

## 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.