

ONE FOOT IN SWEDEN, THE OTHER IN SCOTLAND. WHAT DOES ONE NOTICE?

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Six years ago, I arrived in Sweden with my young family, filled with high hopes for what I would learn here. As a Social Worker with a background in children and families work, I had long admired the Scandinavian model, where children are recognised as citizens and the UNCRC is championed, parents are supported with high-quality childcare, and poverty is mitigated by a robust welfare compensation. My colleagues in Scotland saw my move as a pilgrimage to the pinnacle of children's welfare.

You can imagine my surprise, when I soon discovered that Sweden was looking to Scotland's system, particularly the GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child) framework, as a model to learn from. Reflecting back, I recalled the excitement whilst witnessing the launch of GIRFEC in Scotland in the summer of 2005. Standing in the packed conference hall of the riverside hotel in Glasgow as a graduate in Education and Social Services, integrated service provision, I felt exhilarated. The hope in the room was palpable: we believed the system would change, we knew what children, young people, and their families needed and wanted, and we knew what practitioners needed. Finally, a government initiative had packed all that knowledge into a new policy framework with its own glossy practice manual, promising to revolutionise support for children and families.

My career in Scotland led me through residential children's services, child protection social work, and therapeutic children's support. I worked with and within GIRFEC, promoting its values, developing joint working practices, and grappling with the policies challenges. Over the past five years in Sweden, I have engaged in numerous discussions about GIRFEC and its potential to adapt the system in Sweden. I have worked with many GIRFEC-inspired projects and facilitated informative discovery trips to Scotland for regional and municipal leadership, practitioners, and academics. Observing the differences in the systems and cultures of Scotland and Swedish children's welfare services, I recognise that after 20 years of GIRFEC, many similar challenges remain in Scotland as in Sweden.

My work at Linnaeus University with the Connected Children research programme has provided a new perspective, a third lens, allowing me to critically analyse and compare the two systems.

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So what have I noticed with one foot in Sweden and the other in Scotland? In this presentation, I will explore key themes, drawing on my experiences and the ongoing dialogue between Sweden and Scotland in the field of children's welfare, that have led me to ask the research question: How do children's welfare service actors in Scotland navigate institutional, organisational, and interpersonal challenges during interprofessional collaboration within the GIRFEC framework