

# Review of Learning at Home

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# APPENDIX A – ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

## Background – Scottish policy mapping

This section provides an overview of the key national policies and strategies relating to Learning at Home. These policies provide the overarching framework and guidance within which local authorities and practitioners should work.

After devolution in 1999, the Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government) identified the need for more research data and information about children's circumstances, their opportunities, difficulties and the challenges they faced as they grew up. This lack of existing data on developmental phases in children's lives, early years and the transition into adolescence led to the commissioning of the longitudinal study Growing Up in Scotland (GUS).

The GUS study was designed to examine 'the characteristics, circumstances and attitudes of the families who took part in the research' (GUS, 2007, p1). It aimed to track the lives of a cohort of Scottish children from their early years through childhood and to look at their experiences across time. The study has a specific and unique emphasis on Scotland and is 'driven by the needs of policy-making, with a particular focus on access to, and use of services' (GUS, 2007, p2). Topics covered in the GUS study have included: characteristics and circumstances of children and their families; pregnancy and birth; parenting young children; parental support; child health and development; parenting styles and responsibilities; and parental health.

The Growing up in Scotland Study has been fundamental in supporting Scottish Government after devolution, in developing cross-cutting health, education and socio-economic policies.

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

The Parental Involvement Act recognises the vital role that parents play in children's learning and development. It aims to encourage parents to develop their children's learning at home and in the community. Local authorities are required to 'take into account factors that may act as barriers, discourage or inhibit parents' involvement in their children's education' (p10).

There are many reasons why some parents have little or limited contact with the school, or who have difficulties in supporting their child's education and learning e.g. parents' own experience of school education. Within the Act, local authority and school staff are required to work closely with colleagues from other services, such as home-school link services, community learning, health, and social work, or other organisations to help support the work of the strategy, or who are working with families. They are also required to consider the effectiveness of their existing structures and ways of working with parents to encourage parental involvement.

Duties within the Parental Involvement Act:

- Parents should receive information and support to help develop their child's learning at home and in the community.
- Learning at home should be included in the Local Authority's Parental Involvement Strategy.

## National Parenting Strategy (2012)

The Scottish Government launched the National Parenting Strategy in 2012 with the purpose of acting 'as a vehicle for valuing, equipping and supporting parents to be the best that they can be so that they in turn can give the children and young people of Scotland the best start in life' (p7). Helping parents to be the best they can be, makes a difference to children and young people (NPS, 2012, p3). The process for making this happen is through championing the importance of parenting, strengthening the support on offer to parents and making it easier for them to access

the support they need. Within the document, parents alone are not expected to 'shoulder the responsibility of improving the life chances of Scotland's children and young people' (p11).

'The nurturant qualities of the environments where children grow up, live and learn - parents, caregivers, family and community – will have the most significant impact on their development. In most situations, parents and caregivers cannot provide strong nurturant environments without help from local, regional, national, and international agencies' (World Health Organisation, 2007, p3).

### **Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition (2014)**

Adult learning with the family provides modelling for children and young people. Intergenerational learning has the power to create a more cohesive society by challenging stereotypes and through valuing the experience of both young and older people. The Statement of Ambition document aims to inspire, through adult learning, the people of Scotland to develop their dreams and aspirations, building hope and realising ambitions for individuals and communities.

### **Scottish Attainment Challenge (2015)**

The Scottish Attainment Challenge aims to achieve equity in educational outcomes and raise the attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas in order to close the poverty-related attainment gap. The Challenge focuses on and accelerates targeted improvement activity in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing in specific areas of Scotland. It also supports and complements the broader range of initiatives and programmes to ensure that all of Scotland's children and young people reach their potential.

### **'How Good Is Our School?' (4th edition) (2015) and 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?' (2016)**

'How Good Is Our School?' and 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?' aim to support the growth of a culture of self-improvement across Scottish education. They build on previous frameworks and continue the journey of moving Scottish education from being good overall to being great overall.

'Evidence on the current performance of Scotland's education system suggests that we have a good education system, which is performing strongly in a number of respects. However, we are not yet at the level of achieving consistently excellent levels of performance which would match the world-leading ambition of our vision' (Education Scotland, 2013, p15).

### **Review of Family Learning (2016)**

The Review of Family Learning is the first of its kind in Scotland. It aims to provide an easily accessible guide for practitioners and gives a summary of evidence taken from research, case studies and consultation with partners.

Within the Review, 'increasing ways in which parents and families can be equal partners in their children's learning at home, school and in communities' is viewed as 'crucial to raising attainment for all and closing the poverty-related attainment gap' (p4). 'Family learning programmes can be a conduit to increasing parental involvement and engagement in the life of the school and in children's learning at home' (p9).

### **National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education**

The National Improvement Framework sets out the vision and priorities for children's progress in learning. The Framework is key in driving work to continually improve Scottish education and close the attainment gap. The Framework aims to 'improve and increase ways in which parents, carers and families can engage with teachers and partners to support their children and young

people and increase the voice of parents and carers in leading improvements with schools' (National Improvement Framework, 2018, p14).

The Framework is linked to other key national outcomes such as giving children the best start in life and being ready to succeed, tackling inequalities in Scottish society and improving the life chances for children, young people and families at risk. It builds on other improvements and reforms such as Getting it Right for Every Child, Early Years Collaborative, National Youth Work Strategy and Teaching Scotland's Future (skilled workforce). The Framework provides a shared focus to ensure that 'partners are focused effectively on key priorities' to work together and make the vision a reality (National Improvement Framework, 2018, p5).

### **Research to inform the review of the impact of the 2006 Parental Involvement Act (2017)**

Independent research by Ipsos MORI was undertaken with 502 parents via a telephone survey and 4 case studies.

#### **Key Findings:**

- Most parents and some parent councils had limited knowledge of what learning at home meant in the context of the Act.
- Parents discussed learning at home synonymously with homework.
- Concerns that too much focus on learning at home could widen the deprivation attainment gap for those children whose parents may be less inclined to support them at home or do not have time to do so.
- Learning at home was an area headteachers felt they could improve on.
- Barriers to other forms of learning activities – financial constraints, lack of public transport in rural areas.
- More intangible aspects of learning at home where parents play a key role eg developing respect, resilience and self-confidence were not mentioned.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Learning at home is promoted to parents as a wider concept than just 'homework'.
- Greater promotion of learning at home could be through schools in the form of support and information but would also benefit from more focus at a national level.
- Greater thought should be given to how to support deprived parents in providing learning at home and how to support those children who do not receive that support.

### **Review of the impact of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 (2017)**

National Parent Forum of Scotland undertook a multi strand review which examined the impact of the 2006 legislation. Responses received were from 1200 parents, 460 parent councils, 86 stakeholders.

#### **Key Findings:**

- The majority of parents understood 'learning at home' to mean 'homework'.
- Confusion and lack of understanding amongst parents and staff about the difference between homework and the concept of learning at home.
- Clarification is required to help broaden parents' and staff's understand of learning at home.
- The majority of respondents considered the increased focus on and promotion of learning at home was a positive outcome of the Act.
- Parents mentioned many examples of the ways in which schools supported learning at home. Suggestions for future included: more accessible teaching staff who are willing to engage with parents; and robust homework policies.

**Positive impacts of the Act on Learning at Home included:**

- Learning at home goes beyond assigned homework.
- Schools recognise the need to support parents with learning at home and have developed resources to help.
- IT platforms are being used to help with homework and learning at home.
- Communications, relationships and partnership working between schools and parents have improved.
- There is greater involvement from families.

**Key Recommendations:**

- Education Scotland take further steps to promote the benefits and ways for parents to get involved in their child's learning, including as a key priority 'understanding and practical application of the 'learning at home' strand of the Act.
- Schools should provide parents with effective strategies to support children's learning at home and take an evidence-based approach to the setting of homework and supporting learning at home.

**Governance Review Next Steps (2017)**

The Governance Review Next Steps document 'recognises that a parent's most important engagement with school is about their child's education and learning that goes on in the home. Evidence from key academics such as Dr Janet Goodall suggest that parental engagement in children's learning has the greatest impact on outcomes for children'. The Scottish Government have committed in the Governance Review Next Steps to 'boost support to those parents who do not currently engage as much as they would want to through enhancing the availability of home-school link workers and extending family learning' (p4).

**Family Learning Framework (2018)**

The Family Learning Framework provides a strategic framework to support the planning, development, delivery and evaluation of family learning in Scotland. It is aimed at those who are already delivering family learning, or who are about to be involved in planning, developing and/or delivering family learning. The Framework builds on the 2016 Review of Family Learning.