

Parents as partners

Strategy for parental involvement and engagement

Working together to support children and family learning



Inspire | Transform | Strengthen

Contents

Membership of the review group

Jargon busting – explaining what we mean

Introduction

Purpose of the strategy

Effective communication

Parent volunteers

Enquiries/complaints procedure

Impact and benefits

Your views

Next steps – Implementation

Sharing best practice

Membership of the review group - Parental Involvement and Strategy Group

Rachel Baxter	HT, Netherburn Primary School
Margaret Brownell	Parent Representative
Cheryl Burnett	NPFS Parent Representative
Clare Carroll	Parent Represent
Audrey Forrest	Rutherglen/Sanderson/Cathkin
Margaret Gallacher	Unison
Craig Goldie	Lanark Grammar
David Marsden	Calderglen High
Lorraine Mullen	HT, St Leonard's Primary
Fiona Robertson	Youth, Family & Community Learning
Susan Sandilands	Youth, Family & Community Learning
Lorraine Smith	Cathkin Community Nursery
Janice Tod	Early Learning & Childcare Lead Officer
Fiona Trainer	Holy Cross High
Des Dickson	SLC Education Resources
Fiona Gibney	Parental Engagement Officer
Margaret Tracey	Parental Engagement Officer

Jargon busting - explaining what we mean!

Child/Children:

When the plan refers to “children” or “child” it means a person under the age of 18.

Parent/s:

The term “parents” means anyone with parental responsibilities and others who care for or look after children or young people. The plan acknowledges that individual family units will comprise a wider range of people who might also contribute to a child’s learning at home experiences. The strategy sets out our plan which aims to support parents to be involved in their child’s education. The strategy recognises the important role of grandparents, kinship carers, foster parents, wider family (uncles, aunts, cousins) and separated parents.

Parental involvement:

Parental involvement describes the ways in which parents can get involved in the life and work of the early learning and childcare setting or school or the ways that parents can get involved in “schooling”. Parental involvement includes family learning and activities such as parental representation in the development of policies, improvement plans and key decisions. It can include involvement in the life and work of the establishment, for instance through volunteering opportunities. Parental involvement can also include help with homework or keeping track of children’s work and on-going, two-way communication between home and school or early learning and childcare setting.

Parental engagement:

Parental engagement is about parents’ and families’ interaction with their child’s learning. It can take place in the home, at school or in the community. Where it takes place is not important, but rather the quality of the parent’s engagement with their child’s learning, the positive impact that it can have and the interaction and mutual development that can occur as a result of that interaction.



Family learning:

Family learning encourages family members to learn together as and within a unit, with a focus on intergenerational learning. Family learning activities can also be 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)

Learning at home:

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

Third sector

'The third sector is an important partner such as charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups who deliver services which help to improve people's wellbeing and contributes to economic growth. It plays a vital role in supporting communities at a local level'.

Definitions

ASN	Additional Support Needs
LAC	Looked After Children
ELCC	Early Learning and Childcare
YFCLS	Youth Family and Community Learning Service

What do we mean by 'Parents as Partners?'

Here are a few quotations that help to show the impact that parents and the home have on children's learning.

"It's time to help our children to be resilient. Let's work together to secure a happy future for them!"

(Sharon Collie, parent, Stonelaw High School)

"Parents, carers and family members are by far the most important influences on their child's lives. They influence how young people think about education, their future and society."

Harris, A et al. (2009). *Do Parents Know they Matter?* London: Continuum International Publishing Group

"A tricky aspect of leadership is that we will we need to adopt a parental perspective"

(The emotional intelligence office)

"Parental engagement can be considered as active involvement in learning. Such learning can take place in a variety of settings including ELCC or schools, the community, through family learning and at home. "

(Goodall and Montgomery, 2014)

Introduction

The Parental Involvement Act requires each local authority to prepare a document to be known as the "Strategy for Parental Involvement and Engagement".

Parents, and families are the most important influence on children's attitudes, behaviour and achievement and effective partnership working is a key factor in a successful learning experience.

In South Lanarkshire we recognise the important role that many parents play in the education of their children. Partnerships with parents can contribute significantly to the life and work of our schools and establishments and enhance the learning of the children and young people. The Council Plan "Connect" reaffirms this through its reference to partnership working, raising attainment for all and its commitment to improving the lives of children and young people.

This strategy is based on the guiding aim of Getting it Right for Every Child. It is informed by the central role of the family, whatever form that may take. The theme that lies at the heart of this plan is that of relationships - relationships based on trust, mutual respect and collaboration.

The Strategy is designed to improve both the quality and extent of parents' involvement and engagement in their child's learning.

Working together we can make a difference. The learning triangle is carefully balanced with three equal components – learners, educators and families. There is no doubt that when these components work effectively together educational, social and behavioural standards are raised and outcomes improved.

"The importance of parents as partners in the education of their child is widely recognised as helping to achieve better outcomes for children and young people."



The objective is to ensure that parents, teachers and pupils work together to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Involving and engaging parents in the education of their child and the life of the school brings benefits which help to achieve better outcomes for families. The aim of our schools and services is to create a positive and welcoming environment, a safe haven and a place which sees and respects parents as key contributors to the wellbeing and education of their children.

Katy Loudon
Chair of Education Resources Committee

Tony McDaid
Executive Director, Education Resources

Purpose of the strategy

Parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home are powerful vehicles for bringing about positive change. This strategy has been written in partnership with education, health and parents so that all parties can engage meaningfully in the education of children within school and the wider community.

Principles which underpin the strategy

Active parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home are effective and positive influences on a child's education. Evidence and research shows that promoting parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home impacts on the motivation, attainment and achievement of young people.

We recognise that parents have valuable skills and attributes that can be utilised to the benefit of all pupils and the school. Inclusion is at the heart of all we do and this ethos encourages and supports all parents to participate in every aspect of their child's education.

Parents should be:

- *encouraged to work in partnership with their child's school,*
- *welcomed and given an opportunity to be involved in the life of the school,*
- *fully informed about their child's education and learning,*
- *encouraged to make an active contribution to their child's learning,*
- *encouraged to support learning at home,*
- *encouraged to express their views and take part in decision making,*
- *know how and where to raise concerns,*
- *aware that they are an automatic member of the wider parent forum as soon as their child starts school,*
- *supported if they wish to be a member of the Parent Council.*

Strategy for parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home

The National Parent Forum Scotland Review (2017) of the Scottish Schools Parental Involvement Act 2006 Act informed the "Learning Together" National Action plan. These have helped to "support a step-change in the quality of parental involvement across Scotland." The vision is that every parent should be supported to be involved and engaged in their child's education throughout their learning journey.

Aims:

- *To ensure that parents are supported to be fully involved in the life and work of their children's early learning and childcare setting or school.*
- *Encourage and support collaborative partnership between staff, parents and families.*
- *Establish appropriate support so that parents can engage in their child's learning.*
- *Develop opportunities for family learning and learning at home.*
- *Improve the quality of all communication between staff, parents and families.*
- *Support the development of skills for both staff and parents.*

Outcomes

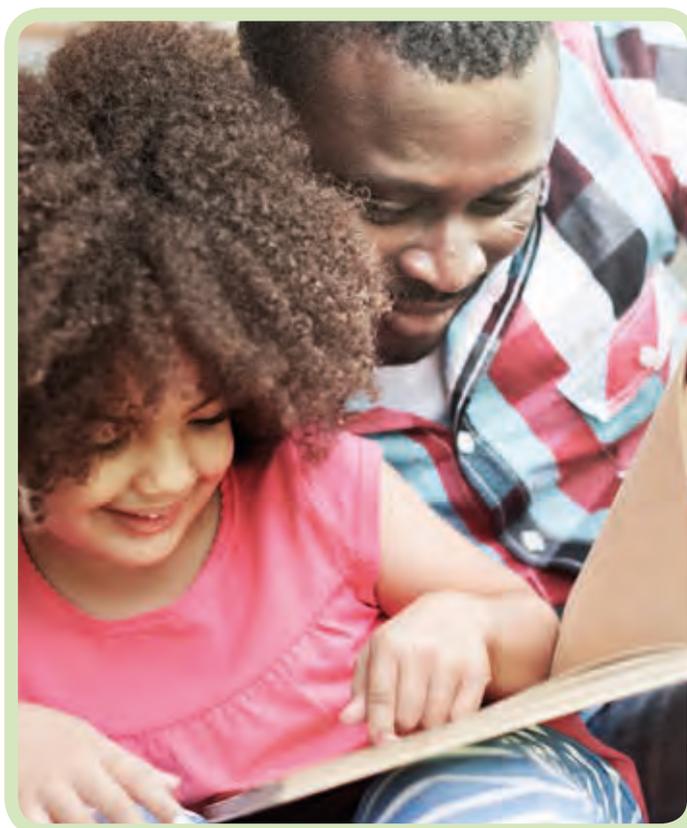
- *By working in partnership, schools and parents can positively develop children's attitudes to learning, helping to ensure that children achieve their full potential. This will also provide schools with a clearer understanding of children's home circumstances and personal achievements.*
- *Effective partnerships help parents to understand what their children are learning, their progress and how they can support learning at home.*
- *Good communication will allow schools and parents to respond quickly and effectively to emerging issues and concerns.*
- *Strengthening parental representation and working with the parent council or parent group in early learning and childcare settings to seek the views of the wider parent forum is essential if we want to achieve the best for our children and young people.*

Who should implement the strategy?

The aim is for everyone to work together to help deliver the best possible learning experience for children and young people.

The framework for implementation is outlined below:

- *The Executive Director (Education Resources) and Heads of Education are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the strategy.*
- *Heads of establishment, staff and partners are responsible for putting the strategy into practice.*
- *Parents, as key partners, are invited to work in partnership with their child's school through parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home.*
- *Parent Councils should work in partnership to ensure effective communication, dialogue and decision making takes place between school staff and the whole parent body (the Parent Forum) and wider school community.*
- *Youth, family and community learning service will continue to support effective partnership working through family learning programmes designed to reach out to parents.*
- *Partner agencies such as NHS and voluntary sector groups also have a key role to play in parental involvement and engagement particularly in the health and wellbeing of children and young people and families.*



Effective communication

A key element of parental involvement, engagement family learning and learning at home is effective communication. Positive relationships to build trust are the cornerstone of success. Communication between staff and parents should respect the rights of all concerned.

Education Resources will seek views in a number of different ways to give parents and young people a voice to influence and shape developments at an authority level.

This will normally be done through:-

- *continuing to build on developments in our schools which support family learning and engagement,*
- *building on our established representative groups such as the Parents as Partners focus group and links with Parent Councils and the wider Parent Forum,*
- *strengthening our links with Pupil and Youth Councils,*
- *focus groups and events to discuss and shape developments;*
- *learning community events which will provide a forum for parents to come together and share ideas,*
- *an annual conference for parents to share information and views on national and local priorities for education,*
- *asking for parents' and young people's views.*

Features of effective communication

- *Communication should be clear and parent friendly. All means of communication should be accessible, relevant, straightforward and jargon free.*
- *Parents will receive information through a number of different channels such as:-*
 - *Social Media*
 - *Apps*
 - *Newsletters/ the school website*
 - *Email/text messages*
 - *Letters/correspondence*
 - *Glow Blogs*
 - *School handbook*
- *Events that involve children, their parents and families coming together should be encouraged and used to celebrate and showcase the achievements of children.*
- *Formal events such as information evenings or parents' evenings should continue to provide opportunities for dialogue between parents, pupils and teachers. Schools should engage with parents whenever possible including formal and informal opportunities.*
- *All communications with parents must be inclusive. Information will be provided in appropriate formats taking account of the inclusive needs of the parent forum by making information available, when required, in community languages or other formats, e.g. Braille, audio, large print. Signers/interpreters should be provided, where appropriate.*
- *Schools are expected to provide advice and information to parents in respect of their own child's learning and offer opportunities for parents to give their views.*

Working in partnership with the school

In partnership with the Scottish Government, Local Authorities will take the lead, through Education Resources, in promoting parental involvement and engagement in our Early Learning and Childcare settings and schools to work together with parents, partners and the wider community.

The emphasis should move from “involving” to “collaborating” between schools, parents and families. A more collaborative role will help to shape and influence plans and strategies.

This can be achieved through collaboration for example, in the following areas:

- *school improvement planning,*
- *raising attainment initiatives such as the current Pupil Equity Funding and Scottish Attainment Challenge,*
- *celebrating the success of children and young people,*
- *family learning and learning at home.*

Working with parents in the local authority

The Authority is committed to supporting Parent Councils and the wider parent forum in carrying out their role to support the work of their child’s school and to develop parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home.

As a Council we will:

- *support schools to promote parental involvement and engagement,*
- *encourage links between the school, parents and the wider community,*
- *support schools to be more inclusive and address any barriers to parental involvement and engagement,*
- *ensure parents have an active role in the recruitment and appointment of Head Teacher and DHT posts.*
- *host an annual Parent as Partners conference to enable Education Resources and parents to share ideas and good practice.*

Parent Councils will be empowered to:

- *be active participants in supporting children and young people’s learning and school improvement,*
- *contribute to the effective use of Pupil Equity Funding,*
- *address barriers that limit parent’s involvement and engagement,*
- *share best practice with their learning community,*
- *publish their activities and achievements with the parent forum on an annual basis,*
- *encourage the uptake and effective use of volunteers.*



Parent volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in shaping the life of their communities. Education Resources value the role of volunteers and recognise the benefit to learners and the wider school community.

We actively encourage schools to seek parent volunteers to support learning.

We wish to help build on the skills and develop the capacity and confidence of parent volunteers. We will provide guidance, support and training.

It is the policy of South Lanarkshire Council that all adult volunteers, including parents, must have an approved Enhanced Disclosure Form (PVG). As a Council we have in place arrangements to support volunteers to go through the Disclosure process which is regularly reviewed.

Work together to address barriers that limit parental involvement and engagement

Evidence based research shows that there are several barriers that need to be considered to achieve equity for all.

We strive to create an ethos in each early learning and childcare setting and school that will provide opportunities to overcome barriers that limit parental involvement and engagement.

Potential barriers to parental involvement and engagement, family learning and learning at home

It is recognised that the type and frequency of contact made by parents and with parents will be influenced by circumstances such as;

- *working patterns,*
- *childcare,*
- *disabilities,*
- *language needs,*
- *transport,*
- *locality of venue,*
- *costs of the school day.*

Overcoming the barriers to parental involvement and engagement

It is important to respect the diversity, cultural and ethnic background of all parents in our communities.

Flexible approaches should be taken when establishing and further developing links with parents. Effective involvement and engagement should take account of the Council's framework for Inclusion and Equality guidelines.

Evidence shows that when parents, children and young people are involved in transition planning outcomes for learners are more successful.

Enhanced transitions for learners with additional support needs must be carefully considered in all our establishments.

Support will also be provided where appropriate, to develop the skills and confidence of parents in supporting children's learning.

Support for parents/schools

The Strategy for Parental Involvement and Engagement enables parents to be involved in making a positive difference to children's learning. Education Resources can provide support and training for parents and schools on:

- *parental involvement in appointment procedures for headteacher and senior posts in schools (HT / DHT - parents will be involved in the appointment process and interview panel)*
- *how to establish a Parent Council and its role and function,*
- *understanding how a school sets out its priorities e.g. improvement planning,*
- *the development of parental involvement, engagement, family learning and learning at home,*
- *communication with parents and schools,*
- *Curriculum for Excellence, Getting it Right for Every Child and Developing the Young Workforce.*

Enquiries /complaints procedure

If a parent has an enquiry or complaint they should raise this by contacting their child's school as the aim is to alleviate any concerns at school level in the first instance.

If you feel you are unable to resolve the matter you can bring this to the attention of the local authority. The council has a Complaints Handling Procedure entitled, "Have Your Say." This can be accessed at school or on the South Lanarkshire Council Website.

Parents can also email parents@southlanarkshire.gov.uk and are invited to provide details of their enquiry or complaint and to advise if the school has been given the opportunity to deal with the matter.

Impact and benefit

South Lanarkshire Council strives to empower parents to develop the confidence and skills to support their child's learning.

This strategy aims to improve the quality of support for parents and develop a greater understanding of families' needs. More effective communication and wider access to resources will lead to more collaborative home-school partnerships and develop the communities which our schools serve.

The impact of the strategy will be monitored and evaluated taking account of national, local authority and school developments within a three yearly review cycle.

Your views

We would like to hear your views on our strategy for parental involvement and engagement, family learning and learning at home. You can let us know in writing by contacting Education Resources, (Parental Involvement) Almada Street, Hamilton, ML3 0AA or through email on parents@southlanarkshire.gov.uk

Next steps - Implementation

To help put the strategy into practice we will adopt the National Action Plan entitled 'Learning Together' which sets out how the local authority, schools and other agencies and services can work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

Key Policies and Plans

- *Learning Together 2018 – 2021*
- *Parents as Partners Toolkit (HMIe and South Lanarkshire Council versions available)*
- *Engaging parents and families - A toolkit for practitioners Education Scotland*
- *Review of Learning at Home - Education Scotland August 2018*
- *Family learning Framework - Advice for Practitioners April 2018*
- *National Action Plan July 2018*
- *Parent Council guide (SLC 2019)*

Sharing best practice

Case studies which help to share best practice and a parents film are available to support the implementation of the strategy. The idea being to help us all learn from practice which is making a difference to children, young people and families.

'There are many reasons why children and young people may need support to help them learn.'



If you need this information in another format or language, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs.
Phone: 0303 123 1015 Email: equalities@southlanarkshire.gov.uk