document everything
- Child's Plan is an addition to existing paperwork
- Additional round-robin reporting on individual pupils
- Reading more information about pupils
- Professional discussion with teacher colleagues about individual children
- Liaison with external agencies
- Shrinking capacity of external agencies impacting on the workload of education staff
- Expectation from external agencies that school-based Named Persons carry the bulk of the responsibility
- GIRFEC meetings
- Meetings scheduled during non-class contact time and breaks
- SEEMIS recording
- Inefficient ICT generating more work for teachers
- Large pupil caseloads
- Shift in emphasis to supporting children and young people through nurture, meaning loss of preparation time and breaks for teachers.

Respondents' comments in response to this question underline further the majority view that GIRFEC has been a significant generator of additional workload for teachers.

'There has been a significant increase in workload. Numerous meetings and paperwork. Loss of clerical staff due to council cuts means that I am overloaded with admin tasks.'

'When GIRFEC was first discussed, it was suggested that, for a Guidance Teacher, there would be very little beyond the existing remit. However, the situation is now completely unworkable current conditions...I find that Guidance staff do not disagree with the spirit of GIRFEC, with the PTG the consistent point of contact. The issue is that people, including other professionals, expect the PTG to arrange everything, and there is no support available. Other services do not seem to be willing or able to take on the role of Lead Professional ...and this leads to a succession of meetings and new Plans.'

'We are asked to regularly feedback extra reporting on pupils who have GIRFME plans. Teachers are also asked to attend lunchtime meetings for updates. Teachers need to give pupils extra time for assessments, etc. by giving up their own lunchtimes, which is not outlined in the WTA.'

'Planning is much more complicated and takes significantly longer than previously. We are expected to use SEEMIS for planning but it's very slow, glitchy and not fit for purpose. Children with a CSP also have an IEP and a Child's Plan. How is this a single plan? Too much administrative work involved. In order to get any other support or professionals even to get involved we have to do a plan so this slows everything down. Everything that the council has that you may need to support a child seems to involve completing a child's plan. Explaining the process to parents takes ages. Minutes from meetings used to be a page...now they're a 15-page Child's Plan...I could go on...'

Respondents were asked to **quantify the average amount of additional time per week required to overtake GIRFEC-related work**. 117 members provided an average. Of these:

- 4 (3.4%) said that they spent less than an hour on average per week on GIRFEC activity
- 20 (17.1%) quantified the average as being 1 hour per week
- 63 (53.8%) stated between 2 and 5 additional hours per week on average
- 17 (17.9%) spent between 6 and 10 additional hours on this
- 5 (4.3%) estimated the average to lie between 11 and 15 additional hours per week.

Some respondents indicated that they found it difficult to quantify the amount of additional time that they are spending per week on such work. Many of their comments, however, stressed the size of the demands placed upon them by the GIRFEC agenda.

One respondent commented, *'I don't keep a record of this but I do struggle at times and am in work for 6am and leave later, also taking work home.'*

A Support for Learning teacher said,

'I'm a bad sample here- as a Support for Learning Teacher, nearly all my time is taken up with such work. Sfl in my school are working caseloads of over 20 GIRFme forms apiece, and for most of this year I have felt it necessary to drop below minimum non-class contact time in order to have even the smallest chance of meeting my responsibilities to these kids in terms of classroom observation, co-op teaching, relationship building and providing help to ensure the classroom environment meets their needs.'

Another respondent simply stated, *'All the time'*.

Worryingly, in response to the question **'Have duties associated with GIRFEC been incorporated within your school's Working Time Agreement?'**, **66% answered no, 34% yes.**

This means that GIRFEC has generated additional work in two thirds of the cases reported by survey respondents, that is being carried out, not within the parameters of the 35-hour working week but in members' own time.

Respondents were asked in the case of 'no' answers to indicate how the work was being overtaken. Comments indicate the common expectation that teachers and pastoral care staff absorb the workload generated by GIRFEC without additional time being made available, as reflected below.

'GIRFEC duties have simply been added to an already busy workload.'

'Lunchtimes, after school, before school and at home.'

'Just expected to get on with it.'

'In my own time or as part of preparation and correction but it doesn't cover it.'

Survey respondents were asked, **'How would you judge the level of support available from specialist external services to your school in its endeavour to Get it Right for Every Child, including those children and young people who have additional needs?'**

The vast majority- **72%**- stated that the **level of support was inadequate**, with only 26% expressing it to be adequate and a tiny 2% reporting that there is a high level of external specialist support available to schools.

The majority of respondents expressed concern and frustration at the diminution and, in some cases, the disappearance of specialist support that in the past was

provided by external agencies. The impact of such erosion of provision, respondents largely reported, is an increase in the workload of school staff and, at best, delays in children and young people receiving the support that they need.

'Speech and language specialists time very stretched. 16 EAL children in my class with many needs yet support of 1 hour per week has recently been cut!'

'The "Multi" in Multi Agency Action Planning frequently is simply and sadly not true. Even the Health input tends only to be the school nurse who, because of caseload, must spend more time at meetings than working with individuals...GIRFEC meetings should be child-centred and child-friendly. Today I attended one where 18 adults were present with the child. After that meeting all the other professionals will be at a distance and may not see the child before the next meeting. The school staff are left to try and meet the pastoral needs, and teach and do all the other things required.'

'Due to cutbacks relevant staff and support is unavailable.'

'Many have become 'consultation' where we can ask for advice. Very few engage with pupils and parents. They send us examples of work we can use with pupils but without the professional training in this how can teachers be expected to deliver this effectively?'

'There isn't enough. Cuts, cuts, cuts. You can only cut so much back before the system doesn't work. The system almost doesn't work.'

Views of the Pastoral Care Specialist Network

Network members were encouraged to complete the survey also. Two responses came directly to the Education Department.

Both answered in the affirmative to the question asking if GIRFEC-related practice and associated planning meetings had led to an increase in workload. Paperwork, preparation for (sometimes up to two hours per meeting) and follow-up from meetings, and continual, often mis-placed requests from other agencies for Child's Plans, were cited as the main generators of additional work.

Both Pastoral Care Specialists stated that the time spent on GIRFEC activity per week was variable, depending on pupil need but suggested a minimum of four hours, extending to ten hours in the event of a new case arising.

In neither case was the additional time required to overtake the work accommodated within the Working Time Agreement. Both responses indicated the view that the standard WTA was insufficient as a workload control mechanism for the role of Pastoral Care/ Pupil Support staff.

Finally, both members of the Pastoral Care Specialist Network who responded directly to the Department stated that they found the level of support available

from external specialist services to be inadequate. Associated comments identified staffing reductions within other agencies and within additional support needs provision to be key factors in this, with levels of bureaucracy being another barrier to schools' ability to access external support. One response identified misinterpretation of the Named Person service by other agencies and the assumption that schools should initiate and lead all GIRFEC-related intervention, as a reason for support being weak from such agencies.

Views of the HT & DHT Network

EIS Headteacher and Depute Headteacher members also identified issues with workload for teachers that emanate directly from GIRFEC practice and highlighted that senior managers also face additional workload demands, from a range of associated activities. Concerns were expressed in the areas listed below.

- Pupil Support teachers having responsibility for the wellbeing needs of up to 200 pupils
- Each school having a core of pupils whose needs are chronic and complex, therefore requiring multi-agency intervention
- Liaison with parents on GIRFEC-related matters requiring significant time
- The writing of Wellbeing Assessment Plans for individual children, each taking around an hour to complete
- GIRFEC-related admin being undertaken in time that is needed for preparation and marking
- Planning and review meetings being largely scheduled to take place outwith class contact time
- Responsibility for the writing of minutes of multi-agency meetings falling to Pupil Support and Head Teachers
- Incompatibility of GIRFEC paperwork and terminology across agencies, making it more time-consuming to manage
- SEEMIS wellbeing module not being fit for purpose
- HTs 'doing child protection things constantly', making it difficult to plan their work for the day
- A prevailing sense that schools are dealing with pupil support 'every minute of the day'
- Many related admin tasks being done by HTs in the knowledge that they can't refer cases further as there is no support available from other agencies.

Views of the ASN Network

Discussion of the terms of the Resolution by ASN Network members echoed the concerns about workload that emerged from the survey.

Network members identified planning meetings as being significant generators of additional work at multiple stages.

Prior to meetings, drafting letters and phoning partners/parents to arrange and sometimes rearrange meetings, gathering reports, and seeking the young person's view can amount to five to six hours' work per child.

Time is required to attend the meeting themselves, the duration ranging from one to three hours each, with teachers sometimes tasked with chairing and minute-taking in addition to reporting on the child. Subsequent to each meeting, teachers are engaged in resultant follow-up work, often involving liaison with external agencies.

Network members contrasted their experience with that of Social Work colleagues in one area who have secretarial support to assist them in their GIRFEC-related work and further support workers who focus on the wellbeing needs of individual children and facilitate relevant meetings. Members expressed the view that teachers are expected to do work outside their job description and concern at the potentially 'catch-all' nature of the 'other duties' phrasing within a teacher's contract.

Views expressed within an ASN Focus Group

In the course of a focus group discussion relating to additional support needs provision, the issue of GIRFEC-related workload naturally emerged, the emphasis being on paperwork. Asked whose responsibility it was to compile this, members of the group indicated that various staff members were required to be involved, for example, class teachers and Support for Learning coordinators where they exist.

SHANARRI assessments featured in this discussion, also including round-robins for individual pupils, entailing the gathering and collation of the professional opinions of all staff who work with the child whose needs are being assessed, in addition to capturing the views of the children and their parents.

While members of the group saw sound pedagogical rationale in such an approach, it was thought to be hugely time-consuming, often for little return in terms of the acquisition of targeted support for individual children. It was felt that much of the bureaucracy associated with GIRFEC is less about securing appropriate interventions for children whose wellbeing is at risk and more about ensuring 'you are covering your own back' amidst a general climate of mistrust of professional judgement and in which teachers are required to 'prove it'. There was a feeling that creating paperwork on GIRFEC had become 'an industry'.

A view was expressed in the group that teachers are now being asked to work in ways which are way out of their professional comfort zone, suddenly expected to be more like social workers required to make judgements on issues they do not feel qualified to comment on, for example, the sustainability of a child's home background.

This focus group clearly identified issues with both the volume and the nature of GIRFEC-related workload.

Meeting with Pupil Support Teacher

A meeting with a Pupil Support Teacher in a school whose pastoral care team had undergone some recent restructuring to take account of GIRFEC and to pre-empt the implementation of Named Person provided clear insight into the extent of the workload demands on such staff, as well as the detrimental impact that this can

have. It appeared from the discussion at the meeting that GIRFEC was being used as justification to restructure pastoral care and additional support needs staffing in such a way as to make budget-saving cuts to staffing, in so doing significantly augmenting the workload of some teaching staff.

The member reported the wide range of duties attached to the Pupil Support role in the school:

- Acting as Named Person for 334 children and young people
- Undertaking the role of Child Protection Officer in the school
- Dealing with referrals
- Supporting pupils displaying challenging behaviour
- Providing classroom-based behaviour support
- Handling exclusions and returns from exclusions, with DHTs
- Responding to incidents of bullying
- Handling Child Protection issues
- Writing Child's Plans
- Attending multi-agency meetings
- Liaison with Social Work on LAC, Child Protection cases and referrals to the children's Reporter
- Meetings with pupils
- Phone calls and face to face meetings with parents
- Managing provision for pupils with additional support needs
- Checking and following up attendance anomalies
- Pastoral care/ GIRFEC admin
- Providing support to a cohort of registration/ tutor teachers
- Supporting students with UCAS processes and careers
- Whole school responsibility in key areas, e.g. transitions, Rights Respecting Schools
- Teaching classes.

To cope with what was felt to be an unmanageable workload, the member came to school at 8.00am each morning, rarely had a morning or lunch break uninterrupted or without a piece of work to do, and would often be in school at 5.30pm reading and responding to emails. This member's view was that the job 'isn't do-able' and is 'unsustainable'.

The member described the health and wellbeing impacts- sleeplessness, inability to 'switch off' from work-related issues, forgetfulness, and anxiety that professional responsibilities were not entirely fulfilled, all of these impacts in spite of conscious efforts to stay physically and emotionally healthy.

The meeting concluded with the member summing up feelings about the pastoral care role:

'I feel like I'm not doing a good enough job for the kids and that's why I became a guidance teacher- to help and support the kids.'

Recommendations

As part of the Workload Campaign, the EIS should highlight the particular workload impacts of GIRFEC.

This report should be shared with the Salaries Committee for its consideration.

The report should be shared with Local Association Secretaries and School Reps with a view to GIRFEC-related activity being factored into Working Time Agreements.

National guidance should be re-issued to all EIS School Branches on Working Time Agreements.

The EIS in engaging in future consultation on the implementation of the Named Person legislation should continue to stress the high level of workload demand on teachers, Pupil Support Teachers, Depute and Head Teachers, generated by the GIRFEC agenda, and the need for additional teaching and administrative support staff to deliver the policy intentions.

The negative wellbeing impacts for teachers of excessive GIRFEC-related workload should be highlighted by the EIS in all relevant discussions with the Scottish Government and other stakeholders.

The issue of inadequate support from external agencies to schools in addressing the wellbeing needs of children and young people should be raised with local authorities and the Scottish Government.
