

Strategic Framework for: Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home

This is a practical guidance document for early years practitioners, childminders, student teachers, probationers, post-probationers and existing staff in Scotland.

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This Framework has been developed with a range of partner and stakeholder organisations and establishments across Scotland including Initial Teacher Education providers and national parenting organisations.

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1. Introduction

It is well proven that children do better when parents, professionals and educators work together. 'However, not all parents find it easy to be involved in their child's learning. We want to help parents lay strong foundations for the loving, nurturing relationships that we know are integral to children's emotional, physical, socio-economic and educational wellbeing'

([National Parenting Strategy](#), 2012).

Increased parental expectations and desires to engage with early learning and childcare (ELC) settings* and schools are evident from the national [Parental Involvement and Engagement \(PIE\) Census](#) data and in subsequent surveys of parents by local authorities and national parenting organisations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Many settings and schools reported an increase in parental engagement through existing and new communication approaches offered by emerging technology and access to digital devices as a result of the [Connecting Scotland](#) initiative.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the topic of improving outcomes for learners, parents and families even more to the forefront of education discourses and debates. Practitioners across Scotland and indeed the world, have had to develop creative ways to engage with parents and help them support their children's learning and development during fluctuating periods of lockdown, blended learning and on returning to settings and schools. Many of the creative strategies and approaches used by teachers and practitioners throughout the pandemic have been welcomed and have proved to be effective in addressing the unique challenges presented by COVID-19. These have supported educational continuity and parental engagement. Whilst some of them may continue, long after COVID-19, they should be viewed as additional 'tools' and options rather than superseding all previous methods used to engage parents.

These additional tools to connect and engage with families builds on the vision in the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act](#) 2006 to involve parents in the wider life and work of the school and meaningfully engage them in their children's learning. Since the Parental Involvement Act came into force in 2006, there have been numerous developments in the form of key national strategies, [Frameworks](#), [action plans](#) and [Blueprint](#) which relate to the involvement, engagement and communication with parents, families and communities. Collectively, they provide the overarching framework within which local authorities, schools and practitioners should work.

However, there has never been a more important time to ensure that the workforce has the appropriate values, competencies, skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications to work effectively with learners, parents and families. Responsibility for working with learners, parents and families can vary across local authorities, early learning and childcare settings, childminders, schools, community learning and development, colleges and the third sector.

Ensuring the workforce continues to be developed and equipped and is given the time and resources to work with learners, parents and families can be an ongoing challenge (Family Learning Review, 2016). This is particularly the case because practitioners who work with learners, parents and families, do so across different sectors and can have a range of experience.

Depending on a practitioner's background, and the position or sector they are employed in, they can be registered with different standards councils or regulatory bodies such as the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) or the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). In doing so, there is an ongoing need to ensure that there is a common language which is shared and used across all sectors by teachers and practitioners who work with learners, parents and families.

Given the range of audiences that this Strategic Framework covers, it should be recognised that while there are mandatory elements throughout for some sectors, providers and bodies, there are other key principles which are encouraged as being good practice for others who are currently not subject to legislative requirements. See section 4.9 for further information.

*It should be noted that the word 'settings' throughout this Strategic Framework includes early learning and childcare settings and childminders. Additionally, the term 'professional learning' throughout the document refers to 'career-long professional learning' used in the teaching profession and to 'continuous professional learning' used by early years practitioners and childminders.

The Strategic Framework aims to provide a structure within which all stakeholders (see example list below) can engage in and deliver professional learning on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. Definitions of these terms can be found in Section 6.

- Initial teacher education providers
- Providers of childhood practice programmes
- Local authorities
- Probationers/post-probationers/teachers
- Early learning and childcare practitioners
- Childminders
- Existing staff e.g. Headteachers, Depute Headteachers

This practical guidance document is intended to be useful to early years practitioners, childminders, student teachers, probationers, post-probationers, teachers and existing staff in all sectors across Scotland who work with parents and families to support children's learning.

2. Historical overview

'No institution or one actor can reinvent the education system by themselves. So you need to spend the time to develop an answer to the question: What is it that we want for our children in this community? Only once we agree on where we're trying to go, can we then work in co-ordination and know what our respective roles are. Developing this shared vision is what good leaders do'

(Winthrop et al, 2021, p13).

Involving and engaging parents in their child's and their own learning has been an evolving journey in Scotland's education systems over many decades. By way of a short historical overview, the Education (Scotland) Act 1946 established a framework for the development of public education in the post-war period. Education was made compulsory from ages 5-15. Parents were given a duty under the 1946 Act to provide education for their children.

Since then, there have been a number of developments in terms of parental rights and parental choices. Scotland's education system was reorganised during the 1960s and 1970s along comprehensive lines. Family Learning as an effective approach to engaging parents and families was redefined in Scottish education during this period. A suite of educational reforms has been enacted since the 1980s. For example, the 1981 Education (Scotland) Act gave parents the statutory right to request places in schools outwith their designated area.

Timeline of key legislative and strategic frameworks

While there are too many developments to mention, some of the key legislative and strategic framework changes include:

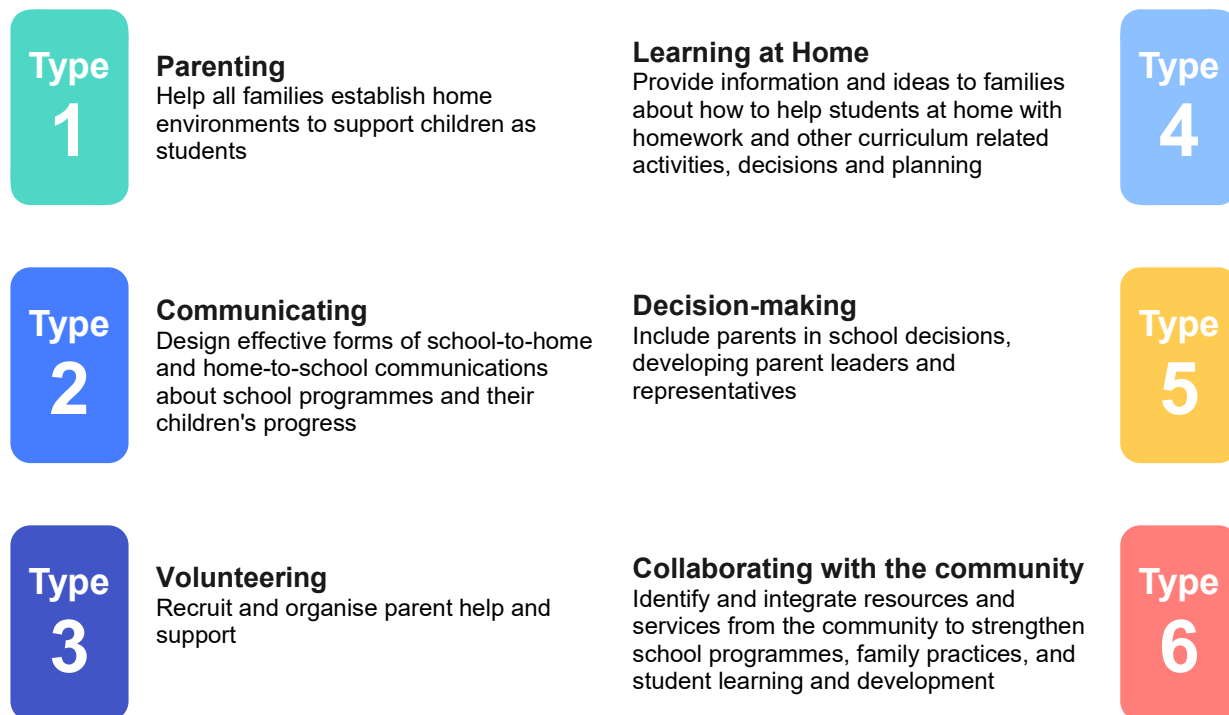
- [Regulation of Care \(Scotland\) Act](#) (2001)
- [Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act](#) 2000 (asp 6)
- [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act](#) (2006)
- Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments (Scotland) [Regulations](#) (2007)
- [Schools \(Consultation\) \(Scotland\) Act](#) (2010)
- School Handbook [guidance](#) (2010)
- National Parenting [Strategy](#) (2012)
- [Getting it Right for Every Child](#) (2015)
- National Improvement [Framework](#) (2015)
- Learning Together National [Action Plan](#) (2018)
- [National Standards for Early Learning and Childcare](#) (2018)
- An Empowered [System](#) (2019)
- A [Blueprint](#) for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland; [Quality Action Plan](#)
- [Realising the Ambition](#) (2021)
- [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#) (2022-26)

Further information on the development of public education and parental choice in Scotland since the 1940s is available in ['The Origins and Impact of the Parents Charter'](#).

Throughout the years that have elapsed since the 1940s, influential frameworks such as that of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943) and Joyce Epstein and colleagues' six types of involvement for action (1990s) has emerged. Maslow's hierarchy of needs was first introduced in his paper 'A theory of motivation'. This was later refined in 1954 with his book 'Motivation and Personality'. Maslow's theory has, and continues, to influence Scottish policy and education. Epstein et al's book 'School, Family and Community

Partnerships: Your handbook for Action' (2009) (Fourth Edition), is based on 30 years of research and fieldwork. It contains a 'theory and framework of six types of involvement for action'. These are: parenting; communicating; volunteering; learning at home; decision-making; and collaborating with the community. Further information on Epstein's framework is provided in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (2010)



2.1 Research

In addition to the legislative developments and influential frameworks, several research papers and projects have been undertaken which review the effectiveness of involving and engaging parents in the wider life and work of the school and their children's learning. However, reasons to involve parents extend beyond legislative and statutory requirements. Findings from the 'Early Learning and Child Wellbeing' study show that 'What parents do is pivotal for their children's development. The day-to-day activities that parents undertake are highly correlated with children's learning and development. Regardless of socio-economic background, the study found children did better when their parents' were engaged ([OECD, 2020](#)).

Parental involvement

Benefits and impacts of parental involvement on children's learning and attainment have strong foundations in literature as well as inspection findings and the National Parent Forum of Scotland's 10-year review of the impact of the Parental Involvement Act (2017). A key message from the 'Review of the impact of the Parental Involvement Act' in Scotland highlighted that 'parental involvement in a child's learning has positive outcomes for the child, their family and their school and helps raise attainment' (National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017, p4). Furthermore, 'successive large-scale studies (Cooper et al 2010; Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008; Bradshaw et al 2012) show a strong association between parental involvement and school outcomes across all age ranges' (See and Gorard, 2013, p8).

Parental engagement

Parental engagement can often be unhelpfully intertwined with parental involvement (see Section 6 for definitions). In its broadest sense, parental engagement can be considered as consisting of 'partnerships between families, early learning and childcare settings, schools and communities' not only to raise awareness of the benefits of engaging in their child's education, but also to 'provide them with the skills to do so' (Emerson et al, 2012, p7).

Engaging parents in their child's learning is said to be 'a powerful lever for raising achievement' (Harris and Goodall, 2007, p5; Goodall, 2017). The impact of engaging parents is evident across attendance and behaviour as well as educational outcomes (Goodall 2017; See and Gorard 2013). Engaging parents is according to See and Gorard (2013) the 'only intervention around narrowing the gap in achievement between children from different backgrounds which had a strong enough evidence base to warrant further investment and work' (In: Goodall, 2017, p1).

Consistent reinforcement that 'what parents do matters' is an important message. Equally, it is also vital to ensure there is a common understanding between teachers, practitioners, parents, children and young people about what parental engagement actually means. For example, teachers and practitioners may consider parental engagement as a way to improve the behaviour of children and young people. Parents on the other hand, may consider the support they provide to their child as parental engagement whereas children may view it as moral support from their parents and them taking an interest in their learning journey (Harris and Goodall, 2007).

Endeavours by settings and schools to engage parents in their children's learning are, however, more effective when integrated into a planned whole setting or school approach to parental engagement, rather than a 'bolt-on' to mainstream activities (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011). Time, dedicated resource and leadership are essential to ensure the success of any proposed parental engagement programmes or strategies at settings, school, cluster and local authority level. This should be in collaboration with parents and be pro-active rather than reactive.

Family Learning

A wide range of evidence shows family learning to be an effective way of promoting and facilitating increased parental participation and engagement with settings and schools (Mackenzie, 2010). Family learning has also been shown to improve attendance, reduce persistent absenteeism and improve attainment. Wider outcomes are shown through skills development, employability, progression into work, interactions within the family, as well as improvements in parental confidence and parenting skills. It is important, however, to understand the differences between family learning and parental involvement and parental engagement. Family learning programmes can be a conduit to increasing parental involvement and engagement in the life of the setting and school and in children's learning at home. Programmes can also be independent of settings and school activity. They can focus on wider family and community needs such as health and wellbeing, families where English is an additional or other language, parents and families of children with additional support needs, and community capacity building. A family learning approach is successful in influencing not just children, young people and families but those who can appear to be further away from being involved in any form of their own and their children's learning (Review of Family Learning, 2016).

Children in Scotland only spend around 15 per cent of their waking hours in school. The remaining 85 per cent of their time is spent at home or in their community and this presents a significant opportunity for learning (OECD, 2014). What parents do with their children at home is more important than their socio-economic status. A stimulating learning environment out with settings and schools such as outdoor learning in gardens and community spaces, and Government led initiatives (Bookbug; Read, Write, Count; Connecting Scotland) can therefore be fundamental to their attainment and achievement whilst also limiting costs to families. For many parents, their first experience of parental involvement and engagement can take place in a provision prior to starting formal school education. Early learning and childcare settings, childminders, schools and communities can also play a key part in recognising, developing and resourcing this. Sensitively supporting parents to 'improve the learning that goes on at

home will have a major impact on child outcomes' (Hunt et al, 2011). In addition to this, 'the interaction between parent and child at home can have a significant impact on a child's language and literacy development' as well as attainment and achievement (Scottish Book Trust, 2018).

A foundational belief of contemporary family learning programmes is the idea that 'parents need to be literate and that through the intergenerational transfer of skills and attitudes, the parents' education can influence the subsequent educational achievement of their children' (Sticht, 2010). Family learning programmes are based on a wealth model that respects the skills, knowledge and experiences that families already have and contextualises learning based on the needs identified by each individual within the family. This approach builds the capacity of families whilst simultaneously breaking socio-economic intergenerational cycles such as low attainment and poverty. Practitioners should continue to meaningfully engage and work together with parents and families, in partnership, to develop programmes to address identified needs in a way that takes account of any barriers to participation.

'Poverty shapes children's lives and what they go on to do in the future. Frank Field's 2010 review of poverty and life chances argues that education serves to 'prevent the intergenerational transfer of poverty, with the aim that future generations of children will not have to experience such financial and material deprivation'' (Save the Children, 2013).

Closing the poverty related attainment gap through, amongst others, effective parental engagement cannot be viewed simply as increasing parental interest in their child's education and/or helping with homework. Although parents from all socio-economic backgrounds will arguably, routinely help their child with homework (See and Gorard, 2013), parental engagement in their child's learning extends much wider than this.

Further information is available in:

[Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners](#)

[Review of Family Learning](#)

[Review of Learning at Home](#)

[Realising the Ambition](#)

3. Professional knowledge and understanding

The teaching profession in Scotland sets high standards for itself. A teaching qualification is the foundation for registration with GTC Scotland, the teaching profession's independent registration and regulation body. Under the [Public Services Reform \(General Teaching Council for Scotland\) Order](#) (2011), GTC Scotland determine what constitutes a recognised teaching qualification for individuals seeking registration as a school teacher. Guidelines published by GTC Scotland set out the content, nature and duration of programmes leading to teaching qualifications for primary and secondary sectors. GTC Scotland ensure that these requirements are met through accrediting all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Scotland.

Initial Teacher Education programmes should:

- include educational theory and practice that supports student teachers to develop their knowledge, understanding and practice in areas such as educational theory, childhood development and developing positive relationships. The legal and statutory frameworks which govern teachers' work should also be addressed throughout the programme.

Student teachers should be exposed to national priorities and pedagogies to develop their understanding and practice in key areas such as:

- inclusion and meeting learners needs;
- parental involvement;
- involvement of young people;
- the curriculum with emphasis on areas that are Responsibilities of All - literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing;
- digital and data literacy;
- skills for learning, life and work;
- mobile families
- learning for sustainability.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provides the foundation upon which all further professional learning is built. Due to the time constraints within ITE programmes (1-year Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), 4-5 years full-time academic study), it is not possible to cover all the above topics in any great depth despite the recognition, desire and commitment placed on doing so. However, upon successful completion of their probationary period, teachers will have demonstrated that they meet the Standard for Full Registration. At this point, they have attained Full Registration with GTC Scotland, committing to career-long professional learning. This provides the opportunity for further training and development in the areas above including parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

Responsibilities for developing the initial and ongoing skills and knowledge of students, probationers, post-probationers, teachers and existing staff extends across ITE providers, GTC Scotland, SSSC, local authorities, schools, Education Scotland, Scottish Government, national parenting organisations and the practitioner themselves. This is explored in further detail in Section 5 'What do we all need to know'.

Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

The Scottish Social Services Council is the regulator for the social work, social care and early years workforce in Scotland. The organisation protects the public by registering social workers, social care and early years workers, setting standards for their practice, conduct, training and education and by supporting professional development of registrants. Where people fall below the standards of practice and conduct, the Scottish Social Services Council can investigate and take action.

The aims of SSSC are to:

- publish the national codes of practice for people working in social work, social care and early years services and their employers. The SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers say that all registered workers must undertake relevant learning to maintain and improve their knowledge and skills and contribute to the learning and development of others;
- register people working in social work, social care and early years and make sure they adhere to our codes of practice;
- promote and regulate their learning and development. Continuous professional learning (CPL) is the learning they do for work which helps them develop their knowledge, skills and professional behaviour so they can deliver their best practice;
- are the national lead for workforce development and planning for the social work, social care and early years workforce in Scotland.

Scottish Social Services Council undertake the functions of the sector skills council in Scotland. This means that SSSC work in partnership with employers to develop the social services workforce and invest in workforce planning. It also includes developing [National Occupational Standards \(NOS\)](#) which underpin qualifications for registration and outline the skills, knowledge and understanding employers say are necessary for an effective workforce. The National Occupational Standards (NOS) are benchmark statements of competence individuals are expected to demonstrate at a given level and for a specific activity.

In Scotland, National Occupational Standards are used by 80% of the social service workforce in the form of qualifications.

- NOS underpin Higher National Certificates, Professional Development Awards and more.
- NOS are used as SVQs by the social service sector.
- One of the qualification criteria for individuals wishing to register with the SSSC is that the qualification is based on the NOS.
- Modern Apprenticeship Frameworks in Scotland are based on NOS as SVQs.

Early Learning and Childcare

Registration to work in early years is undertaken by the Scottish Social Services Council. Practitioners must satisfy the criteria for registration which includes holding, or agreeing to work towards, the appropriate qualifications for the job they do. If practitioners do not currently hold all the required qualifications, registration can still be granted subject to the condition that they achieve the required qualifications within their first period of registration.

3.1 The need for a Strategic Framework

Intelligence gathered over a number of years from a range of sources including settings, schools, practitioners and two national mapping exercises (undertaken by Education Scotland), show that there is a need for a Strategic Framework. This Framework will help streamline the teacher education and professional learning delivered by Initial Teacher Education providers, childhood practice providers, SSSC and local authorities on the areas of Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home. It will help reduce any duplication of professional learning provision and ensure that all teachers and practitioners working with children, young people and families have the appropriate background knowledge of the legislative requirements under the Parental Involvement Act (2006). The framework will also help teachers and practitioners to understand the journey of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home, along with the benefits of involving and engaging parents as clearly defined in research.

The framework will also help equip the workforce and ensure they have access to, and are signposted towards resources, professional learning opportunities, case studies, research and current examples of good practice. Furthermore, ensuring the workforce have the required competencies, skills and values,

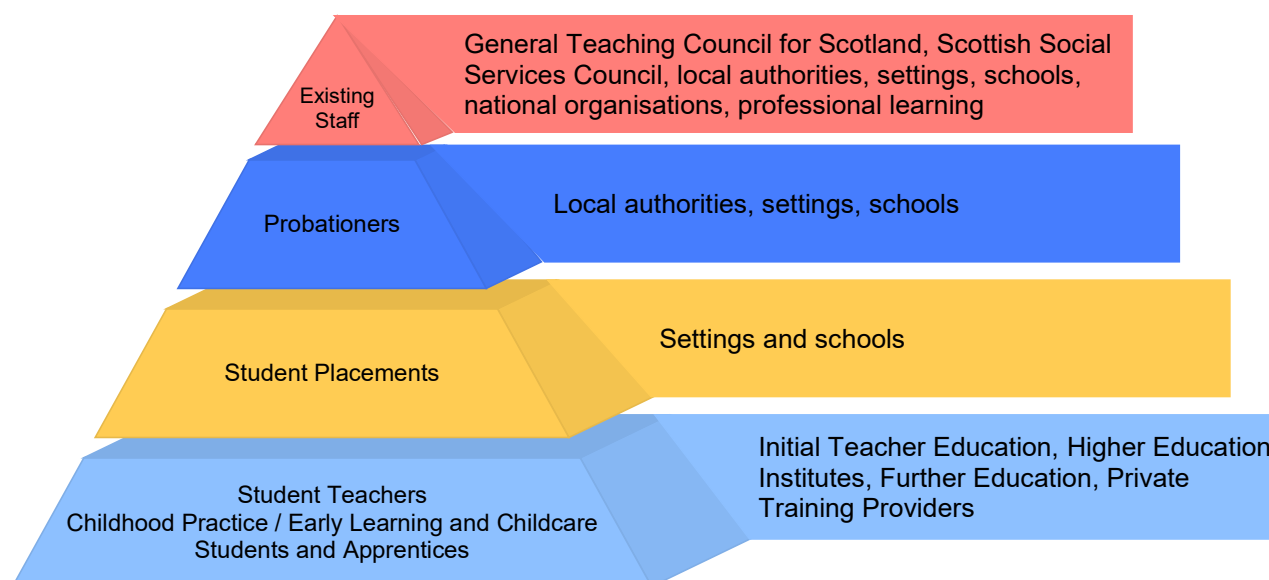
time and resource needed to work with learners, parents and families during their child’s learning journey, often in ever changing complex economic and financial circumstances, is crucial to building trusting relationships.

3.2 Who is this Framework for?

This Framework is for anyone who supports the qualification and professional learning of early years practitioners, childminders and teachers on: parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. It is also aimed to inform those who work with parents and families in settings and schools across Scotland and provide the foundation upon which everything else is built. The framework also aims to provide a common language and understanding of all the component parts of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

Working with parents and families requires a range of skills, competencies and standards which are built up over a period of time. Figure 2 below shows Initial Teacher Education and Early Learning and Childcare development as the foundation from which other learning can be built upon.

Figure 2: Foundation blocks for learning



3.3 How was the Strategic Framework developed?

This Strategic Framework and practical guidance document has been co-developed in partnership with a range of partner and stakeholder organisations and establishments across Scotland. These include:

- Initial Teacher Education providers
- General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Early Years Scotland
- Scottish Social Services Council
- Educational Institute of Scotland
- Scottish Childminding Association
- Local authorities
- National parenting organisations
- Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network (SPION)
- National Family Learning Network
- Scottish Government
- Education Scotland colleagues

3.4 How might this Strategic Framework be used?

We trust that this Strategic Framework will be useful to policymakers, practitioners, stakeholders and national partner organisations in their ongoing work on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

The framework could also be used in the development, review and delivery of:

- local and national strategies and policies;
- childminding provision and services;
- early years provision and professional learning;
- teacher education provision; and
- approaches to and content of professional learning opportunities.

4. Roles, responsibilities and legislation

4.1 General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland)

[Professional Standards](#) for Scotland's Teachers were refreshed and restructured in 2021. They describe teacher professionalism in Scotland, in particular, 'teachers' way of being'. The Standards highlight professional values of social justice, trust and respect, and integrity as central to what it means to be a teacher in Scotland.

Under the [Public Services Reform \(General Teaching Council for Scotland\) Order](#) (2011), the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland) determines what constitutes a recognised teaching qualification for individuals seeking registration as a school teacher. GTC Scotland may make such provision about the education and training required to attain such a qualification as they consider necessary.

4.2 Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in Scotland is provided by universities and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in partnership with schools and local authorities. Each of the partners has particular priorities, roles and responsibilities as have been highlighted in documents such as Teaching Scotland's Future (2010), Teaching Scotland's Future – National Partnership Group: Report to Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (2012) and the National Implementation Board STEC/ADES National Framework Agreement for Partnership in the Early Phase of Teacher Learning (2013).

The overall aim of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes is to prepare student teachers to become competent, thoughtful, reflective and innovative practitioners, who are committed to providing high quality learning for every learner. These programmes must align with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's requirements and ensure that student teachers meet the requirements of the Standard for Provisional Registration (2021), which is part of the GTC Scotland's suite of Professional Standards. The Standard for Full Registration (2021) is a mandatory requirement for registration with GTC Scotland.

4.3 Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC)

'The Scottish Social Services Council Code of Practice for Social Service Workers sets out clear standards of professional conduct and practice that social service workers must meet in their everyday work' ([SSSC website](#)). Being registered with the SSSC means that practitioners are part of a professional workforce similar to teachers and nurses. Practitioners can show that they have the skills and knowledge gained through their qualification and this will help to increase their own self-confidence and the confidence the public have in them. National standards of practice are set through SSSC Codes which practitioners should follow in their daily work.

4.4 Scottish Government

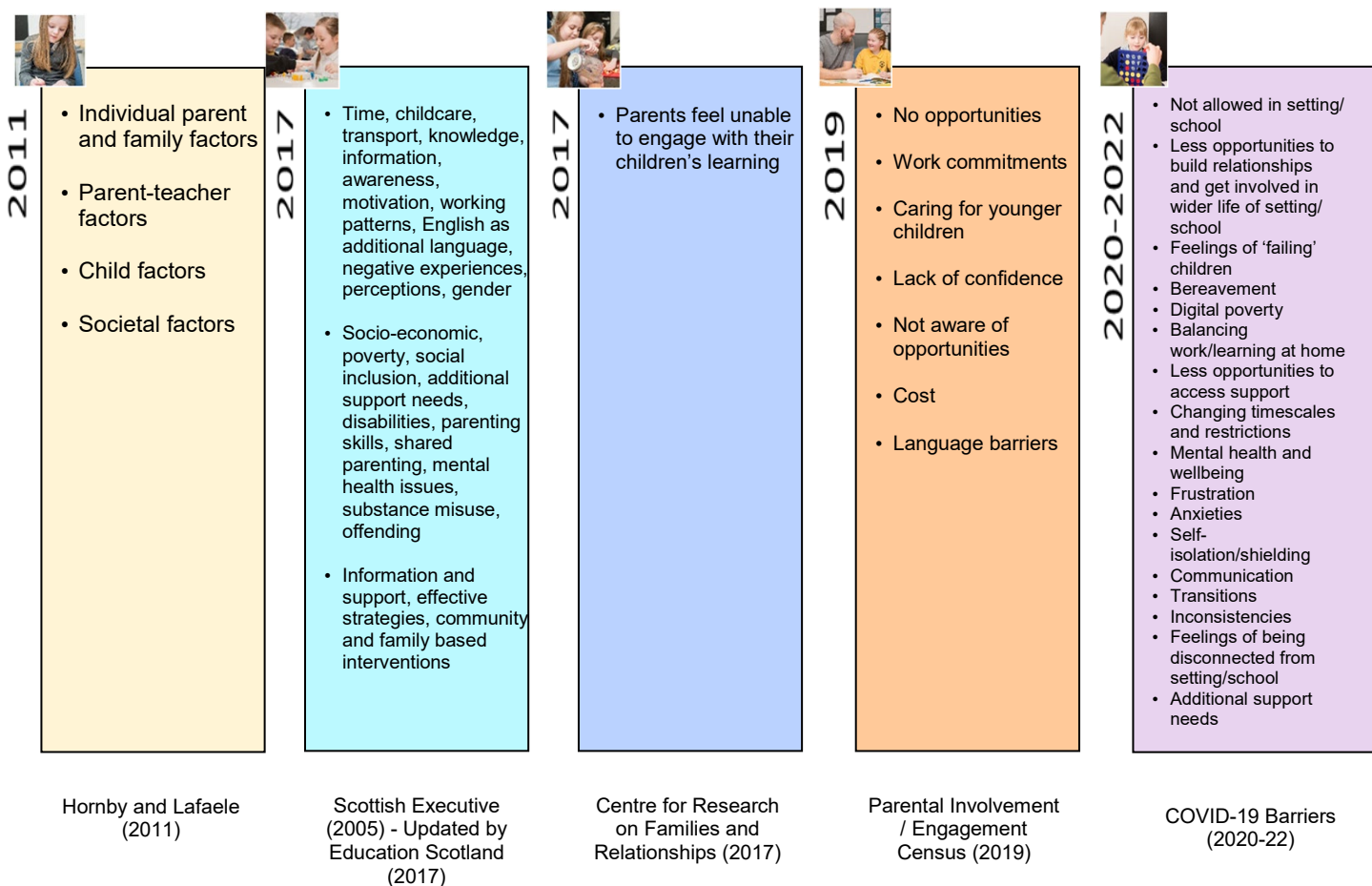
The Scottish Government is the devolved government for Scotland and has a range of responsibilities that include: the economy, education, health, justice, rural affairs, housing, environment, equal opportunities, consumer advocacy and advice, transport and taxation.

Within Scottish Government, early learning and childcare is overseen by Early Learning and Childcare Directorate. Responsibility for parental involvement, parental engagement family learning and learning at home within Scottish Government for settings and schools, sits with the Directorate for Education Reform. During 2018, Scottish Government developed a national action plan which reoriented the national education system to focus on more effectively engaging parents. It was created in consultation with local authorities, teachers groups, national parenting organisations, partners and stakeholder groups.

The Learning Together National Action Plan provided the first national vision whilst still allowing for local and community voice, innovation and flexibility. The Plan highlighted the leadership of those who make a difference every day to children’s outcomes, namely, parents, families, teachers, headteachers, managers, early years practitioners and childminders, partners and relevant stakeholders. At the heart of the National Action Plan is the building of meaningful relationships between home, settings and schools. These relationships are based on trust, mutual respect and collaboration. The methodology of the plan was to promote the creation of collaborative relationships between Scottish Government, Education Scotland, national parenting organisations, practitioners, partner organisations, stakeholders, education non-governmental organisations, local authorities, settings and schools. Equity is the focus of the plan, and it is embedded across all goals and actions within it.

Every family can face barriers to getting involved in the wider life of the setting or school and in their children’s learning. Over the years, parents have identified barriers and factors that restrict their ability to be more involved in their child’s learning. These fluctuate from external barriers out with a parents’ control, to individual obstacles specific to personal life circumstances (Scottish Executive, 2005). External barriers restricting parents from supporting their children’s learning can be multifaceted. Individual barriers can result from a parent’s socio-economic circumstances such as poverty, working patterns, or social exclusion. Some parents also have personal assumptions about what their level of involvement or engagement in their child’s learning should be (Scottish Executive, 2005). Scottish Government, in close partnership with Education Scotland, national organisations, partners and stakeholder groups, work collaboratively to provide practitioners with the tools to address barriers and engage all families.

Figure 3: Timeline of barriers to involving and engaging parents and families



4.5 Education Scotland

Education Scotland is a Scottish Government executive agency charged with supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education and thereby securing the delivery of better learning experiences and outcomes for Scottish learners of all ages. The role of [Education Scotland](#) is to promote and offer guidance and support to practitioners, and others, in order that they can better support Scotland's learners.

The vision of Education Scotland is to achieve excellence and equity for Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators. Education Scotland's mission is to work in partnership with stakeholders from initial teacher education establishments, local authorities, early career and established/fully qualified teachers and practitioners to secure sustained improvement in achievement and attainment for all learners, close the poverty-related attainment gap, and secure positive and sustained destinations for all learners, regardless of their age and where the learning takes place. Supporting and empowering educators to provide the best possible experiences and outcomes for Scotland's learners is key.

As an Executive Agency of Scottish Government, Education Scotland work closely with policy colleagues across Scottish Government. This is with a view to providing professional advice and expertise to inform policy development across the education sector.

4.6 Local authorities

Under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act [Guidance](#) (2006), local authorities are required to take account of the training and development needs of staff and others working with learners, parents and families in their Parental Engagement Strategy (p50). They also have duties to:

- prepare a strategy to involve parents in their child's and their own education and that provided by a school to its pupils (p9);
- establish a complaints procedure (p17); and
- provide support to Parent Councils to enable them to operate and carry out their functions effectively (p24).

4.7 Schools

Within the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act [Guidance](#) (2006), schools must ensure that their Improvement Plan takes account of the local authority's strategy for involving and engaging parents. Schools should have a clear policy in place to support parents with their child's and their own education and learning (p19).

4.8 Inspection

The 'Scottish approach' to improvement in education is based on the premise that establishments and services take responsibility for the quality of education they provide and take action to secure continuous improvement. This is complemented by external evaluation carried out by HM Inspectors and other scrutiny and inspection bodies such as the Care Inspectorate.

The purpose of inspection of education provision is to support improvement by:

- providing assurance and public accountability for the quality of education;
- promoting improvement and building capacity; and
- informing the development of educational policy and practice.

HM Inspectors work in partnership with stakeholders in designing quality frameworks thus ensuring appropriate reference to parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. The quality framework is used by HM Inspectors to evaluate the quality of education provision as part of inspection. The quality indicators within the quality frameworks are also designed to enable providers to undertake self-evaluation leading to improvement.

Within the '[How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#)' (HGIOS4) and '[How good is our early learning and childcare?](#)' (HGIOELC) quality frameworks, there are specific quality indicators focusing on partnerships and family learning. The engagement of parents is inspected through the HGIOS4 quality indicator '2.7 Partnerships: Theme 3 Impact on Learners' and through HGIOELC quality indicator '2.7 Partnerships: Theme 3 Impact on Children and Families'. Family Learning is inspected through the choice quality indicator '2.5 Family Learning: Quality of family learning programmes' in HGIOS4 and HGIOELC. HM Inspectors evaluate engagement with parents, and the community is evaluated through a range of quality indicators. They also evaluate the impact partnerships have on learners, including how partnerships are impacting on the engagement of parents in their children's learning.

As part of inspection activities, HM Inspectors gather the views of learners, parents, staff and partners using online pre-inspection questionnaires. Parents are invited to give their views of the school using a pre-inspection questionnaire. The questionnaire invites parents to provide views through responses to a series of statements and they are also invited to give their own views on any aspect of the work of the school. Their views inform the inspection process, including the content of discussions that HM Inspectors will have with the school in a number of meetings. Parents are also given the opportunity to meet with a member of the inspection team. Additionally, HM Inspectors ask schools to arrange for them to speak to partners and other stakeholders, for example, local community leaders.

Joint inspections

Some inspections are undertaken jointly by inspectors from both Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate (formerly known as Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland). Each organisation have clearly defined responsibilities. Education Scotland's duties to inspect early learning and childcare settings derive from the [Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). The Care Inspectorate has duties under the [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) (the Act) and the [Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland \(Requirements for Care Services\) Regulations 2011](#).

The Care Inspectorate is the official body responsible for inspecting standards of care in Scotland for the regulation of early learning and child care and childminders in Scotland. Inspections for regulation aim to drive continuous improvement and take action where circumstances deem this necessary.

During shared inspections of early learning and childcare, Care Inspectors use core quality indicators from '[A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare](#)' self-evaluation framework.

The engagement of parents and carers is inspected through quality indicators '1.1 Nurturing care and support'; '3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well'; and '4.1 Staff skills, knowledge, and values'.

4.9 Early Learning and Childcare and Childminders

Reference is made throughout this Strategic Framework to the application of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 across all sectors including early learning and childcare, primary, secondary, special and childminders. It should be noted that the application of the Act covers parents of children attending early learning and childcare provided in public primary schools - they are members of the school's parent forum and may join the Parent Council.

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 does not apply to parents of children in 'free-standing' local authority nurseries or those attending early learning and childcare provided by a 'funded partner'. Nonetheless, we would encourage early learning and childcare settings and childminders, currently not subject to the legislative requirements, to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for parental involvement and parental engagement and that the key principles highlighted throughout the toolkit are adhered to.

4.10 Reflective questions

The following questions are provided to stimulate discussion and support improvement in practice. These are not intended to be prescriptive but may be useful as part of your self-evaluation journey.

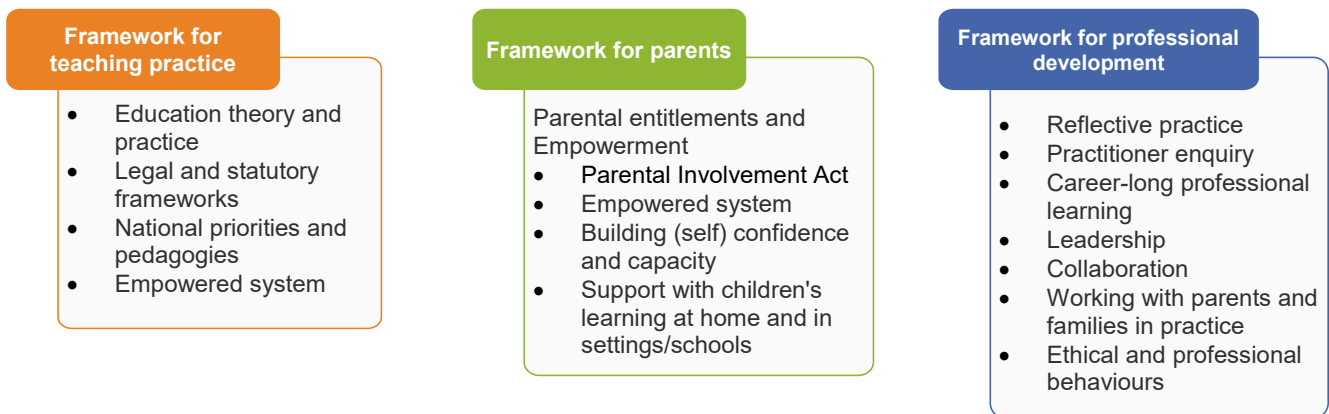
- What evidence do we have that we are aware of the legislative responsibilities and frameworks around parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home? How will we measure this?
- How effective are our approaches to reducing barriers to participation for children, young people and families? How do we know?
- In what way(s) are we able to demonstrate the impact of the approaches we use to engage children, young people and families? Give examples.

5. What do we all need to know?

Supporting and/or delivering parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home is an ongoing and ever evolving process. Each new cohort of children, parents and families will require parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home to change and be adapted as required to suit individual needs and circumstances as well as meeting legislative requirements and national/local priorities. The support provided will need to be continually reassessed, developed and evolved depending on the individual family as well as the wider societal challenges and complexities. For that reason, the points in the tables below should be considered as particular milestones rather than endpoints.

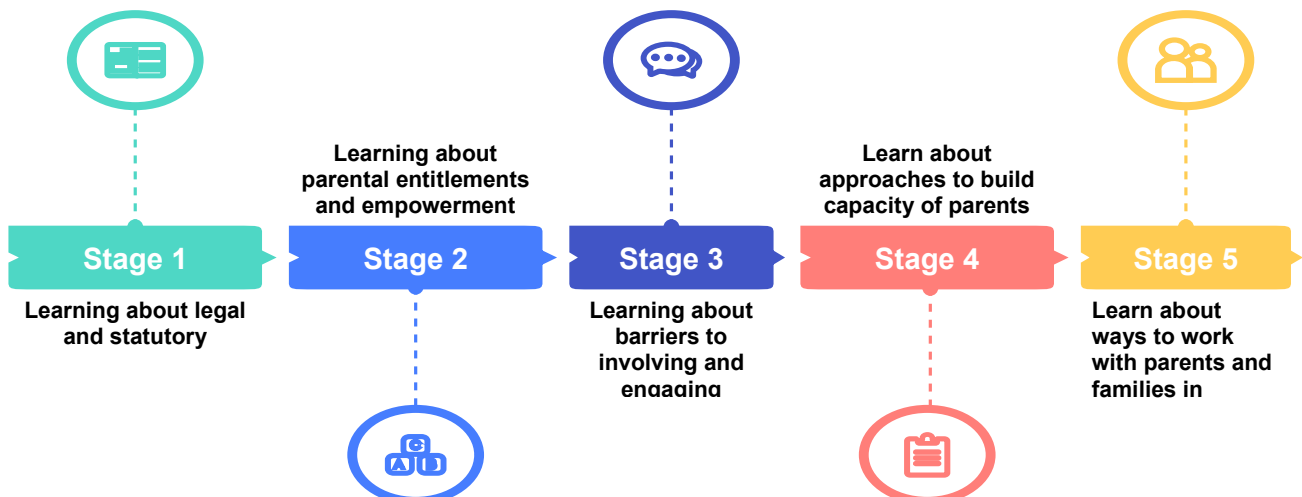
This Strategic Framework articulates what effective parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home should look like in Scotland. In doing so, it describes the practices expected of teachers and practitioners working in early learning and childcare, childminders, primary, secondary and local authorities. The framework responds to the need for quality in teaching and professional learning on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

Figure 4: Practices expected of teachers and practitioners across the Education sector



The framework recognises that excellence in working with parents and families is acquired and nurtured over the career journey of teachers and practitioners in settings, childminding, schools and communities which are supportive. This contributes greatly to the sharing and development of good practice and the strengthening of the role of teachers and practitioners who work with parents and families to improve outcomes for children. The timeline below is provided as an example of the various learning stages for practitioners. Taking time to build your knowledge and expertise in this area will help to enhance your skills and improve outcomes for children, young and families.

Figure 5: Learning stages for teachers and practitioners



5.1 Continuum of professional learning

The following tables should be viewed as guides on the continuum of professional learning for teachers and practitioners who work with parents and families to support them with their children’s learning. However, please note that all the areas in this continuum build upon each other and are not optional. It is the responsibility of all, regardless of their career stage, to ensure that they understand the various elements and refer back to previous sections of the continuum and continue to build upon them.

5.1.1 Legislative and statutory frameworks

The career stages of teachers and practitioners are described below as ‘becoming’, ‘being’ and ‘growing’. This is in line with how the stages of career development are considered in the GTC Scotland Professional Standards. However, they can be seen as applying to early years practitioners and childminders as well as those working in other areas of the education sector. These could include practitioners in a local authority and partner organisations who work with children, young people and families.

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
National <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Scotland) Act 1980 • Standards in Scotland’s Schools etc (Scotland) Act (2000) • Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act (2006) • The Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher Appointments (Scotland) Regulations (2007) • Equality Act (2010) • Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act (2010) • National Parenting Strategy (2012) • National Improvement Framework Parent Communication Plan (2016) • Review of the Impact of the Parental Involvement Act (2006) (2017) • A Research Strategy for Scottish Education (2017) • National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare (2018) • A Blueprint For 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland (2018) • National Improvement Framework • Scottish Attainment Challenge • Learning Together National Action Plan • Armed Forces Covenant Bill (2022) 	Learn about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theory and pedagogy of Scottish education • statutory and policy frameworks on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start the process of applying the theory to practice • Expand knowledge and experience, through initial engagement with learners, parents and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop knowledge and understanding of the legislative and policy requirements and the skills to apply this in practice • Ensure that the voices of parents and families is included when incorporating legislative requirements and duties into setting/school practices and policies

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
<p>Family Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Family Learning (2016) • Family Learning Framework (2018) • Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland (2022-27) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of Family Learning as an approach • Learn about the benefits of Family Learning as outlined in research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate, take part in and observe effective Family Learning approaches in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start to consider areas in the Improvement Plan where a Family Learning may be utilised to engage families and drive improvements • Working with families to plan and develop effective Family Learning programmes • Understand need for and develop effective engagement strategies • Consider the use of bespoke and tailored Family Learning programmes to address identified needs • Develop robust monitoring and evaluation processes
<p>Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Good is Our...self-evaluation frameworks • School Handbook Guidance (2012) • Review of Learning at Home (2018) • Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners • Parent Council Resource (2022) • Realising the Ambition (2021) • Care Inspectorate Quality Framework for Early Learning and Childcare Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of self-evaluation frameworks, toolkits, guidance and resources available to teachers and practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how self-evaluation frameworks, toolkits, guidance and resources inform and are used in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start using self-evaluation frameworks, toolkits, guidance and resources in their setting/school Incorporate self-evaluation processes, information in toolkits, guidance into practice across the setting/school. Utilise resources as appropriate
<p>Social justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004) • Equality Act (2010) • UNCRC • GIRFEC • Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) • Independent Care Review - The Promise (2020) • Support for Learning: All our Children and All their Potential - Morgan Review (2020) • Armed Forces Covenant Bill (2022) • The Muir Report - Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education (2022) 	<p>Learn about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social justice issues as integral to thinking and practice • What to teach and how to teach • The values needed for educating children and young people • How privilege operates • How disadvantage occurs • How education can help strengthen equality and social justice • Complex ethical questions <p>National organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BEMIS – Empowering Scotland’s Ethnic and Cultural Minority Communities • Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC) • Fathers Network Scotland • Shared Parenting Scotland 		

5.1.2 Parental entitlements

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (Scotland) Act 1980 • Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 • Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act (2006) • Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (2014) • UNCRC, Global Citizenship • GIRFEC • Empowered system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about key parental entitlements as contained in legislation and guidance • Learn about the role of parents and families in their children's learning and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how key parental entitlements influence and impact work with learners, parents and families in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start incorporating parental entitlements in their work with learners, parents and families • As part of an empowered system, communicate and engage with learners, parents and families in discussions to support understanding of their entitlements and central role

5.1.3 Working with parents and families in practice

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Developing a Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn about the legislative requirements to have a strategy in place at a local authority and local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin to familiarise your understanding of the local authority and setting/school's Parental Engagement Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage with professional learning on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home Develop actions to contribute to the planned goals of the setting/school's Parental Engagement Strategy • Contribute to the review of the existing Parental Engagement Strategy • Use the national frameworks, priorities and the local authority strategy to develop a Parental Engagement Strategy for your setting/school • Work in partnership Parent Council, parent forum, community partners, stakeholder groups and local businesses to develop/review the setting/school's Parental Engagement Strategy • Take steps to implement the actions in the Parental Engagement Strategy • Monitor and evaluate the impact of the Parental Engagement Strategy

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Engaging parents in the education process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about a broad range of strategies for involving parents in the wider life and work of the setting/school Learn about the benefits of involving and engaging working with parents and families Learn about the potential barriers preventing parents and families from engaging with settings/schools and their children's learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the various ways that your setting/school currently engages parents and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the barriers in your setting/school which prevents parents and families from engaging Begin to develop approaches to meaningfully engage parents in the education process Use a range of data to identify good practice, needs and barriers within your setting/school Develop a strategy to promote and share good practice, and address barriers preventing parents and families from engaging Plan for appropriate and contextually relevant opportunities for parents and families to be involved in their children's learning and the wider life and work of the setting/school
Mobile families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the legislative requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ways to recognise mobile families and build relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the barriers that may prevent mobile families from engaging with settings and schools Develop strategies to address possible barriers to engaging mobile families Begin to implement strategies to develop positive relationships with mobile families Build and maintain positive relationship between school and mobile families Work with mobile families to gather examples of what works well to inform future practice

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships between home-school and other early learning and childcare settings Learning at Home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the legislative requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ways to build positive relationships between home-school and other early learning and childcare settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the family and societal barriers that may affect positive partnerships with settings and schools Develop strategies to address possible barriers to positive partnerships between home-school/settings Start to implement strategies to develop positive relationships between home-school/settings Build and maintain positive partnerships between home-school/settings and examples of good practice
Reporting to parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about a range of strategies and methods for reporting to parents about their child's progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start to develop and test strategies and methods to report to parents Understand the Working Time Agreement in your setting/school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access resources and professional learning to develop an understanding of the importance and legislative requirements to report to parents Develop an understanding of the various strategies and methods in your setting/school to report to parents including collegiate dialogues across relevant professionals (where appropriate) Begin to develop ways to effectively and meaningfully report to parents Use accurate and reliable qualitative and quantitative data to report clearly and respectfully to parents, families and children about learning and progress made on the setting/schools improvement priorities
Resolving issues/complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the legislation e.g. Parental Involvement Act (2006), Public Services Reform (2010) and subsequent Complaints Handling Procedure (2012) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the complaints procedure in your local authority, setting/school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the complaints procedure in your local authority, setting/school Able to handle and resolve concerns, enquiries and complaints

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Seeking opportunities to collaborate with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays knowledge and understanding of the importance of collaborating with stakeholders by actively reaching out to, communicating and working with key stakeholders e.g. staff, learners, parents, community groups, partners, colleges, local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of some of the local community partners in your setting/school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a deeper understanding of your local context, partners, stakeholder groups and their role within the learning community Begin to develop programmes based on needs of parents and families in partnership with partner and stakeholder groups Begin to develop relationships with partner and stakeholder groups to jointly plan, reduce barriers for parents and families, and evaluate programme(s)

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand that children, young people and parents are entitled to support to help them prepare for and deal with transitions from: stage to stage; class to class; between sectors and establishments; and on to positive destinations Recognise the vital role of parents in supporting their children and young people at key transitions Learn about the complexities for mobile families who transition from other countries and UK nations to settings/schools in Scotland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider what makes a positive transition experience for children, young people and parents Identify flexible ways of working with mobile families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of how parental views and knowledge about their child or young person are taken into consideration to support key transitions Work with parents to promote positive transition processes and embed effective parental involvement and engagement structures Continue to work in partnership with parents, children and young people to support them through the various key transition stages Consider any potential barriers and/or needs which children, young people and parents, including mobile families, may encounter during key transition stages Positively engage with relevant stakeholders who know the child and family to ensure that a holistic approach is taken to transition
Using effective communication methods with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn about a range of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to support parental engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider a variety of methods and ways to communicate with parents and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the different types of families in your setting/school Start to test and develop different approaches to communicating with parents and families Use effective verbal and non-verbal communication methods to support parents' understanding, participation, engagement and achievement

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Working with parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand strategies to work effectively, sensitively and confidentially with all parents across diverse contexts. Knowing the power of language. Working with parents and families rather than 'doing to' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start to develop and test strategies and methods to report to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of the various strategies to engage parents and families from across diverse contexts in your setting/school Develop meaningful and effective strategies to work with parents and families Establish and maintain respectful collaborative relationships with parents and families regarding their children's learning, development and health and wellbeing Work with parent forum, parent groups, Parent Council on ways to meaningfully engage all parents and families in the wider life of the setting/school
Case study examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an understanding of where to access case study examples at local and national levels from a range of stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a case study example(s) to inform practice in your own setting/school 	

5.1.4 Family learning

(Led in schools, by local authorities, partner organisations, community or third sector practitioners)

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Learning about Family Learning principles, practices, partnerships and research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the theory behind Family Learning and the impact it can have on families and communities Start to develop an understanding of the benefits of Family Learning as evidenced through research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a deeper knowledge of when to use a Family Learning approach and in which context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start to have a deeper understanding of Family Learning programmes/approaches, their impact and why they have been used in your setting/school Work in partnership with parents, relevant partners and stakeholders e.g. community learning and development, local authority, third sector to support and/or deliver family learning approaches building on strengths of families and based on needs
Case study examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have an understanding of where to access case study examples at local and national levels 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a case study example(s) to inform practice in your own setting/school

5.1.5 Parental representation

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
Parent Councils, local authority representation and national representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the legislation and entitlements for parental representation on education related matters e.g. improvement plans, Pupil Equity Funding, Headteacher recruitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an understanding of how parental representation operates in practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start to meaningfully involve and engage parents in their children's learning and the wider life of the setting/school Arranges meetings in person/online with different groups of stakeholders to inform specific actions/next steps for school issues including learning. Work with the parent forum to establish a Parent Council and hold effective and inclusive meetings

5.1.6 Barriers to involving and engaging parents

Focus area	Becoming	Being	Growing
<p>Parental barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how potential barriers to participation can impact parents and families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how barriers can manifest and change over time for parents and families Consider how barriers can present themselves differently and impact on mobile families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a deeper understanding of barriers within different contexts and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to identify and address any barriers for the parents and families you are working with in your setting/school Use various methods to identify barriers preventing parents and families in your setting/school from engaging Develop strategies to mitigate potential barriers for parents and families, including mobile families
<p>Practitioner barriers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect and understand how potential personal barriers can impact the engagement of parents and families e.g. beliefs, unconscious bias, values, age/stage of practitioners Workload, time pressures, lack of resources, large class sizes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand how concepts such as unconscious bias can lead to treat people differently without realising it and create barriers to participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start to use self-reflective tools to identify any unconscious bias that may lead to barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporating self-reflective tools into practice Engage in self-reflective exercise(s) to identify unconscious bias preventing parents and families from getting involved and engaged with early learning and childcare, childminders and school

5.2 Reflective questions

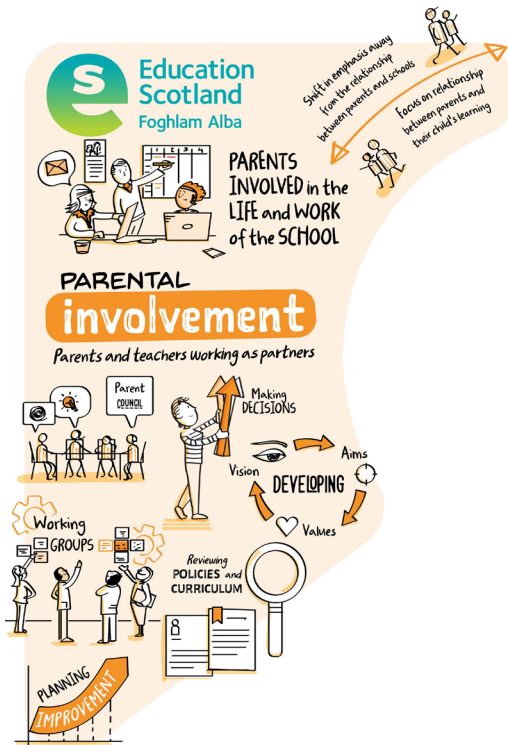
The following questions are provided to stimulate discussion and support improvement in practice. These are not intended to be prescriptive but may be useful as part of your self-evaluation journey.

- In what ways are the above topics included in our professional learning offer(s)? What evidence do we have that these are being embedded into practice and/or used to drive improvement?
- To what extent can we demonstrate that parents are aware of their entitlements? How will we measure this?
- What evidence do we have that we are aware of Family Learning principles, practices, partnerships and research? To what extent can we demonstrate that the family learning opportunities being provided to families are improving outcomes?

6. Definitions and terms

Definitions of the key terms used in reference to engaging parents and families are outlined below. This is to help provide clarity and ensure a common and shared language amongst students, probationers, post probationers, teachers and existing staff who work with learners, parents and families across all sectors.

6.1 Parental involvement - definition



‘Parental involvement is about supporting pupils and their learning. It is about parents and teachers working together in partnership to help children become more confident learners’.

(Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act Guidance, 2006)

‘Parental involvement’ is not a clearly or consistently defined term in literature. It has been described as: representing many different parental behaviours; parenting practices such as parental aspirations for their child’s academic achievement; parental communication with their children about school; parental participation in school activities; parental communications with teachers about their child; and parental rules at home which are considered to be education-related (Harris and Goodall, 2007).

The range of definitions implies that parental involvement is multifaceted in nature because it subsumes a wide variety of parental behavioural patterns and parenting practices.

While there are no universally recognised definitions of ‘parental involvement’ in Scottish education, the term most often focuses on parents getting involved in the life and work of the establishment.

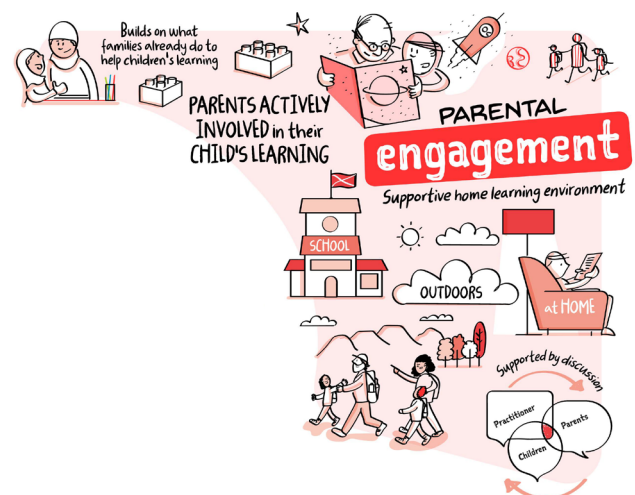
Early learning and childcare settings and schools involve parents by encouraging on-going, two-way communication between home and the establishment. They make sure parents views are represented and they have opportunities to contribute to improvement and decisions that affect the establishment as well as using the skills of parents to enrich the curriculum.

6.2 Parental engagement - definition

Parental engagement can be considered as active engagement in learning. Such learning can take place in a variety of settings including early learning and childcare settings (ELC) or schools, the community, through family learning and at home.

(Goodall and Montgomery, 2014)

‘Parental engagement’ most often refers to parents actively and meaningfully engaging in their children’s learning (Harris and Goodall, 2007; Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Such learning can take place in a variety of settings including early learning and childcare, schools, the community, through family learning and learning at home. Parental engagement is supported by discussion between parents, teachers and practitioners. It focuses on how families can build upon what they already do to



help their children’s learning and provide a supportive home learning environment. Parental engagement represents a greater ‘commitment, ownership of action’ than parental involvement within educational settings such as early learning and childcare and schools.

It is recognized, however, that there is a continuum between parental involvement and parental engagement. The movement between the two represents a ‘shift in emphasis, away from the relationship between parents and schools, to a focus on the relationship between parents and their children’s learning’ (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). Defining what is parental involvement and what is parental engagement is not always easy. Regardless of whether parents are involved with the wider life of the school or engaged in their children’s learning, they can make a positive difference.

6.3 Family learning - definition

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 specifically 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’.

(Family Learning Network, 2016)



Family learning is an approach to engaging families in learning outcomes that have an impact on the whole family. The definition of family learning in Scotland was developed after a series of consultation events throughout Scotland. Those involved in the process worked across sectors and were employed in a variety of positions. After an extensive process it was ratified by the National Family Learning Network of Practitioners in Scotland. Further information is available in the [Review of Family Learning](#) (2016) and [Family Learning Framework](#) (2018).

A family learning approach gives parents, families and children the tools from which they can continue to learn at home together.

6.4 Learning at home - definition

‘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’.

(Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network, 2018)



Learning at home can happen through a range of events including play, leisure activities, fun events, sports, trips, cultural or volunteering experiences and everyday family life. It can also happen through curriculum related activities, homework, reading and sharing books.

Activities for learning at home can be specifically designed to enable parents to engage in their child's learning and build upon the learning from the early learning and childcare setting or school. It can also provide intergenerational learning opportunities for the child, family, extended family and the community. Some families can be supported with learning at home through a family learning approach.

The definition of learning at home was produced as a result of a range of consultation events with practitioners from across Scotland and in partnership with the Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network (SPION). Further information can be found in the [Review of Learning at Home](#) (2018).

6.5 Terms

The term '**parents**' in this document refers to people with parental responsibilities (within the meaning of section 1(3) of the [Children \(Scotland\) Act](#) 1995) and others who care for or look after children or young people. A person with 'parental responsibilities' refers to someone with the rights and responsibilities that parents have in law for their child. Individual family units will comprise a wider range of people who might also contribute to a child's learning at home.

For the purposes of support for children, young people and families, '**child**' means a person under the age of 18 years.

'**Family**', in relation to a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for a child and any other person with whom the child has been living ([Children \(Scotland\) Regulations, 1995](#)).

'**Parent forum**' is the collective term for every parent or carer at a school. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 gives each school's parent forum the right to set up a Parent Council.

'**Parent Council**' is a group of parents selected by members of the parent forum to represent all the parents of children at a school. Parent Councils were established under the Parental Involvement Act (2006) in recognition of the important role that parents can play, both in their own children's learning, and in the wider life of a setting/school.

6.6 Reflective questions

The following questions are provided to stimulate discussion and support improvement in practice. These are not intended to be prescriptive but may be useful as part of your self-evaluation journey.

- As a Team, are we aware of and do we understand the differences and synergies between each of the definitions above for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home? How do we know? What further steps might you take as a team?
- What evidence do we have that we are embedding the definitions into policies, strategies and practice? What further steps might we take as a team?

7. Parental entitlements and empowerment

7.1 Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

In 2006, the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act](#) came into force. Within the Act, Scottish Ministers and local authorities have a duty to promote the involvement and engagement of parents in their child's early learning and childcare setting or school and their learning. The Parental Involvement Act (2006) recognises the benefits of involving parents in the wider life of the school and the vital role they play in supporting their children's learning. Providing and strengthening the framework to support parental involvement and parental engagement is therefore a key focus of the Act.

Duties within the Act:

- Parents are entitled to receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home and in the community.
- Early learning and childcare settings and schools must be open to the involvement of parents in the work they do and they should consider ways of providing information that helps parents engage with school and their children's education.
- The Act provides a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on: policy matters affecting the education of their children; the school's arrangements for promoting parental involvement and engagement; and any other matters or issues of interest to parents.
- The Act makes provision for parents to be a member of the Parent Forum at a school and to have their views represented to the school, local authority and others through a representative Parent Council for the school. It also gives them the right to raise their concerns and/or make a complaint. Other ELC settings or schools may have parent committees or associations that will represent the wider parental view.

Reference is made throughout this Strategic Framework to the application of the Parental Involvement Act in settings and schools. This includes all sectors such as early learning and childcare, primary, secondary, special, community learning and development and the third sector. It should be noted that the application of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 covers parents of children attending early learning and childcare provided in public primary schools - they are members of the school's parent forum and may join the Parent Council. The Act does not apply to parents of children in 'free-standing' local authority nurseries or those attending early learning and childcare provided by a 'partner provider'. Nonetheless, we would encourage early learning and childcare settings, currently not subject to the legislative requirements, to ensure that there are effective arrangements in place for parental involvement and parental engagement and that the key principles highlighted throughout this resource are adhered to.

7.2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly recognises the central role played by parents, carers, and families in ensuring that children grow up healthy, happy and safe. It recognises that families need protection and assistance to support the rights and wellbeing of children. Rights within the UNCRC require governments to recognise parental responsibilities and provide resources and support to help them fulfil their responsibilities, including assisting parents and carers to ensure children are provided with an adequate standard of living.

Parental responsibilities are directly referenced in articles 5, 18 and 27 of the UNCRC and references to parenting and the role of families are made throughout a large proportion of the articles.

Further information can be found [here](#).

7.3 Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

'[Getting it right for every child](#)' (GIRFEC) provides Scotland with a consistent framework and shared language for promoting, supporting, and safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people. Through a common understanding of wellbeing, we recognise that children and young people need to grow up safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included, so that they can become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.

GIRFEC was developed based on evidence and it is internationally recognised and is an example of a child-rights-based approach. It is locally embedded and positively embraced by organisations, services and practitioners across Children's Services Planning Partnerships, with a focus on changing culture, systems and practice for the benefit of babies, infants, children, young people and their families. This is delivered through the core components of:

- a named person who is a clear point of contact for children, young people and families to go to for support and advice. A named person can also connect families to a wider network of support and services so that they get the right help, at the right time, from the right people;
- a shared and holistic understanding of wellbeing and a single model of how this can be considered and supported; and
- a single, shared approach to planning for children's wellbeing where support across services is needed, co-ordinated by a lead professional.

GIRFEC is supported by the use of the National Practice Model which sets out a shared framework and approach to identification, assessment and analysis of wellbeing needs. It provides a consistent way for practitioners to work with children, young people and their families to understand the child's individual growth and development in the context of their rights, unique family circumstances and wider world, exploring strengths, resilience, adversities and vulnerabilities. Under the GIRFEC approach, all sectors and services should act together as a scaffold, to ensure that all children and young people have their rights upheld through receiving the right support, at the right time.

7.4 Empowered system – parents and carers



The Empowering Parents and Carers Guidance considers the contribution of parents and carers in an empowered system.

Empowering parents means improving and strengthening the ways in which education staff engage with parents and families; and, ensuring they are at the centre of decision making processes about their children's learning.

Further information can be found on the [National Improvement Hub](#) and in the National Parent Forum of Scotland's [nutshell guide](#) to Scotland's Empowered System.

7.5 Reflective questions

The following questions are provided to stimulate discussion and support improvement in practice. These are not intended to be prescriptive but may be useful as part of your self-evaluation journey.

- To what extent can we demonstrate that children, young people and families are at the centre of our decision-making processes? Give examples.
- What evidence do we have that we are actively seeking out the voices of children, young people and families using a variety of mediums? How are these voices being heard and taken into account to drive improvements?

8. Beliefs, unconscious bias, integrity, standards, values

8.1 Beliefs

In the years prior to the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, the teaching profession may have considered their primary role to be that of teaching children and young people. However, evidence from research across the world has continued to show that working with parents to support their own and their child's learning is essential for improving outcomes. Successful involvement and engagement of parents can also help local authorities to deliver on a range of their overarching priorities for Scottish education such as Curriculum for Excellence, Developing the Young Workforce, Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework.

Celebrating the value and role of parents is key to raising attainment and achievement. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a renewed and increased mutual respect between teachers, practitioners and parents, and vice-versa, for the role that each plays in a child's learning journey. Teachers, practitioners and parents alike were tasked with rethinking almost every aspect of their respective roles. While involving and engaging families has, for many years, been a central part of policy, the pandemic has moved this further along in its journey and more towards being recognised as an imperative and integral part of children's learning. This is evidenced in the national [Parental Involvement and Engagement \(PIE\) Census](#) data and subsequent surveys of parents by local authorities and national parenting organisations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For these and many other reasons, working in partnership with parents and families is even more paramount and central to improving outcomes for children.

Where the voices of children, parents, families and teachers, practitioners are equal and all respective skills, knowledge, expertise and perspectives are openly shared and welcomed, this will help pave the way for collaborative working and the co-creation of a shared vision for the future of involving and engaging parents and families across Scotland.

Every child, family, setting, childminder, school and local authority is different. Together, practitioners, students, probationers, post-probationers, teachers, existing staff, ITE providers, GTC Scotland, SSSC, national organisations, partners and stakeholder groups are able to decide what parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home should look like for their respective establishments whilst following legislative requirements. Considerations should be given to the culture, history, aspirations, needs and requirements of their communities. Furthermore, the future of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home in settings and schools, should continue to be influenced by the voices of parents, families, learners, teachers and practitioners.

Teachers, practitioners, parents, national organisations, partners, stakeholder groups, GTC Scotland, ITE providers, SSSC, childminders, local authorities and schools all share the same belief, common interest and goal which is about the importance of improving outcomes for children, young people and families. This is the key foundation and motivational factor which drives forward the collaborative partnership working between all parties.

8.2 Unconscious bias

We all have unconscious bias(es) that can lead us to treat people differently without us realising we are doing it. Our unconscious bias allows us to make 'snap decisions' in a range of situations. These decisions can be based on our past experiences, what we have been told or something we have seen in the media. While this can at times be helpful, at other times it may mean that we make decisions, judgements and/or hold opinions about others based on stereotypes. We are more likely to use our unconscious bias when making decisions under pressure, when we are stressed, tired, anxious, frustrated or when information is unclear, incomplete or when we feel threatened.

Below are some of the attributes that our unconscious bias might make a snap judgement about:

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Religion/belief
- Perceived sexual orientation
- Attractiveness
- Disability
- Clothing
- Height
- Piercings/tattoos
- Hairstyle
- Body language
- Accent
- Personality
- Friends/family
- Age
- Mobile families

Understanding, acknowledging and addressing any personal unconscious bias(es) will support practitioners to fully and meaningfully engage with all children, parents and families that may have previously been overlooked.

Further information and resources are available [here](#).

8.3 Integrity

Integrity is described as: 'adherence to strong moral and ethical principles and values. Demonstrating kindness, honesty, courage, and wisdom. Being truthful and trustworthy. Critically examining professional beliefs, values and attitudes of self and others in the context of collegiate working. Challenging assumptions, biases and professional practice, where appropriate' ([GTC Scotland](#), 2021, p5).

Professional commitment to learning and learners 'values the contribution of others, challenges biases and assumptions and applies critical thinking to make effective decisions, in the interests of maintaining and improving the quality of education and leading to improved outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland' ([GTC Scotland](#), 2021, p5).

8.4 National Occupational Standards

National Occupational Standards (NOS) describe what a person needs to do, know and understand in order to carry out a particular job or task in a consistent way and to a nationally recognised level of competence. Currently there are a suite of NOSs which have been agreed across the four nations of the UK. Qualifications in Scotland are underpinned by the National Occupational Standards. Further information on the eight values that underpin the Family Learning National Occupational Standards are available in the [Review of Family Learning](#).

The National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents also apply to work with parents across the four nations of the UK. They were developed in consultation with the sector and were originally approved by the United Kingdom (UK) Regulatory bodies (QCA, SQA, ACCAC and QCA NI) in 2005. The Standards were reviewed during 2010 and the updated version was approved by the UK regulatory body UKCES in January 2011. Information on the Work with Parents National Occupational Standards is available [here](#).

8.5 Values

Practitioners and childminders who work with children, parents and families should be able to evidence that their approach(es), language, programmes and efforts are all underpinned by a values base. This should include professional values of social justice, trust and respect, integrity and ensure no-one is stigmatised. Relationships built on mutual trust and respect should be protected across decision-making and through the culture and values of teachers and practitioners who work with children, parents and families.

National plans, frameworks, local authority strategies, improvement plans should all recognise and value the benefits of including children, parents and families. Teachers and practitioners should build on the assets that children, parents, families and communities have to offer whilst working with and supporting them to manage positive changes by producing interventions and approaches which help support them with their child's and their own learning.

Having a consistency of approach across Scotland's workforce, in terms of values driven leadership alongside approaches which respect, include and understand the diversity of culture, backgrounds, barriers and needs of parents and families will help to shape beliefs and attitudes. This in turn will not only contribute to improving outcomes but will underpin and influence the contribution that future parents, families and generations will make in our communities and in wider society across Scotland.

8.6 Reflective questions

The following questions are provided to stimulate discussion and support improvement in practice. These are not intended to be prescriptive but may be useful as part of your self-evaluation journey.

- Do all parents have regular opportunities to contribute to the improvement journey and the wider life of the setting or school? If the answer is 'yes', what evidence do we have? If the answer is 'no', what steps might we take?
- How do we understand, acknowledge and address any personal unconscious bias(es) to fully and meaningfully engage with all children, parents and families that may have previously been overlooked? What evidence do we have that these approaches are effective in engaging more children, young people and families?

9. Professional learning opportunities and resources

(for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning, Learning at Home)

Provider	Becoming	Being	Growing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universities delivering Initial Teacher Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Teacher education e.g. BA / MA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masters degree programmes 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University(ies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Learning and Childcare modules BA in Childhood Practice Postgraduate in Childhood Practice 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Learning and Childcare settings Schools Local authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-service days Professional learning opportunities/programme(s) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Scotland 			<p><u>Professional Learning:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Towards Headship Into Headship In Headship Excellence in Headship Middle Leadership Teacher Leadership Professional Learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional learning opportunities (online/in-person) National Improvement Hub Websites 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Social Services Council Early Years Scotland Scottish Childminding Association Care Inspectorate GTC Scotland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional learning opportunities/programme(s) provided by national organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect National Parent Forum of Scotland Save the Children (Families Connect) Scottish Social Services Council leadership resources and learning zone Educational Institute of Scotland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDA in Childhood practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PDA in Family Learning 	

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