

“Learning together”

Scotland’s national action plan on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home 2018 - 2021

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The Scottish Government and CoSLA would like to thank:

- the National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFs) for the completion of the independent review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act, published in May 2017, which helped to inform the vision, goals and actions contained in this plan.
- the members of the national Parental Engagement Steering Group, the Scottish Parental Involvement Officer Network (SPION), the Association of Directors of Education and the various national agencies who helped develop or contribute actions to the plan.
- the headteachers, parents and third sector employees who provided input to the independent review of parental involvement which helped to inform this plan.



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Definitions

Child/Children: When the plan refers to “children” or “child” it means a person under the age of 18.

Parent/s: The term “parents” means anyone with parental responsibilities and others who care for or look after children or young people. The plan acknowledges that individual family units will comprise a wider range of people who might also contribute to a child’s learning at home experiences. Although the plan is titled a ‘parental’ involvement and engagement plan, there are a wide variety of parenting roles. The plan recognises the important role of grandparents, kinship carers, foster parents, wider family (uncles, aunts, cousins) and separated parents. The term “parents” and “parents and carers” are therefore used interchangeably throughout this plan.

Parental Involvement: Parental involvement describes the ways in which parents can get involved in the life and work of the early learning and childcare setting or school or the ways that parents can get involved in “schooling”. Parental involvement includes activities such as parental representation in the development of policies, improvement plans and key decisions. It can include involvement in the life and work of the establishment, for instance through volunteering opportunities. Parental involvement can also include help with homework or keeping track of children’s work and on-going, two-way communication between home and school or early learning and childcare setting.

Parental Engagement: Parental engagement is about parents’ and families’ interaction with their child’s learning. It can take place in the home, at school or in the community. Where it takes place is not important. The important thing is the quality of the parent’s engagement with their child’s learning, the positive impact that it can have and the interaction and mutual development that can occur as a result of that interaction.

Family Learning: Family learning encourages family members to learn together as and within a family, with a focus on intergenerational learning. Family learning activities can also be designed to enable parents to learn how to support their children’s learning. ‘Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage’ (Scottish Family Learning Network, 2016)

Learning at Home: Learning at home is the learning which happens in the home, outdoors or in the community. It can take place through everyday activities that families already do and can overlap with aspects of organised or active learning activities.

“Parental Involvement / Engagement is” Quotes

Throughout this plan you will find “parental involvement is...” and “parental engagement is...” quotes. The quotes have been gathered from parent organisations, education agencies, educationalists and parents themselves. They are intended to capture what the terms mean in practice.

Foreword

Improving the education and life chances of our children and young people is our defining mission.

But it is vital that we recognise that it is parents who are the primary educators of their children.

The plan sets out a vision for parental involvement and engagement for the next three years. It covers the journey that a child takes from pre-birth to age 18. It takes account of the national and international evidence base as well as policy and practice expertise across the Scottish education system. It contains 13 goals and 52 national actions. It provides a national vision but it allows for local and community innovation and flexibility. Importantly, it highlights the leadership of those who make the difference day in and day out: parents and families, teachers, headteachers, managers, practitioners and other partners.

This plan is based on the guiding aim of Getting it Right for Every Child. It is informed by the central role of the family, whatever form that may take. The theme that lies at the heart of this plan is relationships - relationships based on trust, mutual respect and collaboration.

We would like to thank the National Parent Forum of Scotland for their work in conducting an in-depth review of the impact of Scotland's Parental Involvement Act – a review which has helped to influence this plan. We would also like to thank the national parent organisations, local authorities, parents and all of the national agencies who have collaborated in the development of this plan.

We are delighted to endorse this plan, and the activity that will be taken forward under this plan, as evidence of the commitment by both national and local government to parental involvement and engagement.

We look forward to working with a wide range of partners to deliver this plan in the coming three years.

John Swinney MSP

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Councillor Stephen McCabe

CoSLA Spokesperson on Children and Young People

Purpose

“Parental involvement is...throwing open the doors and saying come on in.”

“Parental involvement is...throwing open the doors and heading on out...”

Parental involvement and engagement are not ends in and of themselves. They serve a purpose, and that purpose is to support the learning and development of children and young people. This plan is based on three key principles:

1. That our priorities and our approach should be guided by the needs and interests of the child and their family.
2. That parents are the primary educators of children.
3. That it is only through positive *relationships* – relationships between families, and those working with children and young people, relationships based on trust, mutual respect and partnership - that we will achieve our aims.

We start from a strong foundation. The National Parent Forum’s [Review of Scotland’s 2006 Parental Involvement Act](#) (published May 2017) confirmed that Scotland’s Parental Involvement Act (2006) has helped to “support a step-change in the quality of parental involvement across Scotland”. Practice across Scotland has evolved considerably since Scotland’s Parental Involvement Act was brought into force in 2007.

This plan aims to raise the bar yet higher.

The guiding vision is that every parent and family should be supported to be involved and engaged in their child’s education throughout their learning journey.

Our aims are to:

- ensure that parents are supported to be fully involved in the life and work of their children’s early learning and childcare setting or school;
- encourage and support collaborative partnerships between practitioners, parents and families;
- get the right support in place so that parents can engage in their child’s learning;
- expand access to family learning opportunities which meet participants needs;
- improve the quality of all communication between practitioners, staff, parents and families, and;
- improve the skills of leaders, front-line practitioners and support staff.

The plan takes account of available Scottish, UK and international evidence as well as a review conducted by the National Parent Forum. It covers parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

The Scottish Government will work with key partners at national, local and regional level, to deliver, monitor and evaluate progress against this plan over the next three years.

National Actions:

- Action 1** Joint commitments to enhance and improve parental involvement and engagement will be included within a [joint CoSLA and Scottish Government agreement](#). This will include a commitment to ensure that headteachers work collaboratively with their Parent Council, wider parent forum and school community on substantive matters of school policy and improvement, based on the principle of co-production.
- Action 2** The Scottish Government will bring forward proposals to improve statutory and best practice guidance on parental involvement and engagement. This will be accompanied by a package of training and information materials. The guidance and training package will underpin a collaborative approach to parental involvement matters, and will aim to encourage and support parental engagement in learning.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement includes parental representation in decision-making, collaboration between parents and educators in matters such as school improvement planning and communication between home and early learning and childcare setting and school. It is about the partnerships and links between home and school, and the opportunities for parents and families to get involved in activities in school or early learning and childcare setting.

We have made important strides in parental involvement in the last ten years. The progress that we have made has depended on the expertise and innovation of headteachers, teachers, early learning and childcare managers, parents and families and practitioners. In addition, we have benefited from a positive policy and legislative framework developed by various Scottish Government administrations as well as clear strategic leadership from local authorities and third sector organisations. We start from a solid foundation with our legislation on parental involvement, school handbooks and statutory guidance.

The aim of this plan is to take forward a further phase of reform. This next phase will shift the emphasis from “involving” to “collaborating with” parents and families. Funded early learning and childcare settings will be supported to extend the effective practice that already exists in that sector. Parents who wish to undertake a more collaborative role in areas such as improvement activity and policy development should be supported to do so, shaping and influencing plans and strategies from the very beginning. Parent Councils will be supported to act as a partner in school improvement. A variety of opportunities should be provided, recognising that formal meetings are not going to work for everyone.

As with other sections in this plan, the themes of equalities and equity will be considered and addressed within our plans to improve parental involvement.

Goal A (Representation): Strengthen parental representation in the life and work of early years and childcare settings and school

Key steps at local authority level:

- Ask parents how you can improve your communication with them and their families. This may include engagement with the National Parent Forum of Scotland representatives where appropriate.
- Identify and provide career-long professional learning for practitioners and teachers.
- Ensure that parents are provided with opportunities to access relevant support and advice to enable them to be involved.
- Provide appropriate levels of funding to schools, early learning and childcare settings and Parent Councils to help them provide a wide range of opportunities for parents to be involved.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Identify approaches to support parents who might initially feel reluctant to be involved but may wish to do so with the right support and the right opportunities.
- Ensure that all parents can have their views represented.
- Facilitate joint working at parent representative groups.
- Make sure that all parents feel welcomed and supported to get involved in the life and work of the school, bearing in mind that some parents may not have had a positive experience of school.
- Work with the Parent Council or equivalent group in early learning and childcare settings to seek views of the wider parent forum.

Action 3 By March 2021 Education Scotland will develop and publish a range of further additions on parental involvement within its professional learning resources including the [Engaging Parents and Families Toolkit](#). These additions will support further improvement in parental involvement by schools and early learning and childcare settings. Priority will be given to case studies from sectors currently under represented within the current suite of support materials.

Goal B (Collaboration): Expand opportunities for ALL parents to collaborate at every level of the education system

Key steps at local authority level:

- Work with national parent organisations to identify opportunities for effective and meaningful collaboration in improvement and all matters which are important to parents.
- Consider the role that co-design and participatory methods can play in delivering strong collaboration between parents and decision-makers.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Support parents to identify areas for improvement that are relevant to them.
- Identify the strengths and expertise amongst parents and families and build on those strengths.
- Identify and address any barriers which may prevent parents from being involved.
- Develop expertise in collaborative working amongst senior school leaders, and widen the range of opportunities to obtain parents' views in flexible "parent friendly" ways.
- Develop opportunities for conversations with parents and families – "what matters to you?", not "what's important to us".
- Provide opportunities to think about how you are listening, who you are listening to and what you are doing as a result.¹

National Actions:

Action 4 The Scottish Government will continue to support the [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) (NPFS) up to 2021. As part of this commitment, the Scottish Government will work with the NPFS to:

- identify new ways to provide a representative voice for parents, reflecting the diversity of the parent community;
- ensure that forum's representatives are involved in all relevant forums;
- promote the forum at every level of the system.

Action 5 The Scottish Government will ensure that the National Parent Forum of Scotland and other national parent organisations are involved in the annual review of Scotland's [National Improvement Framework](#) for education.²

¹ "What Matters to You" is an approach developed in the NHS but some of the key principles are applicable to parent/education professional conversations <http://www.whatmatterstoyou.scot/>

² This responds to recommendation 3 in the National Parent Forum's Review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (published May 2017)

Spotlight on...the leadership role of local authorities

Local authorities have played a major role in achieving the shift in approach that we have seen over the past ten years. This has helped to develop the Scottish approach to parental involvement and engagement.

Scottish Government and local government will continue to work together to ensure that local authorities lead this agenda at local level by:

- developing, implementing and monitoring local strategies;
- reviewing those strategies every three years - involving parents, families and partner organisations as they do so;
- continuing to support a local authority network of Parental Involvement Officers;
- providing advice, training and support to headteachers, early learning and childcare managers and Parent Councils;
- bringing managers and practitioners together to share practice;
- involving parents in the recruitment of headteachers and senior staff;
- providing simple, straightforward advice and information to parents and families about how they can be involved in education and engaged in their child's learning and development;
- involving parents in the work of education committees; and
- ensuring effective arrangements for dealing with complaints and questions from parents.

A more detailed summary of the three-year priorities for the Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network is provided later in this plan.

Action 6 The Scottish Government will work with national parent organisations to develop a "Policy Maker's Toolkit on involving parents" by the end of June 2019. The toolkit, which will be targeted at policy-makers and strategic managers at national and local level, will focus on how to support co-design and collaboration with parents in matters of policy and strategic planning.³

Action 7 National guidance on [Pupil Equity Funding](#) will highlight the importance of collaborating with parents in planning and decision-making processes relating to the funding.

“Parental involvement is asking parents to identify what matters to them”

³ This responds to recommendation 3 in the National Parent Forum's Review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (published May 2017)

Spotlight on... [participatory budgeting](#)

Effective collaboration requires working together from the very start, before priorities have been decided and throughout the relevant process. One of the principles in the Scottish Government's national guidance on Pupil Equity Funding is that parents and carers, children and young people and others should be involved in the planning process for how to spend the funding. One way of doing this is through a participatory budgeting approach which involves people influencing budgeting decisions that will have a direct impact on their lives. More information is available at the Participatory Budgeting website <https://pbscotland.scot/>

Action 8 Between 2018 and 2021 the Scottish Government will work with national parent organisations to raise awareness of participatory budgeting as an innovative and effective mechanism to involve parents, particularly those who face additional barriers.

Goal C (Communication): Improve communication with parents and families

This goal is about improving the connection between home and early learning and childcare settings or schools. It is about informing and discussing with parents what is happening with their children's learning, reporting to parents about their children's progress and informing parents about how well a setting or school is doing. At a national level it is about working with parents and families to develop and share a clear narrative about Scotland's curriculum and Scotland's education system. This narrative should make clear for parents the purpose of curriculum and how it supports children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills, qualifications and wider achievements they require. Equally communication is about listening to parents about issues that are important to them and engaging in effective dialogue with parents and families. This would include topics such as; their own children's learning, the life and work of the school or early learning and childcare setting, and local and national policies and strategies.

Case study: [Largs Academy](#)

The school offers an annual Saturday morning Broad General Education workshop and information session. The sessions are aimed at parents and carers of young people in S1-S3. Some of the pupils' work is showcased and sessions with teaching staff and pupils are offered to provide an insight into the Broad General Education. Over the years sessions offered were focused on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. More recent sessions include greater pupil participation and workshops on a variety of curricular areas across the school. Sessions are also offered to parents on the senior phase, the new qualifications and the importance of wider achievement.

The main impact is on our relationship with parents. The latest parents evening surveys were very positive. The results have been collated into a You Said/We Did format and this demonstrates our ability to address concerns and support parents better.

Equalities and equity are important aspects in relation to this theme. Dads, minority ethnic parents, disabled parents and a variety of other groups can face additional barriers if communication is not tailored to their needs and respectful of their role. There are therefore very strong links between this section and the Equalities and Equity section within this plan.

National Actions:

Spotlight on... [Parentzone Scotland](#)

Parentzone Scotland aims to provide parents with good quality advice, hints and tips as well as access to a wide range of high-quality, easy accessible, school level data.

Action 9 Education Scotland will continue to work with stakeholders to review and refresh the content of Parentzone Scotland. The aim will be to help parents support their child's learning and get involved in the life and work of the early learning and childcare setting or school.⁴

Action 10 From June 2019 onwards all national communication materials for parents will be developed in line with the key principles within the National Improvement Framework Parent Communication Plan. The principles are simplicity and clarity; transparency; relevance; partnership; flexibility and timeliness.⁵ *This commitment is made by Scottish Government, Education Scotland, the National Parent Forum of Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education, the General Teaching Council of Scotland and the Scottish Qualifications Authority.*⁶

Action 11 The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) will use its 'Digital First' approach to build an understanding of parent needs, learn from parent feedback and provide a 'toolkit' of plain English publications including social media content, which parents will be able to access during session 2018-19.

Action 12 By March 2019 the Scottish Government will develop an online resource for parents to empower them to make informed choices about the right early learning and childcare setting for their child. The Scottish Government will work with parents and parent organisations to develop the resource.

Action 13 The Scottish Government will promote the National Parent Forum's "Nutshell" series as providing a simple, straightforward source of information about education matters. The Scottish Government will explore with the National Parent Forum further opportunities to provide nutshell advice in alternative formats.

“Parental involvement is asking parents for their advice”

⁴ <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>

⁵ Scottish Government (2016) National Improvement Framework: Parent Communication Plan <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/11/8261/0>

⁶ This responds to recommendation 5 in the National Parent Forum's Review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (published May 2017)

Key steps at local authority level:

- Identify effective and appropriate communications channels to reach ALL parents.
- Produce guidance and support on how effective communication with parents can be achieved.
- Involve parents in meaningful ways in informing your policies and strategies.

Key steps – Practitioners, managers, families:

- Ensure a culture and approach that is welcoming and supportive and challenge any behaviours likely to alienate or intimidate parents.
- Develop [school handbooks](#) or alternatives for early learning and childcare settings in consultation with parents. Ensure that those handbooks are accessible in their language and share the content in a range of ways.
- Take a strategic approach – ask parents and families what would work for them.
- Contact parents proactively and regularly about their child’s learning and progress.
- Support parents to share *their* questions, views and knowledge about their children.
- Support parents to be active participants in the assessment and reporting process, provide advice to parents to help talk to their child about their learning and next steps.
- Make communication and reporting to parents simple, quick and responsive to parents’ needs.⁷
- Make innovative use of social media and other forms of electronic communication – e.g. texts, online journals - to share what children are learning - but consider alternative provision for parents who have no access to this form of communication.
- Take steps to ensure a mutually supportive link between home and school or early learning and childcare setting.
- Have a simple, easy to navigate website.

Goal D (Information technology): Support early learning and childcare settings, schools and parents to exploit the opportunities provided by information technology to improve parental involvement and engagement

Research has shown that information and communications technology can improve parental involvement and engagement by providing a convenient way for parents to access up-to-date information about their child’s learning.⁸ Parents often find it easier to access surveys and provide feedback when using mobile technologies than paper based copies. For example, text updates on children’s progress have been shown to have important positive impacts on home/school links.

⁷ The National Parent Forum’s “Sharing Learning, Sharing Assessment” report provides recommendations and advice on effective assessment and reporting arrangements <https://www.npfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Report.pdf>

In addition, there is guidance on “Reporting to Parents and Carers”, available on Education Scotland’s National Improvement Hub <https://education.gov.scot/improvement>

⁸ “ICT can contribute to improved parental engagement by providing a convenient means for parents to access up-to-date information about their child’s learning” Goodall, J, and Vorhaus, J, (2011), Review of best practice in parental engagement https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182508/DFE-RR156.pdf

We will aim to take advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technology to make communication more timely, to make communication more effective and to develop effective dialogue between educators, children and parents.

Action 14 The Scottish Government and Education Scotland will work with parent organisations between August 2018 and March 2019 to explore how digital and information technology resources can be better exploited to support parents' involvement and engagement. A report on the available options and next steps will be provided by June 2019.

Key steps at local authority level:

- Support schools and early learning and childcare settings with the appropriate use of social media and other online forums, advising on both methods and content, using plain English parent-friendly language.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Raise awareness of opportunities to use digital technology to support parental involvement and engagement.
- Seek meaningful and appropriate opportunities to use digital technology to enhance parental involvement and engagement.

Goal E (Volunteering): Widen opportunities for parents and families to volunteer with the school or early learning and childcare setting

Volunteers play a vital role in shaping the lives of their communities. The Scottish Government is committed to doing more to support volunteering for all.

Opportunities to volunteer in school and early learning and childcare settings depend on a variety of wider factors including parents' and families' access to family friendly working opportunities and links between schools and early learning and childcare settings and wider community partnership. It is important that we bring together these three policy agendas – parental involvement in schools and early learning and childcare settings, volunteering and employment practices – in order to take full advantage of the skills offered by parents.

“Parental involvement is
...giving me plenty of notice of
school events’

National Actions:

Action 15 In early 2019 the Scottish Government will convene a national working group to explore practical, effective ways to make it easier for parents, families and wider communities to volunteer in early learning and childcare settings or schools. The group, involving third sector organisations, employer organisations, volunteering organisations and agencies, will seek to ensure that volunteering opportunities in schools and early learning and childcare settings are meaningful and sustainable.⁹

Key steps at local authority:

- Ensure that broader volunteering strategies consider the volunteering needs across schools and early learning and childcare settings.
- Make early learning and childcare settings and schools aware of broader local and national volunteering strategies and frameworks.
- Explore where third sector organisations can engage in and support parental involvement and engagement.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Work with parents in their community to identify the arrangements that would need to be in place to allow parents and families to volunteer. This can include some very basic but important items such as bus tickets, crèche facilities, alternative timing of events. The important thing is to respond to any barriers to participation.
- Ask parents and families what would work best for them.
- Find out parents' and families' skills and strengths.
- Follow up on offers of support.

Spotlight on... Allons-y 'Wee Famille'! - Parental involvement in languages

In North Ayrshire, the languages "1+2" team have embarked on a new initiative to raise the profile of languages and engage families with their children in learning French. The 1+2 team partnered with the Family Learning team and SCILT – Scotland's National Centre for Languages - to deliver the seven-week project, aptly called 'Wee Famille', in Springside Primary in Irvine. The Family Learning Coordinator, kicked off 'Wee Famille' with a logo design competition. Together with SCILT the 1+2 team worked to identify language learning opportunities, as well as exciting and engaging ways to deliver the language. They then consolidated key vocabulary into a 'Wee Famille passeport', bearing the winning logo design, to support family learning at home. For seven weeks, families were invited into school one afternoon each week to learn French with their child. Before each session, parents and carers had a cuppa and a croissant with the Family Learning team.

Further details available in the SCILT Summer 2018 Newsletter

⁹ This responds to recommendation 9 in the National Parent Forum's Review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (published May 2017)

Parental involvement means “working with parents at their level in an easily accessible environment and at a convenient time, encouraging their strengths”

Quote, parent

Parental involvement and engagement The Scottish Approach 3-18

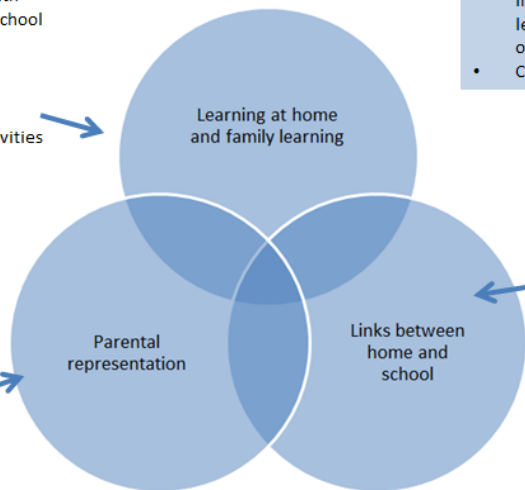
Engagement in learning

For example:

- Reading, writing, counting and playing with your child and advice and support from school to help with this
- Moral support to your child
- Involvement in family learning projects/programmes
- Joint parent/child social and learning activities and events

Key points:

- Engagement takes many different forms
- All forms of involvement and engagement are important but engagement in children’s learning has the greatest positive impact on outcomes
- Collaboration not just consultation



For example:

- Involvement in decision-making – i.e. parental involvement in “governance”
- Collaborative involvement in improvement planning and activity
- Parent Council (or equivalent opportunity to influence life and work of the early learning setting)
- Involvement in senior staff recruitment

For example:

- Opportunities to volunteer at early learning setting or school
- Assisting with trips
- Reporting to parents about their child’s progress
- Newsletter home, social media, website and text updates
- Parents’ evenings and consultations

Involvement in “schooling”

*Underpinned in legislation, statutory guidance, best practice guidance
Supported by career long professional learning, investment and funding*

Parental involvement means “being available to speak with parents at the school gates”

Parental engagement, family learning and learning at home

We know that parental engagement leads to better educational outcomes. This is why parental engagement, family learning and learning at home is a key theme within this plan. The actions taken forward under this section of the plan will help to contribute towards our aim to ensure that every child has the same opportunity to succeed, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

It is important that we focus on the strengths contained within families and communities as well as strong partnerships between early learning and childcare settings and schools, and the NHS, third sector, community organisations and others. Our renewed national package of guidance and training will therefore contain a strong focus on parental engagement in learning alongside parental involvement in the life and work of school or early learning and childcare setting.

Family learning has a vital role to play in helping families to learn and develop together. Our approach to family learning will be based on the principle that family learning is an approach relevant to all staff, a methodology that engages families in learning opportunities using universal and early intervention and prevention strategies. All staff will have families and community needs and aspirations at the heart of their approach.

Goal F (Parental Engagement): Improve support to parents and families to help them to engage with their child's learning and development

Parental engagement means
... "having good relationships with
my children"
Quote, parent

National Actions:

- Action 16** The Scottish Government will work with local authority partners to increase access to home-school link workers and similar roles by the end of 2019. The government's investment in Pupil Equity Funding will continue to provide schools with opportunities to employ their own workers where the school concludes that a link worker will support the school's aims. Work will be undertaken with local authorities to widen access to home/school link workers, to monitor progress and to evaluate impact.
- Action 17** The Scottish Government will continue to work with delivery partners to further develop and implement a range of commitments set out in the National Parenting Strategy.
- Action 18** The Scottish Government will continue to deliver the [Baby Box](#) programme. This will include the launch of 'Baby Box 2' with national roll-out of a new design and contents by end March 2019.

Action 19 The Scottish Government will invest in the [Parent Club](#) marketing campaign as a single integrated marketing approach to all parental audiences across learning, health and other policy themes. The learning theme within Parent Club will run from Autumn 2018 and will build parents' confidence in how to adopt learning activities into their daily lives. Parent Club will also be independently monitored and evaluated among parents by May 2019.

Spotlight on...maths and numeracy

We know that maths and numeracy can be intimidating for parents and carers who are less confident with the subject. A positive attitude to maths can help to support children's progress in numeracy and maths. A number of primary and secondary schools have engaged with parents to provide information, advice and support to encourage parental engagement and participation. Drop-in classroom sessions, tailored courses on numeracy learning for parents, numeracy cafes, bedtime maths sessions, video and social media updates, and evening sessions at school with pizza and hot chocolate are all common methods employed to foster an appreciation of the value of maths and confidence in learning together. Education Scotland will work with the National Parent Forum of Scotland to identify key challenges for parental engagement in maths and to promote good practice and guidance for practitioners and parents.

Spotlight on....Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM): Mearns Primary School

The school launched literacy and numeracy home reading kits for parents to use with their children at home. Initially, teachers created a workshop for parents which encouraged engagement and equipped them with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively support their child's learning. Parents then volunteered to host workshops for other parents using the model set out by the teachers. A borrowing system was then put in place allowing parents to take these kits home to support their child in particular areas of literacy and numeracy. Key parents were then responsible for the distribution and maintenance of this resource.

The school was an outstanding finalist in the STEM category of the 2018 Scottish Education Awards. Links with local employers and the partnerships with their local shopping centre provided learners with very valuable insights into the world of work. This is supported by strong cluster working which had been established over a number of years.

Action 20 The Scottish Government will continue to invest in a package of national programmes to support parental engagement in learning including [Bookbug](#), [Read, Write, Count](#) and the Deputy First Minister's Holiday Maths Challenge.¹⁰

Action 21 Education Scotland will publish examples of good practice on learning at home by March 2021.

¹⁰ Bookbug and Read, Write, Count will provide parental involvement and engagement resources, hints and tips and reading, writing and numeracy materials to households across Scotland, encouraging learning through play. The DFM's Holiday Maths Challenge is an initiative promoting family engagement in numeracy and maths games provided direct to pupils via school to ensure that all families receive them for the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays.

Spotlight on....Gaelic Medium Education

Action 22 The Scottish Government will ensure that effective support is provided to parents who would like to have access to Gaelic Medium Education for their children.

Supporting activity:

Involvement: The growth in Gaelic Parent Councils has helped to improve parental involvement and engagement in Gaelic Medium Education in schools. It is equally important that those parents with children in Gaelic Medium Education are also represented on Parent Councils of schools with Gaelic Medium Education units. The Scottish Government will work with Comann nam Pàrant (CnP) – the organisation for parents with children in Gaelic Medium Education and funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig – in order to promote and support parental involvement and engagement.

Engagement: The Scottish Government will work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to fund Storlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig providing resources and support for pupils and teachers at all levels in Gaelic Medium Education. Storlann will have an important role in supporting parents with children in Gaelic Medium Education via its website and telephone support line Gaelic 4 Parents. The Scottish Government will ensure that Bookbug and Read, Write, Count initiatives continue to support parental engagement in Gaelic Medium learning.

* Further information is available in Appendix B

Spotlight on....Education Scotland's Family Learning Framework



Family Learning Framework Advice for Practitioners

In April 2018 Education Scotland published its [Family Learning Framework](#) providing advice and support for everyone who works with families in early learning and childcare settings, schools, colleges, community learning and development, or in the third sector. In August 2018 Education Scotland will publish their 'Review of Learning at Home'. This review provides the first Scottish definition of 'Learning at Home'. The objective is to produce an easily accessible and understandable definition of learning at home and to provide clarity for practitioners and parents.

Parental engagement means...
"confirming our will to stay together, to
never give up"

Quote, parent

Key steps at local authority level:

- Provide advice to schools about relationship-based approaches.
- Share good practice in family learning.
- Ensure that parental engagement is embedded within the improvement planning process.
- Share good practice in involving parents in school improvement planning.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Talk with parents and families about the role that they play in supporting children’s learning.
- Make it everyone’s role to support parental engagement.
- Develop strategies with parents that help them to further develop their skills and confidence to support their child’s learning.
- Consider parental engagement when considering your policies on homework.
- Take time to build the necessary trust and confidence amongst staff and parents.
- Ask parents what works for their children and what might help them to engage with their children’s learning.
- Ensure that parental engagement and family learning are considered as part of improvement planning processes.
- Consider the diverse needs of parents and families and tailor advice to suit individual parents’ needs.

Goal G (Family Learning): Increase the opportunities for families to access evidence based family learning opportunities and programmes

Spotlight on...Family Learning using Pupil Equity Funding

The Scottish Government received reports from headteachers on how they have used the available Pupil Equity Funding. From the feedback received, it was clear that parental engagement and family learning featured strongly as an additional benefit of Pupil Equity Funding. Headteachers referred to the success of initiatives aiming to engage families and reported improvements in the relationships between the school and parents.

National Actions:

- Action 23** The Attainment Scotland Fund and Pupil Equity Funding will continue to provide funding to schools from 2018 onwards. Schools will continue to be able to tap into these funds to arrange family learning programmes and to fund joint activity with early learning and childcare settings.
- Action 24** By March 2019 Education Scotland will publish professional learning resources and case studies to support practitioners in their work to continually improve parental engagement and family learning.

Action 25 By the end of 2019 Scottish Government will develop plans to assess the impact of the range of parental engagement and family learning programmes as supported by the Attainment Scotland Fund and Schools Programme.

Spotlight on...joint working to support families - [Families First](#)

Families First is a family support programme. It started with two 'core teams', one in Ferguslie and one in Linwood, to help families build a better future for their children, with a focus on 0-8 years. The teams offer a support package that starts with staff building trust and quickly moves forward to helping the families achieve their potential. Some families have a key worker working very closely with them for months, while others come to drop-in sessions for a chat – and they know the teams are there if they need them, 371 families have been supported by Families First core teams, with £1 million of income generated for local families.

- Reproduced with permission from the Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Strategy 2015 – 2017

Spotlight on...Save the Children's Families Connect Programme

[Families Connect](#) supports parents and children to learn together, focusing on literacy and language development, numeracy and emotional development. The eight-week programme works with children in the early years of primary school and in the transition from nursery to school. It provides a series of activities, techniques and games that parents and carers can do with their children at home, and that complement children's learning in school. Each activity encourages parents and children to spend quality time together. The informal workshops focus on getting parents to reflect on what they already do to support their children's learning, and inviting them to explore new activities, games and approaches that might enhance this. The programme is delivered in partnership by schools, community practitioners and Save the Children staff.

Key programme outcomes include:

- Parents feel more confident, skilled and better able to engage in their children's education.
- Develops relationships between parents and schools which allows schools to reflect and improve how they engage with parents.
- Children demonstrate greater enjoyment of learning, are self-motivated and confident, and show improved educational attainment.

An evaluation of the programme showed a significant increase in the level of parent/school engagement, reported by both parents and teachers, and provided details on the ways in which teachers and parents felt the programme had benefited children's learning. Save the Children is currently delivering Families Connect as an [outreach arm of the Scottish Government's Read, Write, Count programme](#).

Key steps at local authority level:

- Measure the impact and success of different approaches to family learning.
- Draw on evaluation evidence from within the programmes themselves and from wider national and international analysis.
- Involve wider partners in improvement activities.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Work with families, partners and relevant stakeholders to identify needs within families and community. Ask parents and families to identify if and when they need to access family learning programmes
- Let families know what's available and what benefit they can derive from the programmes.
- Understand and build on the assets and potential of the individual, the family and the community.
- Work with families to support their understanding of family learning outcomes and the positive impact this can have on the whole family.

Equalities and Equity

“Tackling inequity is at the heart of the Scottish Government’s education policy... there is a collective responsibility to ensure continuous improvement for children and young people.”

John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, December 2017

All parents should have access to support and advice to help them to engage in their child’s learning. This requires practitioners to adapt to the needs and wishes of parents and to ask parents what is important to them. It is important to be aware of the impact of family circumstances – poverty, background, connections with their community – on parents’ and families’ confidence, and to take steps to address and support that impact.

We will aim to build on the strengths within parents and families, improving the connections and communication between early learning and childcare setting, school and home. The themes of equalities and equity are reflected in a specific section within this plan. However, it should be noted that both themes run through all other sections of the plan.

The [public sector Equality Duty](#) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Goal H (Equalities and Equity): Work together to address barriers that limit parents’ involvement and engagement

Case Study example: Prestonpans Infant School / Dad Friendly Schools

At Prestonpans Infant School, we recognise the first place of the family as educators of the child. When the child comes to school, we aim to enter into a partnership with the family to nurture, develop and teach the child. The voice of children and their families inspires our practice.

As part of our drive to adopt an inclusive and equitable partnership with families, we considered which groups were under-represented and became aware that male carers felt less comfortable in the school setting. We set out to improve our welcome, communication with, involvement and engagement of male carers in our children's learning. We then shared our practice with other schools as part of the East Lothian Father Friendly Schools Project. The project focused on using our practical ‘How Father Friendly is our School?’ guide to self-evaluate the practice of participating schools. Long working hours, negative personal experiences, mum-centric communication from schools and social inequality were all found to be barriers in the study; conversely dads' involvement was increased through positive imagery, gender-specific events, a warm and genuine welcome and appointed "champions" of father inclusion. The project could have a significant impact across Scottish education, if its findings

are grasped and ideas built upon. Tim Porteus, a Prestonpans dad, believes change is coming: “We’re not conforming to this old stereotype anymore. We want to be proactive, hands-on, nurturing, full-on parents, equal with mums, because we know that we can do it.” Such enthusiasm, when it translates into greater participation, is proving a win-win for everyone – families, children and society at large.

Full findings of the study and a copy of guide is available free on-line at www.fathersnetwork.org.uk

“Two key issues of representativeness emerged in discussion [about Parent Councils] – gender and socio economic class”

IPSOS Mori (2017) Research to inform the review of the impact of the Parental Involvement Act

National Actions:

- Action 26** The Scottish Government will conduct an Equalities Impact Assessment and Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment in relation to this plan. The Scottish Government will consider equalities issues in key programmes and campaigns such as Parent Club, Read, Write, Count, the First Minister’s Reading Challenge and the Deputy First Minister’s Holiday Maths Challenge.
- Action 27** The Scottish Government will work with parent groups to ensure that national education policy documents, strategies and guidance documents are fully “parent friendly”. This will include active steps to engage with groups that we have failed to involve in the past. It will include detailed consideration of socio-economic circumstances as well as a wide range of equalities issues.
- Action 28** As part of its work to extend and strengthen the Engaging Parents and Families Toolkit, Education Scotland will review and update the existing section on working with parents who face barriers to their involvement by March 2019.
- Action 29** Equalities and equity will be addressed as part of the new package of guidance, training and support on both parental involvement and engagement. This will include the equalities needs of Parent Councils, responding to findings from the National Parent Forum’s review of parental involvement. In addition, the Scottish Government will make a total of £350,000 available between 2019 and 2021 in order to develop small scale research and best practice materials on a range of equalities themes.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 18 (parental responsibilities and state assistance) - Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

Action 30 The Scottish Government will take steps to support the positive involvement and engagement by specific groups. This includes <u>but will not be limited to</u> the following:	
Armed services families	<p>The Scottish Government, the National Parent Forum and Education Scotland will promote and share “Transitions”, the Parent Forum’s “Nutshell” for Armed Forces Families. The Parentzone Scotland website will be promoted to forces families as well as the Association of Directors of Education’s Forces Children’s Education website.</p> <p>The Scottish Government will continue to engage with stakeholders, including members of the Scottish Service Children Strategy Group, the MOD Children’s Education Advisory Service Parent Support Officer, and Family Federations, in order to provide advice and support in relation to forces families.</p>
Dads	<p>When fathers are supported to engage with their child’s learning this leads to better outcomes for children. Children are also likely to enjoy school more. A father-friendly approach is essential. The Scottish Government will work with Fathers Network Scotland and Families Need Fathers to ensure that all key guidance and training materials relating to parental involvement and engagement are “father friendly”, fully reflect the role of dads, and reflect the principles of father-inclusive practice. We will promote the “How Father Friendly is our School” guidance and associated research. Organisations who support and enhance the role of fathers will be fully involved in the implementation of this plan and associated policy activity.</p>
Minority ethnic parents	<p>The Scottish Government will ensure that the refreshed guidance, training and support materials on parental involvement and engagement will include materials to support minority ethnic parents. The Scottish Government will work with organisations to ensure that minority ethnic parents are fully involved in the implementation of this plan.</p>
Gypsy/Travellers parents	<p>Under the Child Poverty Delivery Plan, the Scottish Government will provide tailored play and early learning opportunities for pre-school children and their parents living on Gypsy/Traveller sites and deliver on site adult learning opportunities to parents and carers to improve their own literacy and numeracy and enable them to support their children.</p> <p>The Scottish Government will publish guidance aimed at schools, including early learning and childcare settings, and local authorities, to help them better engage with Gypsy/Traveller children and their parents.</p>

<p>Parents of disabled children and children with additional support needs</p>	<p>The Scottish Government will consult on a new resource - Supporting Disabled Children, Young People and their Families - from April 2018 with direct relevance to education, schools and early learning and childcare settings. This will highlight good practice and share information on Rights and Information; Accessibility of Support, and Transitions.</p> <p>The Scottish Government will work with parent organisations to monitor, review and develop all national policy in relation to Additional Support for Learning (ASL) through its Advisory Group for ASL.</p> <p>The Scottish Government will continue to fund the Enquire national advice and information service for additional support for learning up to end 2021, ensuring accurate, helpful information including online and helpline support. Scottish Government will review the effectiveness of the service on an on-going basis through grant monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>The Scottish Government will promote the National Parent Forum's 'Nutshell' briefing on additional support for learning via a wide range of communication channels.</p>
<p>Parents with learning disabilities</p>	<p>The Scottish Government will liaise with the National Parent Forum of Scotland in relation to their work with People First to consider the information needs of parents with learning disabilities. This will include consideration of opportunities to provide 'Easy Read' guides on key topics related to Scottish education. An Easy Read version of this plan will be published by December 2018.</p>
<p>Separated parents</p>	<p>The Scottish Government will ensure that duties and responsibilities relating to separated parents are reflected within relevant guidance, and training accompanying the guidance on parental involvement and engagement. The Scottish Government will work with local authority partners and parents to consider and address barriers which may prevent separated parents from being involved and engaged. The Scottish Government will promote the Children In Scotland/Families Need Fathers Helping Children Learn guidance on involving separated parents to all schools.</p>
<p>British Sign Language users</p>	<p>Education Scotland will work with British Sign Language users to publish information and advice about how parents can get further involved in their child's learning. This work will be completed by 2020. The Scottish Government will seek the views of parents who use British Sign Language when developing guidance on parental involvement and engagement.</p>

Key steps at local authority level:

- Reflect equalities duties in key strategic and improvement plans and documents.
- Work with organisations who can assist in providing advice and support on both equalities and equity to early learning and childcare settings, schools and Parent Councils.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Consider training and support needs in relation to inclusion and the full range of equalities considerations.
- Consider the links between your approaches to support greater equity, plans for Pupil Equity Funding and broader activities on parental involvement and engagement.
- Work with the Parent Council or additional parental involvement groups to consider how to minimise the impact of cost on children's experience of school.
- Consider the [Cost of the School Day Toolkit](#) and its relevance in the context of your school or early learning and childcare setting.

Case Study example: [Food, Families, Future – Dalmarnock Primary, Glasgow](#)

Dalmarnock Primary's summer club builds on the long-standing success of the school's Homework Club which runs weekly. It allows parents to prepare a hot two course meal while children do their homework and enjoy facilitated and supervised play. Families then eat the meal together.

Parents had expressed concern over the length of the holiday, the expense involved in entertaining children and the social isolation many parents felt over the period while school was closed. The school was also very mindful of the Cost of the School Day project and wanted to address the cost of the holidays in some way. Morning sessions for parents and children were run separately, to allow new friendships to be formed and skills to be learned. The children's programme was pre-planned and themed across the weeks. It was delivered by Thriving Places and PEEK (Possibilities for Each and Every Kid). They also took responsibility for child protection protocols, meaning the club could still run on days when no school staff were available to attend.

The parent programme evolved from need and request. It included input from health, housing, local beauty therapists, counsellors and opportunities to sit and chat over coffee.

The afternoon session involved facilitated 'learning through play' sessions with parents and children learning together and was also facilitated by partners.

[Watch the video](https://vimeo.com/178001930) taken during the Summer Camp (<https://vimeo.com/178001930>).

Leadership and skills

We have seen a step-change improvement in practice and culture over the past 10 years. This has been due in no small part to the leadership, expertise and good practice demonstrated across our schools and early learning and childcare settings. Crucially, it has also benefited from the skills and attributes of parents and families.

As part of the guidance framework on parental involvement and engagement, we will focus on leadership, confidence and skills - attributes that are just as relevant and important to parents and carers as they are to those who work with and support their children.

We will reinforce and build on school and early learning and childcare sector skills in collaborative leadership. We will create the space for professional dialogue and development, focusing on the themes of trust, confidence and collaborative leadership. We will develop and sustain the leadership skills, peer networks and peer supports within the parental community. We will work to further improve the connections and links between organisations providing peer support to parents and the organisations that provide professional development opportunities for practitioners.

As with other sections of this plan, the themes of equalities and equity will be considered in the delivery of all actions in this section.

“Leadership doesn’t come with a position or a title”
Attendee, workshop session on parental engagement

Key steps at local authority level:

- Identify career-long professional learning needs in relation to parental involvement and engagement.
- Ensure the delivery of career-long professional learning meets practitioner needs and results in improvements to practice.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Build trust and honest, positive relationships with parents and families.
- Support parents to feel comfortable and confident in building on their strengths and identifying next steps.
- Ensure that staff are available for conversations with parents.
- Recognise that working with parents and engaging with practitioners can be daunting for both parties.

Goal J (Skills): Enhance the skills associated with parental involvement, parental engagement and family learning amongst practitioners

National Actions:

- Action 31** The joint work to improve national guidance on parental involvement and engagement will be supported by an additional investment in a package of training, awareness raising and advice materials. The contents of this package will be developed by end June 2019 and rolled out via Regional Improvement Collaboratives, local authorities and parent groups during the course of financial year 2019/20¹¹. The package will be designed to support collaborative leadership at all levels and skills relating to trust and partnership.
- Action 32** The General Teaching Council of Scotland will work with partners to ensure that parental involvement and engagement is fully reflected in amended [standards for headship and professional standards](#) for teachers and associated support materials. The new standards and accompanying supporting materials will be in place by August 2019.¹²
- Action 33** Parental involvement and engagement will be reflected in the new national standards for early learning and childcare settings, expected to take effect in 2020.
- Action 34** In the early years we will increase support for evidence-based family learning programmes in order to embed this in the early learning and childcare support for families facing disadvantage. As part of this commitment we will include a module on parental involvement and engagement in an online national programme of career-long professional learning on early learning and childcare.¹³
- Action 35** The Scottish Government will engage further with Initial Teacher Education (ITE) universities and early learning and childcare colleges in order to improve how parental involvement and engagement are reflected in relevant qualifications and courses, and to share expertise.
- Action 36** The Scottish College of Educational Leadership (SCEL), as part of Education Scotland, will work with parent organisations to ensure that parental involvement and engagement are included in the ["Into Headship"](#) qualification and the enhanced leadership support package for practitioners by March 2020.
- Action 37** By March 2019 SCEL, as part of Education Scotland, will pursue the opportunity to build on the 'People and Partners' theme within [Excellence in Headship](#). This theme looks at the importance of collaborative partnership working – a crucial aspect in ensuring effective parental involvement and engagement.

¹¹ Responds to recommendation 18 in the National Parent Forum of Scotland's Review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (published May 2017)

¹² Responds to recommendation 18 in the National Parent Forum of Scotland's Review of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (published May 2017)

¹³ Also referenced in the Scottish Government's Quality Action Plan for early learning and childcare, published Oct 2017]

Goal K (Parents as leaders): Build the capacity of parents, drawing on their expertise and supporting them to be involved and engaged in their children's learning

National Actions:

Action 38 The Scottish Government will ensure that the refreshed national training and development offer includes specific materials developed for and with parents and Parent Councils. The theme of *parental leadership*, confidence and capacity will be a strong element in this new package of support and advice.

Evidence, inspection and improvement

We have seen a number of improvements in the way that we reflect parental involvement and engagement within our national inspection and improvement frameworks as well as school and early learning and childcare improvement activities. Education Scotland has increased the focus on parental involvement and engagement within the 'How Good is our...' self-evaluation framework. Revised pre-inspection parental questionnaires were introduced in January 2017. Scotland's National Improvement Framework includes a specific 'driver' on parental involvement and engagement. The 'Growing up in Scotland' study has provided a wealth of information about the role of parents and carers.

Education Scotland will continue to ensure that it hears the voice of parents as part of inspection activity.¹⁴ Inspection will play an important role in helping to assess the extent to which parents are being fully involved in the life and work of their child's school.

As part of the National Improvement Framework, evidence will be gathered through pre-inspection questionnaires and other sources. The Scottish Government will seek to consolidate and enhance our national evidence base via continued investment in the 'Growing Up in Scotland' study as well as the piloting of a new national survey of parents. We will support a collaborative and innovative approach to improvement activity in early learning and childcare settings and schools, looking to encourage new methods to involve parents in the improvement plan.

As with other sections in this plan, the themes of equalities and equity will be considered within all of our actions.

Key steps at local authority level:

- Ensure that parental involvement and engagement strategies are up-to-date and accessible to parents.
- Involve parents in the development of strategies.
- Feed back to parents on progress with parental involvement and engagement strategies.
- Provide and share expertise on parental involvement and engagement.
- Consider available data on deprivation, employment, community resources as part of parental involvement and engagement strategies. Share that data with schools and early learning and childcare providers.

¹⁴ This is achieved in a variety of ways, including offering guidance and the opportunity to provide comment and feedback through questionnaires. During inspections teams will have the opportunity to meet with parents in focus groups, taking their views into consideration as part of the inspection process.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Collaborate with parents and families in the development of improvement plans, the investment of Pupil Equity Funding and other key activities.
- Fully integrate parental involvement and engagement activities into broader improvement plan activity
- Ensure two-way communication as part of the improvement planning process.
- Make sure that parents are involved in early learning and childcare and school improvement, and consider parental involvement and parental engagement in their children's learning as areas for improvement.
- Evaluate how you are doing – but do so in partnership with parents. Consider quality of involvement as well as numbers.
- Share good practice in involving parents in school improvement planning.

Spotlight on...collaboration and improvement at a regional level

Parental involvement and engagement are vital at every level of the education system. An important aspect of this are regional improvement activities - the arrangements for collaboration across and amongst local authorities. Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) will facilitate the sharing of best practice and innovation across local authority areas throughout the timescale for this plan. They will support collaboration leading to high quality learning opportunities across a wide range of education improvement matters.

Action 39 The Scottish Government will work with local authorities, Regional Improvement Collaborative Leads and national parent organisations to ensure meaningful parent stakeholder involvement in relation to the priorities for the RICs¹⁵.

Goal L: Ensure that parental involvement and engagement are fully reflected in strategic policies, improvement activity and inspection processes

Action 40 The Scottish Government will retain parental engagement as one of the key drivers within the National Improvement Framework.

Action 41 Local authority Parental Involvement Strategies will be reframed as strategies for involvement and engagement, with a requirement to review strategies every three years.

“Further consideration should be given to improving the consistency of local authority parental involvement strategies. Improvement could be made in four key areas:

- * More regular review and monitoring
- * Parental Involvement Strategy to contain clear, measurable aims
- * Parental Involvement Strategy to be easily accessible online to parents
- * Strategies to be available in a format that is easily understandable to all parents, free from jargon and technical language

IPSOS Mori (2017) Research to inform the review of the impact of the Parental Involvement Act

¹⁵ This responds to recommendation 7 in the National Parent Forum's Review of Parental Involvement (published May 2017)

Spotlight on...Local Authority Parental Involvement & Engagement Strategies

Research by IPSOS Mori illustrated the importance of having up-to-date parental involvement and engagement strategies, with clear objectives and easy-to-understand content, made available on-line and in accessible formats. A recent example of this is [East Lothian's strategy](#).



- Action 42** The Scottish Government will engage with Connect's [Partnership Schools programme](#) (funded by Skills Development Scotland) throughout the timescale for this plan, with a particular focus on reforming the culture and approach in relation to school improvement. The government will identify and share lessons and ensure that any national training, guidance or support materials take account of the initiative. This will help to support a more collaborative approach to improvement planning.¹⁶
- Action 43** Education Scotland will work with the Care Inspectorate to develop a new shared inspection framework for early learning and childcare settings. This will be implemented in 2019 and will include an appropriate focus on parental involvement and engagement.
- Action 44** Education Scotland will continue to ensure that parental involvement and engagement are considered in the development of new and revised inspection frameworks. National parent organisations will also be fully involved in the on-going review of Education Scotland's self-evaluation frameworks up to 2021.
- Action 45** By the start of the 2019/20 academic session the Scottish Government will create a new National Network on Parental Involvement and Engagement, drawing together practitioners, academics, researchers and policy makers to review evidence, share expertise and build new connections. The aim will be to improve the connections between policy, research expertise and what is actually happening on the ground. As part of this commitment, the government will identify champions for parental involvement and engagement amongst parents and carers, families, practitioners and support workers.

¹⁶ The "Year 2" report from Connect's Partnership Schools programme was published in February 2018 https://connect.scot/application/files/5015/1878/5156/PSS_Year_2_Report_FINAL_Feb_2018.pdf

Case Study: [Bellshill Academy](#)

The leadership of the headteacher, staff commitment and partnership working with parents and external agencies were central to Bellshill Academy's home-school partnership project, entitled Working Together to Raise Standards and Transform Lives.

The school appointed a Principal Teacher Support for Learning and Inclusion, and a Principal Teacher Nurture. They had the support of a Community Learning and Development Home School Partnership Officer who was trained in nurture and meditation.

Parental partnerships focused on improving family learning. A sub-group of the Parent Council was engaged in evaluating existing practice and planning and developing a more focused approach. The initial drive for this approach came from discussions with the large and very active Parent Council and focused on strategies to address the poverty related attainment gap.

Parents consulted through questionnaires, presentations at parents' meetings, open evenings and study skills evenings.

Young people's attainment, achievement and attendance increased as a result of effective, tailored interventions for individuals and groups based on the tracking approach illustrated. A comprehensive home-school partnership programme contributed to an ethos of success, increased attainment and engagement with parents through family learning. The programme includes strategies for raising attainment, peer support, pupil support, key transitions, wider achievement and parental involvement.

Goal M (Evidence): Improve the evidence base

The Scottish Government will work with a range of parents to improve the evidence base on parental involvement and engagement. We will also work to improve access to the available evidence for practitioners, parent groups and others. Our aim will be to provide a true "one stop shop", providing access to the available evidence and analysis.

Key steps at local authority level:

- Identify, gather and analyse relevant data on parental involvement and engagement.
- Act on the evidence available, for example including specific actions within the improvement plan.
- Identify and address any gaps in data.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Find out from parents and carers what they would like to know about their child's education and progress, and respond to their needs.
- Analyse relevant data and self-evaluation findings.
- Share learning with others.

National actions:

- Action 46** As part of the annual National Improvement Framework cycle the Scottish Government will gather, analyse and publish key performance information on parental involvement and engagement on an annual basis and throughout the timescale for this plan.
- Action 47** The Scottish Government will work with local authorities to pilot a new national survey of parents and carers by summer 2019, with a view to wider roll out in academic year 2019/20.
- Action 48** The Scottish Government will ensure that the [Growing up in Scotland](#) (GUS) study provides reliable, relevant and impactful data relating to the links between parental involvement and engagement and children’s learning outcomes, publishing the next GUS report by the end of 2018.
- Action 49** The Scottish Government will ensure that activity under Scotland’s [Research Strategy for Education](#) reflects parental involvement and engagement, family learning and learning at home. The Scottish Government will work with the National Parent Forum of Scotland to review the extent to which research activity under the current strategy incorporates parental involvement and engagement. An initial analysis will be developed by end December 2018. The Scottish Government will consider the further steps that may be needed in order to provide a single “one stop shop” summarising the available evidence.
- Action 50** The Scottish Government will ensure that key national policies relating to parental involvement and engagement take full account of the latest research and evidence. As part of this commitment, the Scottish Government will seek appropriate expert input and advice from independent academics throughout the timescale for this plan.

Goal N (Funding): Provide appropriate levels of funding for parental involvement and engagement at national, regional, local and school level

The Scottish Government will continue to provide funding to support core education provision, including the relevant funding to support the work of Parent Councils. The government will continue to provide significant additional funding to schools through Pupil Equity Funding and Scottish Attainment Challenge, with associated guidance reflecting the themes of parental involvement and engagement.

National Actions:

- Action 51** The Scottish Government, through the Attainment Scotland Fund, will provide funding to the Child Poverty Action Group in 2018/19. This will help to promote awareness of the financial barriers that pupils from low income families face, demonstrate the ways in which these barriers prevent full participation and provide practical steps to address those barriers.

Action 52 The Scottish Government will work with regional partners to share advice and guidance on ways to engage with families living in the most deprived areas in Scotland. This will include the [Toolkit for Parent Councils on the Cost of the School Day](#) developed by the Child Poverty Action Group and the National Parent Forum.¹⁷

Key steps at local authority level:

- Ensure that there is appropriate funding in place to support effective and inclusive parental involvement and engagement.
- Develop fair and equitable criteria to allocate funding to Parent Councils.
- Making funds available for childcare facilities that will allow ALL parents and carers to be involved.

Key steps – practitioners, managers, families:

- Consider the potential to use Pupil Equity Funding to enable parents to engage in their children's learning, exercising the wide discretion available via the guidance.
- Collaborate with parents and families on how to best target available Pupil Equity Funding.

¹⁷ National Parent Forum of Scotland and Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland
<https://www.npfs.org.uk/2017/11/cost-of-the-school-day-parent-council-toolkit/>

Local Authority Joint Statement

Key Priorities on Parental Involvement and Engagement, 2018 - 2021

The following priorities for local authority collaboration have been agreed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and by the Association of Directors of Education. The priorities identified in this section of the plan will shape the areas of focus for the local authority network in the coming three years. It reflects the vital leadership role that local authorities, both individually and collectively, will continue to play. The Scottish Government, CoSLA and ADES are grateful to the cross-authority parental involvement officers network for their work to develop the content in this statement. The statement applies to the entire 3-18 framework and, unless otherwise stated, should be interpreted as applying to both schools and early learning and childcare settings.

Goal A (Representation): Strengthen parental representation in the life and work of early learning and childcare settings and schools

Local authorities will seek to ensure that **parental involvement officers** are identified in every local authority, either as dedicated roles or as part of a wider role. The officers will aim to take forward parental involvement and engagement in an effective and co-ordinated way across the local authority. They will have an opportunity to contribute to broader local authority guidance, plans and activities relating to parental involvement, parental engagement and family learning. They will promote parental involvement and engagement and family learning through multi-agency meetings and work in partnership with the local National Parent Forum of Scotland representative and other parents.

Parental involvement officers will continue to support Parent Councils, parents, practitioners and leaders with a programme of training and information. We will maintain a database of Parent Council contact details to enable sharing of information to support them to fulfil their role.

We will work together to assess the range of models for a parent and/or Parent Council umbrella groups, set up and share expertise on the various models and ensure that umbrella groups are appropriate to local circumstances as per the wishes of parents. Where such a group already exists, we will ensure they are determined by parents needs and are sufficiently flexible to give all schools the opportunity to be represented.

We will explore possibilities for proportionate representation of parents and committee voting rights, with advice and support from committee administration officers and senior managers. This will be done with the agreement of elected members and in line with local decision making.

We will ensure there is an appropriate process in place to recruit parent representatives and provide advice and support to enable them to fulfil their role.

Goal B (Collaboration): Expand opportunities for ALL parents to collaborate at every level of the education system

We will enable parents to participate in shaping key policies and budget decisions. We will support the involvement of parents on Education Committees. We will support schools and early learning and childcare settings to engage with parents to develop improvement plans, Pupil Equity Funding expenditure and the development of policies.

We will continue to support parental involvement in recruitment of senior management and head teacher posts by providing training, supporting parents through the process and supporting schools to involve parents in the recruitment of senior posts at school level in line with legal requirements.

We will support cluster meetings at a local level, according to the wishes of parent representatives.

Goal C (Communication): Improve communication with parents and families

Goal D (Information technology): Support early learning and childcare settings, schools and parents to exploit the opportunities provided by information technology to improve parental involvement and engagement

We will provide support in relation to the appropriate use of social media, and timely, appropriate communication, advising on both methods and content, using plain English and parent-friendly-language.

Goal E (Volunteering): Widen opportunities for parents and families to volunteer with the school or early learning and childcare setting

We will support and encourage early learning and childcare settings and schools to recruit volunteers, advising on issues such as Protecting Vulnerable Groups membership. We will provide guidance for staff on supporting volunteers. We will help in the development of role descriptors and guidelines for volunteers, drawing on experience from community learning and development colleagues and third sector partners.

Goal F (Parental Engagement): Improve support to parents and families to help them to engage with their child's learning and development

We will continue to share examples of good practice in parental involvement and engagement between schools and early learning and childcare settings, via parent conferences, at regional level and nationally through the local authority network of parental involvement officers, Connect and the National Parent Forum of Scotland.

Goal G (Family Learning): Increase the opportunities for families to access evidence based family learning opportunities and programmes

We will work collaboratively with Family Learning teams, community learning and development teams, schools and early learning and childcare settings to ensure shared understanding of family learning. We will aim to develop a coordinated programme of evidence based family learning, sharing learning activities and supporting parents to engage in their children's learning. Local authority guidance to schools on Pupil Equity Funding will seek to reflect the aim that funding streams may be used in a wide variety of ways, including activity to support parental involvement and engagement in learning.

Goal H (Equalities and Equity): Work together to address barriers that limit parents' involvement and engagement

We will support and challenge Parent Councils to ensure they are inclusive and represent the demographic of parents. We will signpost Parent Councils and schools to support organisations who can advise them in equalities and inclusion - such as BEMiS, Families Need Fathers, Fathers Network Scotland, Families Outside.

We will share practice and approach to further improve parental involvement and engagement in relation to specific groups and circumstances, including the arrangements to support effective communication to separated parents.

Information about support organisations will be shared amongst the network of local authority parental involvement officers.

We will prioritise cross-local authority collaboration on areas where parent organisations have identified where good practice could be shared between authorities, and we will work collaboratively with other organisations on sharing this practice

Goal J (Skills): Enhance the skills associated with parental involvement, parental engagement and family learning amongst practitioners

We will facilitate career long practitioner learning opportunities for local authority staff, particularly for newly qualified teachers and probationers. We will continue to share good practice between schools, locally, regionally and at a national level.

Goal K (Parents as leaders): Build the capacity of parents, drawing on their expertise and supporting them to be involved and engaged in their children's learning

We will ensure that our local parental involvement and engagement strategies consider parents needs for advice, information and support.

Goal L: Ensure that parental involvement and engagement are fully reflected in strategic policies, improvement activity and inspection processes

We will develop comprehensive, effective parental involvement and engagement strategies.

We will ensure that improvement actions on parental involvement and engagement are contained in local authority National Improvement Framework and Attainment Challenge plans and in local Pupil Equity Funding guidance.

We will ensure that parents are included in relevant local authority policy development groups and arrangements for self-evaluation at school and local authority level, ensuring that the appropriate “How Good is Our School” or “How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare” challenge questions are taken into account.

We will support and challenge early learning and childcare settings and schools to involve parents in the development of improvement plans, policies and plans to engage parents in their children's learning.

Goal M (Evidence): Improve the evidence base

We will gather and share evidence of effective practice in parental involvement and engagement from self-evaluation focus groups, surveys and other school and local authority level activities.

We will gather evidence both qualitative (views, feedback, evidence of impact from what parents say) and quantitative (data, statistics, satisfaction figures).

Goal N (Funding): Provide appropriate levels of funding for parental involvement and engagement at national, regional, local and school level

We will provide funding support for Parent Councils, as a direct payment, by arranging Public Liability insurance, or as support in kind such as free school lets, copying or administrative support.

We will work together to share practice on parent-related funding arrangements, including the various criteria and policies that help to determine the levels of funding provided to Parent Councils.

Implementation Statement

how we will deliver this plan

The Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the National Parent Forum of Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education, and Education Scotland will work together to implement this Action Plan in partnership with a range of national agencies, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and other partners.

A national implementation and oversight group will be created. The group will include the National Parent Forum of Scotland and key national education agencies and parents. It will coordinate progress against the actions within this plan. It will explore additional ways to deliver the goals contained in this plan.

Specific working groups will be established to lead on specific activities, goals and actions within this plan.

The National Parent Forum of Scotland will monitor progress against this plan in partnership with the Scottish Government. The NPFS will publish a progress report at the mid-way point (December 2019) and the end of the plan (June 2021).

The specific actions within the plan will be implemented over the next three years. We will also explore further opportunities to develop additional activities and actions under the 13 goals.



Evidence

Research has shown that:

- Around 80% of the difference in how well children do at school depends on what happens outside the school gates (Rasbash et al, 2010; Save the Children, 2013).
- Providing a 'stimulating learning environment outside of school can be crucial for children's educational achievement, as well as for their social and emotional development' (Save the Children, 2013, p13).
- Children tend to succeed where families are 'supportive and demanding' therefore creating a 'culture of much higher expectations for young people, both in our homes and in our schools' (House of Commons, 2014, p29).

Key sources

- The home learning environment in early years plays a key role in attainment at age 11 after 6 years in primary school (*EPPE, Sylva et al., 2008*).
- *Engaging parents in raising achievement – do parents know they matter?* Professor Alma Harris and Dr Janet Goodall, University of Warwick, 2007 - This study identified that parental support of learning within the home environment, as distinct from parental involvement "in schooling", that has the greatest impact on pupil achievement.
- Dr. Joyce Epstein, Johns Hopkins University, six different types of parent involvement.
- "telling stories or reading books to children when they are very young is strongly related to how well they read and how much they enjoy reading later on" (*Let's Read them a Story: the Parent Factor in Education*): *OECD, 2009*)
- "In most countries and economies, students whose parents eat the main meal around the table with them at least once or twice a week are less likely than students of similar socio economic status, but whose parents eat with them less often, to arrive late for school or skip classes or days of school, and to have a strong sense of belonging at school". (*OECD, 2013*)
- "when paternal involvement includes activities such as reading and playing, there is some evidence of a positive link between fathers' involvement and child cognitive outcomes. These results suggest that the importance of paternal involvement is not just a matter of time but foremost an issue of quality." (*OECD, 2013, Fathers' Leave, Fathers' Involvement and Child Development*)
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report 'Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education' (Sosu and Ellis, 2014) found that parental involvement programmes that focus on helping parents to use appropriate strategies to support their children's learning at home have a positive impact on reducing the poverty related attainment gap.

Growing up in Scotland (2012): *Research Findings Early Experiences of Primary School*

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/05/1427/1>

"Research has shown that parental involvement in children's education from an early age is associated with educational achievement. In addition, it has been found that the more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects. Yet research has also demonstrated large differences between parents in their level of involvement in school activities."

Gaelic Medium Education

The role of parents has been essential in the establishment and growth of Gaelic medium education. Since the commencement of Gaelic medium education in 1985-86 it has been parents that have requested Gaelic medium education (GME) and have requested various improvements in the provision of GME. Good progress has been seen in the provision of Gaelic resources for practitioners, teachers and pupils in GME, in the education and support for GME teachers and in the provision of guidance on what parents can expect if their children attend GME. In all of these areas, parents with children in GME have played an important part. Parents have also been prominent in requesting the establishment of stand-alone Gaelic medium early learning and childcare settings and schools.

There is a national association, Comann nam Pàrant (CnP), for parents with children in GME. CnP operates both on a local level and on a national level. It has local committees which are usually formed around current GME provision and a national function which includes a national officer and a national committee and chair. The local committees have a focus on the provision and growth of GME at a local level. The national function also has an interest in local matters but with the added aim of representing these concerns at a national level. CnP also holds an annual conference for all CnP members. Bòrd na Gàidhlig provides funding for CnP and also has a role in supporting parents with children in GME.

With the growth of stand-alone GME schools, there are now also Gaelic Parent Councils. There are now six GME stand-alone schools and six corresponding Parent Councils. These Parent Councils – and equivalent parent committees or groups in an early learning context - also have an important role both locally and nationally for GME. It is equally important that those parents with children in GME are also represented on Parent Councils of schools with Gaelic units and this should be encouraged at every level.

The body, Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig is funded by both the Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Its principal function is to provide resources and support for pupils and teachers at all levels in Gaelic education. Stòrlann also has an important role in supporting parents with children in GME. This is by means of its website and telephone support line Gaelic 4 Parents. More recently Bookbug has been a valuable initiative for introducing parents and children to Gaelic learning.

The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 included important provisions for parents who wish Gaelic medium education for their children. This includes a right for parents to request GME for their children and a duty on local authorities to assess that request.

In order to ensure that GME continues to be promoted and supported it will be important for parents views on GME to be considered in the education policy process both at a local and national level. It will be important to reflect the specific needs and circumstances of parents of GME pupils as part of the Scottish Government's education reforms, including the proposals to enhance and strengthen parental involvement and engagement. It will be important that effective structures remain in place for GME parents to have access to information and to contribute their views. It will be important that GME parents continue to be supported in the decision to select GME for their children.

Further information, advice and research

Policy and strategic documents, statutory and non-statutory guidance

[Building the Ambition](#): National Practice Guidance on Early Learning and Childcare and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

[Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families](#)

[How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare?](#)

Scottish Government's [National Improvement Framework](#) for education

[Statutory guidance](#) (2007) on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

Scottish Government (2012) [School Handbook Guidance](#)

Education Scotland's [Family Learning Framework](#), available on the National Improvement Hub

Education Scotland (2016) [Review of Family Learning](#)

Education Scotland's [Engaging Parents and Families toolkit](#)

[Education Scotland – What is Parental Involvement and Parental Engagement?](#)

[Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit](#)

[How Good is Our School? \(fourth edition\)](#)

[How Dad Friendly is Our School \(Fathers Network Scotland\)](#)

[Helping Children Learn - Involving non-resident parents in their children's education](#) (Children in Scotland and Families Need Fathers)

Advice and support for parents and families

[Connect](#) (formally known as the Scottish Parent Teacher Council) – advice on Parent Councils.

[Enquire](#) - Scotland's advice service for additional support for learning. Enquire's mission is to raise awareness of children's rights to extra support in school, help families and schools work together to ensure children get the support they need and provide advice to children and young people who might be struggling in school.

[My World of Work, Parent advice](#) – Advice and support to parents when their child is making decisions about their career.

[National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) – website includes a wide range of “Nutshell” advice guides on Scottish education, qualifications and reform programmes.

[Parentzone Scotland](#) - website for parents and carers in Scotland, from early years to beyond school providing information about learning in Scotland, and practical advice and ideas to support children’s learning at home in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and science.

[Parent Club](#) - practical advice for parents covering a range of themes including, hints and tips on engaging with your child’s learning from 0-5.

[Parenting Across Scotland](#) offers support to children and families in Scotland.

[Read, Write, Count](#) – for parents of children in P1 – P3, providing practical advice to support your child’s literacy and numeracy skills.

Scottish Government (2009) [Guide to Parents About School Attendance](#).

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<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/parents-and-carers-research-final-report-january-2018/>

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“Parental involvement, parental engagement” Quotes

In drafting this plan the Scottish Government sought a series of quotes on parental involvement and parental engagement - short lines that encapsulate what the terms actually mean. Many of the quotes are contained in the main body of the plan. This appendix provides further quotes. The Scottish Government and CoSLA would like to thank the parent organisations, headteachers and individual parents who their suggestions. We would like to extend a particular note of thanks to [Parent Network Scotland](#) for providing a large number of the quotes.

Parental involvement is...	Parental engagement is...
<p>“communicating with my children and my children’s teacher about everything that might affect my children”</p> <p>“parents’ participation in any activity related to their children or any activity related to them as parents”</p> <p>“getting involved in parenting activities at home, at school, in the community ...”</p> <p>“including parents at every stage of decision making and review to ensure they are fully involved in the process.”</p> <p>“respecting and taking on board parents’ thoughts and feelings whilst providing feedback and reasoning for any alternative options considered.</p> <p>“working in partnership and reducing the power differential between facilitator/practitioners and parents.”</p> <p>“partnerships that forge the future”</p>	<p>“active engagement in children’s learning and daily life”</p> <p>“making sure children are supported to engage in activities they are interested in doing”</p> <p>“ ensuring that parents understand their crucial role in their children’s learning”</p> <p>“developing the skills, tools and confidence I need to help my children learn”</p> <p>“being committed to my role as a parent”</p> <p>“being present as a parent”</p> <p>“interacting with my children”</p> <p>“family time, playing games and having fun together.”</p> <p>“having good relationships with my children”</p> <p>“commitment”</p> <p>“talking to and listening to your children. Understanding their needs and encouraging them to grow and develop by being the best role model you can be”</p> <p>“taking time to be with your children. Playing with them and being aware of their needs as well as your own”</p>



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