

Strategic Framework for:

Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home

Section 8

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

8.1 Beliefs

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

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

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

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

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

8.2 Unconscious bias

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

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

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

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

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

8.3 Integrity

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

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

8.4 National Occupational Standards

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

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

8.5 Values

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

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

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

8.6 Reflective questions

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

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