

# **Effectiveness of Current Statutory Guidance which supports Part 3 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014: Consultation Analysis**

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# Introduction

## Background

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, placed a requirement on local authorities and health boards to present evidence to the Scottish Government in a Children's Services Plan which clearly sets out and demonstrates the actions planned, taken and delivered to improve outcomes for children and young people in their area. The first statutory Children Service's Plans were submitted to the Scottish Government in March 2017.

## The Guidance

To assist local authorities in developing their Plans, statutory guidance was issued by Scottish Ministers under section 15 of the Act. It provides local authorities and health boards, working in partnership with other public bodies and organisations, with information and advice about how they should exercise the functions conferred by Part 3 (Children's Services Planning) of the Act.

An earlier consultation carried out by the Scottish Government in 2016<sup>1</sup> showed that, on the whole, the statutory guidance was well received, was clear and was seen as appropriate in its approach. There were some concerns among respondents about how it would work in practice, including capacity of partners to deliver and others stressed that it would be challenging but essential to engage with children and young people in developing Plans.

## The Consultation

In advance of the next reporting cycle, and to support the programme of strategic engagement with local Children's Services Partners, the Scottish Government ran a second formal consultation to test whether the content, scope and format of the statutory guidance was still helpful, fit for purpose or whether it should be modified, amended or improved to further enhance and build on the support available. The consultation opened on 25 March 2019 and closed on 17 June 2019.

A total of five substantive questions were asked. Three contained both a closed response component and an open-ended field to allow respondents to elaborate on their response. One invited closed responses only, and the other invited only qualitative comments.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-analysis-guidance-childrens-rights-part-1-section-2-childrens/>

## Responses Received

A total of 48 responses were received (46 from organisations and two from individuals).

A good mix of organisation ‘types’ contributed, with responses from local authorities and their affiliates (14), children and young people’s support organisations (12), NHS and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) (6), third sector support organisations (6) and additional support needs providers (2), among others.

	Number	Percentage
Organisations	46	96%
Individuals	2	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

No campaign responses were received, and only a small number of respondents provided near identical responses. As they came from different contributors, all were counted as separate, legitimate responses.

## Approach to Analysis

Most responses (n=41; 85%) were submitted directly via Citizen Space, the Scottish Government’s online consultation portal. The remaining seven responses were submitted directly to the Scottish Government by email.

All who contributed written responses were asked to submit a Respondent Information Form (RIF) alongside their consultation response, indicating if they were willing for their response to be published (or not). Just over half of respondents (n=26; 54%) indicated that they were content for their response to be published alongside their name. A large proportion (n=19; 40%) were content for their response to be published without their name and the remainder (n=3; 6%) indicated that they did not wish their response to be published.

All responses were read and logged into a database, and all were screened to ensure that they were appropriate/valid. None were removed for analysis purposes. Although some responses to individual questions did not directly address the questions being asked, all feedback was analysed and is presented under the appropriate sections below.

Closed question responses were quantified and the number of respondents who offered supportive/unsupportive answers to each question is reported below. The percentage of respondents who said ‘yes’ or ‘no’ and who provided ‘no response’ to each question is also shown. As percentages relate to small raw numbers of respondents, these should be interpreted with caution.

Comments given at each open question were examined and, where questions elicited a positive or negative response, they were categorised as such. The main reasons presented by respondents both for and against the content included in the consultation were reviewed, alongside specific examples or explanations, alternative suggestions, caveats to support and other related comments. Verbatim quotes were extracted in some cases to highlight the main themes that emerged. Only extracts where the respondent indicated that they were content for their response to be published were used and a decision was made to anonymise all responses as part of the reporting process.

## **Report Presentation and Research Caveats**

Findings are presented as they relate to each question in the consultation in turn. Where people provided no response, this is noted separately from cases where respondents indicated that they had no further comments or were unsure.

The tables below show the difference in views expressed by the respondent group as a whole. Where there was a difference in view expressed by respondent type (e.g. individuals, organisations or specific 'types' of organisations), this is picked up narratively in the report. As a guide, where reference is made in the report to 'few' respondents, this relates to three or fewer respondents. The term 'several' refers to more than three, but typically less than ten. Any views expressed by large numbers of respondents (i.e. ten or more) are highlighted throughout.

Finally, although a large number of responses were received overall, it is worth stressing that the views presented here should not be taken as representative of the wide range of stakeholders invited to respond to this consultation, nor should they be generalised too broadly. They simply reflect the views of those individuals and organisations who chose to respond. The analysis of responses was also carried out independently and the report presents the analytical conclusions reached by the independent research team. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Scottish Government or Scottish ministers.

# Effective Development of a Children’s Services Plan

The first part of the consultation sought general views on the extent to which the statutory guidance assists partners in the development of Children’s Services Plans.

Q1. Does the statutory guidance provided to date assist in the effective development of a Children’s Services Plan?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	32	67%
No	9	19%
No response	7	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

Just over two thirds (67%) of respondents agreed that the statutory guidance assisted in the development of Children’s Services Plans. One in five (19%) did not and the remainder offered no response (14%).

Q2. What part(s) of the guidance were most helpful or least helpful? How could the guidance be enhanced to strengthen the effective development of a Children’s Services Plan?

When asked which parts of the guidance were particularly helpful/unhelpful and what, if anything could be done to improve the guidance, all respondents gave a response. It should be noted that several of the comments provided to this question mirrored those made in response to later consultation questions, and several respondents used this question to provide a ‘catch all’ view which incorporated their feedback on the guidance overall.

## Strengths of the Guidance

Many offered generally supportive comments around the structure and clarity of the document in helping to guide Plans, including the clear headings which guide the reader:

*“During the 2017 drafting of the first 3-year Integrated Children’s Services Plan...the statutory guidance offered a clear framework to draft the Plan. Those involved in the work welcomed the guidance which was well laid out and comprehensive.”*

Comments were also made that agencies were now familiar with terminology/established protocols and language used in the guidance and so it would be even easier to implement going forward.

Other highlighted strengths of the guidance included:

- that it outlines the legislative and policy context for the development of Children's Services Plans (including reference to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014); and
- that it offers explicit definition of terms throughout, in particular with regard to the responsibilities of partners and what constitutes early intervention/primary prevention (although the message to prioritise this could be strengthened).

*“All parts of the guidance contribute to the provision of a clear and detailed overview regarding what is required and who should be involved in and contribute to the development of a comprehensive and inclusive Children's Services Plan.”*

Specific content that was particularly welcomed included:

- Section 8 - Requirements to Prepare Children's Services Plans, especially the step-by-step guide in relation to Review, Mapping, Consultation and Analysis of Population;
- Section 9 - Aims of Children's Services Plans, especially the emphasis on integrated services (although some of the additional description under each of the aims could be shortened or signposted digitally, it was suggested);
- Section 10 - Children's Services Plan Process, and the detail surrounding consultation in relation to who best to consult on the Plan and the process whereby people can participate within the consultation;
- sections that highlight that consideration should be given to services provided to adults by virtue of their role as children's parents or carers (such as parenting classes, support groups, etc.). Services that support families, including those focused on parents, play a vital role in supporting children's wellbeing and outcomes, and a comprehensive and coherent Plan should seek to ensure they are carefully considered, it was stressed;
- Appendix D, which summarises what constitutes an effective Plan; and
- explanation of links with other Statutory Plans and Reports, including reference to community planning/Community Empowerment Act.

Having the process set out in a step-by-step fashion was particularly welcomed:

*“The guidance helpfully outlines the strategic planning process, from strategic assessment and analysis of need to identify a manageable and meaningful number of evidence-based key priorities, as well as a focus on outcomes, performance indicators, baselines, monitoring, review and governance.”*

Stressing that Plans should be underpinned by a Children's Rights framework, i.e. Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)<sup>2</sup>, taking into account intersectionality and structural inequalities was also seen as a key strength of the document:

*"It makes strong reference to Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), noting that GIRFEC involves both universal and targeted services to support children and young people with different types and levels of need."*

More generally, comments were made that the guidance allows sufficient flexibility for local areas to tailor Plans in line with local priorities:

*"...it allows local areas to have flexibility to determine priorities which are most prevalent and beneficial to their areas - recognising that one size/approach does not suit all."*

*"The stated commitment to not overly prescribing the practical realisation of the Plans has been positive and has allowed for adaptability within our local approach to the Plan."*

## **Weaknesses with the Guidance**

The main weaknesses identified with the guidance were length and complexity, a need for greater clarity around how Plans fit alongside other planning duties, benchmarking and putting in place better mechanisms for ensuring compliance with the guidance, especially around engagement.

### Length and Complexity

Although many noted that the guidance was thorough, it was suggested it may be too lengthy and complex as a document (making it inaccessible). There was some indication that it could also be repetitive in parts, especially the 'Interpretation' and 'Introductory' sections of the document which could be streamlined. Sections 11 and 13 were also specifically mentioned as areas which could be refined with better cross-referencing or moving of some material to the Appendices:

*"The guidance could be enhanced to strengthen the effective development of a Children's Services Plan by being shorter and more succinct with more explicit detail building on the information in Appendix D."*

Suggestions were made that a summary level document with illustrations may be particularly helpful, as well as including checklists, templates and case study examples:

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<sup>2</sup> GIRFEC is the Scottish Government's approach to supporting children and young people. More information is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>



*“...we would suggest that the guidance would benefit from being more succinct and visual with diagrams and flow-charts outlining suggested processes with key milestones for the development of Plans.”*

Others urged the development of a separate document which would be accessible to a wider (including non-professional) audience to honour and further bolster the commitment to transparency and accountability set out in the guidance:

*“We strongly suggest that an Easy Read version of the guidance be made available for those who do not have statutory responsibilities but have a potential role in the planning process. The guidance could also be complemented with visuals such as flow-charts to help explain key stages within the planning process.”*

*“We believe that the guidance, or a separate, more accessible resource, would be of interest and use to those who wish to influence the planning, design and delivery of services, including communities and the organisations representing and working with them. On that basis, we would like to see appropriate resources produced to support all groups and individuals, including children, to engage in the development of a Plan.”*

Linked to this were comments that the guidance, as drafted, is ambiguous about who Plans are for. Reference to Plans “telling a story” which can be understood by affected families were contradicted by comments such that the Plan should be comprehensive in its scope, it was felt. The latter may suggest that Plans are solely for a professional/practitioner audience. Clearer guidance on the main audience of the Plan would be beneficial to avoid any confusion, it was suggested.

While flexibility of the guidance was seen as a strength by many, it was seen as a weakness for a minority who suggested more clearly prescribing what was expected in terms of content. One respondent suggested that it would be helpful if there could be one section which sets out the minimum requisites which must be contained and referenced within the scope of Children’s Services Plans while another suggested that more guidance on format and style was needed:

*“Useful framework and reference tool to the group co-ordinating the developing of the Plan. However, the guidance was a bit vague in providing a clear steer for format and style for our Plan. In this sense the guidance could have been more simple and directive.”*

One respondent suggested that there was a risk that, if local partnerships follow the guidance, it may result in lengthy Plans which are inaccessible for staff as well as being inaccessible to children, young people and their families.

A few other specific comments around changes to wording were put forward. Firstly, that the document should refrain from using ‘best value’ as it “*weakens the need for full human economic costs to be taken into consideration*” when preparing a Plan. Secondly, use of the term ‘children’ throughout the document may, by its

very definition within the guidance, exclude care leavers and thus fail to facilitate addressing their transitional needs from care to care leaver, it was suggested. References to Looked After and Accommodated Children (LAAC) could be updated to Care Experienced Children, it was suggested and there was also scope to include reference to trauma informed approaches throughout.

### Cross-referencing Planning Requirements

Several comments were made that there was a need for greater consideration of how Children's Services Plans fit with other planning requirements, and for this to be more clearly explained in the guidance. It was felt that, while the guidance had been helpful to date, and was generally fit for purpose, an evolving planning landscape meant that the guidance needed to be updated to reflect this, and enable greater cohesion between different planning demands (especially Corporate Parenting Plans):

*"The guidance would be more helpful in our opinion if it set out clearly the links between the Children's Services Plan (CSP) and the range of other planning requirements such as Corporate Parenting Plans; Child Poverty Action Plans, etc. It would be useful if the guidance could demonstrate that the CSP could be the overarching framework."*

Several public sector respondents in particular commented on limited resources in the face of competing demands and urged cross-referencing or streamlining of requirements, if possible:

*"Currently the abundance of new duties and subsequent reporting demands specifically in relation to multi partnership/agency plans e.g. Corporate Parenting Plans, Early Years Plans, Child Poverty Plans, Community/ Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs), Outcome Delivery Plans, Employability Plans, etc. means that the place for a Children's [Services] Plan is unclear. As a result of new legislation on local authorities especially, the demand on the resources of all partners at a strategic and operational level to participate in the wide range of planning requirements to prepare and deliver all of the Plans required by a wide range of legislation is very significant."*

Others, including children's services providers, suggested that clearer explanation of the rationale for the myriad of reporting demands was also necessary:

*"It would be a great help if the Scottish Government could provide a clearer rationale for the range of reports and plans currently required, and of their relationship to one another - not just a description."*

### Links to Wider Policy Landscape

The guidance should also be updated to reflect wider current policy, it was felt:

*"We believe the guidance needs to more clearly connect with national practice and policy frameworks, particularly as some of these policies have emerged*

*since the statutory guidance was written including child poverty planning and Local Outcome Improvement Plans.”*

This included more explicitly linking Plans to GIRFEC, the Fairer Scotland Duty<sup>3</sup>, Equally Safe<sup>4</sup> and to government commitments to tackle child poverty, it was stressed.

### Strategic Commissioning

On a related note, some comments were made that the ‘strategic commissioning approach’ to children’s planning may be too challenging given differing budget arrangements between partners as well as the different contexts in which each local authority works. Those working in the third sector may also be susceptible to unstable funding in the future, making the approach vulnerable, it was suggested:

*“...there should be an explicit focus in the guidance for Plans to focus on sustainable futures for non-statutory services that deliver key GIRFEC priorities.”*

Some examples of how local authorities have developed local commissioning processes in relation to the Children's Services Plan would be helpful, it was suggested, as well as more information about the strategic commissioning process and how it can be embedded into the planning cycle:

*“...we believe the procurement of services could be more joined up with the planning process. Guidance on purchasing practice, in keeping with the rights-based and co-production ethos being developed with regard to children’s services planning, will help ensure it reflects the priorities identified in the Children’s Services Plan.”*

One respondent specifically suggested that it would be helpful for the guidance to reference the potential for collaboration across local authority boundaries in the preparation and delivery of Children’s Services Plans. Others suggested including reference to the importance of joint strategic commissioning and how this could assist in the delivery of priorities (drawing on examples of good practice, if possible).

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<sup>3</sup> The Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in April 2018. The duty places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland to pay due regard to (actively consider) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome, caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions.

<sup>4</sup> Scotland's Strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. For more information see: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/equally-safe/>

## Benchmarking

A small number also suggested that there was a need for greater clarity around measuring impacts of the Plans and that this could be more clearly set out in the guidance:

*“It would be very helpful to have a clearer, more coherent framework of outcomes to work towards and a core national data set to monitor impact. We appreciate that specific outcomes have not been set in order to allow flexibility and to recognise local needs and context, however, consideration should be given to more prescriptive outcomes as a guide.”*

Several others questioned the availability and quality of existing data to inform planning, and to ensure consistency of measurement between areas (especially health needs data):

*“The lack of a nationally agreed data set of high-level indicators - health, education, social work, housing, wellbeing, economic measures (child poverty, positive destinations etc.), means that local partnerships cannot benchmark. Many meaningful high-level indicators exist that would be hugely useful especially for the determining local need but in the absence of a clear direction to use and importantly report on them and benchmark across the country, is a lost opportunity.”*

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Adding consistency to benchmarking processes and adding more uniformity to the data that are available to inform planning was welcomed:

*“As a collaborative, our experience of drawing together performance data is perhaps unique and, in our view, there is potential for the use of a consolidated minimum dataset which draws on and extends the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for Scottish Education, Local Government Benchmark Framework and National Care Standards as a tool for benchmarking purposes.”*

Clearer identification of the different outcome measures that must be reported was urged (as well as the data required to complete risk assessments).

## Compliance and Engagement

Another issue identified by a small number of respondents was the potential for guidelines and policies to be ignored at the operational level. Some suggested that there may be inconsistencies between agencies using/implementing the guidance

and that there was a role for greater accountability<sup>5</sup>. Related to this, there was a perceived lack of accountability and the complaints system was described by one as being insufficiently robust.

Several specifically spoke about the guidance failing to be implemented insofar as insufficient engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including children, young people and families (also discussed more in response to later consultation questions):

*“Although the guidance refers to consulting with children and young people and members of the community it is important that they are involved at every stage of the preparation of any Plan. We feel that this area needs strengthened and the language used in the guidance is not as accessible as it should be.”*

The lack of representation in engagement activities was seen to be particularly acute in rural areas, as well as for young people with additional support needs and their families, people living in poverty, transient families, those at risk of criminality<sup>6</sup> and those experiencing domestic abuse:

*“...while there are examples of good practice when developing Children’s Services Plans, this is inconsistent across Scotland. Members identified issues such as tokenistic engagement opportunities, a lack of joined up collaborative working, a lack of engagement with children who have experienced domestic abuse and insufficient prioritising of - and investment in - domestic abuse prevention and early intervention. While we appreciate that the statutory guidance can only go so far in engendering effective development of Children’s Services Plans, there are areas in which it could be strengthened to further encourage good practice.”*

It is crucial, it was felt, that marginalised groups are fully involved in the development of Children’s Services Plans to ensure that the needs and views of some of the most vulnerable children and young people inform local priorities and actions. Plans (and their development) should also be gender sensitive, it was stressed and case studies and examples may be useful for highlighting how a Plan can include all. Alternatively, providing examples of tools and models of engagement could help planning partners to engage more effectively with communities, including the most disadvantaged groups, it was suggested.

One organisation recommended that, while the guidance currently highlights that it is important to listen to the voices of those with lived experience, this should instead be presented as an embedded requirement.

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<sup>5</sup> One respondent suggested the relationship between the Care Inspectorate and the guidance needed to be articulated more clearly

<sup>6</sup> One respondent also suggested that it was not clear why youth justice strategies are listed separately to what should be considered under Children’s Services Plans and questioned the appropriateness of this

## Adding Clarity

Other suggestions for adding clarity to the guidance included:

- further detail on the requirements of other key statutory partners besides local authorities and health boards, as well as clarifying the obligation (or not) of Ministers to participate in or contribute to the preparation of Children's Services Plans;
- more detail around information sharing and updating the guidance to reflect GDPR, acknowledging the importance of respecting individuals' rights and of having a lawful basis to share personal information;
- that the guidance should reflect, reference and make links to The Independent Care Review 12 intentions as well as aligning any future guidance with the findings from the Independent Care Review, where possible;
- offering more clarity on what is meant by 'related services';
- requiring a housing contribution statement to be included in Plans;
- earlier referencing and cross-referencing of the Realigning Children's Services (RCS) programme;
- raising the profile of mental health and wellbeing in the guidance including a focus on best to facilitate and support collaborative, cross sectoral, cross organisational working to support child and adult mental health;
- raising the profile of mental health and wellbeing in the guidance including a focus on best to facilitate and support collaborative, cross sectoral, cross organisational working to support child and adult mental health;
- stressing the importance and opportunities brought through Corporate Parenting across the country and the role Corporate Parents play in relation to Children's Services (including demonstrating areas of accountability, as well as opportunity for consistency across the country in good practice);
- setting out more clearly the need to identify any gaps in evidence used to support Plans and, where necessary, for planning partners to conduct or commission further research or analysis to ensure that Plans meet the needs of all children in the local area;
- discussing transitions, setting out links to adult services and making clear the importance of their contribution to better outcomes for children;
- elevating and making more explicit the importance of youth justice as an explicit priority within Plans; and
- making reference to Children's Rights more prominent in the document. Specifically, reference to Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments (CRWIAs) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in the guidance could be strengthened (with changes to the guidance considering how the incorporation of the Rights can be embedded in public services at all levels).

*“By mapping out the impact of children’s rights and wellbeing against the services provided, this will not only safeguard the wellbeing of children but will also highlight any action that is required to be taken to prevent needs affecting the wellbeing and rights of children from arising. This helps to ensure that children, young people and families get the right support at the right time.”*

The schematic diagram was broadly welcomed but views were expressed that this maybe needed to be updated and developed further to map the current landscape of policy and legislation for planners and ensure all staff understand they have a place in the Children’s Services Plan.

Some comments were made that feedback on the Plans which were submitted in the first reporting cycle may also be helpful to inform the next wave, and let authorities see how they could improve as well as making better use of best practice examples and collaboratively developed materials:

*“Acknowledge the journey so far. The guidance was not the start of the planning journey for Children’s Services Partnerships. There is a significant history and experience to build from- What worked well? What improvements developed? Although it may not be fitting for inclusion in the guidance itself, are there opportunities to identify and share best practice?”*

*“The most effective way to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the guidance is by examining how the guidance has been interpreted by the local authorities in the production of their Children’s [Services] Plan and that is the lens through which these questions have been answered.”*

*“We think it would benefit from more examples of where good practice is currently in place, especially around the areas we continue to be most challenged by. The idea of practice materials to sit beneath the guidance may contribute to improving the planning process.”*

Finally, several comments were made in response to this question which urged constant refreshing of the document to reflect current policy developments and other advances (including the national commitment to reduce child poverty):

*“The current guidance states that planning partners should reflect the national commitment to reducing child poverty within the Plan. The policy context for this has changed significantly since the development of the guidance and this must be reflected in any update to the guidance. We believe it is fundamental that Children’s Services Plans reflect the importance of tackling child poverty, and make tangible and effective commitments to contribute to achieving these national outcomes within their local area, in line with their local child poverty action reports.”*

# Consultation in Advance of Planning

The second part of the consultation focused specifically on the requirement for partners to consult others in preparing their Plans.

Q3. Does the statutory guidance provide sufficient advice on how widely you should consult in advance of developing a Children's Services Plan?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	32	67%
No	8	16.5%
No response	8	16.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

Again, just over two thirds of respondents (67%) agreed that the guidance provided sufficient advice on consultation. Around one fifth (16.5%) did not agree and the remainder offered no response (16.5%).

## Widening Engagement

In general terms, respondents welcomed that the guidance encouraged broad consultation:

*“The current guidance helpfully emphasises, in line with the Christie, report that service developments must empower individuals and communities receiving public services by involving them in the design and delivery of the services they use; and that public service providers must be required to work much more closely in partnership, to integrate service provision and thus improve the outcomes they achieve.”*

Respondents were also asked how, if at all, the guidance could be improved to enable effective consultation and engagement with local stakeholders during the preparation of a Children's Services Plan.

Many again reiterated points made in response to the earlier question, around the need to ensure that marginalised and vulnerable groups in particular are considered equal stakeholders in the planning process and are appropriately engaged as such:

*“We believe that the guidance could be more explicit in stating the need for planning partners to effectively and meaningfully engage with local communities, including children and families, in the development of the Plan, and that particular efforts should be made to engage the most disadvantaged groups, including families experiencing poverty.”*



Those living in poverty, those living with domestic abuse, those at risk of offending, those with physical disabilities and/or those with additional support needs were all seen as particularly important to engage. Those living in rural areas may be particularly difficult to reach using standard consultation mechanisms and may require special attention/different strategies to engage, it was stressed.

Consultation and engagement with local stakeholders should be relevant, diverse and adequately reflected in final Plans and some indicated that there was inconsistency with which the guidance had been interpreted and applied to date:

*“...the views of certain groups of children and young people are not always being included in the current planning process. For example, vulnerable children such as those with disabilities and additional support needs appear in some cases not to have been included due to the lack of appropriate support during consultation and engagement.”*

To maximise engagement, approaches should be accessible, it was stressed, and this could be reinforced in the guidance:

*“Consultations need to be soft touch, face-to-face and supportive and held in primary locations within community settings. The community needs to feel it is being listened to and supported in the design of future services.”*

Some suggested that Plans should go beyond being ‘informed’ by user voices and should be ‘co-produced’ with service users and saw this as something that the guidance should encourage (i.e. direct involvement in planning rather than consultation alone):

*“We recommend that children’s services planning should move towards co-production with communities rather than remain limited to consultation.”*

Encouraging partners to engage with the independent sector (including independent schools) could be advanced further in the guidance too, as well as engaging with parents (including Parent Councils):

*“Local authorities need to find ways to reach parents, rather than the typical online survey hosted on their website consultation page that many parents aren’t aware exists. At the very least these consultations need to be in easy read format, quick and straightforward to complete and heavily publicised where families are, for example parents suggested noticeboards in school playgrounds, supermarkets, libraries, community centres and public toilets; but also in local newspapers and on local radio as well as in leaflet drops.”*

## **Involving Children and Young People**

Many welcomed the strong acknowledgement in the guidance that planning partners should give particular attention to obtaining the views of children and young people across all ages, socio-economic groups and types of need but there

were also several views that this part of the guidance could be strengthened even further:

*“We would like to see the guidance strengthened to advise that planning partners are expected to give particular attention to engaging with children, including those experiencing poverty, in the development of a Plan...In order to ensure equity and to develop services that truly meet the needs of all services users, especially those who are most disadvantaged, specific emphasis must be placed on the need to engage these groups meaningfully in service planning.”*

Several respondents felt that there was scope to highlight the importance of hearing children’s voices more explicitly throughout the guidance, to ensure that partners do not view this as discretionary, but as mandatory. Some perceived that engagement with children and young people may be tokenistic, if not given more prominence throughout the guidance:

*“There should also be stronger language in the guidance around involving children in the development of Plans, for instance echoing the wording of the statutory guidance on Part 1 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which sets out the importance of involving children in developing Children’s Rights Reports and potential processes for doing so effectively, ethically and meaningfully.”*

Again, advice on engaging particularly vulnerable or hard to reach children and young people could be enhanced:

*“The guidance could be strengthened to make it clear that local authorities and health boards are expected to give particular attention to the views of children, young people and families. The engagement process should also be inclusive, and should pay attention to groups who are more likely to struggle with participation such as children with additional support needs or asylum-seeking and refugee families.”*

Examples of good practice for engaging with children and young people with lived experience already exist, especially in the third sector, it was stressed and these could be better utilised/drawn upon by planning partners. Making better use of Youth Councils could also be encouraged and account could also be taken of The Independent Care Review 1000 Voices - a local Champion Board. The Children’s Commissioner 7 Golden Rules for engagement could also be referenced/included in the guidance.

## **Engaging Professional Partners**

Importantly, variability in approaches to engagement were not limited to engagement of communities, but also to engagement of professional partners, including national organisations (e.g. Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA)) and local practitioners, such as throughcare and aftercare workers. Additional guidance on how all local planning authorities should equally involve

such partners would be welcomed to ensure that Plans more accurately capture the realities of service delivery on the front line. It may also mitigate against local variability in delivery (discussed more below).

While it was appreciated that different local authorities would involve different partners, as appropriate, a general list of potential groups to be consulted may be beneficial, it was suggested. This should take note of the different capacity levels (e.g. paid employees in the public and third sector organisations compared to volunteers) and the guidance should continue to refer to the National Standards for Community Engagement, some stressed.

Again, greater aligning of service specific planning and reporting requirements would facilitate better and more consistent multi-agency working, it was suggested:

*“Currently each professional area is required to report on progress and performance in line with their specific professional requirements. If there was a way of amalgamating the number of reports requires by Scottish Government across Education, Social Work and Health, that would be a significant improvement in relation to the promotion of genuine multi-agency working for children’s services.”*

Outlining more explicitly the expectations and responsibilities of other lead partners, such as Police, the local Third Sector Interface and/or other statutory partners in terms of involvement in the development and consultation of the plan was also suggested. National awareness raising about Children's Services Planning may also assist engagement from stakeholders, it was posited.

One respondent also noted that it was equally important for local authorities and health boards to include their own staff in the consultation process and this could be presented in the guidance.

## **Sharing Methods and Signposting Support**

Partners should be encouraged to share and publish the methods used to consult with the wider community or other service providers within their authority as part of the Plans, it was suggested. Sharing of methods may give others insight into new/different approaches that they could also adopt and would provide valuable context to Plans.

Indeed, offering more guidance around what is expected in terms of consultation was urged, in addition to signposting of support aimed at facilitating this task:

*“We believe that the guidance sets out clear expectations that there should be consultation with children and families. However, we think it could be improved by providing or signposting to further advice and support on how to go about this, how to make it meaningful, and how to reach more disadvantaged groups. It should also reflect the challenges of engaging with young children, and support to do this effectively.”*

Providing sample consultation engagement tools or case studies of successful engagement approaches was suggested by many respondents. One organisation also suggested the development of a planning resource or toolkit which includes case study examples of good practice, specifically in key areas of issue for people with learning disabilities such as transitions and parenting.

Making additional specific support and guidance available to planning partners around how to undertake meaningful engagement with more disadvantaged groups and with children, in particular, was seen as key. To date, it was felt that community engagement often excluded the hardest to reach groups.

Having a checklist of who to consult was suggested, to ensure that there were no gaps. Many third sector support organisations, in particular, also expressed a willingness to share their existing consultation skills and experience with statutory planning partners to help them improve their own approaches.

## **Other Suggestions for Improvements**

Other more general comments included:

- offering more guidance on time required to carry out formal consultation, including a timetable for planning engagement activities; and
- giving those named within Plans an opportunity to provide feedback/respond to the document following consultation.

*“The document as a whole is large and involved and, on this basis, it could be off-putting or intimidating for some stakeholders, especially with newly involved individuals. If it has not already been done it would make sense to develop a consultation guide or worksheet in relation to the various sections of the Statutory Guidance. This approach would allow an experienced facilitator to lead consultation sessions with a clear structure and focus with an effective method of engagement and recording views and responses.”*

Overall, there was a sense that while the guidance was already strong in encouraging consultation, it could be strengthened to better guide practice (without being overly prescriptive). The tenet of the document could also be changed to make clear that consultation is only one part of a wider ideal for continuous involvement of communities in the planning process, building on existing strategies that are already employed locally:

*“The ‘consultation’ in the preparation of a Children’s Services Plan is one mechanism amongst a broad range of activities, practice and actions that seek to develop continuous dialogue and engage children, young people and families as genuine partners. Our own aspirations...are to integrate engagement and participation of children, young people and families into all aspects of our partnership activity - assessing need, feedback on services, identifying priorities and service development.”*

# Encouraging Inter-agency Collaboration

The third part of the consultation explored the role of the guidance in supporting, enhancing and strengthening inter-agency collaboration.

Q4. Do you agree that the guidance supports, enhances and strengthens inter-agency collaboration?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	27	56%
No	9	19%
No response	12	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

Over half of respondents (56%) agreed that the guidance supports, enhances and strengthens inter-agency collaboration. One in five did not (19%) and the remainder gave no response (25%).

## Reducing Variable Practice

The importance of multi-agency working is highlighted throughout the document, but one of the main concerns raised was that, while the guidance should, in principle, support inter-agency working, there was sporadic compliance around the country with differing levels of support and input to the process among partners in different localities.

While some areas already have good inter-agency working arrangements, others do not, it was suggested and this impacts on how well the guidance is being implemented. Cited features of 'what works' included strong leadership in local inter-agency relationships, effective communications (including all partners reading relevant reports), nurturing and building up relationships over time, active understanding of different partners' roles, awareness of specific challenges being faced by different partners and a shared set of values to underpin the working relationships.

There was suggestion among a small number that funding decisions (including budget allocations to local authorities by the Scottish Government) may be negatively impacting on working relationships in some areas as they come too late to allow local services to plan together with confidence. The guidance could usefully reiterate priorities for spend, it was suggested:

*“Reductions in core budgets inevitably have an impact on how services are delivered and how plans are implemented... This can often lead to a trade-off between providing services which are aimed at prevention and those which are*

*identified as being a priority for the Scottish Government...The guidance should emphasise that local decision making - and the funding to support this - should be focused on preventing poor outcomes for children and young people.”*

## **Encouraging Shared Ownership**

Respondents were also asked how, if at all, the guidance could be enhanced to emphasise the importance of multi/inter-agency integrated collaboration in the preparation of Plans and the delivery of services. One of the main suggestions was reinforcing the message of ‘shared ownership’ which was, again, seen to be variable around the country at present:

*“The degree to which Plans represent shared ownership and vision between agencies is variable, it is unclear to what extent these Plans represent the priorities and agendas of the range of agencies working with and for children within the localities.”*

Small changes to the wording and presentation of the guidance could also be made which emphasise the importance of inter-agency collaboration and shared ownership of Plans, it was suggested:

*“By making it clear at the outset that the Children’s Services Plan is the joint responsibility of the local authority and the relevant health board, the guidance may inadvertently signalling to others that their contribution and/or responsibility to contribute is lessened. We would seek a change in emphasis which stresses the value of planning on a truly multi-agency basis...We would welcome guidance which reflects more clearly the benefit of extending the planning group beyond those two statutory agencies.”*

One organisation suggested the production of a framework document to help stress the importance of inter-agency collaboration in the preparation of the Plan and in service delivery:

*“A framework document could indicate what kind of time commitment is required for this planning work, so that [organisation] staff can dedicate time and give advanced thinking to the work. It could indicate what a local authority should be recording and against what kind of timescales. Statistics on their own are not always useful - the framework could indicate what statistics can be used for and also how they could be used... this kind of approach could minimise input and maximise effect for our managerial staff - but also for staff across the local authority involved in the development of the Children’s Services Plan.”*

Similarly, organisations of different types suggested that the guidance could be enhanced by agreeing a suite of national indicators that all partners could work towards across agencies.

## Third Sector Involvement

Providing greater clarity about the role of the third sector was seen as particularly important by a large number of respondents. The nature and level of involvement of third sector partners in developing Plans was seen as particularly inconsistent around the country:

*“Although in some cases the specific and additional work provided by third sector or other agencies is included within the Children’s Plans, this is not consistent across the local authorities. In contrast, in some Plans the focus is very much on what can be provided by statutory services. This may be as a result of different procurement timescales or commitments but in those cases, this does leave the Plan looking incomplete which is problematic in terms of being able to measure outcomes as a result of the aims or ambitions of a Plan but also by definition keeps those other agencies at arms-length and discourages buy-in. If all of the agencies involved in the aims and intentions of the Plan were involved from the start, and were fully consulted in the preparation, this may encourage greater investment on their part in ensuring the Plan was fully achievable and subsequently achieved.”*

*“The role of the third sector as a partner in strategic development could be re-enforced to ensure effective use is made of the knowledge and experience that this sector can bring in supporting families through generic and specialist service provision.”*

*“While we recognise the importance of allowing flexibility so the planning partners may shape their own approach in reference to their local context, it would be helpful to provide greater clarity about the role of the third sector, including the Third Sector Interface (TSI). Local Third Sector Interfaces play a valuable role in the broader consultation and planning process, mediating or coordinating responses from across the third sector. The guidance should also explicitly advise local authorities and relevant health boards to consider how they can support and resource TSIs to do this effectively.”*

Involving the third sector and community representatives as active and equal members of planning groups could be further encouraged, it was felt (beyond including them only in consultation). Although third sector contribution is already highlighted and there is a clear message about collaborative work in the existing guidance, this should also be monitored to ensure that it happens in practice, it was suggested. This should include better signposting to local Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs)<sup>7</sup> and more consideration of how TSIs can be supported and funded to work with planning groups.

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<sup>7</sup> Third sector interfaces (TSIs) provide a single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within local areas. There is a TSI in each local authority area in Scotland

## Other Suggestions for Enhancing the Guidance

Other suggestions to emphasise the importance of inter-agency collaboration in the preparation of Plans and the delivery of services included:

- offering examples of good practice of collaborative working;
- including a general list of potential partners to be involved in the process (e.g. a 'national directory');
- ensuring better communication between strategic decision makers and communities;
- making roles and remits of different partners even more explicit (especially the role of Corporate Parents, including their accountability);
- suggesting ways for inter-agency groups to self-evaluate their planning;
- clearer guidelines on transitions processes from child to adult services (including communication between partners working in both areas); and
- recording/minuting discussions or decisions which inform the final Plan to ensure transparency/auditability and to protect against individual agencies introducing bias.

Several respondents also commented that the guidance should cross-reference other advice/policy in relation to inter-agency working in children's services planning, including making reference to the Children's Charter, Framework for Standards, the National Guidance for Child Protection, Common Core and policies covering child poverty, addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), closing the attainment gap, Health and Social Care Plans, etc. It should also link to the Fairer Scotland Duty. The refreshed guidance should highlight the advantages of connecting each of these to achieve a greater impact collectively, it was suggested.

It was also posited that stronger alignment of national policy would better support co-ordination of strategic planning at the national, regional, and local level.

Overall, comments seem to indicate that while the content of the guidance does support inter-agency collaboration, adherence is variable. This could potentially be improved by closer monitoring/evaluation and reinforcing the importance of inter-agency collaboration within the document:

*"The guidance has the potential to enhance and strengthen inter-agency collaboration but it is essential that adequate monitoring and evaluation is implemented in order to ensure effective collaboration and delivery."*

*"The guidance should highlight the effectiveness of collaborative working and how it can create a pathway for children that meet all of their needs, rather than delivering an assortment of services that does not meet needs or provide the interventions required to ensure better outcomes for children."*



# Supporting Practitioners and Staff

The final question in the consultation explored the role of the guidance in supporting practitioner delivery of Plans.

Q5. Does the statutory guidance support practitioners and staff in delivering the contents of the Children’s Services Plan?

	Number	Percentage
Yes	16	33%
No	21	44%
No response	11	23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100%</b>

This question attracted the least positive response overall, with only one third of respondents (33%) expressing that the guidance was supportive of practitioners in delivery. Almost half (44%) said that it was not and the remainder gave no response (23%).

## Clarifying Scope

One of the main reasons for not supporting this statement was that the guidance should not seek to do this, as ‘Operational Plans’ would likely exist alongside Children’s Services Plans (which were seen as more strategic documents). As statutory guidance, it was seen as appropriate that the document make reference to Plans being implemented without also referencing operational considerations:

*“We do not believe that the role of this statutory guidance is to support practitioners and operational managers in delivery, given the complexity and variety of service delivery across Scotland. We consider that the statutory guidance exists to support strategic managers across partnerships, and it is for local agencies to then provide guidance and direction to operational staff. As such, we do not think changes to the statutory guidance in this regard are necessary.”*

*“Part 3 guidance is primarily strategic in nature and therefore most relevant at an organisational level to senior and strategic leaders in its current format. While senior leaders set the direction of travel for practitioners within respective organisations/services, this is not covered in much detail within the current statutory guidance. Guidance such as Part 4, 5 and 18 (and others) would have greater direct relevance to frontline practitioners and operational managers.”*

The Plan, rather than the guidance, should support practitioners to deliver local priorities and actions, it was felt.

## **Improving Accessibility**

While many felt that supporting delivery was outwith the scope of the guidance, respondents were asked how, if at all, the statutory guidance could be enhanced to enable Plans to support practitioners and operational managers with the delivery of local priorities and actions.

The main suggestion was making the document more accessible to front-line staff by simplifying the language, removing technical jargon and shortening the document overall (similar to views expressed in response to earlier questions):

*“More succinct and clearer guidance with user friendly language would help practitioners and operational managers understand the Plan is a working document that sets out clear actions, measures and outcomes that focuses on the children and young people they work, this would be assist in making the Plan a more meaningful ‘working’ document.”*

Again, including case studies of ‘strategy translated into action’ for practitioners and managers would be helpful, it was suggested.

A shorter summary document for practitioners was also suggested:

*“If it is one purpose of the guidance, then briefer and more actionable content could be helpful in achieving it. For instance, providing sample (non-statutory) templates for reporting may be useful. These could cover, for example: How the partnership has delivered joint training/development/conferences, etc.; Actions taken to join up commissioning; Checklist of groups for consultation and space to record briefly what was done; and Clear cross-references / links to relevant quality frameworks such as Care Inspectorate for children in need of care and protection.”*

Few operational staff would read the full guidance in its current format, it was felt. Production of a summary may, therefore, increase accessibility of the guidance and support engagement in the planning process.

## **Linking Plans**

Again, (as raised elsewhere in the consultation), making clear to practitioners where the Children’s Services Plan fits in the hierarchy of other Plans that may be required by the Scottish Government (and encouraging a streamlining approach), would also be beneficial and reduce possible duplication of effort:

*“Local authorities are operating in a complex and cluttered planning and reporting environment, the complexity of which is not fully acknowledged in the current guidance. Refreshed guidance would greatly benefit from including clearer links to the wider strategic planning landscape.”*

Similarly, other local strategic documents should also link clearly back to the Plan to ensure that practitioners understand how each relate and how they (and communities) can implement change:

*“The guidance should require clearer links back to the strategic plan in all action plans and resource decisions that sit beneath it. We would suggest strengthening the content relating to reporting requirements, which should include how the Plan and related activities have contributed to the overarching aims of children’s services, and from our perspective, most importantly, how these are preventive and early intervention focused. Not all Plans are clear on how this shift is going to be achieved. In addition, it would be very helpful to translate the strategic plan into an action plan that people in communities and providers can relate to, in terms of what specific differences it will make in their local areas.”*

If to be used by practitioners, the guidance could also usefully encourage operational staff to cross-reference Children’s Services Plans to the individual Plans that they produce, to make sure that they are congruent, it was suggested:

*“Have the guidance emphasising to practitioners in the delivery of services that there is a clear need to ensure that individual care plans are in line with the key elements and commitment contained in the Children’s Services Plan... This cross-referencing will more ensure priorities are met and the focus the child/young person’s wellbeing is contributed to by with all services and agencies agreeing the priorities that are in line with the Children’s Services Plan.”*

The guidance could also be more helpful for practitioners if a more prescriptive guide were provided around the kinds of data that local authorities and their partner service providers should be collating in order to fully understand the needs of children and young people within their authority (with specific reference to including data on numbers of children and young people with learning disabilities in each local area). This would help both identify potential priorities in the coming years and aid in the measurement of impact in the longer term, it was felt.

Local authorities and relevant health boards should ensure that relevant national outcomes and objectives are reflected in the Children's Services Plans and it would be helpful to have national outcome links in the guidance, it was suggested.

Similarly, if more co-ordination or interconnection was made between the Children’s Services Plans and Community Planning Partnerships and the Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs), this may enable greater clarity in planning and identifying need and responses across local authorities. Further clarity on how to achieve this could be included in the guidance.

## **Accountability**

Clearly setting out expectations of accountability for delivery of the plan at all levels of the workforce was also suggested as a way of enhancing the guidance:

*“There could be more explicit detail about the responsibilities of practitioners and other front line staff (or their operational managers) to implement the outcomes/interventions/changes in partnership outlined in a Children’s Services Plan and how these are intended to align with the other plans that they work to. This is important as transformation of services may be required and sharing of budgets across sectors to ensure actions are well placed to meet priorities.”*

Similarly, clearly setting out priorities and objectives which are clear, measurable and rational and which can be monitored in the short and medium term would be welcomed. Linking these to wider reporting demands was again seen as helpful:

*“A clear, concise and comprehensive overview of these legislative demands would greatly help in making clear to practitioners and staff how the various reports and plans have a clear purpose and rationale in supporting them to improve outcomes for Scotland’s children and young people.”*

## **Other Suggestions**

Other suggestions for making the statutory guidance more helpful in supporting practitioners and staff in delivery included:

- lengthening the period of the Plan from 3 to 5 years (with annual reviews) to allow for effective implementation and make the impact of improvements more apparent. This would also promote a longer-term strategic focus, it was suggested;
- creating more opportunities for showcasing good practice and effective partnership working (especially in relation to working with marginalised and at-risk groups);
- offering advice to practitioners to ensure that Plans are co-produced with communities and hard-to-reach groups (drawing on practitioners’ skills/experience); and
- better enforcement/more accountability for non-delivery.

Finally, although not directly answering the question, some comments were also made about increasing budgets to expand or extend provision of local support services for children and young people (to enable Plans to be better implemented and positive outcomes to be met). Similarly, it was suggested that Self-Directed Support (SDS) for children should feature in the guidance.

Overall, it seems that while some small changes could be made to the guidance (including production of a summary document) to help practitioners, this was considered by many to be outwith the scope of the guidance. On the whole, it was supported in its current guise for meeting its core purpose:

*“The guidance sets out clearly how the Plan is able to support practitioners and operational managers to deliver the local priorities and actions and is sufficient for our purposes.”*

# Discussion

The consultation attracted a strong response from a broad mix of different stakeholders as well as a small number of individuals. Most respondents provided a good level of detail in their open-ended responses, setting out reasons for their agreement or lack of agreement with each of the questions asked.

## Overview of Findings

	Yes	No	N/R
Q1. Does the statutory guidance provided to date assist in the effective development of a Children's Services Plan?	67%	19%	14%
Q3. Does the statutory guidance provide sufficient advice on how widely you should consult in advance of developing a Children's Service Plan	67%	16.5%	16.5%
Q4. Do you agree that the guidance supports, enhances and strengthens inter-agency collaboration	56%	19%	25%
Q5. Does the statutory guidance support practitioners and staff in delivering the contents of the Children's Services Plan	33%	44%	23%

While the majority of respondents gave positive responses with regards to the effectiveness of the guidance in developing plans, advising on consultation and strengthening inter-agency collaboration, fewer than half felt that the guidance, at present, supports staff and practitioners in delivery. This was mainly because respondents felt that it was outwith the scope of statutory strategic guidance to shape operational practice, rather than it being perceived a weakness of the document *per se*.

## Cross-Cutting Themes

A number of cross-cutting themes emerged across the consultation including:

- that the existing statutory guidance is helpful, but could be strengthened by supporting planning partners to **effectively engage children, families and communities** in the development and delivery of Children's Services Plans;
- throughout, the importance of **early intervention and prevention** should continue to be stressed as a priority;
- creation of shorter, more **succinct guidance that is accessible** to all would be welcomed. Similarly, the guidance could be clearer about the need for a

Children's Services Plan to be accessible, meaningful and accountable to a broad range of people in the community, including children;

- more guidance on how Plans should **reflect the needs of some of the most vulnerable and hard to reach children and young people**, including those with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, those living in criminal contexts, in abusive and/or transient households;
- stressing the **Rights of service users to be heard** in the planning process;
- **best practice examples** and use of case studies could be used to good effect to enhance the guidance throughout;
- greater recognition may be needed of **wider strategic planning frameworks** which local authorities are required to adhere to and ways of streamlining planning activities (including consultation activities) could be explored (especially linking the Plans to Local Outcome Improvement Planning);
- scope for **improving communication between strategic decision makers and practitioners** in how Plans should be implemented, and what issues should be prioritised locally;
- opportunities to show **connected purpose in reporting**, to minimise duplication in data collection and reporting;
- the guidance could be enhanced by agreeing a **suite of national indicators** that all partners could work towards across agencies;
- changing the wording of the document may encourage more **shared ownership** of Plans beyond local authorities and NHS boards alone;
- scope for better **involving and utilising third sector partners** in the planning process overall (drawing in their unique skills and experience) with the guidance reinforcing this message; and
- better **monitoring and evaluation of compliance** with the guidance.

The main point, it seems, is that it could be made clearer in the guidance how Children's Services Plans fit alongside other ongoing reviews and planning commitments to ensure that a congruent approach to improving outcomes for children and young people is achieved.

## **Sector Analysis**

Although the numbers of respondents in each 'type' of sector makes analysis of differences unreliable at the quantitative level, some observations were made regarding differences in views expressed by those representing different sectors and/or issues which might differentially effect those working in the public, private or third sector domains.

Sector	Emergent Concerns
Public Sector (Local Authorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more cohesion needed in the planning landscape</li> <li>• Plans should specifically link more explicitly with Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs) and the guidance should offer assistance on this</li> <li>• further clarity on data required to fulfill various planning requirements and where these overlap to avoid duplication of effort and lead to a more effective planning process</li> </ul>
Public Sector (Health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more clearly delineate the role of Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) in the delivery of Plans</li> <li>• lack of national and board level health needs data (including data to allow health changes to be evidenced)</li> <li>• mental health issues to be brought more to the fore in the guidance</li> </ul>
Private Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• stressing the importance of including private sector partners to ensure planning on a truly multi-agency basis</li> <li>• encouraging partners to engage with the independent sector (including independent schools) could be advanced further in the guidance</li> </ul>
Third Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• local authorities and health boards should be encouraged to have third sector representatives as active and equal members of planning groups</li> <li>• better signposting to local Third Sector Interfaces and more consideration of how TSIs can be supported and funded to work with planning groups</li> <li>• more clearly defining the role of the third sector on planning groups and stressing the added value that their involvement can bring</li> <li>• making better use/learning from Third Sector skills and experience in community engagement</li> <li>• uncertainty with third sector budget commitments can make some partnership relationships unstable</li> </ul>
Volunteers/Non-specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the guidance should encourage more involvement of those working in volunteering roles, e.g. Parent Councils and volunteer support workers, for more rounded and comprehensive Plans to be produced</li> <li>• more accessible and non-technical guidance is required for non-specialist audiences</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• guidance on how Children's Services Plans link with Corporate Parenting Plans (encouraging Scotland's Corporate Parents to improve the everyday lived experience and outcomes for those with care experience through the Children's Service planning process)</li> </ul>

Overall, respondents supported the principles set out in the guidance that planning should be truly multi-agency, and but felt there was scope for greater clarity of roles and guidance on how to include the full range of partners, and their respective skills and expertise.

## How Findings Link to the Earlier Consultation

Many of the findings from the current consultation mirror findings from the earlier consultation<sup>8</sup>, including:

- a need for the guidance to connect with wider policy and legislation;
- further detailed guidance being needed regarding consultation with children and young people as service users, especially the most vulnerable and hard to reach individuals; and
- the need for more accessible guidance to maximise reach.

As with the earlier consultation, most respondents were broadly supportive of the guidance in supporting the *development* of plans, but felt that the scope should not extend into *practice* guidance. Although more guidance on implementation is perhaps needed, this was seen as something to be separately addressed.

## Next Steps

The findings from the consultation analysis will be published and will be used alongside the learning from the Children's Services Strategic Engagement Scotland-wide programme of visits to Children's Services Strategic Partners local areas, which ran from 5 October 2018 to 10 June 2019.

## Conclusions

Overall, the guidance was viewed positively and as being fit for purpose, subject to some minor changes. This involves streamlining the document and making it more accessible, ensuring that it better reflects the current planning and policy landscapes and further strengthening advice around involving partners from the third sector to maximise efficiency of plan production and effectiveness of delivery.

Respondents commented that they were pleased to have been given an opportunity to respond to the consultation and inform the future refinement of the guidance. Stakeholders also seem keen to share best practice, exchange knowledge and skills and learn from the first round of reporting to ensure the effectiveness of Plans going forward.

All shared the aspirations of the guidance and Children's Services Plans to improve outcomes for children and young people in Scotland.

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<sup>8</sup> Available at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/consultation-analysis-guidance-childrens-rights-part-1-section-2-childrens/>





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