

REVIEW OF FAMILY LEARNING SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

DECEMBER 2016



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REVIEW OF FAMILY LEARNING SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

DECEMBER 2016

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FOREWORD



This Review of Family Learning is the first of its kind in Scotland. Our objective was to produce an easily accessible guide for practitioners, giving you a summary of evidence drawn from a wide range of research, case studies and consultation with partners. The Review is designed to highlight what has worked well in Scotland, and what we can learn from effective practice from other parts of the world.

I believe effective family learning can make a powerful contribution to our ambition for achieving excellence and equity in education outcomes for Scottish learners, with positive outcomes for both the adults and the children involved. Family learning is an early intervention and prevention approach which is ideal for reaching the most disadvantaged communities. Done well, family learning

helps close the attainment gap through breaking the inter-generational cycles of deprivation and low attainment. Its effects can extend beyond the duration of the intervention and provide lasting impacts and improved outcomes.

I trust that you will find this Review of Family Learning valuable and look forward to working with you to deliver positive outcomes for families and future generations.

Dr Bill Maxwell
Chief Executive

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The [2016-17 Programme for Government](#) focuses on a number of themes which include: an education system which provides opportunities for all; empowering people and communities; raising standards in schools; closing the attainment gap; and delivering opportunities to young people regardless of their family background.

Why a family learning approach?

Supporting, equipping and building capacity amongst Scotland's parents to capitalise on children's opportunities for learning is key in raising attainment and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. A family learning approach can also be a catalyst in helping adults take up adult learning and training opportunities, gain employment or attain new skills. This in turn positively impacts on children's individual attainment, their aspirations and personal learning journey.

Approach to the task

In producing this Review and collating the findings, Education Scotland considered national and international research evidence, conducted an analysis of current practice in family learning across all Scottish local authorities and gathered case studies from a range of practitioners. Additionally, a series of consultation events and meetings took place with key stakeholders. Practitioners and researchers across Scotland engaged with and enthusiastically supported the work throughout this Review and have shared examples of family learning in their local areas.

The Review

This Review takes stock of the available evidence on family learning. It identifies the benefits of family learning programmes across literacy, numeracy, ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), parental involvement and health and wellbeing. The complexities in evaluating programmes, having a developed workforce and the need for family learning to be embedded into policies and strategies are also discussed.

Examples of family learning have been gathered through case study examples that focus on the different themes mentioned above. The case studies help provide information on the diversity of programmes being delivered across Scotland as well as further understanding of the family learning approach.

Conclusions

A number of key messages and recommendations for strategic leaders, practitioners and researchers have emerged from this Review. The key message from the Review is that family learning as an early intervention and prevention approach works in reaching disadvantaged families and communities to improve their life chances.

Learning outcomes and benefits resulting from family learning approaches can be categorised into five key areas: new skills; increased confidence and understanding; improved communication; changed behaviours; and changed relationships with community and family. Family learning also facilitates increased parental participation and engagement, improved school attendance, reduces persistent absenteeism and can increase pupils' attainment. The wider outcomes of family learning are shown through skills development, employability, progression into further education opportunities, and interactions within the family, as well as improvements in parental confidence and parenting skills. Family learning should be part of an overall strategic approach to supporting families and communities as and when appropriate.

The evidence gathered throughout this Review of Family Learning highlights that improving and increasing ways in which parents and families can be equal partners in their children's learning at home, school and in communities is crucial to raising attainment for all and closing the poverty-related attainment gap. For adults, family learning programmes have an impact on their own educational attainment, future training and further learning and employment opportunities. Family learning as an approach is not a new concept but one which helps break cycles of poverty and disadvantage amongst communities whilst at the same time enhancing the intergenerational transfer of skills from the parent to the child and the child to the parent.

Moving forward

Improving outcomes for families remains a key focus for all. There are a number of key messages and recommendations from this Review of Family Learning (see section 6) which require to be taken forward by key stakeholders. Education Scotland, Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector organisations, practitioners, further and higher education establishments, researchers and others involved in the delivery of family learning programmes will continue to work closely in partnership to progress these. Potential actions for strategic leaders, practitioners and researchers from the key recommendations in section 6, are listed below.

Strategic

- Gathering more evidence through a range of methods including inspection findings and feedback at a local level.
- Using the evidence to help inform future policy developments and drivers for change.
- Publishing professional learning resources on the National Improvement Hub and international platforms to support practitioners who are working with families.
- Funding should be made available for family learning programme development and delivery at a strategic and local authority level.
- A framework for family learning should be developed to improve greater cohesion between strategic and operational levels.

Operational

- Ensure that evidence-based research influences the design of programmes which should be tailored to meet local needs before being rolled out.
- Obtain, synthesise and share further Scottish research, international research and longitudinal evaluations on the impact of family learning.
- Use evidence to develop strategic plans in relation to whole family approaches to engagement and learning outcomes.
- Develop an appropriate evaluation framework for family learning programmes.
- Map current family learning provision within a local authority to inform future partnership approaches.
- Key stakeholders should ensure that resources are available to meet the drivers in the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the National Improvement Framework. Those delivering family learning programmes should have the relevant skills, knowledge and understanding. Access should also be provided to Continuous Professional Development.
- The National Improvement Framework Plan for Scottish Education should be informed by the key findings and recommendations of this Review of Family Learning.
- Family learning opportunities within Scottish Attainment Challenge authorities and schools should be considered in light of this Review.
- A key feature of family learning is the development of the adults involved. Stakeholder groups delivering adult learning outcomes should continue to support family learning provision.

Research

- Further research is required on the longitudinal impact of family learning across Scotland. This would include wider family learning outcomes that are not always anticipated.
- Additional research on methodology is required to support the provision of family learning, why and how it should be used and why and when it should not.
- Future family learning research should be undertaken in light of the Scottish Government's National Research Strategy.

1. PURPOSE

This report seeks to provide a review of the available evidence on family learning. Particular attention was paid to current national and international research on family learning and relevant links to policy and strategy. This document will support local authorities to review their current policies and approaches to achieving family learning outcomes to meet their requirements within the [2017 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan for Scottish Education](#) and the [Scottish Attainment Challenge](#) (2015) and the [Delivery Plan](#) for Scottish Education (2016).

The term ‘parents’ in this document includes guardians and any person who is liable to maintain (within the meaning of section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995), or has parental responsibilities within the meaning of section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, or has care of a child or young person.

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’.

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, 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).

2. CONTEXT

‘The role that parents and carers play in raising the next generation of Scots is central to everything that we want to achieve for our families, our communities and our country’.

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

2.1 Background

On the 28 June 2016, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney MSP, launched the [Delivery Plan](#) for Scottish education. The Delivery Plan followed engagement with a number of key education partners at an education summit focusing on raising attainment. The Delivery Plan aims to achieve excellence and equity in Scottish education by focusing action around three key priorities:

- closing the attainment gap;
- ensuring we have a curriculum which delivers for our children and teachers; and
- empowering our teachers, schools and communities to deliver for children and young people.

The Delivery Plan is closely aligned to the improvement drivers outlined in the National Improvement Framework and the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The vision and priorities for children’s progress in learning have been set out in the National Improvement Framework. The Scottish Attainment Challenge aims to raise the attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas in order to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

Family learning is identified in the Delivery Plan (2016) as a key driver for change and states that schools should:

‘Develop family learning programmes that support children’s progress and achievement. This also means empowering parents and enabling them to be active participants and

effective contributors to the life of the school and to school improvement’ (p16).

Within this context, Education Scotland in consultation with Scottish Government, conducted a review of the current evidence relating to family learning and collated case study examples of what is working well in Scotland and why. It is supported by national and international evidence gathering in relation to the benefits and impacts of family learning. The Review will help inform future policy direction with a view to supporting children’s progress and achievement. The findings from this Review will be shared with local authorities, schools and practitioners to influence practice.

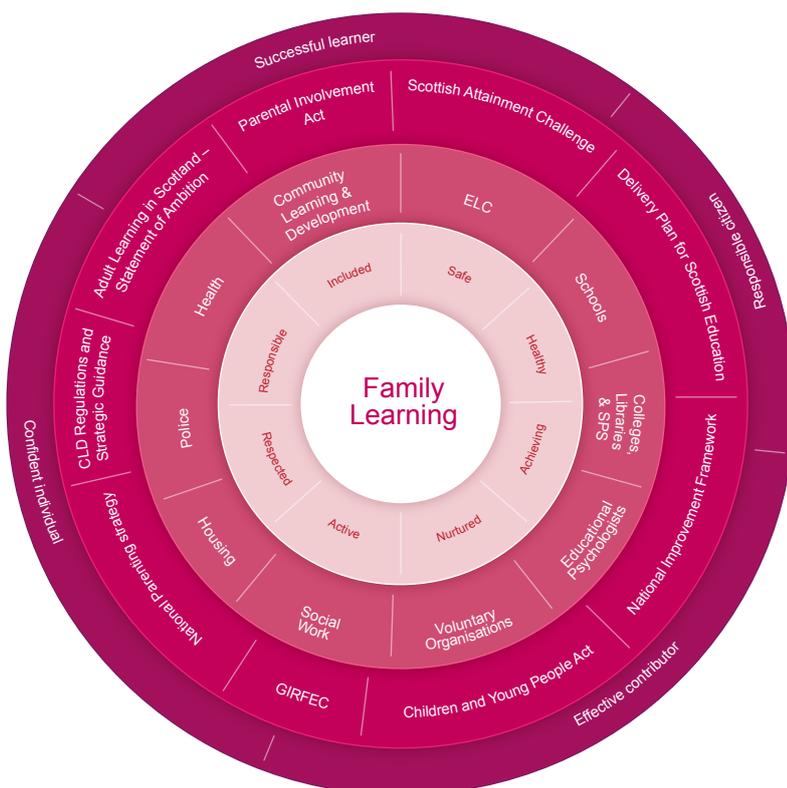
2.2 Review of policy

The Scottish Government has progressed a number of political aspirations and pledges since devolution in 1999. This section provides an illustration of the resultant cross-cutting policies and strategies which relate to family learning. A more detailed policy mapping overview is provided in Appendix A.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is viewed as being the overarching framework in Scotland and family learning fits within this landscape. Depending on priorities within a local authority, practitioners will draw upon different policies at different times. Current policies and strategies are focused on raising attainment and closing the poverty-related equity gap. Family learning is clearly identified within the policies and strategies and is a key approach in delivering on the outcomes within the documents.

The illustration below provides an example of how family learning links to policies and strategies. It also highlights the diversity of partners that could potentially be involved in developing programmes at a local level. The range of partners will change depending on local needs, outcomes and assets.

Illustration of family learning policy and strategy links



3. WHAT IS 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 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.'

(Scottish Family Learning Network, 2016)

There are eight values that underpin the family learning [National Occupational Standards](#). These are:

- Family learning recognises the role of the parent as the first educator.
- Family learning is inclusive and is to be offered as a universal provision with open access.
- Family learning recognises and values diversity of culture, race, relationships and beliefs.
- Equal partnership is the basis for all developments in family learning; all learners and educators, regardless of generation, recognise that learners and educators can frequently exchange ideas.
- Family learning recognises that it is acceptable to make mistakes, which are part of the process of reflective learning.
- Achievements within family learning benefit the wider learning community through promoting change and empowering individuals and communities.
- Family learning raises aspirations and all outcomes of the process, including those which may not be overt, are of equal significance and importance.
- Family learning operates within a culture of mutual respect for individuals, communities, colleagues and organisations.

Family learning programmes are designed to engage adults and children to learn together, as and within a family, through quality formal or informal programmes. These programmes may comprise family literacy, language and numeracy and wider family learning outcomes. They may also include family learning for health and wellbeing, science, and parenting skills which can 'equate to capacity building in its purest sense' (Cooper, 2011, p4).

3.1 Why is family learning important?

Children in Scotland spend approximately 15% of their waking hours in school (OECD, 2014). The remaining 85% of children's time is spent at home or in their communities and this presents a potentially significant opportunity for learning. Equipping, supporting and building the capacity of Scotland's parents to maximise children's opportunities for learning is key to raising attainment.

For many adults a family learning programme can be the first step to taking up further adult learning and training opportunities, gaining a job or developing new skills. For children, this can have a positive impact on their individual attainment and learning journey (Harding et al, 2013).

A wide range of evidence shows family learning to be an effective way of promoting and facilitating increased parental participation and engagement with the school (Mackenzie, 2010). Family learning has also shown to improve school attendance, reduce persistent absenteeism and improve pupils' attainment. Wider outcomes are shown through skills development, employability, progression into work, interactions within the family, as well as improvements in parental confidence and parenting skills. It is important, however, to understand the differences between family learning and parental involvement and engagement. 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. Programmes can also be independent of school activity and focus on wider family and community needs such as health and wellbeing and community capacity building.

A family learning approach is successful in influencing not just children and families but those who can appear to be further away from being involved in any form of their own and their children's learning. Successful family learning programmes include work with the way dads and male carers learn and engage with their children (Giles, 2011). Specifically-designed programmes have also improved the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults and children from Gypsy/Traveller families (Taylor and Hrubciak, 2009). It should be noted that family literacy courses, whilst offering a win-win situation for parents, children and families are also of benefit to schools and teachers, they enhance parent-school relationships and increase home-school partnerships (Swain, 2009; Swain et al, 2015).

3.2 How will family learning help to achieve excellence and equity for all children and adults?

'Engaging the most disadvantaged parents in their children's education, while simultaneously offering them the chance to learn themselves, can improve pupils' attainment by 15 percentage points and improve a child's reading age by six months'.

[\(National Institute of Adult Continuing Education \(NIACE\), 2013\)](#)

Family learning supports children to achieve the highest standards whilst reducing inequity and closing the attainment gap (NIACE, 2013). Educational interventions involving the whole family make a significant difference not only to the aspirations and attainment of children, but also to the skills, confidence and ambition of their parents. Family learning has long-term benefits as it affects behaviours and attitudes to learning across the whole family (van Steensel et al, 2011).

The information gathered in this document has informed our knowledge of where family learning is strong and how evidence-based programmes are achieving an impact.

3.3 Review of evidence

'I've seen such a change in her in just a few weeks. She's listening and joining in much more'.

[\(Learn with Fred\)](#)

Background

Key findings from the [Scottish Survey of Adult Literacies](#) (2009) suggest that approximately one quarter of the Scottish population (26.7%) may face occasional challenges and constrained opportunities due to their literacy difficulties although they will generally cope with their day-to-day lives. Within this quarter of the population, 3.6% (one person in 28) faces serious challenges in their literacy practices. Similarly, the findings of the [Growing Up in Scotland](#) study (Scottish Executive, 2011) show:

- The largest differences in ability are between children whose parents have higher and lower educational qualifications. At age five, compared with children whose parents have no qualifications, those with a degree-educated parent are around 18 months ahead on vocabulary and around 13 months ahead on problem solving.
- Children from less advantaged households are less likely to experience a wide range of 'home learning' activities than children from more advantaged households.
- Children who experience a wide range of activities like being read to, singing nursery rhymes and drawing from an early age, score higher in cognitive ability tests at age three than children with less experience of these activities.

Families from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to have lower parental literacy levels, poorer health, more exposure to crime, stress, less access to good after school programmes and less security from stable employment (House of Commons, 2014). None of these in themselves influence low achievement, neither is family background in itself a barrier to achievement (House of Commons, 2014). Families who are given the opportunity can achieve and learn. This is evidenced in the Growing Up in Scotland study above. Although endeavours have been made to link aspiration with family background that leads to attainment, it has not been possible to find causality (House of Commons, 2014). Evidence does show that there are correlations between aspiration and attainment (House of Commons, 2014). Research also suggests that families from disadvantaged backgrounds have high aspirations but they need the information and understanding on how to mobilise these effectively to achieve better outcomes for children (House of Commons, 2014).

Home and family influences can be associated with underachievement as children and young people spend the majority of their time outwith school. Research shows that around 80% of the difference in how well children do at school depends on what happens outside the school gates (Rabash et al, 2010; Save the Children, 2013). Providing a 'stimulating learning environment outside of school can be crucial for children's educational achievement, as well as for their social and emotional development' (Save the Children, 2013, p13). Children do tend to succeed where families are 'supportive and demanding' therefore creating a 'culture of much higher expectations for young people, both in our homes and in our schools' (House of Commons, 2014, p29).

Early intervention work with families with a view to preventing difficulties later on is an international discussion. Nonetheless, provision for families is viewed as the means to secure 'social order and economic success' (Nutbrown et al, 2015). There is a danger in perceiving early intervention as a 'series of programmes targeted to address potential deficit' and miss the opportunity to 'embrace the importance of well-informed and confident practitioners working holistically with families' (Nutbrown et al, 2015). Family learning derives from a 'wealth model' which builds upon existing skills, knowledge and experience (NIACE, 2013). Reaching disadvantaged families through family learning has benefits that are shown to last beyond the duration of the intervention (Goodall et al, 2011). Family learning also has the potential to allow practitioners to 'refocus their provision and develop more relevant, high quality learning opportunities for families' as well as develop effective planning. This is key in times of financial restraints (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013).

Ensuring that Scotland's parents have the skills, knowledge and respect to provide support and maximise children's opportunities for learning is essential. A foundational belief of contemporary family learning programmes is the idea that 'parents need to be literate and that through the intergenerational transfer of skills and attitudes, the parents' education can influence the subsequent educational achievement of their children' (Sticht, 2010). Such a view is supported by the Growing Up in Scotland study and is particularly important given that a child's network of support begins in the family with their parents (National Parenting Strategy, 2012, p13).

Benefits of family learning programmes

Family learning focuses on 'improving the life chances of disadvantaged families' (Harding and Ghezalayagh, 2014, p10). It should be recognised that family learning is a single intervention but one which can be delivered in a range of ways and settings. Family learning produces multiple outcomes for parents, children, families and communities. Research evidence shows that family learning is reaching those who are more likely to be living in the most deprived Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles, in receipt of benefits, from an ethnic minority background, less likely to be educated to degree level, working part time and who are female (Harding and Ghezalayagh, 2014). The early engagement process and techniques are crucial in developing relationships and trust which is a motivating factor in families who ordinarily would not be engaged in learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes and benefits resulting from family learning can be categorised into five areas: new skills; increased confidence and understanding; improved communication; changed behaviours; and changed relationships with the community and family (Fairfax-Cholmeley and Meade, 2009). Family learning outcomes can be varied within a programme and individuals within the family. The primary outcomes of programmes are as a result of discussions with families and members of the community to identify needs. Secondary outcomes often emerge as a by-product during the programme.

Family learning as an intervention aims to help parents and children learn together as and within a family across generations. Through embedding changes in attitudes, behaviours, understanding and skills within the family, family learning reduces the cost of supporting vulnerable families and gives them the resources to take advantage of available opportunities (NIACE, 2013).

Working with parents and families to resolve problems contributes to the creation of a better environment for the child not just in the short term but through providing sustainable solutions to enable families to help themselves, thereby preventing costly interventions being necessary in the future (NIACE, 2011). Working with families should not be confused with 'doing unto them' but rather working collaboratively together 'with them'. Supporting children's long-term success requires intervention beyond the early years. Real success and intervention to achieve longer-term gains in achievement is obtained through helping parents 'enhance what happens at home' (Nutbrown et al, 2015, p266; Harris and Goodall, 2007).

For many adults a family learning programme can be the first step to taking up further adult learning and training opportunities or gaining employment (Swain, 2009). Motivations for attending programmes are wide ranging and include 'personal progression, personal wellbeing, social and community aspects, work and employability and improvements in parenting and relationships with children and other family members' (Harding et al, 2013, p10). Although impacts can be more related to 'soft' areas, there are tangible results such as gaining qualifications or employment (Harding et al, 2013). 'Gaining employment and skills for employment is a recognised key benefit and progression outcome for parents and carers who engage in Family Learning programmes' (Robey et al, 2016, p8). Attendees at family learning programmes not only benefit from the programme intentions and their original motivations for signing up, they also benefit from 'unintended' impacts. These include personal wellbeing, switching off from stresses of daily life, an opportunity to keep their minds active, improvements in family relationships, ability to share new skills or knowledge with other family members, as well as wider social and community benefits (Harding et al, 2013).

For children, family learning impacts on their own attainment and personal learning journey. Research evidence shows 'family learning could increase the overall level of children's development by as much as fifteen percentage points for those from disadvantaged groups and provide an average reading improvement equivalent to six months of reading age' (NIACE, 2013, p9). Children benefit more widely from being involved in family learning. Such benefits have in previous studies included children being more settled in class, having improved relationships with peers and teachers, improved communication, interpersonal skills and self-confidence (Ofsted, 2009; UNESCO, 2015). Children's reading scores are also positively improved through family literacy programmes (Swain et al, 2015).

Family learning is a cost effective and sustainable approach which helps to break the cycle of the 'long tail of underperformance' through helping adults and children improve their skills, increase their confidence and self-esteem and has positive impacts on health and wellbeing, employability, community engagement and routes out of poverty (Ofsted, 2013, p4; UNESCO, 2015). Family learning 'is part of a cost-effective solution' whereby a 'learning family is one where both adults and children engage in learning, share their learning, and the confidence and skills increase for both, leading to raised aspirations, better attainment and strengthened family relationships' (NIACE, 2011, p3).

Families may also benefit from being in 'a familiar school-based location' which is 'in a convenient location within a trusted set up' (Buttrick and Parkinson, 2013, p53). At the same time, children and young people benefit from learning outwith the school environment (Buttrick and Parkinson, 2013).

A recent study of adult literacy in England urged the UK Government to invest and promote family learning schemes where the learning outcomes are intended for parents and their children which result in a culture of improved learning in the family (House of Commons, 2014, p39). Addressing issues within families and working with them to develop positive attitudes to learning is crucial to making the 'step changes' required (NIACE, 2013). Closing the attainment gap is a key driver in Scottish education and one which can be assisted through family learning to help create a culture of aspiration in Scottish families (NIACE, 2013). Scottish Government policy drivers in the National Improvement Framework and the Scottish Attainment Challenge, aim to reach the most disadvantaged families and deliver early intervention and prevention programmes such as family learning.

Workforce development

Ensuring that the workforce is developed and equipped to work with families is an ongoing challenge. This is especially the case given that family circumstances and methods of communication can change rapidly through developing technology and other societal and economic influences. Previous research suggests that many practitioners do not have appropriate skills, knowledge and confidence to work with parents, particularly those from deprived communities. Research calls for training or continuous professional development (Dyson, 2007). By developing course guidelines and learning materials, practitioners can gain the skills and confidence to work with disadvantaged families and provide increased motivation to retain families who may not normally engage (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013).

It should be noted, however, that skills and knowledge to work with families can be transferable. This is particularly true of community learning and development and adult learning practitioners who are trained in community and family engagement and the social practice model. Their engagement with communities and families is about building relationships and trust and they start from a wealth model. This is a fundamental part of the family learning approach.

Family literacy programmes

Despite the range of studies carried out, research often illustrates the 'scope of the problem, without pointing to solutions' (Carpentieri, 2013, p544). More is known about the importance of literacy and less about the impacts of programmes or the mechanisms that drive impacts. Family literacy is 'based on the most ancient of educational traditions: intergenerational learning' which is rooted in all cultures (UNESCO, 2015, p7). Through family literacy and learning, adults and children are presented with the opportunity to 'become independent, proactive lifelong learners' (UNESCO, 2015, p7).

Family literacy programmes focus on supporting an identified need with the family in relation to literacy. It also puts 'the family at the heart of the educational enterprise and increases parental appreciation of their central role in their child's education in general, and literacy development in particular' (Swain et al, 2015).

Family literacy could be for the whole family or the child and/or parent as individuals but with a whole family impact. It is widely believed that there is an intergenerational transfer of skills from the parent to the child and the child to the parent. This could be both positive and negative but 'family literacy plays a key role in increasing social inclusion and reducing the intergenerational transfer of disadvantage' (Swain, 2009). In terms of social return on investment, family literacy programmes are relatively inexpensive not least because they can often occur outwith school hours (Carpentieri, 2013).

Family literacy programmes also aim to 'increase parents' capacity to support their children's literacy development through mechanisms such as improving parents' confidence in and attitudes towards reading with their children and improving the home learning environment and general parenting skills' (Carpentieri, 2013, p548; Swain et al, 2015).

Interventions based on service delivery are inevitably complex and require complex evaluation methodologies and theories (Carpentieri, 2013). Changes in families take place over a longer period of time and as each one is at a different stage, it is difficult to measure. Research on the results of family-centred literacy programmes show that there are immediate benefits as well as a longer-term impact for both children and adults (Brooks et al, 2008; Carpentieri et al, 2011; Hayes, 2006; Tuckett, 2004; UNESCO, 2015).

Family numeracy programmes

Family numeracy programmes focus on supporting an identified need with the family in relation to numeracy. Again this could be for the whole family or the child and/or parent as individuals but with a whole family impact. As with family literacy programmes, it is widely believed that there is an intergenerational transfer of skills from the parent to the child and that this can be positive or negative.

The majority of family learning evaluations have focused on family literacy with very few looking at family numeracy (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2012). Research that has been carried out, considered 'Family Numeracy Adds On' (Brooks and Hutchison, 2002), and 'Family mathematics/numeracy: identifying the impact of supporting parents in developing their children's mathematical skills' (Ashton et al, 2011). Key findings suggest that parents were unclear about current teaching methods and had to rely on their children explaining these, often with difficulty (Ashton et al, 2011).

Participating in mathematical approaches 'allows parents to be more positive and understand their value' (Ashton et al, 2011). Older studies (Abreu and Cline, 2005) have considered the impact of children's home culture on their maths learning in school. Teaching children at home was found to be difficult and parents needed support both with the way that maths is taught and strategies to bridge the home/school gap (Abreu and Cline, 2005).

Family learning ESOL

Family learning ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) programmes are promoted as an important means of bringing about social inclusion. Current policy and practice supports the involvement of parents in their child's learning. Despite this, language skills and cultural diversity can be a barrier and restrict access to and influence in educational institutions. ESOL family learning programmes seek to remove those barriers and support families to learn together, impacting on the child and parents' learning and reduce the large numbers of those who do not reach their potential (Johnson, 1985; Ward, 2008). In addition to reducing social isolation for some families, it also supports parents to access further training and development as well as the employment market.

Scotland has an increasing responsibility for refugee children and families. Some children will enter the country without family members. These children will be the responsibility of the local authority who will act as a Corporate Parent.

The Scottish Government summarises three key elements of corporate parenting In [These Are Our Bairns: A Guide for Community Planning Partnerships](#) (2008) as:

- The statutory duty on all parts of a local authority to co-operate in promoting the welfare of children and young people who are looked after by them, and a duty on other agencies to co-operate with councils in fulfilling that duty.
- Co-ordinating the activities of the many different professionals and carers who are involved in a child or young person's life, and taking a strategic, child-centred approach to service delivery.
- Shifting the emphasis from 'corporate' to 'parenting', taking all actions necessary to promote and support the physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

Parental involvement and family learning

Parental involvement in schools is well documented as are the barriers to becoming involved. For those parents who have had negative experiences of school and lack the confidence to re-engage with education, family learning offers a more comfortable approach. It enables parents to cross the school gates, participate, allow their curiosity for learning to be re-awakened whilst at the same time, they are able to reinforce the importance of learning to their children (Hartley, 2006).

It is important to understand that family learning is not parental involvement. Family learning is an approach to engage families in learning but it can also happen independently from the school environment. Some families need a step before engaging with the school for parental involvement to be effective.

Evaluating programmes

A simplistic focus on evaluating family literacy programmes can distract policy makers from its longer-term impacts across a number of policy areas (Carpentieri, 2013). Evaluating family literacy programmes often involves pre and post-tests of children's and adults' literacy at the start and end of a programme. Although there is evidence from the programmes that there is an impact on literacy, the wider and longer-term impacts are not always captured (Carpentieri, 2013). Furthermore, longitudinal evaluation can be difficult in terms of tracking individuals over a period of time, as well as being too drawn out for policy makers. Carpentieri suggests that 'if improving literacy is an investment worth making, then so too is improved programme evaluation' (2013, p553). However, it is important to note that the relationship of cause and effect are complicated and that inputs are also important to the process. There has to be trust in inputs as some outcomes are more long term.

The desire to help their children with learning often motivates parents to re-engage in learning themselves. By encouraging and valuing all forms of learning (formal, non-formal and informal), overcoming artificial barriers between home, school and community, and breaking down divisions between generations, a family literacy and learning approach supports the development of literacy and other skills for all age groups.

Monitoring and evaluating the quality and impact of family learning is generally undertaken through questionnaires and course feedback at the time. Yet few schools and practitioners track the longer-term impact of family learning programmes on the standards achieved by children (Estyn, 2012). Although 'robust evidence is beginning to appear that involvement in family learning activity has an impact on measurable outcomes for the children involved' (Mackenzie 2010, p55), further Scottish research is still required.

Policies and strategies

The various outcomes of family learning in general means that it can be a catalyst for changes in cross-cutting social, educational and economic policy areas. Given that parents, children and families are a common denominator in so many cross-cutting policies and agendas, increasing learning within this is 'the catalyst for wide-ranging changes, not just related to skills and qualifications but also in terms of community cohesion and wellbeing' (Lamb, 2007, p17). Integrating family learning into policies and strategies to raise attainment, ensure cross-departmental outcomes and narrow the gap between the lowest and highest achievers is a key finding in an inquiry into family learning in England and Wales (NIACE, 2013). Having the right to be part of a learning family is also considered in the inquiry. In Scotland, family learning is embedded into a number of cross-cutting policies and strategies. However, there is no single policy that pulls together family learning outcomes to provide a wider picture on the effectiveness and impact of this approach.

Research calls for family learning to be 'built into the core offer of early years provision and seen as an effective use of school funding, to ensure that the parents and carers of children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are offered high-quality family learning opportunities' (NIACE, 2013, p11). Other criticisms around funding suggest that there is a need to 'rebalance the current funding skew in expenditure between primary and secondary schools, and to significantly increase the front-loading of school funding' (Save the Children, 2013, p19). Regularly reviewing the funding for, and supply of, family learning against potential demand is also suggested.

Previous research highlights that 'international comparisons, the early appearance of the attainment gap and the economic pressure on the parents of young children', show the potential need for a change in the structure of our educational system to achieve fair chances (Save the Children, 2013, p18). Eradicating educational disadvantage, especially amongst the disadvantaged, requires tangible policies and bold action (Save the Children, 2013). While it is acknowledged that there are pockets of good practice across the country, there is a call for 'a national strategy to bring it all together' (Murtagh, 2010, p42).

3.4 Summary

The aim of this report is to provide an in-depth review looking at the available evidence on family learning. Although current national and international research on family learning has been considered, it should be recognised that the scope of this Review is relatively narrow. It was not intended to consider family learning in its widest sense and it is therefore limited to reviewing evidence from the available literature. Consideration has also not been given to obtaining wider evidence that would have been gathered through consultation with practitioners, parents/families or children and young people.

Despite the relatively narrow scope, there are key messages that have emerged from the Review which are of relevance to policy makers, practitioners and researchers. The review of evidence is strong in highlighting that family learning reaches the most disadvantaged, helps close the attainment gap and has lasting effects beyond the duration of the intervention. Although family learning in itself is relatively low cost and provides a high social rate of return, qualified practitioners are required in the field to tailor and deliver programmes. Evidence-based research should influence the design of family learning programmes. These should be piloted before being rolled out on a wider scale.

There is a need for further data and evidence gathering to identify needs, trends and to help inform future policy developments and drivers for change. Such policy developments need to be cross-cutting and are required to be at the forefront at a national and local level. Further research is required along with more longitudinal evaluations on the impact of family learning across Scotland (van Steensel, 2011).

4. METHODS

This section outlines the methods used in the Review of Family Learning. It has been structured around the different stages of the review process.

4.1 Review of policy

A review of policy relating to family learning was carried out in consultation with the Scottish Government. The purpose of the review of policy was to obtain an overview on the most relevant policies to be considered in this report in relation to family learning. The results of the review identified cross-cutting social, education and economic policies and strategies.

Consideration has not been given to family learning policies or strategies within local authorities as these are often embedded into local authority parenting strategies.

4.2 Review of evidence

A review of relevant evidence in relation to family learning was carried out. The review included national and international literature on family learning and its associated links to policy and strategy.

The review of evidence drew on a number of sources to identify research covering the past 10 years which was of current relevance to family learning. Searches were conducted of the Idox database for research specifically linked to family learning. Key words/terms searched for were:

- Family learning + programmes/programs
- Family involvement/parent involvement + programmes/programs
- Family participation/parent participation + programmes/programs
- Family role/parent role
- Parents as teachers/families as teachers
- Family school relationship/parent school relationship
- Family teacher cooperation/parent teacher cooperation
- School community relationship/partnership
- School community programmes/programs
- Place based education + programmes/programs
- Outreach programmes/programs + parents/families
- Family literacy + programmes/programs
- Numeracy + parents/families + programmes/programs

Other keywords of interest included: attainment and poverty; socio-economic status; social capital; social class; social status; and social mobility.

This search returned a number of results that were of relevance, including materials looking at the benefits of family learning, the lack of funding available and good practice examples. Searches were also conducted by the Scottish Government library across databases (nationally and internationally) and from publicly available resources on the web.

The results of this review of evidence helped provide the background context as well as recommendations for the future policy direction of family learning in Scotland.

4.3 Analysis

An analysis of current practice in family learning was conducted across all local authorities in Scotland. The findings identified which local authorities were delivering family learning, where the delivery was taking place and which programmes were being used.

The results of the analysis showed that family learning is an effective tool for engagement and learning for practitioners across many sectors in Scotland and it is delivered using a social practice model. Nonetheless, there is not a consistent picture across the country as many programmes work in isolation. Practitioners do work with families to improve skills across a number of areas including literacy, numeracy, parenting and health and wellbeing. In many local authorities this is conducted in partnership to ensure that services for families are robust and sustainable. Partnership is also viewed as having a positive effect on practitioners who are able to gain additional knowledge and skills from colleagues in other fields.

Across Scotland, there was a clear link to improved outcomes for the whole family when families are engaged in family learning. Local authority feedback showed that families themselves reported that they had improved their skills in the areas they identified they had a need.

Practitioner evaluations of projects show impacts which are already highlighted in the review of evidence for this Review. However, most evaluations of family learning programmes use qualitative data, which gives a rich picture of impact but quantitative data, is not widely captured. As found in the review of national and international evidence, the results highlight the need for more longitudinal studies as well as improved processes for data collection.

4.4 Case studies

The National Improvement Framework identifies four key priorities that all practitioners in Scottish education should be working towards:

- improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
- closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children;
- improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and
- improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school leaver destinations for all young people.

In order to better support practitioners, Education Scotland has developed the National Improvement Hub. The Hub is an easily accessible portal designed around the needs of education practitioners, providing interactive, digital content and tools to improve practice and increase the quality of learners' experiences and outcomes.

Case study examples of family learning are provided in section 5 of this Review. These have been identified from the National Improvement Hub and sourced through inspection findings and national and international stakeholders. The case studies selected are from different local authorities and stakeholders and cover a variety of themes and family learning programmes.

5. WHAT DOES EXCELLENT FAMILY LEARNING LOOK LIKE?

'Professionals cannot assume that they know what is important to parents in relation to their child's learning'.

(Mackenzie, 2010)

Defining what excellent family learning is, can be problematic. NIACE (2013) suggests a range of hallmarks of excellent family learning provision across five key principles. These key principles are: engaging families in learning together; empowering families to take control; recognising context and culture; starting from a positive not a deficit model; and that family learning is planned, funded and delivered at a strategic level, whether local or national.

The results of an Ofsted survey (2009) found family learning to be most effective when it was characterised by: good partnerships; team teaching; consultation with parents; a planned approach to learners' development; and a sequenced programme that begins with taster courses and workshops.

In Scotland, 'How Good Is Our School?' (4th edition) (HGIOS4) and 'How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare?' contain a Family Learning Quality Indicator. The indicator focuses on increasing the positive impact of working with families to improve learning and achievement. The emphasis is on establishments working in partnership with others in the community to support families to secure better outcomes through programmes which enable them to improve literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Within the indicator, features of highly-effective practice include:

- creative approaches are used to engage families;
- almost all those engaged in family learning courses are highly-motivated and actively involved in their own learning and development;
- almost all the children and their parents are included, participating, achieving and progressing very well in their learning;
- there is clear evidence that the life chances of those families experiencing particular challenges are being improved as a result of their engagement in family learning;
- almost all learners report improvement in their health and/or wellbeing;
- family learning is responsive to identified needs;
- staff have an appropriate shared understanding of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and use these approaches to meet the needs of families;
- family learning promotes equality, fairness and diversity;
- there is evidence that family learning is supporting families to minimise the impact of poverty on learning and achievement;
- participation in family learning courses are monitored robustly to highlight trends and support effective early intervention strategies;
- families are matched into the right programme which is negotiated and addresses identified needs;
- families know that whatever their needs they will be able to access the right support that will enable them to reach their full potential as individuals and as a family; and
- family learning is leading to stronger home-school links which are improving outcomes for learners.

Previous studies and recommendations consider what effective family learning looks like to practitioners. Furthermore, it is important to remember that effective family learning may look different to families. 'People need time, space and social relationships in order to explore and investigate their world' (Mackenzie, 2010, pXV). There is no 'quick fix' in partnership working with parents and professionals are required to 'invest time to build relationships and to provide space for discussion' (Mackenzie, 2010, pXV). Given the complexities, diversities, cultural differences and varying learning styles amongst families, effective family learning could have different timescales and meanings.

5.1 Workforce development

Those 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'.

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).

Details about 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 is provided within the National Occupational Standards. It covers the activities a person might undertake in the course of their occupation and considers all the circumstances or contexts that a person is likely to encounter. Skills and knowledge can be transferable to work with families from other professions especially community learning and development and adult learning practitioners who are trained in community and family engagement and the social practice model.

Having the appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skills is important to safeguard against practitioners 'unwittingly creating distance between home and school' (Mackenzie, 2010, pXVII). Engaging parents who may have barriers to becoming involved for whatever reason, requires a range of interpersonal skills, organisational abilities, joint planning and partnership working across other organisations and agencies (DBIS, 2013). Working across cultural diversities, changing family circumstances, disadvantaged families, families at risk, parents with literacy and/or numeracy needs and language barriers, requires skills, strategies, the ability to develop new and flexible models of delivery as well as having the confidence to motivate and retain learners (DBIS, 2013).

It should be noted that family learning is embedded within a number of qualifications at higher and further education institutions. However, there are limited specific qualifications which would indicate an area for future development and this is recognised in the Scottish Government report 'A Blueprint for Fairness' (2016). The report calls for new models which are more flexible, learner-centred and increase accessibility to a broader range of courses and institutions. This is with a view to addressing the issues of 'supporting improved attainment through new approaches to learning in family homes' (p44).

Practitioners who wish to develop their practice in the area of family learning may wish to consider the following options.

Professional development opportunities

Various education establishments and organisations are working with local authorities to provide exciting continuous professional development opportunities for professionals who work with families. Engaging families in learning is one example that has been progressed in response to the priority given to family learning within current Scottish Government policy. This initiative was developed in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council Family Learning Team and is delivered in partnership by the Universities of Aberdeen and Dundee. Working together, partners have devised a flexible continuous professional development experience which allows practitioners to study at SCQF Level 9 and exit with either 15 credits or 30 credits. Whichever option practitioners choose, and wherever they are based, they will become part of a national learning community connected in a single virtual learning environment. Students undertaking this qualification will have the opportunity to find out how other professionals across Scotland are developing family learning practice and learn from and with others in a range of professional contexts.

The course aims to provide opportunities for participants to develop enhanced critical awareness and understanding of theories, policies and practices which relate to family learning. It is relevant to professionals in a range of contexts, such as education, community learning and development, early years, social work and health. Drawing on the experience which participants will bring from this variety of professional areas, the course explores:

- different conceptualisations and models of family learning;
- the central significance of language;
- social practice theory; and
- issues relating to collaboration and partnership.

Those who wish to achieve 30 credits can go on to undertake their own Action Enquiry into engaging families in learning.

5.2 Family learning case studies

The results of the analysis carried out across Scotland highlighted a number of case studies where family learning was effective and having a positive impact. Moving forward, the information obtained through inspection findings from schools and establishments which opt to include the new Family Learning Quality Indicator will assist in gathering further evidence on current practice across Scotland. These findings will complement future data to be gathered at local and national levels. This Review of Family Learning highlights the complexity and diversity of programmes being delivered across Scotland and internationally. It is also reflective of the diversity of families and communities, local assets and partnership approaches.

In order to obtain examples of family learning, a number of case studies have been collated from across Scotland. The sample case studies focus on different themes which helps provide further understanding on the nature of family learning and also the diverse range of programmes being delivered across Scotland.

Case study 1

The Lighthouse Keeper Joint Transition Project – Moffat Early Years Campus/Niddrie Mill Primary School/St Frances RC Primary School – Edinburgh City Council

Programme overview

A multi-agency early intervention and prevention family learning programme was developed in response to low attainment figures identified within a specific area. Families were engaged in a series of enjoyable challenges developed around the children's book, 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch', by Ronda and David Armitage. The project offered different learning possibilities and was used both in early learning and childcare and primary 1 as a supported transition project for both child and parent.

Why

- To increase the confidence of parents to engage in their child's learning.
- To enable parents to familiarise themselves with, and increase their confidence through, using a creative project as a focus for transition.
- To increase parents' confidence to read with their children.
- To offer creative mediums and methodology as a way of attracting parents who would not normally get involved in their children's learning in this way.
- To encourage families to engage with other local educational services, such as the local library.
- To promote health and wellbeing through healthy eating experiences.

Impact

As a result of implementing the multi-agency partnership programme, led by the Family Learning Worker, the project has shown the following benefits:

- there was an increase in parental engagement in both library attendance and school activities;
- parents' confidence to read with their children has increased;
- families were more aware of health and wellbeing through healthy eating experiences; and
- children developed their listening skills and understanding of the storyline which encouraged them to read more.

For more information go to:

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/elc15thelighthousekeepertransitionproject.aspx>

Case study 2

Upper Nithsdale Men and their Children (MATCH) – Dumfries and Galloway Council

Programme overview

Fathers/male carers are an important part of a child's life and educational development. However, they were underrepresented in their child's life at school. Family learning workers in partnership with schools and Adult Learning needed a powerful incentive to tempt them back into the school environment. The first engagement was an invite to have a free professional father/child(ren) portrait taken. Once the photographs were ready the men were invited back into school to collect their framed portrait, at this point they were invited to join additional programmes. Since then fathers and their children have engaged in a series of intergenerational learning trips including outdoor education activities such as abseiling, kayaking, orienteering and mountain biking.

Family learning sessions in school have included healthy cooking, science fun, storytelling, family quizzes, numeracy games, computing sessions including animation and film making, family first aid and team building games such as photo treasure hunts.

Since its inception this initiative has involved over 200 fathers and over 300 children, from age 3 upwards.

Why

Family learning and development workers had been working in partnership with Upper Nithsdale primary schools for many years. Prior to the introduction of MATCH the vast majority of participants in both family learning and local adult learning opportunities were women.

Research at the time of the group's inception stated that father's involvement:

- increased attainment;
- improved behaviour; and
- had a direct impact on children's overall social development and wellbeing.

Impact

An independent study by The Linked Work and Training Trust found that the active learning in the MATCH group:

- opened up more opportunities for men to take part in an educational process;
- created more opportunities for parents' own skills and knowledge to be recognised and utilised;
- increased parents' confidence in their ability to contribute to their children's education;
- provided a full range of creative, physical, innovative and enjoyable 'hands on' opportunities that enabled many more parents to become involved;
- helped parents to see the world outside the classroom as a learning resource; and
- built community capacity.

As a result of partnership working between family learning, adult learning and schools, men have taken up many local adult learning opportunities. For example:

- computing classes;
- digital photography;
- mathematics - 'How to help your child with maths';
- one to one literacy support;
- storytelling group - the group published their own stories; and
- sTEPS group.

For more information go to:

[https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/Evidencing change and the development of personal efficacy in fathers participating in organised Men and their Children family learning groups](https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/Evidencing%20change%20and%20the%20development%20of%20personal%20efficacy%20in%20fathers%20participating%20in%20organised%20Men%20and%20their%20Children%20family%20learning%20groups)

Case study 3

Peers Early Education Partnership (Peep) Learning Together Programme and Peep Progression Pathway

Programme overview

The Peep Learning Together Programme is an early intervention/prevention programme to improve life chances and close the attainment gap by working with parents and carers in order to enhance their children's learning and development from birth.

The programme focuses on five areas of learning: early maths; early literacy; health and physical development; personal, social and emotional development; and communication and language, and can be delivered by developmental stage: babies, toddlers, and young children.

The Peep Progression Pathway (PPP) is integrated into the Peep Learning Together Programme. It comprises nine adult learning units, each SCQF credit-rated by SQA at Levels 3, 4 and 5, which formally recognise the parent/carer's increased knowledge and skills. Assessment is entirely by portfolio; recording what the parent does to support their child's learning and development, incorporating their new learning from the Peep sessions and creating a 'keepsake' book for the parent and child. Peep have progression route agreements with several further education institutions guaranteeing interviews for and places on a number of courses to Peep alumni.

The flexible nature of the programme means that the focus of the group can be responsive to localised data, to parental interest and to the setting. Peep Programmes could be a universal offer within a defined geographical area, targeted for families who meet specific criteria such as parental low mood, one-to-one delivery or used to support transitions from home to early learning and childcare or early learning and childcare to school.

Why

The programme is based on research, which tells us that the quality of the home learning environment, family relationships and pre-school provision are key to improving life chances and promoting educational equity.

The Learning Together Programme offers an effective way of helping:

- **parents and carers** to improve their children's life chances, by making the most of everyday learning opportunities – listening, talking, playing, singing and sharing books and stories together;
- **parents and carers** to realise and act on their own learning potential, to recognise and build on their achievements, gain qualifications and progress;
- **babies and children** to make the most of their opportunities by becoming confident communicators and active learners; and
- **practitioners** to enhance and develop their work with parents and young children, through accredited training and an evidence-based programme.

The programme starts where parents already are. They build on what parents are **already** doing with their children. By sharing information about child development in an informal, accessible way, parents are encouraged to listen and talk to their children, to share songs, rhymes, books and stories, and just to have fun playing with them.

As Peep practitioners value what parents **already do**, relationships and trust are built which help the parent to learn and do more. Parents don't feel judged, they feel valued. As parents learn why home learning is important, they are empowered to choose to do more. The more they do, the more they will be helping their child to learn, develop and be ready to get the most out of their education.

Impact

Five independent studies by Warwick and Oxford universities show that Peep Programmes:

- engage isolated families;
- increase parents awareness of their child's development and how to foster it;
- help children develop strong foundations for literacy and self-esteem;
- lead to greater engagement in further adult learning; and
- support practitioners to develop fresh skills which can unlock parents potential rather than focus on problems.

The 2015 Peep Progression Pathway pilot evaluation showed that more than half of parents and carers who completed a PPP unit improved their own literacy, group work skills, ability to complete a project and gained confidence to access further education and employment.

'I think the programme has the child and family at the centre and we work with the parent to give them the best possible experience and interactions with their child. We are encouraging, motivating and supporting families through an informal education approach. The parents have the opportunity to gain accreditation and recognition for their learning. They are modelling success with their children'.

(Practitioner)

For more information go to:

<http://www.peeple.org.uk/>

Case study 4

Promoting Roles of Father Figures – St John Ogilvie RC High School/Calderside Academy – South Lanarkshire Council

Programme overview

The Promoting Roles of Father Figures (PROFF) group was formed after an initial campcraft programme run by South Lanarkshire Council, facilitated by Community Learning and Development and the Home School Partnership Service (CLHSPS).

The group is made up of fathers, grandfathers, uncles, step-fathers, step-grandfathers and older brothers. The group hold meetings on a monthly basis and these are open to any father figure. They have developed their own website and utilise CLHSPS links with schools to promote their programmes.

The group have reached out to encourage more father figures to get involved and work closely with CLHSPS to provide opportunities for more families to join the group. 110 male carers and 170 children have participated in PROFF group activities.

The group have been successful in several fundraising pursuits and by linking with CLHSPS, they have been able to provide free transport and activities for families. This has enabled many families, who are living in some of the most deprived areas in Scotland, to participate in a range of learning experiences that they would otherwise have been unaffordable.

Why

Research conducted with the fathers showed that many felt uncomfortable when attending family programmes, as sometimes they would be the only man attending.

The fathers also said they would like support and guidance to help them become more involved in their children's learning. They asked for support from CLHSPS in order to build on their experiences and are now active in supporting their children's learning.

Impact

- Children involved have exhibited wider ambitions.
- Some of the children have become part of Rights Respecting Schools committees.
- Fathers have supported children with their reading through the Scotland Reads programme.
- Families have helped to establish and develop Calderside Academy's Orchard.
- Members have taken part in South Lanarkshire Council's planning groups to help engage more male carers.
- Numerous father figures have accessed training and qualifications, which has led to employment for some.
- Absent fathers have been supported to connect with their children and families.
- Fathers have shared their life experiences at school events aimed at challenging the perceptions of young people.

For more information go to:

www.profatherfigures.com

Case study 5

Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme – Save the Children

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an early intervention programme for primary school-age pupils which aims to bring parents, children, teachers and the wider community together, to make sure children get the support they need to succeed at school and in life. Save the Children works in partnership with Middlesex University to deliver FAST in areas of deprivation and where high numbers of children receive free school meals. FAST works to improve family relationships, and in turn, children's ability to learn. It achieves this by strengthening their home learning environments as well as encouraging and enabling parents, the wider family and local community to play an active role in their children's education.

Why

The impact of growing up in poverty can last a lifetime. It affects children's wellbeing, their health, their life expectancy and it makes them less likely to do well at school than their wealthier peers. Through weekly sessions, FAST helps parents create opportunities for learning and development at home. It ensures children get the support they need to succeed at school and in life.

Impact

The National Evaluation of FAST, conducted by Middlesex University, reported a positive impact across a number of indicators reflecting FAST aims and objectives. Qualitative evidence from the Robert Owen Centre's research also indicates that FAST and FASTworks have promoted positive and effective parental involvement in children's learning. In particular, FAST facilitated greater dialogue between teachers, partner organisations and parents regarding their children's learning.

As well as impacting on family life, the FAST approach improved the aspirations and confidence of parents. In some cases the programme had led to them going on to participate in educational opportunities such as further education and university.

The FAST approach also built parents' social capital and capacity to support each other, thus broadening the impact of FAST into the community.

In addition to impacting on families and parents, there was consensus among all stakeholder groups that the FAST model made a valuable contribution to improved family and school relationships.

For more information go to:

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/united-kingdom/fast>

Case study 6

Family Clubs – Perth and Kinross Council

Programme overview

Family learning in Perth and Kinross is a key method for engagement with children and their families and is an important approach to prevention and early intervention.

Family Clubs offer a multi-agency approach to engagement and learning for the whole family. They provide an environment where parents and carers and children can take part in activities which are designed to enable them to build positive relationships and to learn together. Through a programme of activities, families learn about: healthy lifestyles and eating choices; play and being physically active together; developing more supportive relationships; and spending quality time together. Family Clubs also assist with reducing social isolation. This enables families to develop support networks within their community. Families also develop relationships with local staff who provide them with support, information and signposting to other services and learning opportunities. Many parents and carers go on to access other learning programmes, some which will help them to support their child's learning, including: literacies and core skills groups; Parents groups; PEEP groups; Incredible Years and Strengthening Families programmes; and some will be supported in their journey into volunteering or employment.

Why

Family Clubs deliver on a number of outcomes within Perth and Kinross Council's strategic objectives: giving every child the best start in life; Perth and Kinross Council's Community Learning and Development Plan: Improved outcomes for children, young people and adults through prevention and early intervention, and reduction in inequality; and the Parenting Strategy outcome. Families are also part of a wider caring community, with opportunities to engage in learning.

The Family Clubs also respond to needs identified through Evidence2Success, a collaborative project between Perth and Kinross Community Planning Partnership, and the Dartington Social Research Unit that aims to enhance the safe and healthy development of children and young people in Perth and Kinross. This project included a survey of 8,500 children (9-15 years) and 800 parents. Of the children (9-12 years) that were surveyed, 46.7% reported that they did not have opportunities for positive family involvement. The Family Clubs offer accessible, affordable, local provision which help to address this.

Impact

Participant evaluations from several Family Club families reported:

- improved relationships with their children;
- increased opportunities to socialise with other families;
- increased confidence in their parenting skills;
- having learned new activities that could be replicated at home; and
- more knowledge and confidence to access and engage in other community activities and support.

Feedback from families

'We look forward to spending quality time together with lots of nice people too'.

'The art was great, cooking was yummy, and gym hall was fun'.

'He wouldn't normally eat that but I think he is enjoying it more because he made it himself'.

'Trying out new activities and recipes which I have used again at home'.

'Can't wait until it starts again'.

For more information go to:

<https://education.gov.scot/>

<http://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/4513/Finding-out-about-Family-Learning-in-Perth--Kinross>

Case study 7

Learning Together Through Play Programme (Prisons) – Early Years Scotland

Programme overview

More children in Scotland each year experience a parent's imprisonment than a parent's divorce. The breakdown of family relationships when a parent is in prison can lead to a higher risk of reoffending and of children growing up to become offenders themselves.

Early Years Scotland works to protect children under the age of five years from the harm caused by adverse childhood experiences by encouraging and supporting the bond between children and their parents. They are currently working in five prisons within Scotland (HMP Barlinnie, HMP Dumfries, HMP Low Moss, HMP Castle Huntly and HMP Grampian) delivering and facilitating sessions with children affected by imprisonment. Encompassing work with prisoners, partners and children up to the age of five years, the programme covers facilitated pre-visit sessions for visiting families, family 'Stay and Play' sessions, baby massage and a tailored educational Fathers' Programme for prisoners.

Why

The project aims to foster stronger family relationships, thus contributing to reducing reoffending and the generational cycle of offending. The specific outcomes for the programme are:

- children will have more secure relationships with fathers/carers and improved levels of wellbeing, confidence and communication;
- children and fathers affected by imprisonment will have improved attachment and relationships; and
- fathers' confidence, knowledge and communication will improve and enable them to be more responsive to their child's needs.

Impact

Programmes are evaluated through practitioner observation and surveys of the fathers who participated in the Fathers' Programme as well as parents who participated in the 'Learning Together Through Play' sessions in the prisons. High levels of participation in the programme and high response rates to surveys highlighted that fathers wish to maintain their relationship with their children while they are in prison and that they are willing to learn about child development and how to improve their own skills when engaging with their children.

Evaluation shows that:

- fathers' knowledge and understanding of child development, communication, and confidence in their understanding of their children's needs has improved;
- children and parents have improved attachment through the structured shared play and learning sessions facilitated by an early years practitioner;
- children demonstrate improved attachment and wellbeing, as well as improvements in communication skills; and
- fathers are keen to apply the knowledge acquired in the educational programme and they lead the play activities, putting the child's enjoyment and wellbeing at the centre of the session.

Feedback from fathers in prison

'If I wasn't in here, I would never have found out about the brain development, I just thought that she is young and won't know any different'.

'The programme has helped me to feel closer to my son because I knew what he was learning'.

'I'm seeing a wee attachment happening with the wee one, she is only 15 weeks. It's great having this comfortable time; the music makes the room relaxed and the Mrs loves it!'

For more information go to:

www.earlyyearsscotland.org

Case study 8

The impact of family learning approaches on raising children's attainment - Aberdeen City Council

Programme overview

Aberdeen City Council has developed a range of family learning programmes that are responsive to the needs of families. These include family transition activities, family engagement, positive parenting, supporting literacy and numeracy in the home, storytelling, confidence building, budgeting and one-to-one home learning support.

It was important for the service to make sure that the interventions that they were putting in place were still having an impact.

Research by Aberdeen City Council in 2005 and 2008 showed that using family learning approaches has had a statistically significant impact on the attainment levels of the children involved.

It is important for the service to look at the longitudinal benefits of family learning. This has resulted in further research and revisiting as many families as possible from the 2005 and 2008 cohorts.

Timeline for research:

- Oct to Dec 2016 – Collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data
- Dec to Jan 2017 – Interim report
- March 2017 – Final report

Why

Family learning outcomes for Aberdeen City Council include:

- increasing the confidence of parents in supporting their children's learning;
- promoting health and wellbeing through emotional literacy programmes;
- providing opportunities and activities that are engaging and fun to support children's learning and development;
- encouraging parents and carers to utilise further learning opportunities to support their own learning; and
- raising achievement and attainment.

Impact

Aberdeen City Council family learning workers evaluate each programme to determine impact. Practitioners conduct observations of families and questionnaires that families complete. This can highlight the positive immediate impact on the families, but not future impact like attainment, employability or attitudes towards lifelong learning.

Measuring the longitudinal impact of family learning programmes can be difficult. This is due to factors such as staff movement, families moving away from the area and pressures on staff time and resources. Having this type of data will support Aberdeen City Council and their partner organisations involved in the delivery of family learning programmes. From this, Aberdeen City Council will be able to determine what programmes are making the biggest difference to families in the longer term, the impact this is having, what needs to be improved upon and ideas to take this forward. This in turn will allow the council to effectively manage budgets and resources.

For more information go to:

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/education_learning/adult_community_education/family_learning.asp

Case study 9

Royston Library Family ESOL Group – Glasgow Life

Programme overview

The Family ESOL Group was developed by Glasgow Life Communities staff to offer parents and carers who could not access mainstream ESOL an opportunity to learn English with their children who had not yet started school. Accessing childcare can be a barrier to learning for many parents and carers of young children and so the model of learning together in an informal setting helps address this.

Delivered over eight weeks, the ESOL Family Programme takes place in Royston Library in a child-friendly space with easy access to other library services. The programme takes a playful approach to language development covering a different theme each week such as colours, food or animals with the learners also learning and singing a new song with their children at each session. In order to broaden opportunities for the families, time is set aside at the end of the session to signpost learners to other appropriate ESOL and family activities.

Why

Language development in early years can be greatly enhanced if families are supported to interact with each other through play. The parents were all motivated to learn English with their children and interested in finding out about other services they could engage with.

The programme aims are to:

- increase the confidence of parents and carers to interact in English;
- provide parents and carers with ideas and knowledge of a range of positive play activities using English;
- support parents and carers develop an understanding of learning through play; and
- raise awareness of further ESOL learning opportunities and activities for families, thereby reducing isolation and promoting integration.

Impact

The Family ESOL Group made a real difference to the lives of the families, illustrated through feedback from the families.

Feedback from families

'Before my daughter wouldn't mix, now she does after coming here.'

'At home I used to only play Chinese songs but I now have an app on my phone so that me and my husband can sing English songs to my son'.

'I have learned some nice songs in English which I now sing at home'.

'My English is improving now, I look at CBeebies and I understand Mr Tumble!'

'My husband is pleased I come here because I am meeting other mums'.

'It is nice. I have learned how to teach my daughter some new things, like the colours on traffic lights'.

'On the TV I have heard some songs that we have sung here, I know them now'.

'We talk to each other and it helps my English and me as a mum'.

A number of the group also progressed on to other activities including joining an International Women's Group ESOL class, whilst others are enjoying making use of the library services and other programmes.

For more information go to:

<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/your-local-library/royston-library/Pages/home.aspx>

Case study 10

Books for Bairns – Adult Learning – Dundee City Council

Programme overview

Books for Bairns is a practical and fun family learning course for families with children aged 2½–4 years old.

The aims of the course were to:

- highlight the parent's role as their child's first educator;
- provide parents with an understanding of their child's experience of new concepts to help them better understand their role; and
- provide ideas for simple things parents can do at home to help their child learn.

The learning for the course was delivered through a series of children's books. This encouraged lots of creativity not only from the children but from the parents themselves.

Funding was secured through the Big Lottery's Child and Family Fund. Families were gifted books and materials which were used in the course and also allowed them to make useful resources at home with their children.

Why

The Books for Bairns course was developed as a result of feedback from practitioners and families who had taken part in another family learning project, Learn With Fred. One of the topics in Learn With Fred was 'Using Books' and the experience of taking part in this revealed the potential and scope for using children's books as a focus for using creative practice in family literacies learning in the early years.

Impact

- Parents reported increased confidence as their child's first educator.
- Parents reported increased motivation to read and tell stories with their children.
- Introducing parents to experiential learning resulted in increased knowledge and understanding of children's developmental stages.
- Books for Bairns courses continue to be delivered to families in local communities in Dundee.

For more information go to:

<https://www.dundee.gov.uk/communities/adultlearning/>

Case study 11

Tel mee met Taal or Count on Skills – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW), Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS)

Programme overview

Count on Skills is a Dutch literacy project which aims to reduce the number of illiterate native Dutch citizens and promote reading for pleasure amongst young children and adults.

The Count on Skills action programme aims to reach the following quantitative targets:

- a minimum of 45,000 Dutch residents contacted in order to improve their language skills and score better results on language tests and social participation, including employment participation; and
- one million primary school students reached via reading-promotion activities will participate in order to improve their language skills and learn more about the enjoyment of reading.

The programme also seeks to achieve the following:

- long-term regional collaboration in order to reduce illiteracy;
- improvements to the quality and accessibility of both local and regional language education programmes; and
- provision of social participation and integration opportunities to residents of the Netherlands.

Count on Skills invests in experiments which seek to: better serve target groups that are difficult to reach; unite various segments that are affected by illiteracy; and develop instruments for addressing language deficits and illiteracy.

The Art of Reading pilot programme for families with poor language skills was announced as a specific targeted group. This pilot helps parents with poor literacy skills to engage with reading and to read to their children. The experiment is intended to raise awareness and more effectively reach low-literacy parents within BookStart (BoekStart, for children aged 0-4 and their parents) and the Library at School (Bibliotheek op School) in primary schools. This approach encourages the enjoyment of reading and helps to prevent language deficits among children. At the same time parents are encouraged to actively engage in language themselves. The Dutch Reading Foundation and the National Library of the Netherlands are conducting this pilot in collaboration with the Reading and Writing Foundation.

Why

The approach used for Count on Skills was selected on the basis of various underlying principles and concepts. The decision to include an approach specifically for young families is related to studies that indicate that low levels of education and literacy are often passed on from one generation to the next. Breaking this cycle requires the production of preventive measures for infants and children, including young parents. European and Dutch national policy, also support socio-economic objectives. If Europe and the Netherlands intend to be amongst the best knowledge and service economies, investment to increase the population's level of education is required as 20% of European adults and 13% of Dutch adults do not possess sufficient basic skills. All of this means that the approach to illiteracy and adult education should be seen as an integral part of social policy and economic growth.

Impact

The Count on Skills project will continue to be monitored and evaluated to enable activities to be modified as necessary. An interim evaluation will be conducted in early 2017 and a final evaluation in late 2018 by an independent research agency.

For more information go to:

<http://www.eli-net.eu/good-practice/examples-of-good-practice/detail/project/tel-mee-met-taal-or-count-on-skills>

Case study 12

Family Basic Education (FABE) programme – Literacy and Adult Basic Education Uganda

Programme overview

The FABE programme was initiated and implemented by LABE (Literacy and Adult Basic Education), a leading local NGO in the field of basic education. LABE's interest in family education projects began in the mid-1990s as a new dimension to its adult literacy work in rural areas. LABE piloted the programme in the Bugiri district of Eastern Uganda (one of the country's poorest districts) in 2000-2001. By 2005 the programme was active in 18 schools and many adult literacy centres, reaching over 1,400 parents and more than 3,300 children. The programme has now been expanded to northern Uganda, a war-affected region, where it is being implemented in over 600 villages in eight districts.

The programme aims to:

- improve literacy and numeracy skills among rural children and adults;
- improve the educational performance of children through effective parental/family literacy and educational support;
- strengthen parental support for children's educational needs and equip parents with basic knowledge;
- increase parents' inter-communication skills while interacting with children and their teachers;
- develop parenting skills;
- create a broad awareness on family learning;
- promote and strengthen community participation in primary school education and general community development; and
- enrich the abilities of teachers and adult educators in child-adult teaching/learning methods.

Why

The Government of Uganda introduced programmes and critical policy instruments that seek to eradicate poverty and illiteracy and thus to promote national development and transformation by making education accessible to all. The Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme as a component of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) endeavored to improve literacy levels among adults as well as to empower people to demand access to quality basic social services. The FAL programme managed to reach only 5% of would-be learners and had therefore not benefited many people. Implementation of the PEAP was hindered by the fact that information on available services is in printed format. Consequently, for citizens to claim their rights, they must master literacy and numeracy – skills which adults do not necessarily possess. The shortcomings in the provision of education to children and basic literacy skills to adults made the implementation of the Family Basic Education programme imperative.

Impact

Participants

- A total of around 124,000 children and 76,000 adults have benefited from the programme. Over 95% of the beneficiaries live in rural areas and about 80% are women.
- The Train-the-Trainer programme has facilitated the training of 1,500 literacy trainers and 400 trainers of instructors.

Family level (household level)

- The number of children reporting domestic violence (especially slaps from their fathers) has dropped by 15%.
- The number of girls married before they are 15 has dropped by 40%.
- The number of women presenting themselves for election in schools, churches and village committees has increased by 65%.
- The number of girls directly supported by their fathers as they attend primary school has increased by 17%.

School level

- Girls' average school attendance has increased by 67 days each year.
- The drop-out rate for girls has fallen by 15%.
- The number of women in school governance structures has increased by 68%.
- The number of parents who take part in developing school development plans has increased by 65%.

Community level

- The number of previously non-literate community members who took part in the last national elections by independently selecting a candidate of their choice has increased by 27%.
- The ratio of new community members who have joined local voluntary associations has risen to 3:5 (3 being the new members).
- The number of girls who report being shouted at or mocked as they walk to school has dropped by 32%.

Improved parental involvement in child learning

- Parents are now consciously interacting with and helping their children to reinforce reading, writing and numeracy skills.
- Parents are also increasingly helping their children to do their homework and checking their children's books as their improved literacy skills gives them the confidence to provide such assistance. Some parents are even gathering local learning materials for children, such as bottle tops and counting sticks.
- Improved communication with schools indicates that parents (especially mothers) are becoming increasingly engaged in their children's education. For example, some parents send written notes to school teachers concerning their children's learning progress or the challenges they face.

- Parents are regularly attending school activities, such as meetings and open days, or visiting the school informally to talk to their children's teachers about their educational progress.

Adult literacy learning

- After more than two years of FABE literacy-related work, many parents/adults were able to:
 - correctly read sequences of numbers from 0 to 1,000 and calculate three-digit numbers in writing; and
 - record in writing short messages heard on the radio and copy details from a calendar, notice or other text.
- Men's involvement in and concern for girls' welfare has increased dramatically.
- The number of adult literacy educators has increased and their skills have been enhanced.
- In addition to the improved literacy results, FABE has also produced broader social, economic and political effects. These include:
 - an increased resource allocation to adult learning by local governments;
 - increased donor interest; and
 - community and parental involvement in basic education is now a government policy priority (although the emphasis is still on children's literacy).

For more information go to:

<http://www.unesco.org/ui/litbase/?menu=8&theme=20&programme=9>

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Key messages and recommendations

There are a number of key messages and recommendations from this Review of Family Learning.

Key messages

- Family learning reaches the most disadvantaged, helps close the attainment gap and extends beyond the duration of the intervention.
- Family learning is an approach that has an impact though the different age ranges.
- Current research suggests that family learning is important and it works.
- Family learning programmes can be relatively inexpensive and provide a high social rate of return on investment.
- There is a need for better data collection processes. Longitudinal evaluations should be embedded where appropriate.
- Little is known about the impact of family learning on families which include a disabled child and/or parent.
- Evidence should inform the design of any family learning programme. Creative approaches to engagement and programme delivery should be given the time and space to develop. Impact and outcomes should be evaluated and programmes changed if necessary. This should be part of a strategic and informed approach.

Recommendations

- Funding for family learning programmes require to be built into drivers for change to ensure successful outcomes for families.
- Resources in this field are required to meet the key drivers in the Scottish Attainment Challenge and National Improvement Framework.
- Inspection findings should be used to identify trends, needs and influence future policy developments.
- Embedding family learning into cross-cutting policies and strategies is required to ensure greatest impact and maintain a strong focus at a national and local level.
- Family learning would be improved through greater cohesion from the strategic level to the operational level with the support of a framework.
- Obtaining more Scottish-based research is important given that little is known about the impact of family learning across Scotland.
- Consideration should be given to how further family learning research should be agreed and processed in alignment with the National Research Strategy.
- More research on methodology would support stronger provision and an understanding of why and how a family learning approach should be used, and why or when it should not.
- It is recommended that the workforce undertake relevant qualifications and continuous professional development.
- The key findings and recommendations of this Review of Family Learning will form part of the National Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. They will also feed into Scottish Attainment Challenge outcomes to ensure that family learning opportunities are considered by local authorities and schools when developing future plans.

- Key stakeholders in adult learning should continue to support adults who require more intensive support when engaged with family learning programmes in line with the Statement of Ambition.

6.2 Summary

The review of evidence highlights that family learning plays a key role in society and positively supports the delivery of excellence and equity. However, there remains scope for targeted research and literature on the definitive impact of family learning in Scotland. The Review emphasises the need to gather more evidence through a range of methods including inspection findings and feedback at a local and international level.

Developing the workforce through relevant qualifications and continuous professional development will continue to have a number of positive outcomes for families and communities. Trained staff will be skilled in engaging and working with the most disengaged families to improve relationships between home and school. Family learning programmes support parents to increase their individual skills, knowledge and confidence. This in turn will help parents support their child's development as well as their own personal opportunities for learning, training and employment.

Continually refreshing and updating the professional learning resources on the National Improvement Hub will help support practitioners across Scotland who work with families.

Embedding family learning across education, health and socio-economic policies is crucial to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

APPENDIX A – ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Background – Scottish policy mapping

This section provides an overview of the key national policies relating to family learning. These policies provide the overarching framework and guidance within which local authorities, schools 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 (2006) Guidance

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.

Early Years Framework (2008)

The Early Years Framework recognises that 'some children and families will need long-term support throughout childhood and beyond' (Scottish Government, p9). It aims to 'reduce the numbers of such families through supporting the capacity of children and parents to secure positive outcomes for themselves to the point where it can be self-sustaining within the universal services that are available and by building community capacity so that the wider community is empowered to provide a supportive environment for children and families' (p9).

The document also seeks to address the needs of the children whose lives, opportunities and ambitions are hindered because of poor health, poverty, attainment and unemployment. Early years is defined in the framework as pre-birth to eight years old but it also recognises that many aspects of it are also relevant to children over eight.

At the heart of the framework is an approach 'which recognises the right of all young children to high quality relationships, environments and services which offer a holistic approach to meeting their needs' (p3). The approach in the Framework is seen as being of particular benefit to those children and families requiring higher levels of support. Four principles of early intervention are identified as: everyone to have the same outcomes and opportunities; identifying those at risk of not achieving those outcomes and taking steps to prevent that risk of materialising; where the risk has materialised, take effective action; and work to help parents, families and communities develop their own solutions using accessible, high quality public services.

The Framework contains an action plan which seeks to provide a greater focus within existing services on 'the development of parenting skills, developing broader roles in the workforce and enhancing the role of childcare, pre-school and school in family learning' (p37).

Equally Well (2008)

This document is a report of the Ministerial Task Force on health inequalities and it contains a number of important key findings including the need 'to build individual, family and community wellbeing and resilience' (p17). The biggest gains are viewed as coming through 'supporting parents to help them help themselves and by creating communities which are positive places to grow up' (p20). The approach to making this happen is through shifting the focus 'from providing services (doing things for or to people) to building the capacity of individuals, families and communities, and addressing the external barriers people may face to making use of the high quality, accessible public services they require'.

Achieving Our Potential (2008)

The Achieving Our Potential Framework was launched in November 2008 and it aims to tackle poverty and income inequalities in Scotland. The Framework endeavours to provide a balanced approach while also encouraging people to work and remove barriers to employment. Responding to longer-term drivers of poverty within the framework is to be tackled by the Scottish Government, local government and partners taking an approach which puts 'parenting at the heart of policy, providing better access to spaces to play, and making every pre-school and school a family learning environment so that all can realise their potential and avoid poverty in later life' (Scottish Government, p13). Problems with health, employment, housing or in the family are viewed in the framework as putting people at risk of falling into poverty and triggering further problems.

One area of change which is viewed in the Framework as being of vital importance is the way of working with local authorities. This has seen a 'move away from micro-management' at the Scottish Government and 'one size fits all' national solution approach to provide local authorities with the autonomy to make effective and decisive actions at a local level (p7).

Achieving Our Potential intimated the Scottish Government's plans to introduce the Early Years Framework to address the root causes of disadvantage. This was to be achieved through focusing on 'supporting parents and communities to provide the nurturing and stimulating environment for children' (p14).

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) 2008

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is a Scottish Government approach that enables all services and agencies who work with children, young people and their families to deliver co-ordinated support which is appropriate, proportionate and timely. GIRFEC is about ensuring that leaders, managers and practitioners work together to enable children and young people to reach their full potential. The GIRFEC approach puts a child at the centre of any assessment and allows practitioners to consider their own role when working with families.

The approach operates on a common set of 'wellbeing indicators' that are designed to help assess what is going on in a child's life and to see if there are any areas that need to be addressed. Assessing a child's circumstances is carried out through the national practice model which combines the wellbeing indicators with the 'my world triangle' to assess needs, risks and positive features. These along with the 'resilience matrix', help practitioners to understand the child or young person's whole world while analysing more complex information.

The GIRFEC model is not specific to age, gender or type of need. Under the GIRFEC approach, practitioners are to 'work together to support families, and where appropriate, take early action at the first signs of any difficulty, rather than only getting involved when a situation has already reached crisis point' (A Guide to GIRFEC, 2012, p3). It also calls for practitioners to work across organisational boundaries and put children and their families at the heart of decision making.

Child Poverty Act (2010)/Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland (2011)

The Child Poverty Act (2010) sets out the UK-wide targets to eradicate child poverty by April 2020. Under the Act, the UK Government was to produce a Child Poverty Strategy. This applies to Scotland as well for policy matters that have been devolved to the Scottish Parliament/Ministers.

Following on from the Child Poverty Act (2010), the Scottish Government set out its vision for a Scotland where 'no children are disadvantaged by poverty' (p1). Growing up in poverty is viewed by the Scottish Government as impacting on children's outcomes. Poverty is viewed by the Scottish Government as complex, multi-dimensional and something that demands a range of interventions and responses. Investment in eradicating child poverty and reducing inequality remains vitally important to the Scottish Government. Shifting resources into early intervention and prevention in the early years of a child's life is a key starting point.

The main aim of the Child Poverty Strategy in Scotland is to maximise household resources (income poverty and material deprivation) and to improve children's wellbeing and life chances (breaking inter-generational cycles of poverty/inequality/deprivation). Such an approach requires focus on tackling underlying social and economic determinants of poverty and to improve the circumstances in which children grow up.

The Child Poverty Strategy in Scotland has three underpinning principles: early intervention and prevention; building on the assets of individuals and communities and ensuring that the needs of children and families are at the centre of service design and delivery. These principles are taken from the main social policies which the Scottish Government has already put in place to address child poverty (Achieving our Potential, 2008; Early Years Framework 2008; Equally Well, 2008). The three social frameworks promote an assets-based approach to build the capacity of individuals and families and enable them to manage their way out of poverty. Within the assets-based approach, individuals and communities are invited to manage positive changes to their circumstances by helping to produce the interventions to help support them out of poverty. Professionals are required to recognise that individuals and communities are able to become 'a resource which co-designs services' rather than being simply consumers of services (Child Poverty Strategy, 2011, p9).

Adult Literacies in Scotland 2020: Strategic guidance (2011)

The Scottish Government's Literacy Action Plan established Scotland's overarching vision for all learners – to raise standards of literacy for all from the early years through to adulthood. Within the Adult Literacies in Scotland document, family learning is viewed as 'an investment in Scotland's future, as it contributes to equality of opportunity by changing learning patterns within families. Working with the family together rather than with the child or the adult separately makes a greater impact on the literacies development of both child and parent or carer. This can be achieved by combining early childhood interventions and early parenting strategies with adult literacies work. Parents and carers who develop their own literacies often gain the confidence and skills to help their children with reading, writing and numbers' (p10).

Community Learning and Development Strategic Guidance (2011)

The Community Learning and Development Guidance clarifies expectations of Community Planning Partnerships. The purpose of community learning and development is to 'empower people individually and collectively, to make positive changes in their lives and in their communities through learning' (p1). The vision for Scotland's public services is to focus public spending and action to 'build on the assets and potential of the individual, the family and the community' (p2).

Partners should aim to deliver community learning and development outcomes through a range of approaches including 'family learning and other early intervention work with children, young people and families' (p4).

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).

Community Learning and Development Regulations (2013)

The Community Learning and Development (CLD) Regulations place a requirement on local authorities to initiate, maintain and facilitate a process which ensures that CLD in that area is secured in such a way that it:

- a) identifies target individuals and groups.
- b) considers the needs of those target individuals and groups for CLD.
- c) assesses the degree to which those needs are already being met.
- d) identifies barriers to the adequate and efficient provision of relevant CLD.

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.

Building the Ambition (2014)

Building the Ambition 'reflects the importance of early learning and childcare for the future of individual children and families and the wider society as a whole' (p6). This is also a priority for the European Union who view early childhood education and care (ECEC) as 'the essential foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability. Complementing the central role of the family, ECEC has a profound and long-lasting impact which measures taken at a later stage cannot achieve' (European Commission Communication, 2011).

Within the document, parents remains central to their child's learning journey. Involving families in all aspects of early learning and childcare improves outcomes for children. Family learning is viewed as a 'powerful method of engagement and learning' which helps 'challenge educational disadvantage, promote socio-economic resilience and foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning' (p25).

Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill (2014)

The Children and Young People Bill is to further the Scottish Government's ambition for Scotland to be the best place to grow up. This is to be achieved by making provision in relation to aspects of children's services reform including improving 'the way services work to support children, young people and families' and strengthening 'the role of early years support in children's and families' lives'. The wider public sector are accountable in the Act for their efforts to take forward the realisation of rights which are set out in the The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and they are required to report on what actions they are taking to progress it.

The Act sets the strategic direction for the way in which Scottish public services should be delivered and assists public bodies in their endeavours to improve the life chances of children and young people.

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 Corporate Plan 2013-2016 (p15)

Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) (2016)

The Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) brings together the Early Years Collaborative (EYC) and the Raising Attainment for All (RAFA) programme to deliver quality improvement throughout the child's journey.

The purpose of the CYPIC is to support schools and services for children, young people and families to be as good as they can be, based on evidence of what works in improving outcomes and life chances.

National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (2016)

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' (p1). The Framework aims to 'improve and increase ways in which parents and families can engage with teachers and partners to support their children and increase the voice of parents in leading improvements with schools' (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 Young 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 (p5).

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