

# Family learning in Perth and Kinross

A local authority case study

# Background

This project was set up in partnership between Perth and Kinross Council and Education Scotland to explore the issues around, and identify current practice in

family learning within a Local Authority. The main aims of the project were therefore two-fold:



1

**To identify current practice in Family Learning across Perth and Kinross.**



2

**To explore ways in which Education Scotland can be involved in Family Learning in conjunction with a Local Authority.**

# Methodology

**From November 2012 to March 2013 11 schools and centres were visited, some on more than one occasion by a team from Education Scotland.**

As Perth and Kinross Council has an established history in family learning, the project started with representatives from the education authority suggesting a number of Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries across the authority which would be suitable for gaining information. Perth and Kinross Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries were developed in line with the

Education and Children's Services Early Years Strategy. This sought to simplify and streamline the delivery of services with increased collaborations in rural areas based on the needs of the families and to ensure the engagement of harder to reach families. Due to the success of this model the service was replicated in urban areas where need was identified. From this list, the project team selected centres and schools which were to be visited, ensuring there was an appropriate balance between rural and urban settings which constitute Perth and Kinross Council.

**Through visits, the project team met with school/centre staff, local authority staff, and partners such as social work, health professionals and voluntary organisations and met with families.**

The discussions were firmly focused around the 'Getting It Right for Every Child' agenda and the SHANARRI indicators.

completed and discussions had taken place it was decided to focus this report around three main case studies, Pitlochry High School (3-16 years provision), St John's RC Academy (3-18 years provision on North Inch Community Campus) and Goodlyburn Primary School (a Community School).

It became clear at an early stage that there was a consistency of approach to family learning across the authority and the project team wanted to use this opportunity to explore this consistent approach further and determine the precise impact on children and their families. This became a major focus for the project. In order to do this, once visits to Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries were

Essentially the project team wanted to identify family learning in different contexts (both rural and urban), which highlighted a consistent, needs-led approach being taken towards engagement and learning. By adopting a needs-led approach families are able to receive appropriate and relevant support for their needs at specific times.

# Context of Perth and Kinross

**Perth and Kinross Council has a population of 149,520 and over the past 11 years, they have experienced the highest population growth in Scotland (10.8%) which is 2.8 times the national average. Their population is projected to grow by 32% by 2035 which is the second highest growth in Scotland.**

In 2010, there were 64,780 households in Perth and Kinross Council and it is predicted that there will be 89,030 by 2033. As a result of an increasing population there are challenges to service delivery.

The Perth and Kinross Council population continues to have high life-expectancy and older people aged 65+ make up 20% of the total. The number of older people has increased by 14% since 2001. This trend is projected to continue. The area remains a safe place to live. Over the last five years the number of crimes

committed has continued to decline and is at its lowest-ever level.

Children make up 17% of the population and they have approximately 17,450 school pupils. There are 10 secondary schools, 76 primary schools, one additional support needs school, one preschool centre and 45 nursery classes within primary schools. Whilst attainment within Perth and Kinross Council schools is high, they have had an increase in the number of children in the more choices, more chances category.

More Choices, More Chances is an action plan to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Scotland. The number of looked-after and accommodated children has also increased. It is recognised that the key challenge is to enable young people to realise their full potential.

## The economy of Perth and Kinross Council is dominated by small businesses which account for around half the workforce.

**Tourism is a main contributor to the economy, worth over £400 million a year and supporting 13% of employment.**

Perth and Kinross is 6th in terms of levels of net migration from overseas nationals out of the 32 Scottish local authority areas. It is 5th in terms of net migration overall. In 2010/11 around 24% of their In-migration was from overseas nationals and correspondingly only around 10% of their Out-migration was from overseas nationals which suggests a further increase of resident overseas nationals in the local population. This trend was replicated in

the previous four years and is reflected in the increase in pupil numbers with English as a second language. This has an impact on services delivered to communities that have a high influx of migrant workers with English as a second language and their children. Over two million visitors a year are attracted by the environment and the historic heritage of the area. As a result of this there is lower unemployment in the area compared to the rest of Scotland. However, the average monthly earnings for people in the area are below the Scottish average.



**Family learning is an important approach to prevention and early intervention in Perth and Kinross Council. It is a key method for engagement with children and their families. The approach was highlighted by the achievement of a COSLA Gold Excellence Award for Perth and Kinross's Family Support and Family Learning practice in 2010<sup>1</sup>.**

Family Learning has become increasingly important and widespread through the development of the Perth and Kinross Early Years and Parenting Strategies and the Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement as part of the Council's Transformational Change process.

The governance and planning structures of the Early Years and Parenting Strategies have brought community planning partners together to achieve a common outcome to improve the lives of children and families in communities. By enabling joint-working across services such as health, education, social work, housing, culture, community and voluntary agencies, they have an integrated approach which works from

the bottom up and the top down. Multi-disciplinary sub groups deliver outcomes related to parenting, family learning, training, achievement of children (3-8) and prebirth to three. They have enabled sharing of practice and communication between agencies. Local Partnership groups coordinate early years parenting, family learning and community capacity building.

The Government's Early Years Collaborative and the Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership's project Evidence2Success research and implementation are further supporting existing approaches to parenting and family learning.

**Family Learning work in Perth and Kinross is based on the following definitions:**

- Parents/carers and children taking part in activities together which are designed to enable them to learn together.
- Parents/carers learning separately from children, in order to engage in learning with their children or other family members.
- Intergenerational learning – formal and informal learning for more than one generation.
- Parents/carers or children learning about family matters to enhance life learning at home.
- Parent/carers participating in adult learning programmes which focus on core skills which will help them to support their child learning.

<sup>1</sup> <http://awards.cosla.gov.uk/2010/03/advancing-community-and-citizen-well-being-in-perth-and-kinross/>

## Perth and Kinross Council context for Family Learning

**Many services and teams currently use Family Learning as a method of delivery.**

These include schools, nurseries (including Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries), Active Schools, Arts Development, Libraries, Perth Prison,

Museums, Perth and Kinross Leisure, the Childcare Strategy Team, Home-start, Community Learning and Development, Community Link Workers, Gowans Child and Family Centre and the two Early Years Teams which sit in Children's Services' and Education Services.

The Communities Service has prioritised its delivery over recent years towards a preventative approach using Community Capacity Building, Adult and Family Learning, Youth work and Community-Link Workers to deliver family learning and parenting in all Learning Communities often with staff from other professions.

This integrated model enables ongoing universal and targeted support to families as well as progression to volunteering, training and employment.

The Family Learning programmes delivered range from Men and Children projects to Family Holiday Activities, Family Swims, Bookbug, Rhymetime, Family Cooking, PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) Infant Massage, Messy Play, Family Clubs, Set4Sport and many others.

The Community Campuses, with their emphasis on integrated working and flexible accommodation, particularly the Campus libraries, provide ideal locations for the development of Family Learning. The combination of Community Learning and Development staff, Active Schools, Community-Link Workers, school staff and Early Years Development Teachers provide a basis for creative developments throughout the year. Targeting of additional Family Learning, in areas of multiple deprivation, continues to embed early intervention, prevention and reduce isolation for families.

Progression from Family Learning includes Adult Literacy and Numeracy, ESOL, accredited learning, parenting programmes such as Handling Children's Behaviour, Handling Teenagers Behaviour, volunteering training and employment.

# Common Themes

**Partnership working with other agencies and voluntary organisations is a strong and common feature. The range of agencies includes health professionals, police, housing, social work and educational psychologists.**

In a number of the Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries a multi-agency approach to family learning has resulted in the creation of Family Clubs and SPACE (Supporting Children and Parents Early) groups. Family Clubs enable families to be involved in a variety of activities which is needs-led and supports them to learn together

Families accessing the SPACE groups are on the whole referred to the service from colleagues such as a Health Visitor or Social Work, which supports the family as a whole through play activities during the first hour then supports the parent or carer separately while their child enjoys crèche time with Playstart. Crèche provision is provided which helps to break

down barriers for some parents/carers to access groups.

A needs-led approach can be seen working effectively in one setting where there is a Drop-In session for parents which is linked to other services. Various activities are delivered successfully such as a cooking group, a health and wellbeing group for dads, baby massage and work with a Homeless Unit. A parenting group is led by a senior social worker and play leader. This setting engages with families in a supportive and meaningful way to build strong links and relationships. This type of provision creates an open channel for communication and as the relationships grow stronger it is easier to signpost to relevant services and groups for the family. A needs-led approach is a strong feature of family learning and is consistent throughout the Authority. An open dialogue and access to staff empowers parents to become more actively involved in their child's and their own learning journey.



## Impact of involvement with Family Learning

The impact of a family learning approach is threefold. It shows that it can have an impact on both the child and the significant parent as well as staff and services.

Parents reported that family learning has had an impact on the relationship that they and their child have with learning. One parent reported that due to coming to a family learning project she is now creating more learning opportunities at home with her children.

Parents are given the skills and knowledge through healthy eating and sports clubs

to impact on their choices in relation to health and wellbeing.

Parenting groups throughout the authority give parents the skills to manage challenging behaviour.

A multi-agency approach to family learning facilitates easier sign posting to services if a family requires specific support.

Working in partnership, staff have reported that they have increased their skills-base and now have the flexibility to create more effective early intervention projects.

## Case studies

Family Learning was used as a method of delivery in all of the Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision. This was clear throughout our conversations with families

and staff within Perth and Kinross Council. This is highlighted using the case studies on the following pages.



# Case Study 1

## Pitlochry High School (3-16 years with Hub Nursery)

Pitlochry High School is an all-through school for pupils aged 3-16 living in Pitlochry, Killiecrankie and the surrounding rural areas of Highland Perthshire. The Early Years Hub and Extended Provision Nurseries is a conduit for different services to come together and support families from the surrounding area. They work in partnership to identify needs within the community and support the delivery of

relevant projects. Pitlochry High School is in the Highland Perthshire locality with evidence of rural poverty which has a migrant seasonal workforce due to the nature of the economy. This has resulted in targeted support incorporating more ESOL provision than was found in more urban areas due to the response to the needs led analysis by staff with local families.

### The range of Family Learning activities is extensive and includes:

#### Impact

Families are more aware of health and wellbeing issues and the impact on their choices. Parents reported that the cookery project has developed their and their children's skills in the kitchen.

Families build relationships with a range of staff both formally and informally which breaks down barriers for future access.

Raising staff awareness of the range of services available and how they link together. This allows flexibility of staff between services and makes sure that staff skills are utilised appropriately.

A multi-agency approach can support different sectors coming together in identifying resources, both physical and

human, which are then utilised effectively ensuring the best outcomes for families.

#### Jellytots

This is a self-referred group for children 0 to 3 and their parents/carer. It is advertised through the local paper, the nursery and by word of mouth. It incorporates rhyme-time, peer support and offers an opportunity for both the child and the parent/carer to socialise. A whole family approach is used which gives parents/carers the skills and knowledge to support their child's learning at home.

#### Impact

Peer learning and support between families has had an impact on the engagement process and attendance of parents and carers.

Parents reported that this had an impact on the way that they interacted and played with their child at home.

Parents who lived in more isolated parts of the community or who were new to the community valued the links and support received from staff and parents.

### **Family Hub**

This service is led by the Community Link Worker based within the school and is an all-day facility for families to access support when needed. This project is a link between home and school and is tailored to each individual family.

### **Impact**

Specialist resources and services can be identified for families when required.

Families felt that this project had a positive effect on daily family life. Families reported that they utilise the skills they have learned in the projects at home and in their community life.

Staff are confident with linking and referring to different services to ensure families have the most relevant support needed at that time.

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# Case Study 2

## St John's RC Academy (3-18 years with Extended Nursery Provision on North Inch Community Campus)

St John's RC Academy is at the heart of the North Inch Community Campus, providing education for children and young people from Nursery through to Secondary sixth year. In November 2011, Nursery and Primary classes moved into the campus and are now enjoying 'state of the art' facilities. Members of the community are also able to access the facilities within the Campus and have

a range of activities to choose from. An important strand of the school's core beliefs is that partnership between pupils, staff, parents and chaplains is at the heart of their school community. The campus is available for use outside school hours and offers an excellent range of facilities for local interest groups, organisations and individuals.

### The range of Family Learning activities is extensive and includes:

#### Family Club

The Family Club is a multi-agency approach to engagement and learning for the whole family. It is run on a weekly basis and involves a variety of professionals including community workers, adult literacy and numeracy worker, art specialist, cookery specialist and sports workers. There are a number of activities which are offered on a weekly basis with parents and children choosing which ones they wish to participate in. In order to break any barriers to attending a crèche is available if needed.

#### Impact

Families reported that the classes enhanced their skills in a variety of areas including arts and crafts, sports, literacy

and numeracy and cooking.

Children and parents worked closely together which parents said had a positive impact on communication and bonding with their child.

Family Club offers staff the opportunity to link in with colleagues from different services. This creates strong referral pathways and collaborative approaches. One member of staff commented that she had a number of families being successfully referred to other services when needed.

#### Handling Children's Behaviour Parenting Course

Handling Children's Behaviour looks at

child development and types of behaviour and aims to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to consider and talk about how best to manage children's difficult behaviour, and to help to build positive, confident and strong family relationships.

### **Impact**

Families are able to communicate better when a challenging situation arises.

Parents and carers feel more confident about how they will challenge behaviour and work out a positive solution so that conflict in the home can be avoided.

Children feel safe and secure to voice their opinion in a nurtured environment.

### **Family Cooking Classes**

The main aim of the cooking session was to enhance the skills that the parents already have by giving them opportunities

to engage their children in budgeting for food, preparing meals and cooking. Some families were cooking and eating meals together for the first time which had a huge impact on meal times at home.

### **Impact**

Families became more confident in trying new food and making healthier choices at meal times. Children were more likely to eat the food that they had prepared with their parent or carer.

Cooking together had an impact on the overall communication between families and how they interacted as a unit.

Families also enjoyed cooking with others in the community and meeting new friends who they can then go onto socialise with. This is important for those families living in isolation that they feel part of a community and are supported.

# Case Study 3

## Goodlyburn Primary (a Community School with Extended Nursery Provision)

Goodlyburn Primary School is a Community School providing education for children, young people and their families. They accommodate an extended nursery provision and primary provision, which includes Gaelic Medium as well as community classes. It is situated in an

area of deprivation which the school fully understands and works hard to support their local community. The school works in partnership with a number of services to address the needs of the community involving projects using a family learning approach.

### The range of Family Learning activities is extensive and includes:

#### Homework Club

The homework club is an after school project set up to support not only the child but also the parent/carer. The school and community-link worker work closely together to make sure that parents feel able to access support and help their child at the same time. The system of home visits and referrals to other services, as and when needed, works well and are an effective early intervention project.

#### Impact

Parents reported that they found the club a benefit to both themselves and their child. It also encouraged learning at home and with other siblings.

One child said that it was great to be able to spend time with his grandfather one-on-one.

Staff reported that working in partnership made it easier for them to refer at an early stage as they knew who to refer to and that the parent and/or family would be in good hands.

School staff reported that it had a positive impact on their own practice in class and also in volunteering after class.

#### Men and Children Matters

Community Learning and Development and School staff set up a project to encourage the significant male figure in a child's life to engage and achieve learning outcomes as a family. The project focuses on activities that men will take ownership of and enjoy with their children. This directed learning has resulted in a popular project that is now a constituted group.

### Impact

Children are able to spend more time with the fraternal role-model in their lives.

Fathers are now engaging more with projects in their community and forming stronger bonds with their children and each other.

By becoming a constituted group fathers have taken ownership of the project and are now directing their own learning.

Staff and families within this project have built up a relationship of trust enabling clear two-way communication.

### Family Club

The Family Club is a common feature in many of the Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries around Perth and Kinross. The approach is to engage the whole family in a number of learning opportunities using a multi-agency approach. They can access arts and crafts, cooking skills, health and wellbeing, sports and literacy and

numeracy class amongst others. Parents and children can also be referred to more intensive classes either together or separately as appropriate. Families' feedback to this was overwhelmingly positive and they believed it had a number of positive results for all of the family. Staff also felt that it was a beneficial way of working which allowed them the flexibility to engage with families with specialist support from staff from other agencies if needed.

### Impact

Families are more aware of health and wellbeing issues and are able to develop strategies to help address these issues.

Families build relationships with staff formally and informally and enter into a trusting relationship.

Staff awareness is raised about the range of services available and how these services can complement each other for the benefit of the family.



# Conclusion

Perth and Kinross has a strong history in Family Learning. The education authority has ensured that Family Learning has become increasingly important and successful through the development of the Perth and Kinross Early Years and Parenting Strategies. This has enabled joint working across services such as health, education, social work, housing,

culture, community and voluntary agencies. Families are aware that if they moved throughout the authority support would move with them and children and families would receive a similar experience. Central to the success of Family Learning is the needs analysis approach, the integration of services and the consistency of joined up thinking.

## Outcomes and benefits of Family Learning as identified by Perth and Kinross Council

- Improvement in children's wider achievement.
- Improvement in literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents.
- Improvement in parents' ability to help their children learn.
- Improvement in children's acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy.
- Enabling parents to access information and further skills to help them with their parenting role.
- Increase in confidence and self-esteem of parents and their children.
- Parents going on to address their own learning needs.
- Children benefit from seeing their parent as 'a positive role model' when the parent undertakes further learning or employment.
- The family as a whole spend more time together and experience a wider range of activities.
- Social capital generated through better networks, can lead to friendships, reduced isolation, increased employment, improved health, higher level of attainment at school and stronger communities.



**However it should be noted that some of the Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision Nurseries were clearer in the direction that they were taking and because of this had stronger links to partner agencies.**

This could be down to staffing from partner agencies connecting with the service or staff not realising the benefit of a multi-agency approach and what that can bring to the families in their area. Access to space within the Early Years Hubs and Extended Provision was good overall but again, in some settings this was limited and in some cases projects were asked to move or cancel for a night at short notice

if the school requested it.

The future of family learning within Perth and Kinross Council is strong and the foundations of this approach being used in a variety of settings are already there and in some cases flourishing. It would be recommended that they continue to build on this success and nurture it in areas where it is not strong. Collegial partnerships are present but not as strong in all cases and where it is present this is where the most impact was seen. In these areas, staff felt empowered by working in partnership and families expressed the most impact on their lives.

# Implications for Education Scotland

There are many areas from which Education Scotland can learn from this work and develop further its own delivery and awareness of effective practice in family learning. These include:

- Be clear about definitions of Family Learning.
- Inform the development of inspection and review of Family Learning nationally.
- Recognising and learning from the firmly established approaches to family learning within Perth and Kinross Council.
- Emphasise the partnership approach to Early Intervention and the consistency across the authority.
- Recognise and promote the needs analysis approach taken at all levels within Perth and Kinross Council.
- Acknowledge the importance of the life-long learning journey approach taken with Perth and Kinross Council when working with other local authorities.
- Recognise the very strong partnership working with other agencies and promote this when working with other local authorities.
- Acknowledge the strong impact that family learning can have on the lives of children and their families.

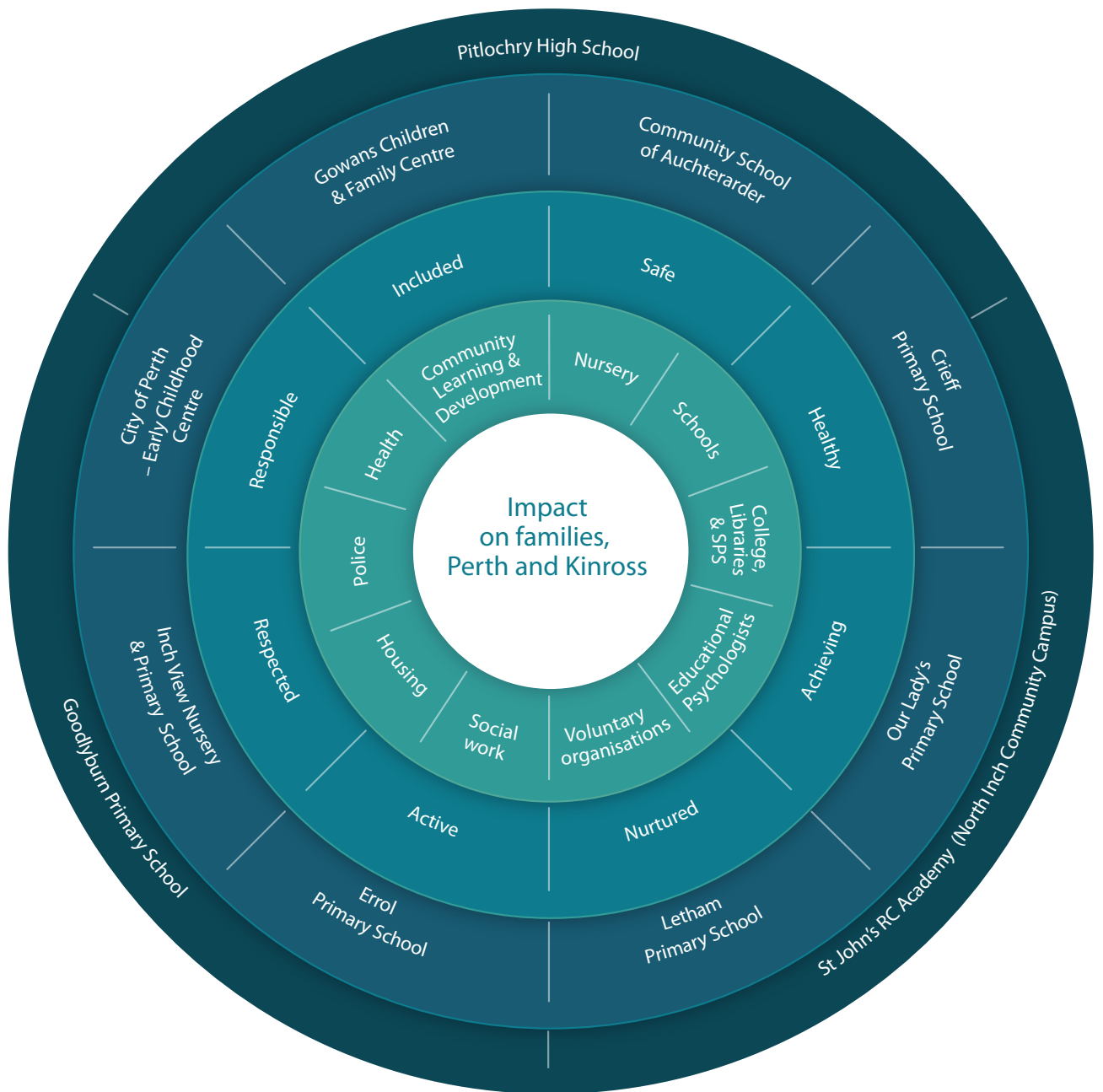
# Evidence

**Evidence for this report came from the following resources - discussions with families as a whole and separately, meetings with a range of local authority and voluntary personnel through visits to:**

- Pitlochry High School
- The Community School of Auchterarder
- Crieff Primary School
- Crieff High School
- Goodlyburn Primary School
- Errol Primary School
- Gowans Child and Family Centre
- Inch View Primary and Nursery School on Glenearn Community Campus
- City of Perth Early Childhood Centre
- Our Lady's RC Primary School
- Letham Primary School
- St John's RC Academy on North Inch Community Campus
- Community Centres
- Documentation from the Local Authority

# Appendix 1

## Project representation using the GIRFEC Wheel



# Appendix 2 - glossary

## **Active Schools**

Network of staff, and programme, who provide quality opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport – before, during and after school.

## **Community School**

A school with very strong ties to the community and with a multi-disciplinary team working within it and other local schools

## **Community Link Worker**

Supports children, young people and

parents through individual and group work in home, school and community settings.

## **Early Years Development Teachers**

Seconded Early Years Teachers (currently 6.5fte) who are locality based and promote sustainable ways of integrated working across the early years.

Though not class committed, they do work hands - on in schools, centres and a range of other settings to support development work and share best practice e.g. focused work on transition / pre-birth to three etc.

## **Hubs + Extended Provision**

Local authority nursery provision (including full time places) within which, and from, a range of integrated services is delivered.

**Background:** The Early Years Review identified the need for the development of services outwith Perth City, eg pre 2009, the only full time local authority nursery provision was in Perth.

**Hubs:** In August 2009, 5 nurseries, spread geographically across Perth and Kinross, were developed as nursery hubs; each with 8 full time nursery places which were allocated under Support for Children and Families criteria. It was recognised that key to success would be the development of integrated working both within the hub nurseries and also linking directly to other

services in a seamless way. Progress was kept under review and the early positive outcomes secured built the case for developing 3 further nurseries which were developed as hubs commencing August 2011.

**Extended Provision:** Also in 2011, the same model was developed within five Perth City nurseries and these were established in recognition that young children and their families needed to be supported within their local communities. This means that rather than the support that surrounds a full time nursery place being accessed elsewhere in the city, relationships with parents/ carers are now established early within nursery classes of catchment primary schools.

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