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it right  
for every child



## Guidance on the Child's or Young Person's Plan



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## Guidance on the Child's or Young Person's Plan

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# Guidance on the child's or young person's plan

## Preface

No matter where they live or whatever their needs, children and families need to know where they can seek help, what help is available, that the help is appropriate to their needs and will be delivered to the highest possible standard.

*Getting it right for every child* is the programme for change that will revolutionise services for children. It gives clear authority and responsibility to agencies and professionals to work with children, families, local communities and each other, in a way that brings practicality and reality to the vision for Scotland's children.

### What is this guidance?

This guidance on the child's or young person's plan sets out the structure of the plan as intended in *Getting it right for every child*. The plan has been designed to help all practitioners and staff working with children and families in any organisation in the community think about the needs of a child or young person.

The child's plan is the core of the approach to meeting the needs of children as set out in *Getting it right for every child*.

***This guidance is the first of a set of tools for practitioners, which will be developed and improved in the light of experience and developing legislation.***

### How does it fit with legal duties and the proposed Children's Services (Scotland) Bill?

The approach is based on legislation as it currently exists. In addition the guidance also signposts areas where legislation is being proposed by the draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill which is being consulted upon until 31 March 2007 – see [www.scotland.gov.uk/childrenservicesbill](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/childrenservicesbill). The guidance will be revised in the light of experience and the proposed development of this legislation, subject to decisions on the way forward made by the new Scottish Executive after the May 2007 elections. This draft guidance does not therefore have statutory status and current statutory responsibilities remain in force. This guidance is, however, intended to be the basis for future statutory guidance on the child's or young person's plan.

While the proposed legislation is not currently in place, we would expect agencies to be working towards the introduction and use of plans as part of best practice. This will help agencies prepare to deliver on Scottish Ministers' expectation that every child or young person going to a Children's Hearing should have a plan in line with *Getting it right for every child* by December 2007.

Scottish Executive  
January 2007

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## The Vision

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

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

To achieve this, every child and young person needs to be:

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

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

**Achieving:** being supported and guided in their learning and in the development of their skills, confidence and self-esteem at home, at school, and in the community.

**Nurtured:** having a nurturing place to live, in a family setting with additional help if needed or, where this is not possible, in a suitable care setting.

**Active:** having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development, both at home and in the community.

**Respected:** having the opportunity, along with carers, to be heard and involved in decisions which affect them.

**Responsible:** having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles in their schools and communities and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision and being involved in decisions that affect them.

**Included:** having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.

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## Background

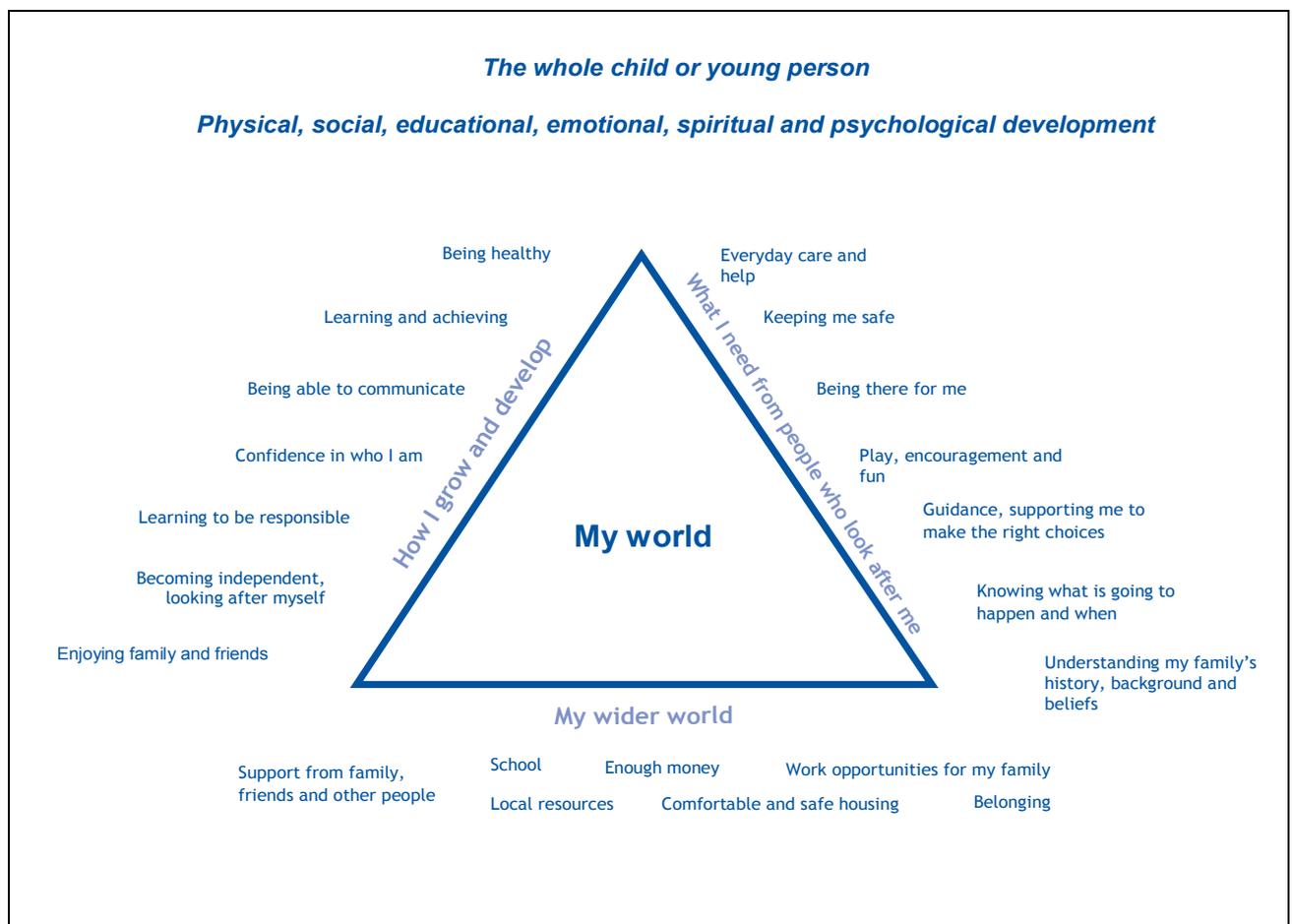
Currently, there are only specific legal duties to plan on a small number of agencies who might work with children, and only for specific purposes. The draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill proposes widening the number of agencies who have duties with regard to the well-being of children. It also includes new duties to plan, discussed below. As part of best practice there is an expectation that agencies will work and plan together to implement *Getting it right for every child*.

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

The plan has been designed to help **all** staff working with children and families in any organisation in the community think about the needs of a child or young person.

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

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



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## Section 1: Planning

### Why plan?

- To help children and young people.
- To achieve goals.
- To make sure that everyone, including the child or young person, understands what is expected and what is to be done, who will do it and when they will do it.
- To show commitment to improving a child's or young person's situation, through the proposed action.

### What is the purpose of the plan?

The plan can:

- help children and young people, families and agencies think about what children and young people need;
- make sure that agencies, families, children and young people are all clear about the help already being given or planned;
- help monitor the child's or young person's progress;
- put in place arrangements to manage risk;
- co-ordinate help for the child or young person, bringing it all together;
- ensure successful change when a child or young person has to move and needs extra help (for example, moving from one school or household to another, to or from a refuge, from child to adult services, or between institutions such as children's homes, secure units or prison);
- outline why compulsory measures may be necessary; and
- make sure the arrangements are in place to manage future risks and needs when a Children's Hearing (Panel) ends a supervision requirement, or where a child or young person leaves care.

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

- Whenever a child or young person, family or professional thinks a plan would help to identify and meet needs. It is a tool to help children and young people, families and professionals understand what action is needed.

The level of detail in any plan should match the complexity, concerns or needs identified.

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The draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill sets out proposed situations where legislation will introduce a duty on agencies to plan. The draft Bill proposes that, where an agency makes a decision to take action to improve the well-being of a child or young person, they must record this. The draft Bill also proposes that there **must** be a child's or young person's plan when agencies are working together to meet the needs of a child or young person. In practice this means that a plan must be put in place when more than one agency is involved in meeting the child's needs. Specific examples are:

- when a child or young person is at significant risk or presents a significant risk to others, and a risk management plan is needed; and
- when compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary.

While these proposed legal duties are not currently in place, we would expect agencies to introduce and use plans as part of best practice.

### Who starts a plan?

- **Anyone who wants to improve matters for a child or young person.** The plan is designed to be used by anyone to help identify and record the strengths in the child's or young person's life and what might be needed to make his or her life better. They may be parents, carers, professionals or the children and young people themselves.
- **Agencies** when they have to work together. Agencies may be voluntary or statutory. They may provide services for children and young people (for example, education or health) or for the adults in their lives (for example, disability services or drug misusing services).
- **Certain professionals or agencies** when the law *requires* them to plan. The draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill proposes additional requirements to plan. The Bill is intended to supplement current planning requirements such as those set out in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004.

### Who should be involved in planning?

- **Children and young people** should be involved in planning according to their age, stage and understanding. Some children and young people may need help to explain their thoughts and views. Sometimes this may be done by a person whose job it is to make sure the child's or young person's views are taken into account. The draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill proposes that agencies be under a duty to take into account the views of children in making any material decision as regards a child's well-being.
- **Parents.** Where a parent has any contact with their child, they should be involved in the plan. However, this is always subject to safety considerations (for example, where the child may be exposed to domestic abuse). In some cases, involving absent parents in the child's or young person's life and plan may be key to his or her current or future wellbeing. The draft Children's Services (Scotland)

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Bill also proposes strengthening requirements that agencies be under a duty to take into account the views of relevant persons, including parents.

- **Carers** who have day-to-day care of the child or young person (for example, kinship carers (usually family), foster carers or residential carers).
- **Staff in agencies/ professionals** who can contribute to the child's or young person's wellbeing or risk management. They may work directly with the child or young person (for example, teachers), or with the adults who care for them (for example, GPs).
- **Other important people**, such as extended family and friends, depending on the nature of the plan and the child's or young person's circumstances. Sometimes relevant members of the community or victims of an offence can contribute to understanding and improving matters. This may be at 'restorative meetings', where offender and victim and the people supporting them meet to discuss the offence and decide together how to deal with the consequences.

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

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

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

- **One plan**, which develops as required to meet the needs and risks involved. It must be fit for all necessary purposes. The child's or young person's plan should meet all statutory planning requirements.

### How should the plan be designed?

- **Ideally, the child's or young person's plan should be as set out in Section 3 of these guidance notes.** The proposals in the draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill set out a basic framework placing a duty on agencies to plan together where there is more than one agency involved with a child or young person. If required, the design of the plan could be set out in subsequent secondary legislation or statutory guidance. Meantime, the plan has been designed to meet the needs of all children and young people when there are concerns that they might not meet their full potential.
- Some children and young people are subject to assessments and plans required by current law (for example, Looked After Child Reviews and Coordinated

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Support Plans). The child's or young person's plan should meet all statutory planning requirements. Where the plan calls for help from a range of agencies, any specialist assessment must become part of the plan to meet all the child's or young person's needs.

- In every case, all agencies should record relevant information in the same way (ie using the same data standards), so that they can share information with others when necessary.

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

- The plan can be as flexible as necessary in order to meet the child's or young person's needs and to meet current statutory requirements.
- The key parts of the plan are:
  - A summary of the needs which have to be addressed.
  - What is to be done?
  - Who is to do it?
  - How will we know if there are improvements?

### What makes a good quality plan?

The child's or young person's plan should:

- be as simple as necessary and written so that it can be clearly understood by the child or young person, parents or carers;
- set out the child's or young person's:
  - Needs;
  - Strengths in their personal, family and environmental circumstances;
  - Risks that they face;
- be based on an assessment and analysis of the child's or young person's world – see Section 2;
- be practical, possible and achievable; and
- be regularly monitored and reviewed, and amended as needs or circumstances change.

Action can go ahead without having to wait for every part of an assessment or plan to be completed. Action should be taken to improve matters for the child or young

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person and to reduce risk as soon as possible, based on the information and evidence available at the time.

### Who can the plan be shared with?

- The relevant information in a plan should usually be shared with the people who have contributed to it.
- Access to a plan should be discussed and decided with the child or young person and their family at every stage of planning and a record kept of any consents given to share information.
- The purpose of sharing information is to improve matters for a child or young person. Information should not be shared if it would pose a risk to the child or young person or to others such as a parent or carer.
- Some young people may not want their parents to have access to the entire plan. For example, they may seek contraceptives or contraceptive advice without their parents' knowledge. By law, they can do this in confidence, without their parents' agreement and without the information being passed to their parents.
- A child or young person may be at serious risk of harm or causing harm to others. In that case, information that might help protect themselves or others must be shared with the people responsible for protecting the child or young person or others.
- Children or young people moving on to new circumstances may want plans to be shared in advance with the people who will have responsibility for them in the future.
- Where compulsion may be needed, families should be advised that the child's or young person's plan will go to the Children's Reporter and may go to a Children's Hearing.
- Families should also be told that the child's or young person's plan will go with them and be subject to consents if they move away from home into foster care or into an institution such as a secure unit or prison.
- In some circumstances, there will be legal reasons which control when information can and should be shared.

### Can parents or children and young people appeal against a child's or young person's plan?

- In most cases, the child's or young person's plan should be jointly agreed between the children or young people, their parents and professionals.
- Where current law provides a right of appeal for certain types of assessments or plans, that right of appeal remains.

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- Parents and children or young people have a right to complain about the content or delivery of specific services. Their views should always be taken into account, except where parental responsibilities and rights have been removed. In some cases, the law allows them to complain to Scottish Ministers or go to a Tribunal.
- Occasionally, professionals may insist on or recommend something to which parents or young people object. If the matter is critical to the child's or young person's wellbeing and the child meets or is likely to meet the grounds for referral to the Children's Hearing, a professional may need to seek compulsory measures and the matter may have to be resolved at a Children's Hearing. The draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill proposes changes to the grounds for referral to a Children's Hearing

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

- The plan can be for any length of time, depending on the needs of the child or young person, the exposure to risk, and any statutory requirements for a review.
- Where a child is identified as being at risk or causing a risk to others, reviews should take place often enough for action to be taken quickly if the risk increases. For example, plans for a new-born baby with parents who misuse drugs may need to be reviewed weekly, whilst plans for a teenager with a complex but stable long-term disability may only need to be reviewed every six months.
- Where there is a supervision requirement agreed at a Children's Hearing, the plan should include and explain the terms of the supervision requirement, and may continue after the supervision requirement ends.

## Section 2: Developing and writing the plan

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

There are a number of ways to develop a plan.

- Some parents or children and young people may have a clear view about the issues needing to be tackled. Others may need help with this.
- There should be active partnerships between professionals and families in developing a plan. These need to take account of relationships within the family, especially where domestic abuse may be an issue.
- Family group conferencing or restorative meetings are ways to ensure that those who are most affected are heard. These are processes which support family members in working together with each other and with others involved in order to form a plan for the child.
- A few children and young people may need more detailed or specialist assessments before action can be planned. This work should be proportionate to the risk and needs (that is, suited to the degree of risk and need involved).

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

- At present, the local authority (generally social work) is responsible for providing reports to the Children's Hearing. However, other people can also write reports to the Children's Hearing on the child or young person.
- Normally, it is the person best placed to do so who writes the child's or young person's plan.
- In some cases the law already requires certain people to write plans. Agencies must ensure that these legal obligations are reflected in each child or young person's plan. Further work may be required to make sure that current statutory planning arrangements are integrated with the unified planning approach proposed here. This work will also identify whether there are legislative barriers which prevent this unified approach.
- Everyone involved can take part in writing the plan – children or young people, families or professionals.
- The headings used in the plan should allow people to record it in language suited to their needs.
- Where a child's or young person's needs are complex, or there are a number of agencies or professionals involved, one individual (a lead person) will need to co-ordinate the involvement of others and make sure there is a written plan. Professionals and the family should think about who this should be. They should

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bear in mind the needs of the child or young person, his or her relationship with various professionals and the complexity of the co-ordination task.

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

- Everyone working with children and young people should think about each one as a whole person.
- The assessment triangle on page 3 shows what is important to the development of all children and young people. The triangle can structure the thinking and the gathering and analysis of information. This will guide discussion and decisions and make sure the right action is taken for the child or young person.

### When is an assessment needed?

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

### When is a recorded assessment needed?

- A recorded assessment is needed when anyone has to *stop and think* about what they or others should do next.
- A fuller, recorded assessment is likely to be needed when:

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- the child's or young person's situation is complex;
  - the parent or the professional does not have the whole picture of the child or young person; or
  - the 'moment by moment' decisions do not seem to be improving matters.
  - When a child or young person is exposed to serious risk or poses a serious risk to others. The greater the risk, the greater the detail needed to manage the risk. The plan should describe what those risks are, what is likely to trigger them and in what circumstances they might happen.
- There are often several points of view on the strengths, protections, vulnerabilities, pressures and risks involved. Recording these will help to measure the impact on the child's development, behaviour and wellbeing. They will help to identify the child's and family's needs and assess how they can cope with change.

### Should I use an assessment tool?

- Specific assessment tools may be helpful (for example, speech and language testing, assessing psychological development and milestones, parenting capacity and motivation, and risk of serious harm).
- It is unlikely that a single tool will cover all aspects of a child's life. However, children should not be subjected to a number of different assessment tools or approaches. If a tool is used it should be one that encourages the participation of children and families in giving and understanding information about themselves.
- Where a child's needs are complex, professionals will have to decide together which tool might best help in each individual case. They must also decide how to combine the analysis of all their work into one assessment of needs and risks.

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

Whether a child's or young person's plan is short and simple or more complex and detailed, the plan should be recorded and kept safely and securely.

Information to be recorded should include:

**Concerns or matters to be tackled** – Why agencies or families believe the child or young person may need action, help or support. These reasons should include any issues of concern to be tackled and risks to be managed.

**Partners to the child's or young person's plan** – The name and job title or relationship of every partner to the child's or young person's plan, including parents and children.

**Summary of analysis of the child's or young person's circumstances** – The analysis should be based on the assessment triangle (see page 3) and should cover:

- how the child or young person is growing and developing (including their health, education, physical and mental development, behaviour and social skills);
- what the child or young person needs from the people who look after him or her, including the strengths and risks involved;
- the strengths and pressures of the child's or young person's wider world of family, friends and community; and
- an assessment of risk, detailing:
  - the kind of risk involved;
  - what is likely to trigger harmful behaviour; and
  - in what circumstances the behaviour is most likely to happen.

The plan should note the level of risk – low, medium or high – as well as the likely impact of the child or young person on others.

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

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

**Desired outcomes and milestones for achievement** – The child's or young person's plan should:

- identify practical goals (for example, improved safety, achievements, nurture, improved dental health and leading an active life);

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- identify short-term and longer-term goals and say what activity is expected and who will do it;
- where a child or young person is at risk or poses a risk to others, identify the minimum requirements or standards of care, safety, nurture or behaviour to make sure he or she is safe or that the safety of others is protected; and
- encourage ambition for children and their families.

**What should be done to improve a child's circumstances** – The child's or young person's plan should be appropriate to the child's or young person's needs and circumstances. This may need to include:

- action to promote future wellbeing, inclusion and achievement (for example, social training or employment opportunities and education, including good citizenship and how to be safe). The action should be identified from a range of options known to improve outcomes for children in the longer term;
- action to strengthen the support network for the child or young person and the family (for example, parenting classes, respite services, youth services and self-support groups);
- any changes that need to be made to where the child or young person lives to keep him or her safe (for example, providing aids such as hoists, or separating the child or young person from their parents);
- action to make good any harm already caused or to help the child or young person catch up with other youngsters (for example, extra education, counselling or health treatment, and young carer peer support groups where they can meet others in the same position as themselves);
- whether compulsion is thought necessary;
- any other action that will help the child or young person and family manage their situation as independently as possible (for example, care or support for dependent parents to relieve a child from his or her caring role); and
- action that can reduce the risk to the child or young person and others.

**Agreed action to be taken** – Who does this (to include the family, the child or young person and agencies involved) and when it should be done.

**Resources to be provided** – Who provides them and when this should happen. Any difficulties agencies may have in providing resources of the type or level required by the child's or young person's plan should be recorded and suitable alternatives offered.

**Contingency plans** – A statement of what will happen if milestones or agreements are not reached, or if risks or circumstances change. An agreement

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should be recorded about actions to be taken if the child or young person or others continue to be at risk of harm, or if difficulties get worse rather than better.

**Monitoring, review and lead professional arrangements** – The plan should include:

- the name and contact details of the lead professional who is the key contact person for the family and responsible for monitoring the child's or young person's progress and for putting the plan into effect;
- how the lead professional will carry this out;
- the name and contact details of the person responsible for co-ordination, communication and review arrangements (if different from the lead professional);
- arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the plan and how this will be carried out, including where, in what form (for example, paper or electronically), when (including the date of the first review), who should take part, and the need for advance assessments or review reports.

**The child's or young person's views (and those of their parents or carers)** about the plan or any part of it.

**Compulsory measures** – Where compulsory measures such as a supervision requirement, an ASBO (anti-social behaviour order) or parenting order are thought to be needed, the reasons for this should be recorded and the evidence attached to the child's or young person's plan.

## Section 4: Review

- The child's or young person's plan should be reviewed by a time agreed at the start and within any time limits set down in law.
- No child or young person should have to experience unnecessary reviews.
- Reviews should be held as often as necessary, taking account of the risks in each case. When things are unstable for a child or young person, or when a number of agencies are being very active in supporting his or her needs, the plan is likely to be reviewed or renewed frequently.

Reviews should detail:

- **How well the child or young person is doing** – a review of progress measured against agreed outcomes and milestones.
- **New information or change of circumstances** – to include changes in living circumstances, schools, new incidents or concerns.
- **A summary of contacts with the child and family** – this should include contacts or appointments, both kept and missed, with the child or young person and their parents.
- **Has everyone done what they set out to do?** – accounting for any changes to the agreed actions.
- **Have these actions had the desired effect?** – recording the actions that have had an impact on progress or outcomes (positive and negative) and those that appear to have had no impact.
- **Is there a need for further action?** – identifying the current level of needs and risks and what else, if anything, needs to be done and who should do it.
- **The child's or young person's views (and those of their parents or carers)** about any part or all of the plan and review.

When the child's or young person's plan is reviewed, new and different outcomes may need to be set. It may be that concerns have been resolved and no further action is needed. On the other hand, it may be necessary to revise the assessment of the circumstances of the child or young person and their family, setting new timescales and a date for the next review. Where concerns have been resolved but action is needed to sustain progress, action should continue. Where there is a supervision requirement agreed at a Children's Hearing, the plan should include and explain the terms of the supervision requirement.

Further information on implementation of *Getting it Right for Every Child*, can be obtained by contacting  
[CHRteam@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:CHRteam@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

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