

Collaborative Working

What is Collaborative Working?

Supporting individuals is a collaborative process that involves effective partnership working. A range of people may be involved over any period of time in supporting the needs of the child or young person. The role and views of the parents, carers, and child or young person are particularly important. The involvement of professionals will vary depending on individual needs.

The **Getting it right for every child or GIRFEC practice model** provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language which encourages and supports a culture of collaborative working which in turn promotes, supports, and safeguards the wellbeing of all children and young people.



Why is collaborative working important?

Collaborative working supports inclusive practice. Effective collaboration is underpinned by a clear mutual focus on meeting the needs of individuals. It is supported by clear lines of communication, and a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. It is enhanced by a culture of respect, which values the perspectives and contributions of everyone involved.

Effective collaboration is particularly important during times of transition. For children and young people with additional support needs, transition both within and between environments and settings requires careful management to ensure that all support information is passed on effectively.

Partnership with parents and carers, and learners

Parents and carers

Parents and carers can provide deeper insight into their child's feelings about school; their abilities, likes and dislikes, interests, hobbies, language, and culture. These insights can be invaluable when trying to tap into the individual's motivation and can lead to improved outcomes in the education setting, at home and in the community.

When a child has additional support needs, parents and carers help practitioners understand how these needs might impact on their child in the education setting and at home, and the wider implications for the family. Sharing information regularly supports early identification of concerns and early intervention.

The learner's views

Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) gives children the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, including their education. Children's views should be taken seriously, in line with their age and maturity. Children with additional support needs aged 12 – 15 have rights to be more involved in the decisions that affect them.

Information Note

Reflect on any barriers a child or young person may face to sharing their views and plan accordingly. A small number of children and young people may well have complex additional support needs, including communication. Their views must still be sought. If you are not sure how best to go about this, you can speak to your colleague with lead responsibility for additional support for learning.

What do I do? Things to try

- Open, honest relationships
- Mutual understanding, respect and trust across professions and services
- Mutual recognition of time constraints and pressures
- Shared understanding of systems and procedures
- Promote an environment and culture which is welcoming, and respectful and affirming of everyone's contributions.
- Clear and open means of communication
- Communication which is jargon-free
- Joint target setting

With parents/carers:

- Parents/carers should be fully involved in all decisions and their permission should be sought to share information with partner services and agencies where required.
- Parents/carers should know who to contact if they need any information clarified.
- Clear and agreed routes for two-way communication should exist. Ask parents/carers how they would prefer to share information.
- Use face to face discussions or phone calls in addition to notes for parents/carers who experience challenges with literacy.
- Ensure that any communication is free of jargon and that any important points are summarised or reiterated.
- Show consideration of social and cultural differences and provide support so parents/carers can gain an understanding of the local school systems and curriculum.
- Ensure that parents/carers who have English as an Additional Language (EAL) are aware that the school will provide an interpreter for all meetings and discussions if required. Ensure all parents/carers are aware that they can bring someone with them for support.
- It can be helpful for practitioners to remain aware of their own feelings, views, and judgements, and that the perspective and expectations of the parent/carer may differ. It is equally important to bear in mind that the home experience of the learner may be different from that in the education setting.
- For meetings, it is helpful to provide an agenda and a list of the names and roles of those who will be attending the meeting in advance. Where possible, arrange meetings at times of the day or week which accommodate the parents'/carers' lifestyle. Follow up with a summary, a timeline, who will be responsible for which action

Resolving disagreements

- Most concerns and disagreements can be resolved simply by speaking to the child/young person, their family and other colleagues.
- Be proactive and show that you're taking any concerns seriously.
- Open, honest, and early communication often helps avoid minor concerns escalating into relationship breakdown.
- Remember, you are part of a team you can reach out to.

Information Note

- Encourage parents and carers to get independent advice and support from Enquire and other services.

Further reading, resources, and professional learning

[Enquire](#) is the national source of information and guidance around additional support needs in Scottish schools which provides information and guidance for parents and carers, professional and young people. Here you can find further information about effective partnership working with families.

[My Rights, My Say](#) supports children aged 12-15 to use these rights. It is independent, confidential, and easy to use, and designed to make sure the voices of children with additional support needs are heard.

The [CALL Scotland](#) website is a reliable source of information and support around supporting learners with communication support needs.