Inside:
Baby CJ gets to know his Named Person
Welcome
to the second issue of our Wellbeing magazine

Parents as partners in Getting it right for every child
Kristina Woolnough shares a parent’s perspective

Bill puts wellbeing at its heart
Answering questions about the Children and Young People Bill

Spotlight on the role of the Named Person
How it’s working in Angus and Ayrshire

Our guest writer
Kristina Woolnough

Play time
The importance of nurturing children through play

Finding their forever family
How the Adoption Register is changing lives

A sense of perspective
Relationship Helpline provides confidential and anonymous service for all

Agents of change
Disabled young people take their ideas to Holyrood

Making a splash
Why children need to play outside - whatever the weather

Our guest writer for this issue is Kristina Woolnough, parent and Edinburgh representative of the National Parent Forum of Scotland.
I believe there is nothing more important than the wellbeing of our children and young people. Our innovative approach – which we call Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC for short) – aims to make sure that everyone involved in the care of our children works together to ensure that the wellbeing of every child is at the heart of our public services, and that families get the support they need when they need it.

In this issue we’re telling some real-life stories about how our approach is already working in practice.

You can find out how health visitors and teachers have embraced GIRFEC as we hear from two people with the key role of Named Person, Katrina Szimaitis in Ayrshire and Jennifer Scott in Angus. And Kristina Woolnough – parent of three and Edinburgh representative of the National Parent Forum of Scotland – gives us her personal take on what GIRFEC means to parents.

I saw for myself just how much children love playing in the open during National Play Day back in August.

Our feature on play echoes the words of Scotland’s sports ambassador, Judy Murray (pictured above right) who says: “Providing kids and parents with play spaces is incredibly important.” Judy’s Set4Sport programme shows parents how they can play an active role in their children’s physical development by playing simple, fun games at home using everyday household objects.

And that was what happened in play spaces across the country. All it took was some basic props and a lot of enthusiasm. We all need to make sure children get that time and freedom – and not just when the sun’s shining!

GIRFEC is about what is best for children and young people. Quite simply it’s a way for those who support children to work differently, making sure children and their families and carers have available a single point of contact if they need support. Everything we do for and with children and young people – whether that’s Curriculum for Excellence, our programme of early years initiatives or our approach to care and justice – works towards the same goal: nothing is more important than that we all try to get it right for every child and young person.

I hope you will enjoy finding out more about how we’re already creating a Scotland where the rights of children and young people are not just recognised, but rooted deep in our society and our public services.

Aileen Campbell
Minister for Children and Young People

www.scotland.gov.uk/girfec
As a parent of three children, all of whom are either dyslexic or dyspraxic or both, when I first heard about the ambitions of ‘Getting it right for every child’ (GIRFEC), I was delighted. The main ideas of the GIRFEC approach were explained to me at a family support event held by the Support for Learning department at my children’s school. These specialist teachers were also really pleased with, and excited by, the ideas behind GIRFEC: here was an initiative...
which would draw professionals – from subject teachers and support staff to occupational therapists and physiotherapists – around those children who needed extra input and support.

GIRFEC would put children and young people at the heart of services, complementing Curriculum for Excellence, which puts children and young people at the heart of learning.

Like many parents who hear about GIRFEC, I was surprised that this was not already the case. It is hard for parents who are unfamiliar with the bureaucratic structures of our public services to understand or accept the complexity of those structures, particularly if those structures get in the way of services. For example, parents of children with complex needs cannot understand why key professionals don’t turn up to pre-arranged conferences about their child. By contrast, positive results and relationships occur when specialists such as occupational therapists share their expertise and knowledge with both parents and teachers. This ensures that a child can be more effectively supported on a daily basis, within the child’s existing routine. My family has benefited considerably from this latter collaborative approach.

From this parental perspective, GIRFEC makes complete sense. For me, the concept of the Named Person works because I will have a named and known professional with whom I can communicate any concerns or share any information. Parents are often frustrated and confused by not knowing who to contact, or by professional teams changing frequently. At times of pressure or concern, clarity will be a real benefit.

The principles of GIRFEC are embedded in the Children and Young People Bill which is going through the Scottish Parliament at the moment. The legislation has been introduced to compel all public services to conform to GIRFEC principles, which means local authorities and health boards will be accountable and ultimately responsible for ensuring that children are supported and can access the services they need.

It will challenge how and why our public services are delivered but as a parent, it seems to me that every possible means should be used to ensure that children and their families can access the support they need, when they need it.

I am sure it is much more easily said than done, but it is right to have the highest ambitions for our children’s wellbeing.
Bill puts wellbeing at its heart

The Children and Young People Bill will further the Scottish Government’s ambition for Scotland to be the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up.

It will do this by putting children and young people at the very heart of planning and public services, making sure those services are joined up, and by ensuring children’s rights are respected across the public sector.

There’s a lot in the Bill and some of the main elements of the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach will become legal duties. In other words, local authorities, health boards and other public bodies that come into contact with children will be required by law to put the approach into practice in their organisations.

These are just some of the questions we’ve been asked about the Bill, along with some short answers.

What’s happening with the Bill just now?
The Bill was introduced to Parliament on 17 April 2013. The Education and Culture Committee is looking at its general principles and is taking evidence from the Scottish Government, and a range of other organisations.

This is known as Stage 1 of the Parliamentary process for a Bill. Once the Committee has considered all the evidence, they will prepare a report of their findings. The Scottish Parliament will then debate those findings and decide if it can progress to Stage 2 which involves making any amendments to the Bill if needed.

Stage 3 involves a final consideration of the Bill by the Parliament and a decision on whether it should be passed or rejected.

How can I get involved?
You can watch the evidence sessions and the Committee debates on the Parliament website or you can arrange to visit Parliament when these are
Finding out more online:

More about what’s in the Bill:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/legislation/proposed-bill

To see the Bill and how it is progressing:
www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/62233.aspx

More about the Parliamentary process, including timeline:
www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/29800.aspx

A closer look at the role of the Named Person

A bond of trust

It’s obvious when you see Health Visitor Katrina Szimaitis with client Claire and Claire’s new baby, CJ, that there is a strong bond of trust between the two women.

“The concept behind the Named Person has been around for a long time,” says Prestwick-based Katrina. “It’s a strong nurse-client relationship that means families have someone they can rely on for encouragement, advice, support and professional guidance.”

Katrina – who’s been a health visitor for 12 years – says that what’s different with the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach, is that the role of health visitor is more widely and consistently recognised and valued among other professionals as well. “There are more and more ways for professionals to work closely together. For me, as the Named Person, this means I’m more aware of what’s happening with families on my caseload – and the impact something could have on a child’s wellbeing.”

For example, Katrina (pictured right) says the local police now tell her about every domestic incident they attend involving any family on her caseload. And local hospitals inform her about any visits to accident and emergency so she can offer appropriate advice and support. “Recently, a mum took her child to A&E with sticky eyes. That’s something the GP should be handling. I had a chat with the mum to make sure she understood this.”

Continued on next page
Katrina can cover up to 30 miles in a day and works to a timeline of planned home visits for families in Ayrshire and Arran. Health visitors in Ayrshire – where implementation of GIRFEC is well under way – become the Named Person when a baby is 11 days old, after care is transferred from the midwife. Health visitors and midwives explain GIRFEC to new parents, who are also familiar with it from the ‘Red Book’ – the child’s personal health record.

Mum of seven, Claire, has found Katrina’s support and advice invaluable. While 11-week old baby CJ is getting on well and is all smiles, his big brother Colby, two, has been causing concern. “I know they can be difficult when they hit two,” says Claire, “but I was worried about Colby’s behaviour – it seemed like more than that.”

She raised her worries with Katrina who says: “Colby’s language skills weren’t developing as you’d expect and Claire was finding his behaviour challenging.”

Katrina arranged for Colby to start nursery a bit earlier so he could meet other children and increase his social skills. Katrina also arranged appointments with a child psychologist, paediatrician and speech and language therapist, all of whom will work with Colby and his family to ensure he gets the best possible start in life.

Claire and her partner, Colin, are pleased and relieved Colby’s getting extra support. Colby’s child’s plan – drawn up by Katrina – sets out how different services will be able to support the family and Katrina hopes that this early action will get Colby back on track.

Across the Angus Council region, the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach is pretty much business as usual – in education and health services and linked in where needed to social work, police and the voluntary sector.

At Strathmore Primary School in Forfar, the language of wellbeing appears in the posters and artwork that adorn the walls of corridors and classrooms. The children have written and drawn about what the words ‘safe’, ‘healthy’, ‘achieving’, ‘nurtured’, ‘active’, ‘responsible’, ‘respected’ and ‘included’ mean to them.

(These are sometimes referred to as ‘SHANARRI’ for short.)

But it’s not just the children who understand what wellbeing means.
“In the simplest terms, GIRFEC allows us, as professionals, to make the right connections when we need to – to make sure that the children in our care get all the support they need, if they need it.” Head teacher, Jennifer Scott, is the school’s designated Named Person – a key part of the GIRFEC approach.

“If anyone – pupil, parent or carer – has a concern about a child’s wellbeing, they know they can bring it to me and I’ll make sure the right people are involved in planning appropriate support for that child and their family.” The aim, explains Jennifer, is to take a proportionate approach and, wherever possible, work out what can be done within the school to improve outcomes for a child facing challenges. “Of course sometimes we’ll need to escalate, but our first step would be to ask what additional services from within health and education might help get the child back on track,” explains Jennifer. Professionals and practitioners call this ‘staged intervention’. That could mean drawing in educational psychologists or speech and language therapists, for example. The work of the council’s School and Family Support Service is also key here and Jean Forsyth, who works across all the schools in Forfar, supports Jennifer’s team with issues like attendance and bullying.

Jean is one of a range of professionals who works in what’s known locally as the ‘cluster’ of services that are there to back up Jennifer (and other Named Persons in Forfar) if they’re needed.

Wherever possible, parents and carers are involved with these professionals in finding solutions and working towards an agreed set of improved outcomes. As Jennifer explains: “These are the answers to the questions, ‘So, what difference have you made?’ and ‘How do we know?’”

“When we first introduced GIRFEC here, there were concerns amongst head teachers in Angus that the role of Named Person would add to the workload,” says Angus’s Principal Educational Psychologist, Audrey Osborne. “But we’ve all come to realise that GIRFEC is really about doing what any good head teacher would be doing anyway. What it’s done is streamline processes so that once people are familiar with how staged intervention works, they can take action earlier, and make sure it’s targeted to an individual child’s needs. This is how colleagues in Angus are making it work.”

What Jennifer, Jean and Audrey are all agreed on is that using these streamlined processes has also – and most significantly – made a big difference to children and their families. “GIRFEC gives us all a common language to use and parents really get it. We’re talking about whether their children are safe or healthy or feel included. They no longer have to speak separately to lots of different professionals or use those people’s own jargon. If we think that a family needs support from a speech and language therapist and some additional support for learning then they will be invited to a single meeting where both those specialists will be present. And everyone will be talking SHANARRI,” says Jennifer.

Jacqui Williamson, Chair of Strathmore Parent Council, says, “Parents really appreciate how GIRFEC works in the school and across other services as well. If I’m speaking to another mum or dad and they’re worried about their child I always encourage them to speak to Jennifer – their Named Person – to get things sorted. And if necessary I offer to go with them – I think it’s that important.”
Proving that play can be whatever you make it, kids got stuck in to face painting, go-karting and bread-making at one of a number of play days organised across Scotland this summer.

In Leith in Edinburgh, two weeks of fun were organised by The Yard – with funding and support from Go2Play, a fund delivered by the Scottish Government through Inspiring Scotland. The £1.9 million fund has supported almost 10,000 hours of play activities across Scotland for over 12,000 children since it was launched last year. The idea is to support local charities like The Yard to help turn largely unused and often unloved land into a community asset that families can rely on to support play.

In Leith, the timing – towards the end of the school holidays – was welcomed by parents who said they found the simple ideas inspiring. And Megan’s mum said she was delighted that her children were getting the chance to take some risks – there were some bumps along the way as children learned to steer go-karts and stand upright on the slippery tarpaulin water slide.

“The important thing is to make sure children play on their terms,” says Juliet Robertson, Director of the Creative Star Learning Company and a member of the working group that shaped the Scottish Government’s recently-published Play Strategy.

She feels a strategy was vital to demonstrate how important play is – not just for children but for wider society as well. “We need to make sure our children have sufficient time, space and places for play. And there is a culture shift we need to make to become truly play-friendly. A simple
indicator is the number of ‘No Ball Games’ signs you can still see around the country.”

Outdoor play, says Juliet, is particularly important. There is mounting research suggesting children need to be outside, in nature, in order to thrive. According to the late David Ingvar, brain researcher and Professor of Neurophysiology: “It is necessary to be outside for our brains to be stimulated from the flow of sound, light, shapes and colours that nature provides. Especially between the ages of three and six, when the energy flow in the human brain is at its greatest.”

The priorities for the working group are for a Scotland which values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all children and young people. Juliet Robertson says that through the strategy, the group wants to ensure parents have access to support when they need it and so what can parents do to nurture their children through play? “Make time,” says Juliet.

“The important thing is to make sure children play on their terms.”

feel empowered and enabled to provide simple play experiences for their children. “And those should be experiences that don’t rely on the latest gadget, either,” she says. “We want nurseries and schools to ensure all children get access to free play at breaks and lunchtime – especially outdoors, and all year round.”

“Even just 10 minutes a day to play with your child, listen to them, have a conversation and laugh! Set sensible boundaries but give them freedom and trust to play with their friends. It’s their way of expressing themselves freely, exploring the world and making sense of it.”

Find out what the Scottish Government is doing to support play: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family/Play

Children were having fun all across Scotland on National Play Day on 7 August.

Events all around the country encouraged parents and children to join in den building, sports and obstacle courses as underused land was transformed into playgrounds of all shapes and sizes. Tennis star Andy Murray’s mother joined children and parents in Glasgow as they celebrated getting active.

Judy Murray helps celebrate National Play Day

Judy Murray (below right), who is Scotland’s sports ambassador, said: “I’m wholly supportive of the Scottish Government’s initiative to develop opportunities for children to play actively. It’s crucial that exercising becomes a way of life in the early years because that can help make us a fitter, healthier nation in the long term.”

Photo of Judy Murray: Malcolm Cochrane Photography
That’s how Pat (not her real name) describes the moment when she and her husband saw photos and information about the two girls who are now in the process of becoming their adopted daughters. They were at one of the Scottish Government-funded adoption exchange days designed to match children in need of families with families who are approved adopters.

The exchange days are part of a wider project operated on behalf of the Scottish Government by the British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) and called Scotland’s Adoption Register. While children do not attend the exchange days, their details — including photos and sometimes video clips can be shared in a secure and supportive environment. It’s a chance for social workers to showcase children who are looking for their ‘forever’ family.

The aim, as BAAF Project Manager, Sue Brunton explains, is to increase “permanence”. In other words, to try and reduce the number of children in temporary care who are waiting to be adopted – and to encourage more people to think about adoption.

“Adoption has tended to be managed on an area-by-area basis,” explains Sue. “Local authorities mainly concentrated on placing children within their own geographical boundaries. Some had joined forces but there was no national, Scotland-wide resource.”

The Adoption Register is a way for social workers across the country to share details about children in their area with a much wider pool of potential adopters.

“Finding their forever family

“As soon as we saw our girls’ details, we just knew.”
As well as the exchange days, there is a national, secure database that connects children who have a plan for adoption with approved adopters. There’s also a quarterly newsletter called, “Scottish Children Waiting”.

Fife Social Worker, James Ross, says that without the adoption exchange days two young children he has been working with would still be without a permanent home. “Permanent families mean better outcomes for children,” he says. For James, one of the most positive aspects of the exchange days was the chance for face-to-face meetings with prospective adopters from across the country. “We could really bring the children to life – and we could get a good sense of what the families had to offer,” he says.

James has seen positive changes in both children’s behaviours since they were placed with their new families.

Finding out about children in other parts of the country made the difference for Pat. She says: “We’d been approved as potential adopters for a sibling group... but there weren’t any sibling groups available in our local authority area. We were totally committed to adopting and when we heard about the exchange day we made a 130-mile round trip to be there.”

“This isn’t the traditional way of doing things,” says James Ross. “But we all need to think more creatively in order to maximise the outcomes for these children.”

Although Pat admits she felt slightly overwhelmed when she first got to the exchange day, she echoes James’s positive take on the experience. “It’s a really good thing to do. The girls were the first children whose details we saw and I just knew they were for us. It really opened up new avenues of conversation and communication.”
A sense of perspective

“I’m finding it hard to get along with my teenage step-daughter...” “I’m worried my wife’s having an affair...” “Why can’t I seem to hang on to a boyfriend?” “My neighbours are doing my head in...”

Relationships touch every part of our lives – and can sometimes cause confusion, stress and unhappiness. Getting some perspective to help sort things out could mean the difference between a family staying together or being split apart.

We all need someone to talk to sometimes – and if times are tough, bottling things up might not be helpful.

But it can be hard to know who to turn to – especially if the problem lies in a relationship with a family member, partner, friend, colleague or neighbour. Extended families with step-children can be a common cause of tension as well.

The idea behind the Relationship Helpline is to offer a confidential and anonymous service to anyone who is going through a hard time – whether it’s something relatively minor or a much bigger problem. That could be difficulty with step-families, worries about a partner or spouse, or how to talk to your kids.
“There’s no need to suffer in silence. We’re there to act as a sounding board, someone to understand, offer a different perspective or just a chance to offload.”

As Jen Graham, the Helpline’s Manager, says: “There’s no need to suffer in silence. We’re there to act as a sounding board, someone to understand, offer a different perspective or just a chance to offload.”

The Helpline team, all of whom are professionally trained, can also signpost callers to other appropriate services – including the face-to-face counselling which is also on offer.

The Scottish Government-funded Helpline recently expanded to include Scotland’s first live relationship web-chat service. Instant messaging links clients directly with a member of staff. It’s proved a hit with people who prefer going online rather than picking up the phone – especially if it’s hard finding a quiet place to call from.

Clinical Supervisor, Mary Dick says the Helpline is being promoted across Scotland, by psychotherapists, street pastors and GPs. “I think people like the fact that the Helpline is instantly accessible so there’s no waiting for appointments – and we really do cover any and every type of relationship.”

“This is about normalising support – the Helpline isn’t the same as counselling – it’s more like a community support that anyone can access,” says Chief Executive, Stella Gibson.

“We want people to realise that it’s absolutely fine to ask for a bit of help, advice or support – and that doing this sooner rather than later might help stop things getting to crisis point.”

New telephone counselling service now available

The Relationship Helpline now has a new way to access relationship counselling in Scotland. From October 2013, people can also get telephone counselling. The Relationship Helpline offers immediate advice and support, and where people need more in-depth and structured help, they can go on to access telephone counselling as well. The new service aims to make counselling much more accessible. Whether you live in a remote and rural location, in a village, town or city, you can now access expert relationship counselling in whichever way you choose, with the cost of the call free from landlines and most mobiles.

You can phone the Relationship Helpline on: 0808 802 2088 or go online at: www.therelationshiphelpline.org
Calls are free from most mobiles and landlines.
Agents of change

Some of life’s challenges can seem even more daunting if you’re a young person with a disability.

Using public transport, dealing with bullying and making sure their voices are heard are just some of the issues disabled young people may need some extra support with.

“I wanted to see if I could make a change in my life, and I have.” That’s how Kirsty Johnstone sees her involvement in a project which explored ideas for improving the wellbeing of disabled children and young people.

Supported by Young Scot with Scottish Government funding, young disabled people describing themselves as ‘agents of change’, went to the Scottish Parliament to share their recommendations with service providers, national and local government and other bodies.

At Holyrood they met Minister for Children and Young People, Aileen Campbell who said: “I appreciate the time and thought these young people have invested in bringing their views to Parliament. As a Government we are doing all we can to empower and involve disabled young people in our communities. I value every opportunity to hear their views on how to make things better.”

Kirsty, from Glasgow’s Rights to Reality (R2R) group said: “I didn’t want to feel isolated anymore.” Among other things, the R2R group suggested more opportunities for disabled people to travel in groups on public transport – at present, most buses and trains can’t accommodate this.

Other groups had suggestions about making sure retailers and restaurant owners were more aware of disability issues – and that they understand the law.

There was also a call for more support for disabled young people who are being bullied – including making people aware of the effects bullying can have. Meanwhile, the Kindred group from Edinburgh focused on advocacy support, saying more disabled young people should be able to understand what it is and how to access it.

Myles Goldsmith from Kindred said: “We need to feel as though we’re getting our voices heard and we need someone to speak up and say, ‘Excuse me, but this kind of treatment is not on.’ Being at Parliament is so important to me because we get the chance to share our views with others.”

Rights are about making sure people are treated well and get a fair deal. Agents of change used their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to support them to join and form groups, enabling them to speak up and have their opinions listened to. For more about rights, have a look at www.sccyp.org.uk

Every single child and young person in Scotland has the right to be safe, healthy, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included – and to achieve positive things in their life.

Disabled children and young people are no exception – the GIRFEC approach sees every child or young person as an individual and ensures their wellbeing is at the heart of any support they might need.

Look out for the Agents of Change final report soon on: www.youngscot.net