

Strategic Framework for:

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

Section 6

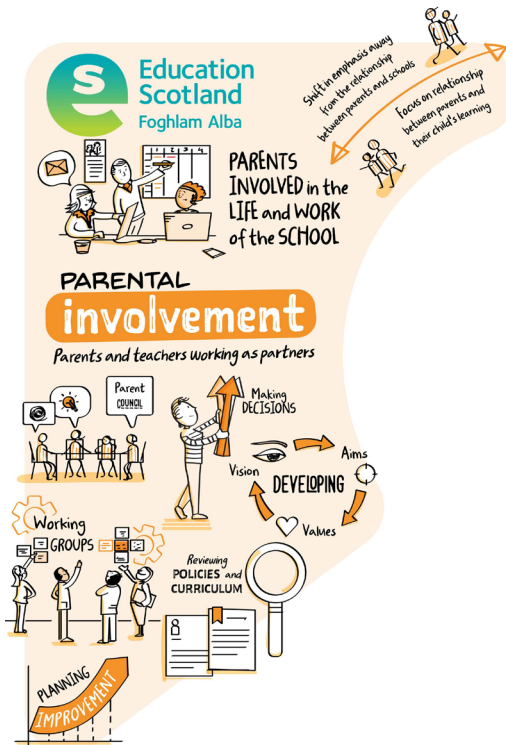
This section covers:

- 6. Definitions and terms
 - 6.1 Parental involvement – definition
 - 6.2 Parental engagement – definition
 - 6.3 Family learning – definition
 - 6.4 Learning at home – definition
 - 6.5 Terms
 - 6.6 Reflective questions

6. Definitions and terms

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

6.1 Parental involvement - definition



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

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

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

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

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

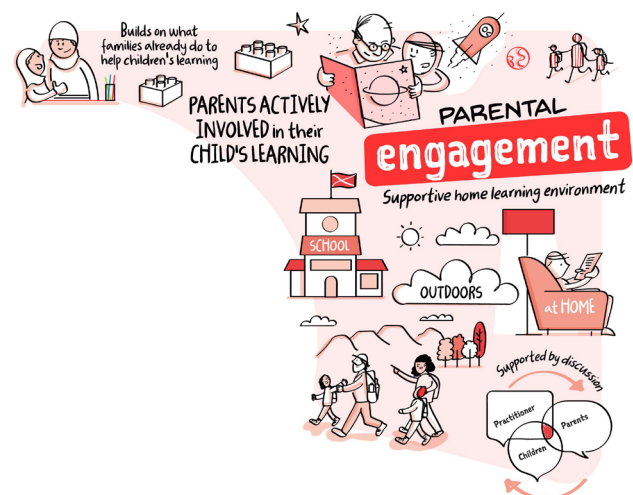
Early learning and childcare settings and schools involve parents by encouraging on-going, two-way communication between home and the establishment. They make sure parents views are represented and they have opportunities to contribute to improvement and decisions that affect the establishment as well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

6.2 Parental engagement - definition

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

(Goodall and Montgomery, 2014)

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



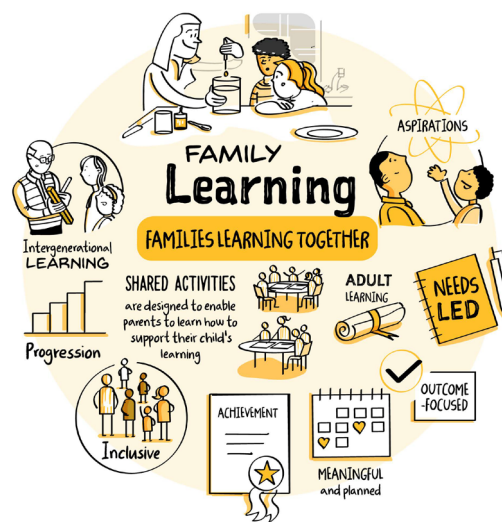
help their children’s learning and provide a supportive home learning environment. Parental engagement represents a greater ‘commitment, ownership of action’ than parental involvement within educational settings such as early learning and childcare and schools.

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

6.3 Family learning - definition

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

(Family Learning Network, 2016)



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

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

6.4 Learning at home - definition

‘Learning at home is the learning which happens in the home, outdoors or in the community. It can take place through everyday activities that families already do and can overlap with aspects of organised or active learning activities’.

(Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network, 2018)



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

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

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

6.5 Terms

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

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

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

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

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

6.6 Reflective questions

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

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