



Professional Learning Guide

For practitioners and educators who:

- **work with parents and families; and**
- **are involved in delivering training to the workforce**

March 2024

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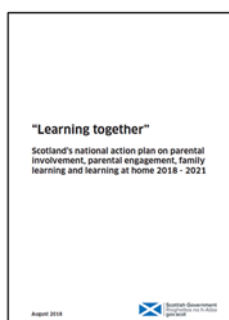
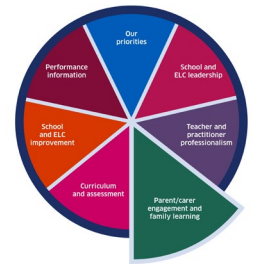
1. Introduction

‘No institution or one actor can re-invent 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).

Scotland has much to be proud of in terms of its journey, transformational change and continuous commitment to parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. Involving and engaging parents in their children’s learning at school and home, in the wider life of early learning and childcare (ELC) settings, schools, family learning approaches and in the community, has been an essential part of Scotland’s education reforms over many years.

These reforms have taken the format of a suite of legislation, strategies and frameworks in an attempt to find ways to promote more meaningful engagement and interactions between early learning and childcare settings, schools, parents and families. Much of this reform has been shaped over time and in response to new and existing research which continues to highlight the benefits of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. These four areas are also recognised as being one of the six key drivers in the [National Improvement Framework](#).



Following a [‘Review of the Impact of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act’](#) (2017), Scotland introduced its first [Learning Together National Action Plan](#) (2018-21). This plan set out for the first time, the nation’s vision for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home from pre-birth to age 18. The [update](#) to the National Plan was published in December, 2023. It has been produced for local authorities to fulfil their

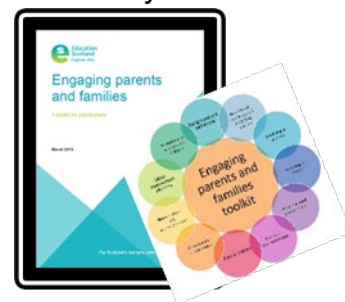
legislative duties and requirements contained in national documents and strategies to ensure that: effective approaches are in place to support and engage parents; parents and carers are involved in the work and life of the school; and that parents and carers are engaged in their children’s and their own learning.

1.1 Who is this Professional Learning Guide for?

Throughout this Professional Learning Guide, reference is made to the application of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act across all sectors including early learning and childcare, primary, secondary and special. 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 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 the [Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners](#) are adhered to.



This Guide is intended to support practitioners and educators in local authorities, settings, schools, national parenting organisations, initial teacher education providers, third sector and relevant stakeholders who work with parents and families. An additional aim is to help practitioners and educators to fulfil their legislative duties and requirements (where appropriate) contained in national documents and strategies when delivering professional learning to the workforce.

This is to ensure that practitioners and educators are informed and equipped:

- to support parents and families to become involved in the work and life of the school
- to support parents and families to engage in their children's and their own learning
- when making arrangements and/or developing approaches to support and engage parents
- and that the existing and future workforce is developed
- to support children and families improve their health and wellbeing.

The Guide supports the delivery of the Scottish vision for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home and encourages local and community innovation and flexibility. At the heart of this Guide is relationships based on trust, meaningful and open communication, mutual respect and collaboration. This work is by its very nature

ongoing and so this Guide is required to ensure that improvements and progress continue to be made across the workforce.

1.2 Reflections from COVID-19 pandemic

Since the development of the Learning Together National Action Plan, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have been felt across all aspects of Scottish education, thus presenting one of the most challenging periods likely to be experienced in our generation. Parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home is no different and has also been affected.

COVID-19 had an impact on the way we work, learn, engage with parents and families, access information, develop and deliver support, programmes and measure impact. It altered approaches to partnership working and demonstrated that the relationship between home and school is vital. The pandemic also created opportunities for greater leadership roles for some Parent Councils in their school communities. This led to more effective working between schools, Parent Councils, community groups and exemplified how a whole school community engagement model can work in practice.

Surveys conducted during this time by national parenting organisations, such as [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) (NPFS) and [Connect](#), allowed us to gather and map parent and family voice during the COVID-19 pandemic. This provided intelligence on the challenges families faced at this time. Gaining an in-depth understanding of these, along with the new creative ways of working with parents and families that emerged during this time, has helped inform this Professional Learning Guide.

One of the key changes for children and young people during the pandemic was the move from learning in a physical early learning and childcare setting or school building, to learning at home and/or accessing learning online more than ever before. Examples of other impacts include time apart from family and friends, wearing masks in class, worries about assessments, bereavements and of course the subsequent effects these had on mental health and wellbeing.

Practitioners and educators too had to pivot and adjust very quickly in a variety of ways. Some of these include delivering lessons online, social distancing in the classroom, wearing masks,

developing learning at home packs and delivering them to families, and balancing a mix of in-person, blended and online learning.

These albeit temporary but essential responses to the pandemic have had positive impacts in bringing the importance of working in partnership with children and families even more to the forefront of educational discourses. Greater mutual respect between educators, practitioners, parents and families in terms of their respective roles, has never been more prominently acknowledged and respected.

Throughout the course of the pandemic and as the nation emerges from it, educators, practitioners, local authorities, regional improvement collaboratives (RICs), researchers and national parenting organisations reflected on what worked well for children and families in Scotland, what could have been better and more importantly, what needs to happen next to assist in the recovery process.

It is widely acknowledged that families across Scotland have experienced the impact of the pandemic in different ways: some positively, others less so; some short-term impacts, others long-lasting impacts. [Research](#) across the UK and [surveys](#) undertaken in Scotland indicate that some of those differences have been experienced most by families from less advantaged backgrounds. They include having little or no access to digital devices or internet access, limited digital skills, language barriers, little or no access to resources, and limited support with learning at home. Additionally, in some cases children and young people have struggled to return to education full time.

Differences have also been experienced across various cultural and ethnic groups and geographical locations. Challenges have existed due to individual family circumstances and the individual needs of children and parents. A significant number of families have experienced isolation, anxiety, reduced mental health and wellbeing, bereavement, loss of jobs and income in addition to the significant daily disruption to their lives and communities as a result of the pandemic restrictions. Some parents and families who would previously have attended events at settings and schools have not returned.

However, although it may appear that much has been lost during the pandemic, there is evidence that much has also been gained. Educators, practitioners, children and young people, parents and families have quickly adapted as a result of the pandemic and in doing so, have

found new and creative ways to communicate, build relationships, share experiences and support children's learning and development at home.

Moving on from the pandemic presents an opportunity for Scotland to review both historic and existing practices and consider how we can do things differently. While many of the new strategies, approaches and technologies have been welcomed, and proved to be effective, they should be viewed as being additional 'tools' and options to use rather than superseding all previous methods.

Scottish education is therefore entering an exciting and important phase of reform. Having the voice of children and young people, parents and families is key to influencing and re-shaping how parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home looks and takes place across Scotland, post COVID-19.

1.3 Vision, aim and objectives

Scotland's vision for children and young people

The vision of Scottish Ministers remains the same in that Scotland's children and young people will become 'successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors' by being safe, nurtured, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible ([Scottish Government](#), 2021).

Scotland's vision for parents and families

The vision of Scottish Ministers for parents and families is about creating the right conditions for them to feel empowered to be involved in the wider life and work of the school, and meaningfully engaged in their child's and their own learning. This is part of the National Improvement Framework ('[An Empowered System](#)') which endeavours to build an empowered, connected, self-improving education system to achieve excellence and equity for all. To achieve this, it is necessary to ensure that the voice of parents and families, and children and young people are heard, valued and at the heart of planning and decision-making.



It is also important to continue working with our local, national and international partners, stakeholders and national parenting organisations to drive forward ongoing improvements.

1.4 Aim

The aim of this Professional Learning Guide is to help inform and build the capacity of practitioners who work with parents and families. This is with a view to ensuring that all parents and families are supported to be involved and engaged in their child's and their own learning, taking account of and addressing barriers to participation.

1.5 Objectives

After consultation with educators, practitioners and partner and stakeholder organisations, the following overarching themes and key objectives have been identified as being key.

Building the capacity of parents and families

- Working with parents and families to ensure they are welcomed and fully supported to be involved in the life and work of their child's early learning and childcare setting or school.
- Engaging and consulting with parents and families to provide the right support, conditions and opportunities to help them feel empowered to engage in their child's and their own learning.
- Working with Parent Councils to develop and review policies and identify areas for improvement as appropriate.

Communications and relationships

- Working together with settings, schools, local authorities, partners and stakeholders to engage meaningfully and collaboratively with parents and families in their children's learning and education related matters.
- Engaging and consulting with parents to further improve the quality of communication between settings, schools, local authorities, and families.
- Working in partnership with parents and families to further improve relationships, trust and mutual respect.

Health and Wellbeing

- Engaging and consulting with parents and families to ensure there is a wide range of creative, meaningful and effective approaches appropriate to their needs.

Additional Support Needs

- Working with parents and families of children with additional support needs to ensure they are provided with opportunities to be more involved in their children's learning and are aware of their entitlements.

Family Learning

- Engaging and consulting with parents and families to understand strengths and needs to inform family learning approaches.
- Identifying and working collaboratively with partners to support the development and delivery of family learning programmes, as appropriate, establish referral routes and progression pathways, relevant to individual family members' needs.
- Working with parents and families to identify appropriate families learning opportunities, using existing programme(s) or develop bespoke programme(s) keeping the strengths, needs and interests of the families at the centre.
- Engaging and consulting with parents and families to identify and address barriers to participation.

Learning at home

- Continuing to raise awareness of the importance of learning at home with educators, practitioners, parents and families. Review local policy approaches in partnership with children and young people, parents and families.

Workforce development

- Further improving the skills of practitioners and educators who work with parents and families across all sectors. This includes early years, schools, local authorities, colleges, initial teacher education, community learning and development and third sector.

Celebrating success

National

- Family Learning Festival – utilising this two-week event to celebrate families' achievements in family learning and raise awareness of opportunities across local authorities.
- National Education Awards – where appropriate identify settings and schools, who meet the criteria of national education awards, to be considered for nomination.

Local

- Events – making use of local opportunities to celebrate success and achievement with children and young people, parents and families.

1.6 How was the Professional Learning Guide developed?

This Guide has been developed following extensive consultation and partnership working with a range of partner and stakeholder groups across Scotland.

1.7 How to use this Professional Learning Guide

This Guide provides background context and information for practitioners and educators who work with parents and families and/or who are involved in delivering training to the workforce. It should be used alongside the [Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home](#).

Practitioners and educators are encouraged to use the accompanying PowerPoint slides when delivering training. These slides can be used and adapted to suit local context.

In addition to this Guide, there are Professional Learning Activities which practitioners and educators across all sectors can access to increase and develop their knowledge and skills. These can be accessed from the Professional Learning section of the [website](#). Practitioners and educators may also wish to access other resources and research from the Parents and Families topic page such as reviews, frameworks, case studies, wakelets and toolkits.

2. Terms and Definitions

2.1 Terms

‘Parent(s)’ - The term ‘parent(s)’ 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 and support a child’s learning at home, in the community and in settings or schools.

‘Child’ - For the purposes of support for children and families, ‘child’ means a person under the age of 18 years.

‘Family’ - In relation to a child, family 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).

‘Family engagement’ - the term ‘Family Engagement’ is sometimes used as an umbrella term for ELC and schools to capture the breadth of active and meaningful engagement with parents and families. Effective ‘Family Engagement’ extends across sectors and reinforces learning in multiple settings where children and families learn including at home, in settings, schools and the community. While the role of parents will change as children grow and develop into adulthood, ‘Family Engagement’ is continuous throughout their life. As with Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home, Family Engagement is a shared responsibility for settings, schools and communities.

‘Corporate parenting’ is defined in the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act \(2014\)](#) as ‘the formal and local partnerships between all services responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children, young people and care leavers’. The term ‘care experienced’ is used in this Guide to denote looked after children and young people and care leavers to ensure a more inclusive definition.

2.2 Definitions

The definitions below have been informed by research, extensive consultation across Scotland and the Statutory Guidance. These provide clarity and a common language across all sectors who work with children, young people, parents and families. Further information on all four terms, including sketchnote illustrations, can be found in the [Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners](#).

See
**PowerPoint
Presentation 1
- Definitions**

Parental Involvement: '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 Engagement: 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).

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

Learning at Home: Learning at home is the learning which happens in the home, outdoors or in the community. It can take place through everyday activities that families already do and can overlap with aspects of organised or active learning activities (Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network, 2018).

Home Learning Environment: The Home Learning environment is the combination of everything you and your family do and the spaces your child has access to that affect your child's development and learning.

3. Setting the Scottish context

'By designing and delivering effective approaches to support parental engagement, schools and teachers may be able to mitigate some.....causes of educational disadvantage, supporting parents to assist their children's learning or their self-regulation, as well as specific skills, such as reading'

([Education Endowment Foundation, 2021](#)).

Scotland has enacted a suite of educational reforms since the 1980s. It passed the Education (Scotland) Act in 1980, Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act in 2000, and Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act in 2004. Previously, national legislation did not explicitly focus on the issue of parental involvement. In 2006, Scottish Government began looking for ways to promote more meaningful interactions between families and schools. This was in response to research at the time highlighting the benefits of parental involvement in children's learning, as well as a general consensus that the previous school board arrangements, which had been in place since 1988, required reform.

To this end, the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act was passed in 2006. The legislation mandated that Scottish ministers and local authorities take a number of actions to increase parental involvement. These included transforming school boards into Parent Councils, along with mandating that local officials develop strategies to increase parental involvement. Subsequent to the implementation of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act, independent [reviews](#) acknowledged the progress that had been made over the 10-year period that it had been in place and concluded that it had been successful in increasing parental involvement ([National Parent Forum of Scotland, 2017](#)).



Using the evidence from these reviews, Government officials wanted to build on the previous policy changes to create a national framework for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home, where the government would work in conjunction with local partners and stakeholders to create a more parent-focused education system. To accomplish this, Scottish Government worked alongside Education Scotland, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), a number of partners and stakeholder organisations including parents' groups and teacher associations to create the Learning Together National Action Plan (2018-21). This plan set out a vision and structure for how the Scottish Government

would promote parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home within the education system, covering the journey a child and family takes from before birth to age 18 and beyond.

Across Scotland, there is a range of legislation, approaches, frameworks, strategies, guidance, and regulations relating to parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. Collectively these provide the overarching framework within which local authorities, early learning and childcare settings, schools and practitioners should be guided. The Learning Together National Action Plan helped bring these together and provide practitioners and educators with a focus and direction for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home in what can be viewed as a complex policy landscape. It also helped to ensure that practitioners and educators had clarity on the requirements placed upon them.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 2
- Legislation**

Streamlining and providing easy access to the various legislative and policy requirements placed on practitioners and educators who are, or will be, leading on this work and/or delivering training at a local and national level, is a necessary process.

4. The case for change

‘Participation in family learning programmes can offer parents the opportunity to be seen as experts in their children’s education. Family learning (FL) as a means of engaging parents is central to policy throughout the EU because ‘when parents engage in educational activities for themselves a series of cultural and educational interactions are promoted within the family’

(Macleod Tett, 2019).

4.1 International Evidence

Findings from research undertaken by Brookings Institute showed that aligning ‘around a shared vision of the purpose of school is a powerful way for schools and families to shape the deep structures guiding how schools operate.....Collectively defining and aligning the purpose of education, and the values that drive it, are among the essential enablers of system-wide transformation’ (Winthrop et al, 2021, p13-14). The findings also show that ‘parents....have a unique set of beliefs and expectations – and that frequently there is misalignment between parents and teachers’ (Winthrop et al, 2021, p68).

Given the numerous challenges during COVID-19, it seems the right time for practitioners and educators to collaborate with children, young people, parents, families and learning communities to re/align beliefs to support a united holistic vision of education in their setting or school. International research indicates that ‘parents’ beliefs about school are dynamic’ but that they change ‘greatly with their children’s age’ (Winthrop et al, 2021, p84). Exploring this across Scotland will not only strengthen collaborative working but help early learning and childcare settings and schools to consider next steps and plan for the future.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 3
– re/aligning
beliefs**

It is important therefore that cognisance is taken of this and work continues to re/build the school community and create an inviting environment for parents and families which is predicated on being welcoming and approachable. This will support any re-engagement strategies which are implemented. For many settings and schools, engagement with parents and families has increased in a variety of ways including through their Parent Council, online forums and family

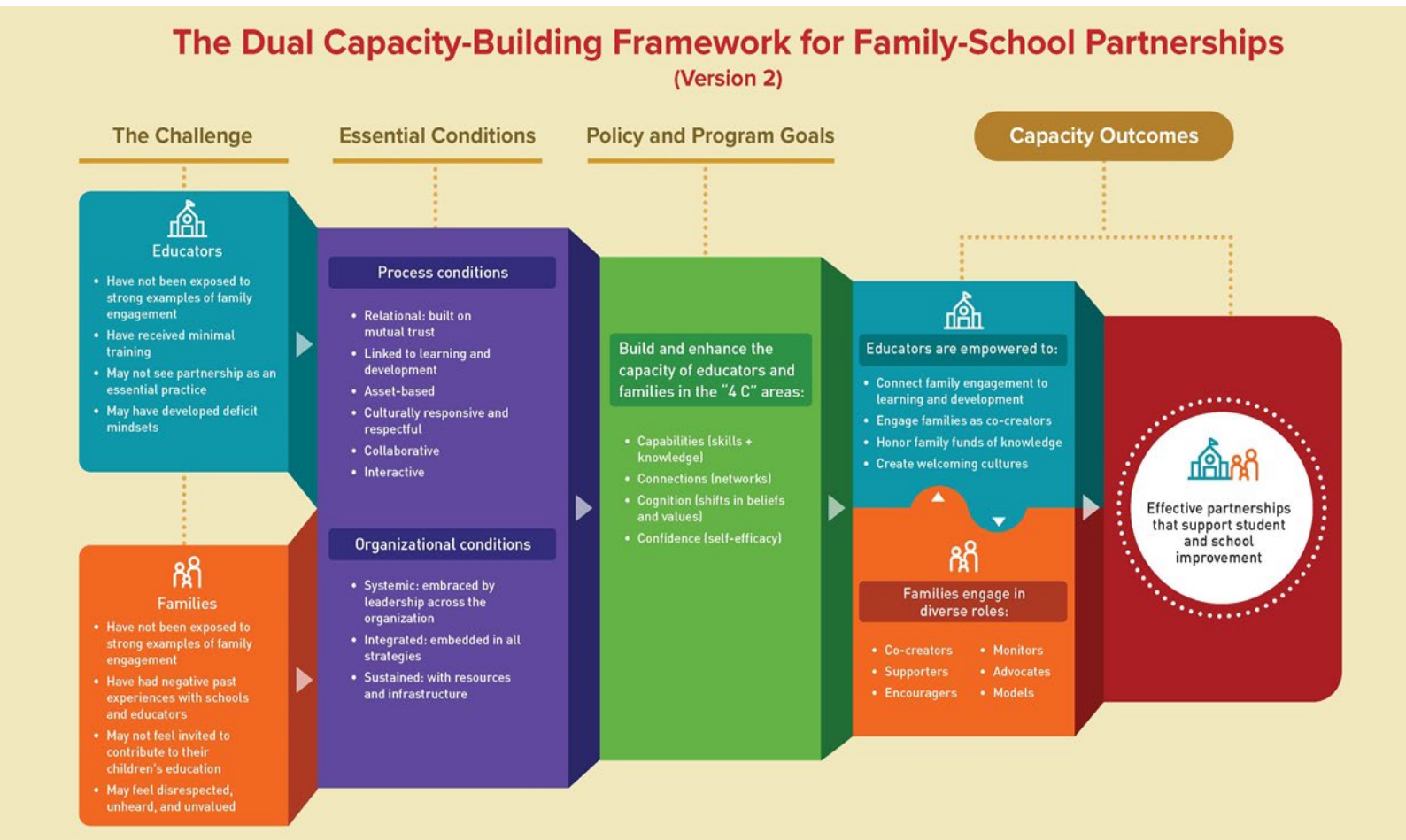
learning online programmes. Building on this good work which has already taken place should be encouraged as settings and schools move forward together with children, young people parents and families.

Dual-capacity building framework

In 2014, Dr Karen Mapp released a pioneering framework to help settings and schools productively and equitably engage parents in their children’s learning experience. Following the collation of evidence on the ways that the guidance was and could be used, a revised version was then released in 2019 which places trust at the core. It is designed to support the development of parental engagement strategies, policies and programmes.

The Dual Capacity Framework below (Figure 1) can be used by settings, schools and local authorities when developing or reviewing their Parental Engagement Strategies. This Framework can be viewed as a compass to lay out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path towards effective parental engagement efforts which are then linked to raising attainment and school improvement.

Figure 1: Dual Capacity-Building Framework



Further information and a [video guide](#) showing how practitioners and educators can use the Framework to build trust with families can be found on [Harvard Graduate School of Education's website](#). As per the legislative requirements in Scotland, parents and families should be encouraged to be part of the process to develop and review Parental Involvement and Engagement strategies.

4.2 Research

Research in the UK has identified a number of powerful levers for improving outcomes for children, young people, parents and families (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011; Tett and Macleod, 2020). These include: parental engagement, quality of relationships between practitioners and families, home-school links and partnerships. Engaging parents in their children's learning is said to be 'a powerful lever for raising achievement in schools' (Goodall and Harris, 2007, p5; Goodall, 2017). 'Effective partnerships between parents, communities and schools are 'characterised by mutual respect, common goals and recognition from each party of the role, skills and challenges of the other' (Tett and Macleod, 2020). Furthermore, the impact of engaging parents is evident across attendance and behaviour as well as educational outcomes (See and Gorard, 2013; Education Endowment Foundation, 2022). In fact, engaging parents is 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' (Goodall, 2017, p1; See and Gorard, 2013).

The levers of change and improvement which remain at the centre of all our work on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home is relationships and communications based on trust, mutual respect, transparency and collaboration. Within these levers, it is important that there is ongoing information exchange between home and settings and schools. It is also important that local strategies aim to change and positively influence any previous negative or false beliefs, attitudes or mindsets and reduce barriers to becoming involved and engaged (See Section 5.6). This can take place through building positive relationships and trust with families but also building the skills and competencies of practitioners and educators (See Section 6). Further information on the principles that should underpin all communications with parents and families can be found in the [National Improvement Framework Parent Communications Plan](#).

The various approaches to involving and engaging parents must ultimately be adapted to meet the individual needs of the family and community specific contexts. Parents and families should feel that they have a place, are welcomed, and fully involved in school related matters. Deciding on which approach would be most appropriate to achieve a specific goal, in a given context, is vital to ensure the best outcomes.

Seeking the views of parents regarding what worked well for them during the pandemic has been an ongoing focus for many settings and schools. Continuing to do so as Scotland plans to move beyond COVID-19 will remain a priority. This will ensure that settings and schools are better prepared to deal with any future interruptions to the education system on a similarly wide scale.

Further work is also required to raise awareness and facilitate links between the most up-to-date research and practical application, with practitioners and educators. Information on the Research Strategy for Scottish Education can be found [here](#).

4.3 National Discussion

The listening phase of the National Discussion on Education took place between 21 September 2022 and 5 December 2022. This provided the opportunity for children and young people, parents and families, and educators to give their views about what is working well in Scottish education. It also sought views on the future vision of education over the next 20 years and the changes required to put this into practice.

The need to work in partnership with parents and families in a meaningful way was threaded throughout the national discussion and the question sets being asked of participants. An analysis of the 5,741 survey responses was published by Scottish Government in the '[All Learners in Scotland Matter – national discussion on education: final report](#)' (May 2023). This report will help inform next steps for Scottish education.

4.4 Local and national data collection

4.4.1 National Improvement Framework (NIF)

The National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish education is designed to help deliver the twin aims of excellence and equity in education. The Framework serves as the single, definitive plan for securing educational improvement and takes into account the information on the National Improvement Framework Interactive Evidence Report. Its primary purpose since January 2016 has been to 'bring together an enhanced range of information and data at all levels of the system, to drive improvement for children and young people in early learning and childcare settings, schools, and colleges across the whole of Scotland' ([National Improvement Framework](#), 2023, p9).



Six drivers of improvement, all of equal importance, have been identified in the National Improvement Framework. The links and connections across these key areas are essential to enabling continuous improvement and minimising unintended consequences.

Parent/carer Engagement and Family Learning is one of the six drivers intended to help all children achieve the highest standards whilst reducing inequity and closing the attainment gap. Family learning is identified within this driver as being a conduit to increasing parental involvement in the wider life of the setting or school. Additionally, it supports parents to meaningfully engage in their child's and their own learning.

In order to measure the impact of this driver, data is collected from a range of sources. Examples include:

- Local authority information on work with partners to develop and deliver family learning opportunities.
- Data from parents' pre-inspection questionnaires.
- Data from the Scottish Household Survey.
- Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN).
- Parental Involvement and Engagement Census (PIE).

4.4.2 Parental Involvement and Engagement Census (PIE)

For many years, settings and schools have been seeking the views of their parent forum and using this information to make improvements. The Parental Involvement and Engagement (PIE) Census aims to rationalise the collection of data by providing a set of national questions that all local authorities are invited to ask in their respective areas. Twenty local authorities elected to use the [2022 PIE Census](#) question set and 18 provided data for inclusion in the Scottish Government's statistical publication.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 4
– National PIE
Census Data
2021-22**

Based on the responses of 38,657 Scottish parents the experimental statistics for 2022 show the following key highlights:

1. In general, surveyed parents want to be more involved in their child's learning.
 - a) 67% of parent and carers agreed or strongly agreed that their child's school currently keeps them well informed about their child's progress in a way they can understand (special schools/units (78.4%); primary schools (71.1%); secondary schools (59.7%)).
 - b) Nearly a third (32.8%) said they were not made aware of opportunities to take part in the life of the school (special schools/units (24.5%) primary schools (27.8%); secondary schools (43.5%)).
 - c) Just over a fifth (22.7%) said there were no opportunities to take part in the life of the school (special schools/units (20.9%) primary schools (22.7%); secondary schools (22.9%)).
2. In general, surveyed parents want to be better engaged in their child's learning.
 - a) 59.7% of parents and carers agreed overall they are satisfied with how the school engages with them (special schools/units (69.4%); primary schools (65.9%); secondary schools (47.2%)).
 - b) Around half of parents and carers agreed the school gives them the information they need to support their child's learning (special schools/units (59.1%); primary schools (54.2%); secondary schools (30.7%)).

3. In general, surveyed parents thought there could be better opportunities to provide opinions on school policies.
 - a) 84.3% of parents and carers reported that their school has a parent council (special schools/units (89%); secondary schools (78.4)).
 - b) Less than four in ten parents and carers agreed the school seeks their views and opinions on school policies. (Special schools/units 51.3%); primary schools (42%); secondary schools (30%).
4. In general, surveyed parents wanted more opportunities to learn together with their children.
 - a) Just over half (52.3%) of parents and carers agreed or strongly agreed the school provides them with useful information about how they can help their child learn at home (special schools/units (78.4%); primary schools (60.5%); secondary schools (36.2%).
 - b) A quarter (25%) of parents and carers agreed the school is making them aware of the Family Learning opportunities (special schools/units (40.1%); primary schools (28.7%); secondary schools (17.3%).
 - c) Around one in five (19.9%) parents and carers agreed they have taken part in Family Learning activities (special schools/units (40.9%); primary schools (25.5%); secondary schools (8.7%).
5. The survey also suggested work is needed to ensure 'parents have the same opportunity to be involved and engaged with their child's education, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics.'
 - a) Parents from the most deprived areas were least likely to say their school had a parent council.
 - b) Parents and carers from the most deprived areas are more likely to agree that a lack of confidence was preventing them from being more active in the life of the school.
 - c) Women were more likely to say that caring of younger children and lack of confidence prevented them from being more active in their school than men.
 - d) Men were more likely to say they were not made aware of opportunities than women.

Intelligence gathered from the census as well as the secondary school sector continues to highlight the need and demand to identify and share best practice in how to involve and engage parents and families of young people in this age group.

4.5 Parental Involvement

Setting/school buildings - Findings from national surveys and intelligence gathered through national creative conversations highlighted variances across Scotland during COVID-19 regarding parents and families being allowed back into school buildings. Now that restrictions have lifted, it is important that parents and families are aware that they are able to access setting and school buildings. Parents and families should continue to be encouraged to be involved in the wider life of the setting or school and have opportunities to attend in-person activities and events.

Improvement Planning – Data from the PIE Census and other intelligence shows frustrations amongst parents at not being involved in legislative processes such as improvement planning and reviewing school policies. Practitioners, educators and national organisations have also emphasised the need to return to focusing on involving parents in the key processes and decision-making within settings and schools. In light of this, a greater emphasis is now required to fully include the voice of children, young people, parents and families in improvement planning and policy reviews to drive forward change.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 5
– Involving
parents in
improvement
planning**

Digital – A reoccurring theme throughout the COVID-19 pandemic was the challenge of finding a mutually suitable platform to enable practitioners, educators, parents and Parent Councils to communicate. While parents generally favoured one platform in particular, many local authorities, national organisations, Education Scotland and Scottish Government were initially restricted from accessing this. In order to operate in the new digital environment that we all find ourselves in, there is a need to continue supporting Parent Councils to utilise digital platforms where appropriate for meetings and home/school communications.

Participatory Budgeting – The [Participatory Budgeting \(PB\) Charter](#) for Scotland is a set of seven key features showing what a fair and high-quality participatory budgeting process should

look like. It aims to ensure that participatory budgeting is inclusive, uses good quality methods and is truly participative.

Participatory budgeting is increasingly becoming a central part of how decisions are made over funding. The Charter has seven features which need to be considered to make sure that participatory budgeting is: fair and inclusive; participatory; deliberative; empowering; creative and flexible; transparent; and part of our democracy.

Further work is needed to ensure that settings and schools are aware of the Participatory Budgeting Charter. Parents should be involved in discussions to generate ideas about how a budget should be spent and have the opportunity to vote for their priorities.

Further information:

[Priority 12: PB across education - Participatory Budgeting Scotland](#)

[Priority 13: PB in Schools - Participatory Budgeting Scotland](#)

4.6 Parental Engagement in children's learning

Under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, local authorities are required to have a strategy outlining how they will involve parents and families in the wider life of the school and meaningfully engage them in their child(ren)'s learning. Since the introduction of the Act, local authorities are now working within Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs). They may also be working together within their local RIC to develop joint actions. Where this is the case, ongoing collaborative work will be required to streamline these as appropriate.

The reviewing and refreshing of Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategies has in some local authorities been postponed for a number of reasons not least because of COVID-19 pandemic. Given the change in policy landscape, settings, schools and local authorities should refer to Appendices 1 and 2 as well as the Parental Involvement [Statutory Guidance](#) when reviewing and refreshing their local strategies.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, parents and families in Scotland were unable to access early learning and childcare settings and schools for a two-three-year period. Intelligence from national creative conversations during the pandemic highlighted the need to re-build links with the school community. Recovering from the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic has thus presented many challenges but also some opportunities. One such opportunity is to use the improved engagement with parents and families to re/align beliefs to support a united holistic vision of education in settings and schools. In doing so, there is a need to provide the right support, conditions and opportunities to help parents feel empowered to engage in their child's learning. Recognising and reducing barriers and/or previous negative or false beliefs, attitudes or mindsets which are preventing parents from engaging in their children's learning requires to be a key focus for local parental involvement and engagement strategies (Section 5.6).

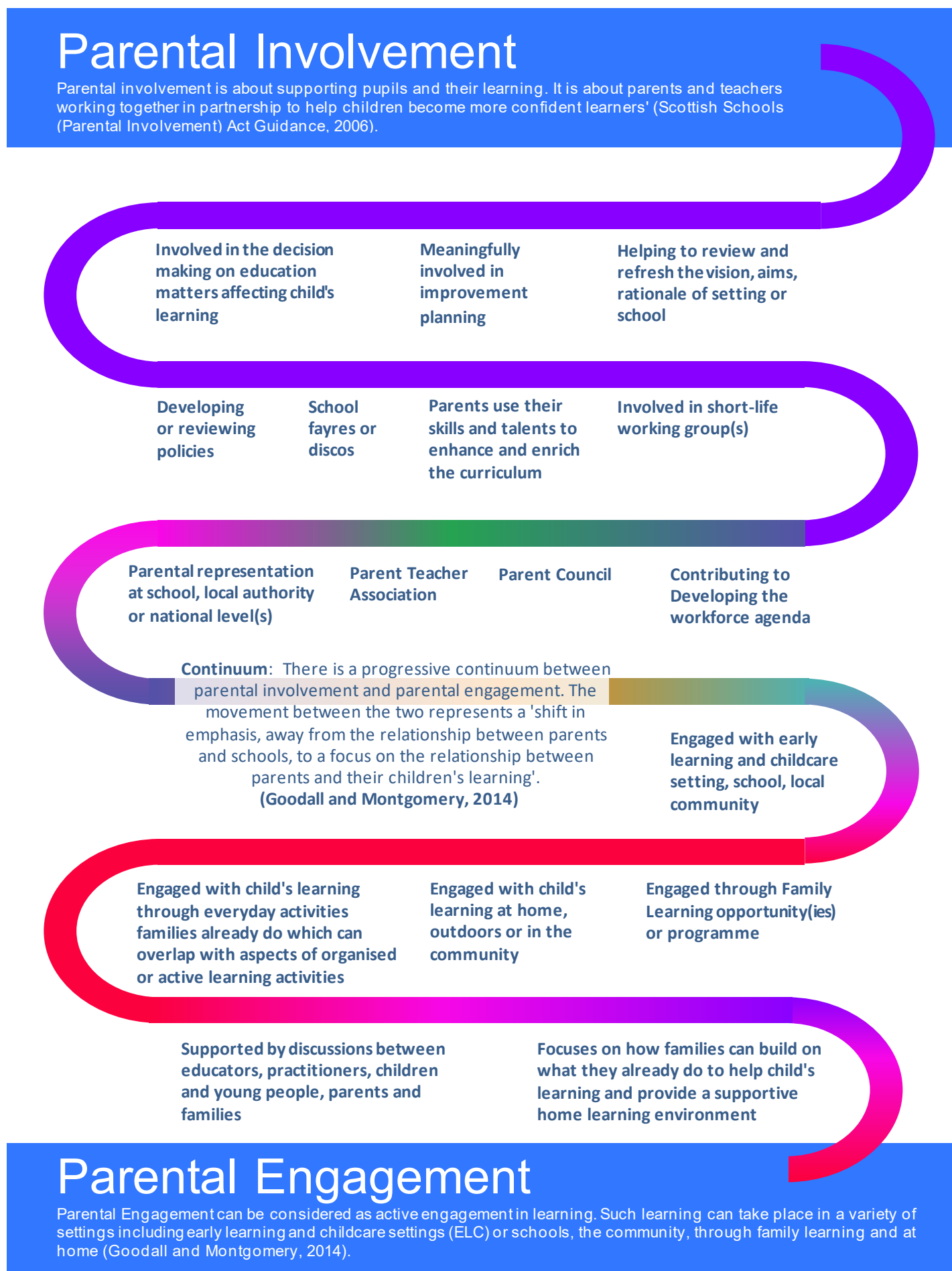
**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 6
– Involving
and Engaging
parents and
families**

There are a range of key terms used in reference to involving and engaging parents and families. At times some of these terms can unhelpfully be used interchangeably throughout documents, strategies, frameworks and research nationally and internationally. Providing clarity and ensuring a common language across Scotland is an ongoing priority.

Figure 2 below aims to help clarify the continuum between parental involvement and parental engagement. Further information on the definitions of the four key terms used throughout this Guide namely, 'parental involvement', 'parental engagement', 'family learning' and 'learning at home' along with sketchnote illustrations, can be found in the ['Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners'](#).

Further work is required to ensure practitioners and educators have access to professional learning opportunities through online, or face-to-face on national and/or local levels.

Figure 2: What is the difference between parental involvement and parental engagement?



4.7 Back to Basics

Many positive and encouraging messages emerged from the 2021-22 Parental Involvement and Engagement Census. For example, many schools experienced an increase in the number of parents involved and engaged with them and their child's learning during COVID-19.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 7
– Back to
Basics**

Since then, intelligence from a range of sources including local authorities, Summarised Inspection Findings during 2022-23 and national creative conversations have highlighted the following requests and themes.

Request for:

- opportunities for parents and children to learn together
- help with learning at home
- more opportunities to be involved
- better understanding of the Parent Council role

Need for:

- more meaningful engagement with parents and families
- parents and families to be allowed back in schools
- educators to work with parents and families to develop a communications strategy to improve communications between home/school, taking account of differing needs, including ESOL, mobile families, shared parenting, BSL, parents' own literacy and/or numeracy needs
- processes to be in place for meaningful and ongoing reporting to parents on their children's progress in their learning journey
- parents to be more involved in planning for school improvement
- setting targets for children's learning in partnership with parents and children
- involving parents in evaluating the work of the school
- more information on the school's approach(es) to homework
- involving parents in a broader range of activities such as family learning programmes based on the strengths, needs and interests of families

The above indicates a need to raise awareness of the legislative duties contained in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 with practitioners, educators, Parent Councils, parents and families. It also highlights an increasing requirement to go back to the basics which form the foundation and spirit of the 2006 Act. This is to effectively involve parents and families in the life of the school and the wider learning community as well as to meaningfully engage parents and families in their children's and their own learning. Guidance for settings and schools on reporting to parents is available [here](#) and in the [Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners](#).

A visual representation outlining the legislative requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, along with current priorities which should be considered, are contained below in Figures 3 and 4 and subsequent text. It should be noted that this does not supersede the Parental Involvement Statutory Guidance. Rather, it is intended to be a useful guide for practitioners and educators who have a remit and/or responsibilities in this area, through bringing together legislative requirements and current priorities not currently contained in the Act.

Figure 3: Back to Basics - Legislative

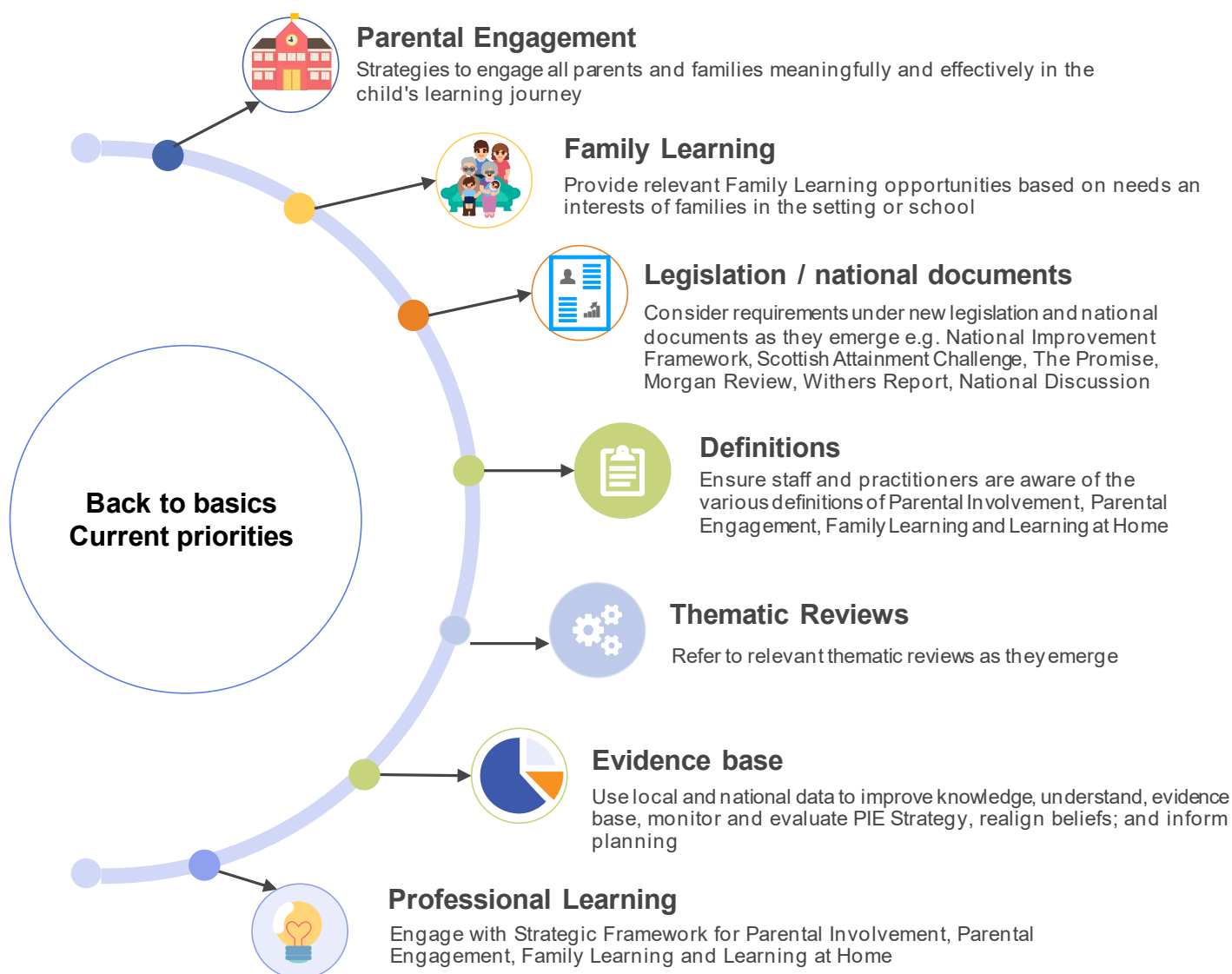


Legislative requirements under the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

- **Strategy** - Develop a strategy for parental involvement, setting out policies for involving and engaging parents. This should be in consultation with parents and relevant stakeholders and made easily available. The Strategy should be reviewed and refreshed every 2-3 years. Local authorities should gather and use data and evidence to measure the progress and impact of the strategy. Lessons learned should be used to inform subsequent plans (See Section 7).
- **Policies / practices** – ensure arrangements for parental involvement reflect the requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006.
- **Parental Involvement** – local authorities are to promote the involvement of parents and families in their child's school and in the wider learning community.
- **Parental Engagement** - parents and families should be meaningfully engaged in their child's learning journey.
- **Learning at Home** – parents should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home and in the community.

- **Home/school partnership** - effective home/school partnerships are essential to ensure that children get the most out of their school and their education.
- **Parental representation** - The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 provides a framework for ensuring that parents have the opportunity to express their views and have these taken into account on matters affecting the education of their children, the school's arrangements for promoting parental involvement and other matters or issues of interest to parents.
- **Parent forum** – local authorities should ensure that all parents with children attending, or about to start, at their schools are aware of what membership of the parent forum means.
- **Parent Councils** - promote the establishment of Parents Councils, support their operation and provide advice and information.
- **Barriers** - local authorities should take into account factors that may act as barriers, discourage or inhibit parents' involvement in their children's learning or contact with the school. Examples of barriers include: English speakers of other languages (ESOL); mobile families; shared parenting; armed forces families; and British Sign Language families.
- **Equalities** - local authorities must take account of issues of equality and the requirements of equalities legislation. They must have regard to how their strategy for parental involvement and engagement will promote equal opportunities.
- **School Improvement Plans** – local authorities are required to ensure that a development plan is prepared for their schools aimed at improving the quality of education provided by the school. The plan should take account of the local authority's policy on parental involvement and engagement. It should also take account of the views of pupils, parent representatives and staff.
- **Communications strategies** - should be appropriate for all parents and families.
- **How Good is Our (HGIOS) self-evaluation frameworks** - in developing their strategy for parental involvement and engagement, local authorities should take account of HMIE's quality indicators outlined in the [self-evaluation frameworks](#).
- **Standards and Quality report** – Schools must produce an annual [Standards and Quality](#) report which records progress of an establishment's annual improvement plan.
- **Complaints procedure** – local authorities are to establish a complaints procedure for their duties on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. This process has been superseded by the [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman](#) Model Complaints Handling Procedures.

Figure 4: Back to Basics - Current



Current priorities to be considered (as appropriate)

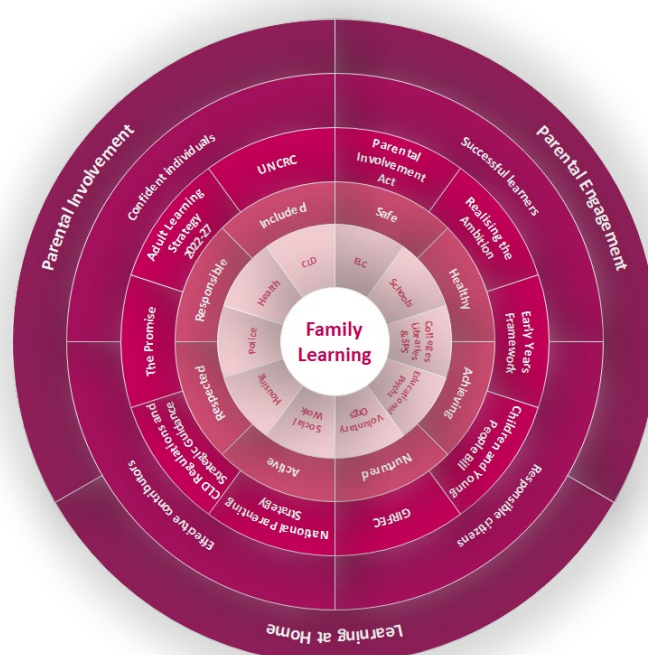
- **Family Learning** - Provide relevant family learning opportunities based on strengths, needs and interests of families in the setting or school.
- **Legislation / national documents** – Consider requirements under new legislation and national documents as they emerge e.g. National Improvement Framework, Scottish Attainment Challenge, The Promise, Morgan Review, Withers Report, National discussion.
- **Definitions** – Ensure practitioners and educators are aware of and understand the various definitions of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

- **Thematic reviews** – refer to relevant thematic reviews as they emerge e.g. [Empowerment for parent and pupil participation](#) (2019) and [Engaging families in learning thematic review](#) (2021).
- **Evidence base** – local authorities should gather and use local and national data such as the Parental Involvement and Engagement (PIE) census data to: improve their knowledge and understanding of different demographics of settings, schools, communities; improve their evidence base; monitor and evaluate the parental involvement and engagement strategy; re-align beliefs; and inform subsequent planning. Recognition should be given to the needs of children and young people, parents and families which will differ depending on the age and stage of the child.
- **Professional learning** – local authorities should engage with the relevant key area(s) of the [Strategic Framework](#) for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home to review and improve their professional learning practice and offer(s) where appropriate.

4.8 Utilising a Family Learning approach to increase parental involvement and engagement in settings and schools

Education Scotland have supported the development and promotion of Family Learning in Scotland on a national, regional and local level over a number of years. This has been guided by the needs of families and practitioners. It has also been influenced by the research community and through partnership working with Scottish Government policy officials.

Throughout this time, Education Scotland has continually engaged with practitioners and educators through consultation, co-producing and co-delivering professional learning sessions, supporting the developments in this area e.g. [National Occupational Standards](#), professional learning activities. Recent engagement with Initial Teacher Education providers in



Scotland, has led to establishing a national working group to support knowledge exchange and inform the practice of our future educators.

Over the last 6 years, Education Scotland has developed a number of key documents and resources such as [The Review of Family Learning in Scotland \(2016\)](#) and [The Family Learning Framework \(2018\)](#). Family Learning is included within the Parent/Carer Engagement and Family Learning key driver of the National Improvement Framework, the Learning together National Action Plan (2018-21) and the Adult Learning Strategy (2022-27). In addition to this, a quality indicator for Family Learning has been part of the suite of 'How Good is our....' self-evaluation frameworks since 2016. This was followed by the recent cross-sectoral Family Learning Thematic Review. Family Learning is also highlighted as a key part of the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge.

Evidence from the '[Engaging families in learning: A thematic inspection of family learning](#)' published in 2021, found the following strengths and aspects for improvement.

Strengths

- Most ELC settings and schools where family learning is taking place are building and sustaining positive relationships with parents. This is key to the success of family learning activities and programmes.
- Family learning in schools is starting to improve outcomes in terms of attainment and achievement. Families facing challenges are learning new skills to help them address issues in their lives.
- Children and young people have increased confidence, self-esteem and engagement in their learning as a result of parental engagement and family learning.
- A few adults engaged in family learning are gaining qualifications, progressing to volunteering and in a few cases, employment.

Aspects for improvement:

- Developing a stronger understanding of the key features of family learning would help schools, ELC settings and their partners to set out clearer aims and outcomes.
- There is scope for ELC settings, schools and their partners to work together in a more co-ordinated way to help them achieve their shared objectives.

- Partners need now to establish robust arrangements that enable them to report on the impacts of family learning, and to celebrate and disseminate highly effective practice.
- The sustainability of family learning needs to be considered as part of planning activities and programmes.
- Progression routes for adult learners needs to be more integral to family learning activities and programmes. Effective partnership working can help to strengthen this.

Education Scotland colleagues have collaborated and built strong links with the research community across Scotland, nationally and internationally. This has been with a view to highlighting the impact of Family Learning. It has also been important to showcase how Scotland is leading the way in our approach(es) to Family Learning.

Intelligence gathered during the COVID-19 pandemic shows that schools who already had a good relationship with families, did better. Family learning teams had to quickly pivot and produce programmes via social media platforms, produce online resources via websites and deliver learning at home packs to families. During this time, many families lived in isolation which impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. Family learning practitioners supported families during this time to engage in programmes to positively impact on mental health and wellbeing outcomes. Evidence from this and research consistently demonstrate the need to continue utilising a family learning approach, where appropriate, to have positive impacts on mental health and wellbeing.

Prior to COVID-19, national partners, practitioners and educators identified the potential, and expressed their support, for establishing a 'Family Learning week' in Scotland. Since then, Education Scotland have supported Campaign for Learning to develop an annual four nations Family Learning Festival event across Scotland during the month of October.

Education Scotland are in a prime position to co-ordinate Scotland's activity, utilise intelligence gathered, and increase the profile of Family Learning with educators, practitioners, community groups and families. Participating in the Family Learning Festival, in partnership with the other UK nations, will build on progress and achievements to date. In addition to this, the Scottish education system benefits through:

- further raising the profile of Scotland as it provides a leading and influencing role alongside the other UK nations in developing the programme for the Festival

- increased partnership working opportunities, with new and existing national organisations, practitioners, educators, partner and stakeholder groups to take the Festival forward
- gaining access to additional intelligence on the range and types of programmes being delivered in Scotland
- promoting the journey that Scotland has been on as a leading nation in taking Family Learning forward and showcasing good practice
- effectively demonstrating how family learning runs through strategic, corporate and national plans and frameworks to ultimately build the capacity of practitioners and educators working in this field.

Given the increase over recent years in the number of settings and schools offering family learning opportunities or programmes, there is an ongoing need to ensure that practitioners and educators are skilled to deliver on this area. In addition to this, evidence from the PIE Census shows that there is an ongoing need to ensure that parents and families are made aware of family learning opportunities. Following on from the development of the [Family Learning Professional Development Award](#) (PDA), further work is now needed to develop a qualification pathway for Family Learning.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 7
– Family
Learning**

4.9 Learning at Home

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 recognises the vital role that parents play in children's learning and development. Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their own children and, as such, should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home and in the community. Learning at Home is one of the Act's three mandatory levels of engagement with parents.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 9
– Learning at
Home**

Learning at home is crucial for children to learn and develop. Research shows that learning at home can have significant immediate and longer-term impacts on children in different ways such as a child's early learning, later achievements, nurture, resilience, wellbeing, social mobility and skills for life. It

is an ongoing priority within the parental engagement driver of the National Improvement Framework.

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).

Research by the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) highlights that 'longitudinal studies in the UK show that the quality of the home learning environment (HLE) before children attend school not only predicts school readiness outcomes, including language and communication and social-emotional skills, but also has a continuing effect on educational performance in primary and secondary school (up to age 18 years)' (2019, p6).

However, data from the PIE Census shows that further work is needed across all sectors (primary, secondary and special) to provide parents with information on how to help their children's learning at home. As outlined in the [Learning at Home Review](#), educators, practitioners and parents can have different understandings about what learning at home is. Work should be undertaken in partnership with parents and families to ensure clarity and a shared understanding. Cultural change is also required to move away from common assumptions that learning at home is confined to homework.

Learning at home requires to be strengthened as outlined in the Review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 carried out by the [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) and [Ipsos Mori](#) in 2017. Interventions with parents and families to help them engage in the child's learning should be multi-layered and remain as a key priority. Schools should develop and regularly review their learning at home policy in consultation with parents, pupils and the community.

4.10 Health and Wellbeing

Ensuring good health and wellbeing, including mental health amongst children, young people and their families has consistently been a key priority for Scottish Ministers. ‘Along with literacy and numeracy, health and wellbeing is one of the three core areas that are the responsibility of all staff in the school. All adults who work in Scotland’s schools have a responsibility to support and develop the mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing of pupils, as part of what is referred to as ‘Responsibility of All’” ([Mental Health Strategy](#), 2017-27, p13).

A survey commissioned by Scottish Government in November 2021 highlighted that 50% of parents were either ‘very concerned’ (18%), or ‘fairly concerned’ (32%) about the impact on their child’s mental health and wellbeing during lockdown ([National Improvement Framework](#), 2022). Public Health Scotland also published their COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey (CEYRIS) [report](#) in June 2022. Topics addressed in the three rounds include: key behaviours in children; children’s play, learning and experience of infection control measures; and experience of parents and carers.

Key findings from that report show that:

- overall, the findings suggest that for a substantial proportion of children in the sample, parents and carers perceive the pandemic to have had a negative impact on child and family health, wellbeing and development
- the impacts generally appear to be felt to a greater extent in families from low-income households, who may have already been struggling before the pandemic
- the impacts do not appear to be universal - areas that some families report as having a negative impact, others report as having a positive impact
- there are areas where the perceived impacts tend to be positive, rather than negative, and these should not be overlooked
- there are areas where further analysis would be beneficial, which will be presented in future publications.

Independent surveys undertaken by a range of national organisations, such as [Connect](#), has identified reduced mental health and wellbeing amongst children, young people, parents and families as a recurring theme. Ensuring that children, young people, parents and families have

adequate access to creative opportunities which will support and improve their mental health is crucial.

Play Scotland also undertook a [survey](#) in April 2020 on 'Play and childcare settings: the impact of COVID-19'. Pandemic restrictions severely curtailed the opportunities for outdoor play. While those opportunities have mostly opened up again, there is still a need to encourage more outdoor learning to support children's play but also their health and wellbeing as well as that of their families.

As a result of the COVID-19 impacts, it is even more important that children, young people, parents and families have the opportunity to find, use and develop their creativity through learning in order to support their health and wellbeing. [Creativity](#) already plays a key role across the education recovery agenda and plans are already underway to embed this at the centre of Scottish education and adopt a collaborative culture to empower more children and young people and increase the amount of learning opportunities. This approach is supported through the [2022 Programme for Government](#) which abolished music tuition charges for children and young people.

Given the pressures on existing approaches to addressing health and wellbeing needs, there is an opportunity to look to alternative and creative approaches that are available and are already in operation. An example of this includes the various creative arts organisations and combining this with a family learning approach.

Ensuring that children, young people, parents and families have adequate access to creative opportunities which will support and improve their health and wellbeing is crucial. Local authorities, settings and schools should seek opportunities to strengthen and work in partnership with local creative arts organisations.

4.11 Additional Support Needs (ASN)

A range of surveys were carried out at different stages by local authorities and national parenting organisations during COVID-19. The findings showed that although many children and young people had positive experiences of online learning at home during the pandemic and the transition back to school after lockdown was easier, there were also a number of challenges.

While it is not possible to list them all, there are several recurring themes and lessons learned which did emerge.

Parents identified that:

- COVID/lockdown had a detrimental impact on children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) including their mental health
- their child(ren) with ASN did not always get the support they needed with schoolwork. They needed additional support, not less
- children with ASN were not always engaging with their work at home
- families struggled to do schoolwork when faced with multiple challenges and juggling conflicting priorities e.g. ill health, work, lone parenting, shared parenting
- some children struggled to return to school after being at home for so long
- there were inconsistencies in the amount of schoolwork provided
- families benefited from schools making regular communication with them
- their preferred online platform was different to that of practitioners and educators.

As part of the national discussion, Connect undertook a [survey](#) with parents across Scotland including parents of children with additional support needs. The key themes that emerged from the findings included:

- parents would like to be more involved in their children's learning
- parents would like more information on what their child is learning and their progress on a more frequent basis
- parents are not always kept informed of their child's progress
- better planning and joined up working is required
- better communication with families of children with additional support needs.

These views are also reflected in the Additional Support for Learning Review [Action Plan](#) (2021). Local authorities, settings and schools should consider the above key themes along with data from their PIE census and local intelligence with a view to identifying and supporting children and families who may need additional support for whatever reason, throughout their learning journey. This should inform and be part of routine planning processes for children's learning and development. Practitioners and educators should also consider that some parents and families may have additional support needs themselves.

4.12 Legislative changes and requirements

Since the creation of the Learning Together National Action Plan, the legislative and policy landscape has already changed significantly with further changes to 'Getting it right for every child'. Changes to the '[Protecting Vulnerable Groups](#)' and the 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (UNCRC) are imminent.

['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, 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.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - recognises the important role of a parent, carer or family member to support their child's best interests, defend their rights and have these taken into account. The UNCRC places responsibility on State Parties to provide appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in performing their parental responsibilities to guarantee and promote the rights set out in the Convention. Parental responsibilities are directly referenced in Articles 5, 14, 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 is available on the Parent Club [website](#).

Other policy updates - [Review of additional support for learning implementation: report](#), [The Promise](#), [Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education](#), [No-one left behind delivery plan](#).

Education reform - the Muir report '[Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education](#)' (2022) seeks to influence educational reform and the future direction of Scottish education. During this time of change, it is important for practitioners and educators to remember that involving and engaging parents in their children's learning remains a legislative requirement and an increasing key priority.

There is an ongoing need to ensure that parents and families as well as children and young people, are kept informed of relevant legislation and policy changes as and when they occur.

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 - A significant amount of time has also now passed since the introduction of the Act and Statutory Guidance. While having legislation on Parental Involvement is a unique position as compared to the other nations of the UK and internationally, it is recognised that there are noticeable gaps and changes since it came into force in 2006. Some of these include: the expansion of funded early learning and childcare provision, changing terminology, shared headships, change in the complaints procedure and the updated policy landscape.

4.13 Parent Councils

Parent Councils play an important role in helping to ensure that parents' unique knowledge of their own child, their valuable life experience and individual personal skills help enrich children's education. Parent Councils have a variety of roles and can help parents to feed in their views and ideas, ensuring their input makes a positive difference to the life of the school community. Parents should be encouraged and supported to share their views and ideas to ensure they influence what happens at school.

Intelligence collated during national creative conversations over 2020-22 from practitioners and educators across Scotland and surveys carried out locally show that the number of parents attending Parent Council meetings significantly increased. This has in part been due to meetings being held online and parents not having to arrange childcare or travel. It has also been due to an increased desire from parents for information about their child's setting or school as well as their child's learning.

Given that membership of Parent Councils changes naturally as parents and families transition through their child's learning journey, there is an ongoing need to continue to support new members and raise awareness of the Parent Council resource.

Intelligence from stakeholders have also identified a desire to recognise and nationally celebrate the excellent work of Parent Councils.



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

There has been exemplary efforts across Scotland to build the capacity of students, probationers, post-probationers and existing staff and develop their knowledge and understanding of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.



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), showed the need for a Strategic Framework on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home.

The [Strategic Framework](#) will help streamline the teacher education and professional learning delivered by Initial Teacher Education providers, the Scottish Social Services Council and local authorities on these four key areas. Additionally, it will help reduce any duplication of professional learning provision and ensure that all students, probationers, post-probationers and existing staff have the appropriate background knowledge of the legislative requirements and journey of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home, as well as the benefits of involving and engaging parents as clearly defined in research.

**See PowerPoint
Presentation 10
– Benefits of
involving
parents and
families**

The Strategic Framework was launched in May 2023 by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. Next steps include raising awareness of this amongst educators, practitioners, student teachers, probationers, post-probationers and existing staff.

Links to videos of the launch and further information is available [here](#).

5. Approaches to supporting parents and families

‘Active listening and engagement must be fundamental to the way Scotland makes decisions and supports children and families. There is no simple formula or standardised approach that will suit all’

([The Promise](#), 2021, p13).

Ministers’ ambition is that Scotland will be ‘the best place in the world to grow up so that children are ‘loved, safe, respected and realise their full potential’ ([The Promise](#), 2021). Across Scotland there already exists a clear commitment to early intervention and prevention. ‘That commitment is best realised through proper, holistic support for families....The underlying universal support system must support all families and identify those who need more support’ (The Promise, 2021, p46).

Universal support – is provided for families with little or no additional needs. This support can be described as non-stigmatising and critical to building relationships with trusted professionals. Examples of universal support could include education and healthcare. Universal support will look different and be dependent on the context of each community and the needs of children and families.

Early intervention – is provided for children and families who have some additional needs which can be addressed through targeted early intervention support. ‘A key part of any early intervention policy is building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to secure the best outcomes’ ([Early Years and Early Intervention](#), 2008, p4).

Intensive support – is provided for children and families who have multiple needs and require a co-ordinated multi-agency package of support to prevent needs from escalating into crisis. The ten principles of Intensive Family Support as identified in The Promise (2021) are:

- Community based
- Responsive and timely
- Work and family assets
- Empowerment and agency
- Flexible
- Holistic and relational
- Therapeutic
- Non-stigmatising
- Patient and persistent
- Underpinned by children’s rights

Specialist services – is provided for families who have acute, high-end needs requiring statutory support.

The UNCRC recognises ‘that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community’ (<https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/convention-text>).

Further information on how ‘[Getting it right for every child](#)’ supports families by making sure children and young people can receive the right help, at the right time, from the right people can be found in Section 4.12.

5.1 Equality and Equity

‘Equality is defined in [legislation](#) and is designed to make sure every person has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents (see accompanying [guidance](#)). Equity is a policy concept and approach that aims to focus on treating people fairly and provide additional or different support where required. Equity in education means that personal or social circumstances are not obstacles to achievement and that all children and young people are well supported and have the same opportunities to succeed’ ([Connect](#), 2021, p4).

Scotland’s vision for education is to ensure ‘every child and young person has the same opportunity to succeed, no matter their background or shared protected characteristics, with a particular focus on closing the poverty related attainment gap’ ([National Improvement Framework](#), 2024, p4). The importance of having a continued focus on the impacts of poverty and inequality is recognised across Scotland. Ensuring that early learning and childcare settings and schools are equipped with the knowledge and tools to support parents and families regardless of their circumstances is a key priority. The Scottish Government, Education Scotland, COSLA and ADES are committed to a joint approach to improving outcomes and experiences of education for children and young people, between our organisations and in partnership with schools and local authorities ([National Improvement Framework](#), 2022, p4).

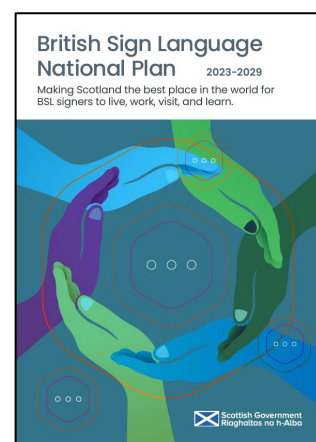
Findings from surveys undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted challenges for parents who had additional support needs (ASN) themselves and/or who had a child with ASN. Equalities and Equities is a key theme throughout the Learning Together National Action Plan.

This Professional Learning Guide has a specific focus on addressing barriers which might be preventing parents from getting involved in the wider life of their child's setting or school and from engaging in their child's and their own learning.

Within the Learning Together National Action Plan, the Scottish Government Equalities and Equities programme funded a number of partner and stakeholder organisations to develop small scale research and best practice materials. These programmes developed a bank of resources to support practice in relation to equalities and equities. The resources are available free of charge on Education Scotland's [Parents and Families](#) topic page. Local authorities, settings and schools are encouraged to utilise the Equalities and Equities resources to inform their planning and implementation strategies.

British Sign Language (BSL)

Scottish Government aims to make Scotland the best place in the world for British Sign Language (BSL) users to live, learn, work and visit. In order to achieve this, the [British Sign Language \(Scotland\) Act](#) (2015) (available in BSL and English) came into force. The first [National Plan](#) for 2017-23 was published in October 2017 and the [National Plan](#) for 2023-29 was subsequently published in October 2023. Providing opportunities, supporting and building capacity amongst Scotland's parents to capitalise on the learning experiences of all children and young people is key to raising attainment.



Work was undertaken to develop a [British Sign Language Toolkit](#). The Toolkit was first published in October 2022 to coincide with the seventh anniversary of the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015. This is aimed at practitioners within early learning and childcare settings and schools who support all Deaf children, young people and their families, parents and carers who use British Sign Language and Tactile BSL, or who may consider using it, in education. The Toolkit has subsequently been updated to align with the 2023-29 BSL [National Plan](#). There is an ongoing need to raise awareness of the BSL Toolkit for practitioners who work with British Sign Language families.

Pupil Equity Funding

‘Evidence shows that some children and young people from marginalised groups can be disproportionately affected by deprivation and can therefore face significant additional barriers to learning. Local authorities have responsibilities to actively address inequality, and the promotion of equity is a shared responsibility held by all staff, partners and other relevant stakeholders. Local authorities should consider how the interests, knowledge, identities and resources of marginalised young people and communities (e.g. those from minority ethnic backgrounds or lone parent households) are being recognised and valued. The influence of unconscious bias should also be considered especially in relation to whose ideas are valued and how they influence PEF planning’ ([Scottish Government](#), 2022).

The Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress to implement interventions, supports Headteachers and teachers to incorporate a key set of considerations when using Pupil Equity Funding. They should also consider how the use of Pupil Equity Funding will support the six priority family types identified by the [Scottish Government](#) as being at highest risk of experiencing child poverty:

- Lone parent families
- Minority ethnic families
- Families with a disabled adult or child
- Families with a young mother (under 25)
- Families with a child under one
- Larger families (3+ children)

5.2 Scottish Attainment Challenge

The Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) [refresh](#) builds on existing policy for the next phase. The refresh was developed in partnership with and agreed by COSLA and builds on the evidence set out in the Scottish Government and Education Scotland 5-year report on progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap, the Equity Audit, the Audit Scotland report on educational outcomes, and the OECD review. It will continue to provide support for children and young people impacted by poverty through [Strategic Equity Funding](#), Pupil Equity Funding, Care Experienced Children and



Young People funding and a number of national programmes. The main aim of the policy is to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerate progress in closing the attainment gap.

This policy's mission is to use education to improve outcomes for children and young people impacted by poverty, with a focus on tackling the poverty-related attainment gap. In summary, the refreshed plan includes:

- an annual investment of up to £200 million in 2022-23 to support children and young people impacted by poverty;
- continued empowerment of headteachers through Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) as the primary model for distributing funding to the education system, with funding of approximately £130 million annually to be allocated to 97% of schools;
- continued investment to support Care Experienced Children and Young People (CECYP funding), contributing to keeping The Promise;
- the introduction of Strategic Equity Funding (SEF) of over £43 million, which will be distributed annually to every local authority based on Children in Low Income Families Data;
- investment in national programmes to enhance supports across the system, supporting a range of national initiatives such as youth work and mentoring; and
- a broader recognition of children and young people's achievements and attainment along with broader support for families and communities through the refreshed mission.

5.3 Social practice model

Social practice is a theory within psychology that seeks to determine the link between practice and context within social situations. The Social Practice model is widely used in community-based adult learning in Scotland. This model acknowledges that adult learners bring skills, experiences and assets to be built on.

The [Adult Learning Strategy](#) (2022-27) recognises that Family Learning has an impact on the whole family and in particular adult learners who may also be parents. It encourages families to learn together, and activities can be designed to help parents support their child's learning. Parents supporting their children's learning can help impact on raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The Adult Learning Strategy, which includes ESOL families,

sets out actions to enable this through collaboration by increasing professional learning opportunities, and supporting the delivery of family learning by sharing practice and resources.

5.4 Cost of the School Day

The Child Poverty Action Group launched a revised [Toolkit](#) which is designed to raise awareness of the Cost of the School Day. It aims to help settings, schools and the wider learning community review and make changes to the Cost of the School Day. Every setting and school is unique and the Toolkit will help practitioners and educators develop plans that reflect their local community and context. The Toolkit sets out the Cost of the School Day process in five straightforward steps. It features: editable action plans; updated information; resources to facilitate whole school conversations about the barriers that costs create and how to tackle them; and practice suggestions. Further work is required to continue raising awareness of the revised toolkit and ensure that settings and schools are taking this forward.

5.5 Transitions

So much has changed as a result of the pandemic. Many parents whose child transitioned during this time did not initially have the opportunity to visit their child's early learning and childcare setting or school in person, meet the practitioners working with their child, see the environment in which they learn nor celebrate their child's learning through assemblies and showcase events. Feedback from parents, national organisations, Parent Councils and local authorities have identified that parents and families greatly missed these opportunities and experiences.

Involving children, young people, parents and families in all transition stages is crucial. Additionally, it is necessary for early learning and childcare settings and schools to provide timely resources to ensure that parents and families have the information and tools needed to support their children and young people to the next stage of their learning journey. It is also an opportunity to build relationships and highlight the important role that parents play in their child's development and learning journey.

Research by the Education Endowment Foundation highlights that home visits in the early years are 'associated with substantially larger positive impacts....on children's cognitive performance',

particularly amongst low-income families (2019, p39). Settings and schools may wish to consider arranging home visits to build trusting relationships and exchange knowledge and information as part of their transition process. Such an approach provides an opportunity for practitioners and educators to discuss how home-settings/schools can work together to improve outcomes for children and young people. It will also allow for practitioners and educators to identify any barriers to involving and engaging parents in the wider life of the school and in their child's and their own learning.

5.6 Barriers to involving and engaging parents and families

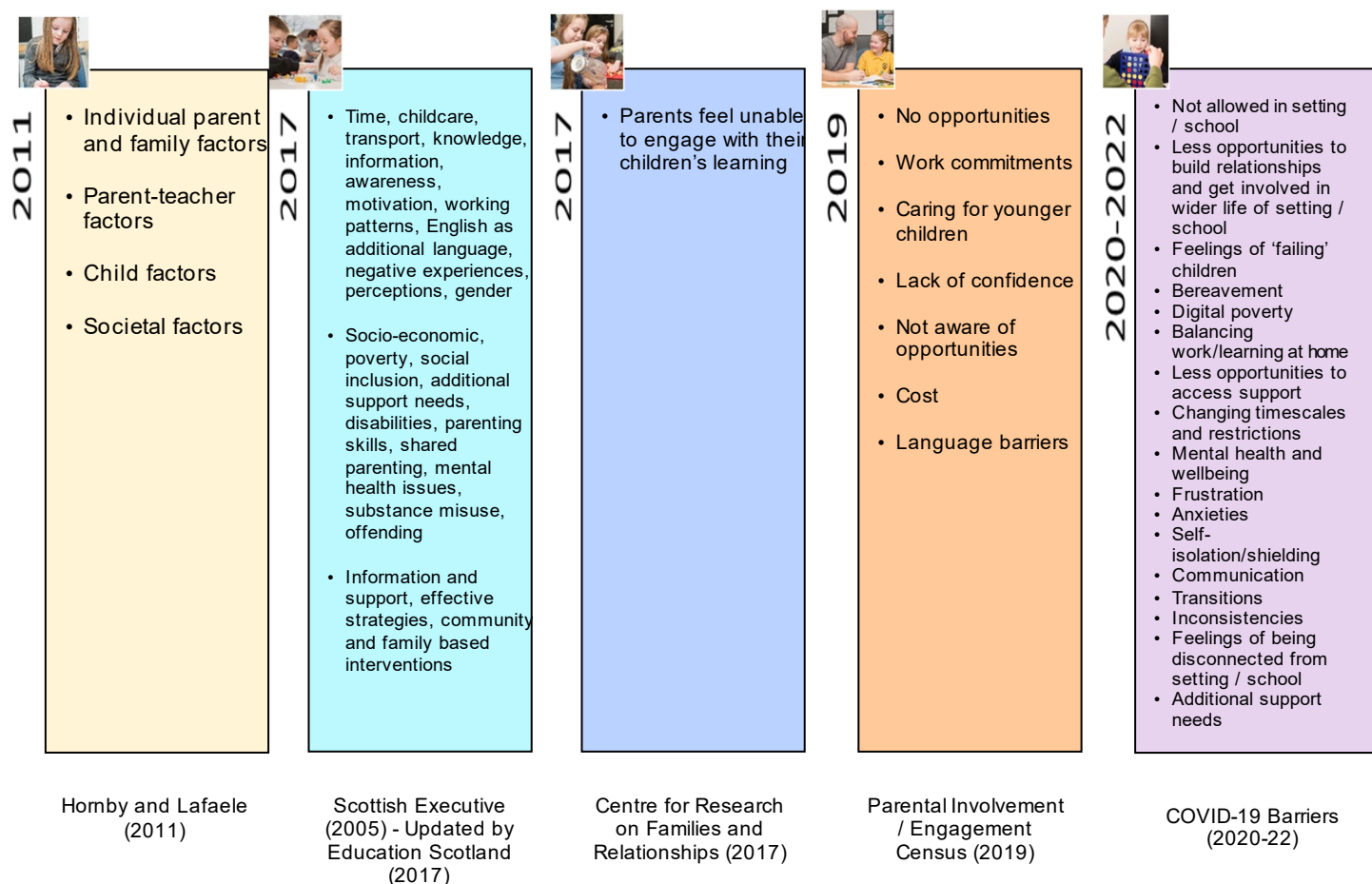
Over the years, parents have identified many barriers and factors that restrict their ability to be more involved and engaged in the life of the setting or school and in their child(ren)'s learning. These fluctuate from external barriers out with a parents' control, to individual obstacles specific to personal life circumstances (Scottish Executive, 2005). External barriers restricting parents from supporting their children's learning can be multifaceted.

**See PowerPoint
Presentation 11
– Barriers to
involving and
engaging
parents and
families**

Individual barriers can result from a parent's socio-economic circumstances such as poverty, working patterns, or social exclusion and/or their own learning needs. Some parents 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 and educators with the tools to address barriers and engage all families.

In addition to the barriers that parents identified during COVID-19 (Figure 5 below), practitioners and educators also highlighted barriers to engaging with families during national creative conversation events. These were: time; staffing; cover; private space to make calls; COVID restrictions not allowing parents in to visit classrooms – varied across local authorities; limited numbers of parents allowed in settings/schools at any one time; and making initial connections with parents and bringing them on board.

Figure 5: Barriers to engaging parents and families timeline (2011-2022)



Data from the 2022 PIE Census continues to show the following highlights:

- around six in ten (62.5%) parents and carers said that work commitments were preventing them from being more active in the life of the setting or school
- nearly a third (32.8%) said they were not made aware of opportunities to take part in the life of the school
- just over a fifth (22.7%) said there were no opportunities to take part in the life of the school.

Further analysis on the 2022 PIE data by age and ethnicity shows that in the 25-34 age range:

- there is a lack of confidence amongst parents and families
- there are no opportunities
- parents and families were not made aware of opportunities
- parents and families were caring for younger children
- there were language barriers

This information provides local authorities, settings and schools the opportunity to use the PIE census data and/or their own intelligence to consider the best way to support parents and families (e.g. universal, early intervention, intensive support - See Section 5 above).

5.7 Holiday interventions

Much has been written in research about 'the summer slide' or a 'loss of learning or knowledge' during holiday periods, especially the summer months. While time away from settings and schools is necessary, it is also important to ensure that all children continue to learn and develop. Younger children are in a crucial development stage, but equally teenagers need their minds to be stimulated with the right learning over holiday periods. Fostering a positive learning environment for children will enable them to have fun, memorable opportunities and experiences and help prepare them for returning to school after a holiday period.

Studies over a number of years (Axford et al, 2019; Kim and Quinn, 2013) show a range of benefits particularly for low-income families. These include:

- improvements in reading comprehension and fluency
- gains in educational outcomes (depending on the programme) of between two and eight months
- decrease in follow-up measures as a result of family literacy interventions
- sustained gains into adolescence resulting from targeted interventions
- positive impacts on academic and other learning outcomes
- effective summer interventions may be critical to improving children's reading achievement, particularly for low-income

Local authorities may wish to consider what free programmes or interventions are currently on offer or can be provided in their area by local or national organisations during holiday periods for children, young people, parents and families. Practitioners and educators may wish to signpost as appropriate.

6. Workforce development

Equipping the workforce and ensuring they have access to, and are signposted towards professional learning opportunities, resources, case studies, research and current examples of good practice is vital. It is also important to ensure that staff have the required competencies, skills and values needed to work with parents and families to support their child's and their own learning journey. Developing the workforce can be challenging during ever changing complex economic and financial circumstances but it is crucial to building trusting relationships.

**See
PowerPoint
Presentation 12
– Workforce
Development**

6.1 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.

Work with parents - The National Occupational Standards for Work with Parents 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](#).

Family Learning - Practitioners and educators delivering family learning programmes are expected to have the appropriate qualifications, knowledge, skills and experience. National Occupational Standards (NOS) for family learning were developed in 2005 along with the standards for working parents (NIACE, 2013). The standards which were revised in 2013, provide 'statements of skills and knowledge needed by the family learning workforce'. Since 2013, the NOS has been refreshed again can be found on the [Parents and Families](#) theme page under workforce development.

The key purpose of the National Occupational Standards is to ‘plan, manage and deliver opportunities to engage adults and children to learn together as and within a family through quality formal or informal programmes’ (Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), 2013).

6.2 Career-long professional learning / continuous professional learning

The [Strategic Framework](#) mentioned in Section 4.14 above, provides a structure within which all stakeholders can engage in and deliver professional learning on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. There is a need for practitioners who support the qualification and professional learning of early years practitioners, childminders and teachers on: parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home, to review their offer and ensure it aligns with the Strategic Framework.

6.3 National and international networks and parenting organisations

National networks

The Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network (SPION), the National Family Learning Network and national parenting organisations continue to provide opportunities for practitioners across Scotland to share practice, learn about key local and national priorities, and engage with new and emerging research. Many of these national networks and organisations have been in operation for a number of years. There continues to be a growing interest and need for collaborative working together not least because of the invaluable support they provide to each other, practitioners, schools, settings, third sector organisations and the community.

International networks

Scotland's approach to engaging children, young people, parents and families is recognised as being sector leading across the world. The Parental Involvement Act and the Learning Together National Action Plan have been referenced in international research positioning Scotland at the forefront of this area of work. This has led to Scotland's inclusion in an international thinktank to share practice and learn from others across the world through the Family Engagement in Education Network (FEEN).

FEEN is a group of education decisionmakers representing local authorities, private school networks, non-profit third sector organisations, parent, and funder organisations from countries around the world. Network members have shown their commitment to building ever stronger family-school partnerships, even during what has been the most challenging school years in recent memory.

National parenting organisations

National parenting organisations continue to provide feedback to Scottish Government and Education Scotland on emerging needs and demands at a local level as well as from a policy perspective. This was particularly evident throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuing to support and partner with national parenting organisations is crucial to achieving Scotland's vision for children, young people, parents and families.

7. Gathering data and measuring progress

The evidence tells us that whilst there is already good work going on, action is still needed to further improve the involvement and engagement of all parents and families. Local authorities, practitioners and educators should continue to gather robust data which will support their planning and delivery processes and identify areas for improvement. To assist with this, Figure 6 below outlines some of the ways in which data can be gathered and used to measure success. This is not an exhaustive list but a helpful guide to support you in your role of working with parents and families. Reference should always be made to the 'How Good is Our...' frameworks to support your self-evaluation journey.

**See PowerPoint
Presentation 13
– Gathering
data and
measuring
progress**

The approaches to involving and engaging parents in their child's and their own learning requires to be regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure they meet the individual needs of families taking account of different demographics. Communications and relationships based on trust, mutual respect and collaboration are, and will continue to remain an important lever of change and improvement which lies at the heart of all our work with children and families. Having the voice of parents represented will not only influence these approaches and communication methods, but it will also help to re-shape the future direction of engaging parents and families in their child's and their own learning.



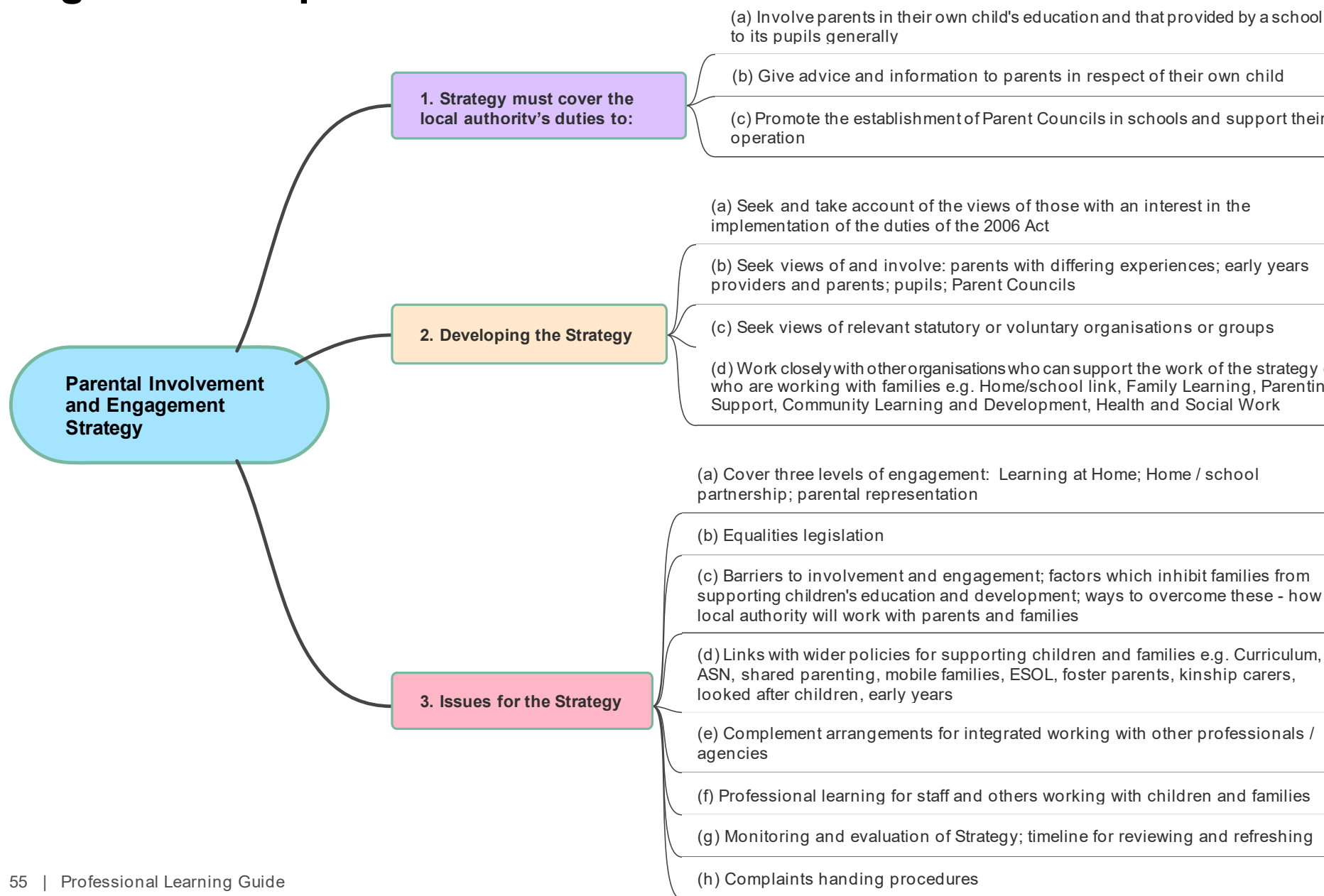
There is a need to provide the right support, conditions, and opportunities to help parents feel empowered to engage in their child's and their own learning. Recognising and reducing barriers and/or previous negative or false beliefs, attitudes or mindsets which are preventing parents from engaging in their child's and their own learning require to be a key focus for local parental involvement and engagement strategies. It is important to ensure that stakeholders are collaboratively and meaningfully involved in professional learning to help improve parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. To ensure success, there must be strong understanding and co-operation within the system to help support parents and families.

This Professional Learning Guide is for everyone who has a remit or responsibilities to deliver training to practitioners and educators who work with parents and families.

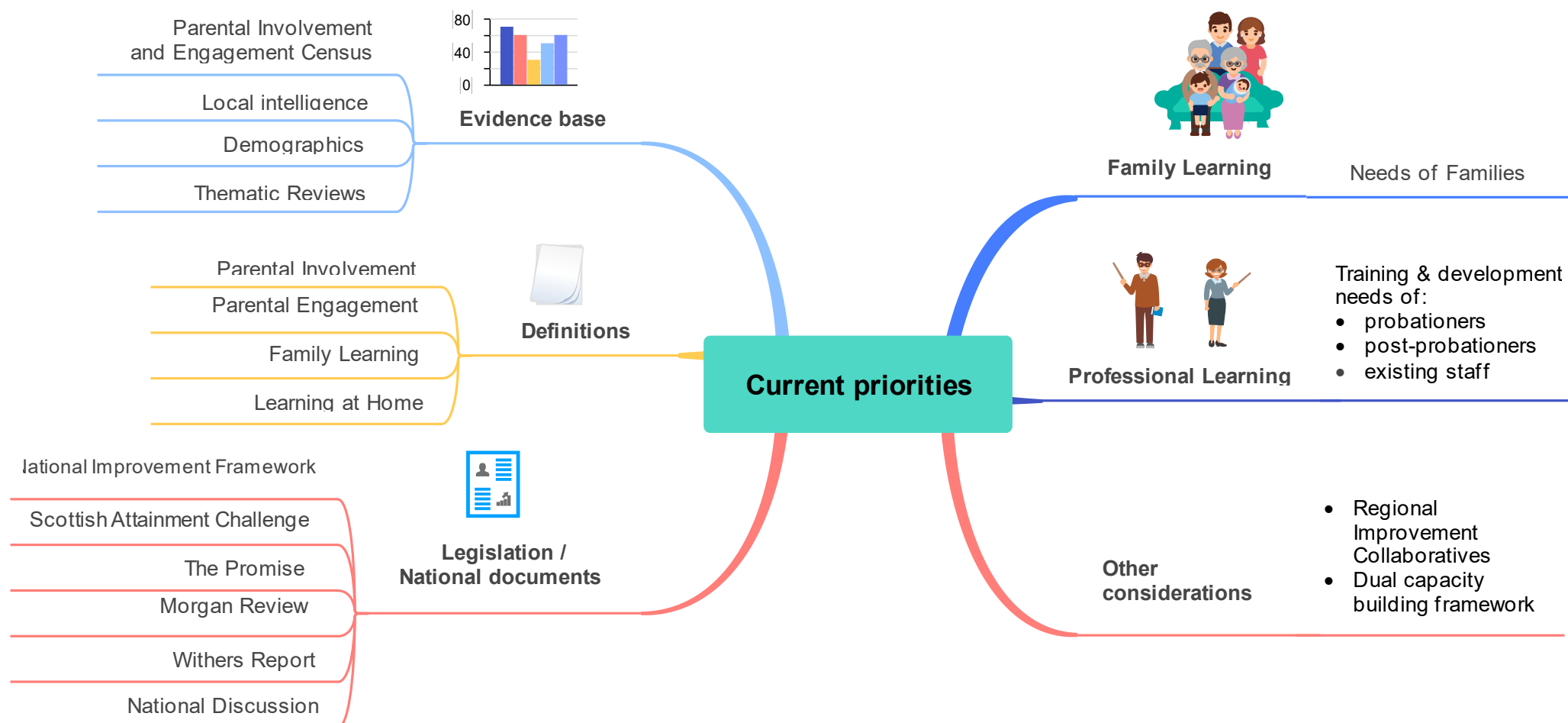
Figure 6: Gathering data and measuring progress



Appendix 1 – Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy - Legislative requirements



Appendix 2 – Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy – Current priorities



Reading list

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