

Item 7 - Question Time

To the Chair of the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee

“Given the Council’s commitment to GIRFEC and the Highland model with a commitment to every child having a named person, can the Chair reassure Highland families that this is not an intrusion by authorities into people’s private lives but is there to provide support to parents and families when they need it?”

Response to Mr H Fraser

I am delighted to confirm that the named person role, which has been operating in Highland since 2008, is about enhancing support for children and families, and bears no resemblance at all to the wildly inaccurate and unhelpful comments that have been made by some fringe organisations, as has been reflected recently in the media.

The named person role was introduced in Highland, because families said they wanted to know who they could go to, if they had a concern or question about their child’s wellbeing. The role is set out in our Practice Model guidance, as the first point of contact for the child and parents or other agencies, and the named person is able to access help, support and advice to support families.

As members will be aware from briefings, all evaluation and inspection over the last eight years makes clear that the Practice Model is proving to be highly effective in getting more early support to more children, and reducing the number of children with higher level needs. At a time when the number of looked after children, and the number of children at risk of harm, have been increasing across Scotland, they have been reducing in Highland because of the implementation of the named person role and other aspects of the *Getting it right for every child* programme.

That is why the programme has been introduced in legislation, and is now being implemented across Scotland, with similarly positive outcomes.

The suggestion that the role is intrusive or changes the relationship or responsibilities between a parent and child has been rejected in the most senior law courts in Scotland. Lord Carloway made clear that “all that the legislation does, is provide a suitably qualified professional who can, if necessary, act as a single point of contact between the child and any public service from which the child could benefit. The named person, available to assist a child or parent, has no effect whatsoever on the legal, moral or social relationships within the family.”

The Highland Children’s Forum make clear that “we strongly support the named person role, because we have consulted with children and young people with additional needs and their families and they support it. Getting it right for every child

and the named person is about making access to services simpler for families who have children and young people with additional needs. These families need and deserve these simpler routes to the support that they require.”

Similarly, Save the Children state that “parents, as well as children, have valued the extra support of the named person, as somebody with whom they can raise issues at an early stage and who can support them to get a clearer idea of what is going on with their child or with any support that they might need.”

I am pleased that various organisations and practitioners in Highland have contributed to this very significant enhancement of services for children, helping to get greater and more effective support to families, thereby also reducing the number of children who require greater levels of intervention.