Engaging parents and families

A toolkit for practitioners

Section 3: Home/school/partnership settings

Introduction

'Our children mean everything to us, why would parents not want to be involved'

We want Scotland to be the best place for our children to grow up. Parents entrust some of that learning to early learning and childcare (ELC) settings and schools. Curriculum for Excellence is learner centred and that means we want to get learning right for every child.

This toolkit has been developed to provide practitioners in all settings, including community learning and development (CLD) teams, family support staff, home/school link workers and additional support for learning staff with a practical resource to help support partnerships with parents and families in all aspects of their children's learning. Practitioners can use the toolkit to help them achieve and sustain high levels of parental involvement and meaningful engagement within their learning settings.

Engaging parents and families: A toolkit for practitioners, provides links to research, examples of practice from ELC settings, primary and secondary schools, community settings as well as parental organisations. Practitioners will also find useful links to other websites, some of which should be shared with parents.

Practitioners will find activities that can be used as a starting point and/or as a tool to measure and evaluate current practice in parental involvement and engagement in their setting and in the local authority. There are activities that can be used in partnership with the Parent Council, parent committees or associations (depending on your setting), to ensure that all parents/carers and families are fairly represented by this body. These activities support the requirements of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, 2006, the Children and Young People's Scotland Act (2014) and the commitments in the National Parenting Strategy (2012). The Engaging with Families website is a helpful source of information to practitioners.

The toolkit is organised into six sections:

Section 1: Involving all parents
Section 2: Learning at home
Section 3: Home/school/partnership settings
Section 4: Parental representation
Section 5: Family learning and community connections
Section 6: Appendix and other useful information

Each section will have information that is relevant to all settings as well as specific examples relevant to each sector (ELC, primary, secondary or community).

There are common themes running throughout the toolkit:

- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
- Children's rights and participation
- Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)
- Building strong, positive relationships
- Family learning/community links
- Equality, diversity and inclusion

Parent refers to the mother or father of a child or young person, or to any foster carer, relative or friend who has been given responsibility for looking after or bringing up a child, for example through a supervision order. We will use the term parent or parents throughout this resource.

Section 3: Home/school/partnership settings

Contents

Home/school/partnership settings: Introduction

Children have the right to be supported by their parents as they grow and develop (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)) and this places a responsibility on parents to ensure that these rights are met. Parents may need practical support which is easy to access in order to help meet their child's needs and aspirations as they grow and develop. Moving towards a culture where parents feel encouraged to seek support, reassured that by doing so they will be treated fairly and their parenting responsibilities and rights will be respected, is the Scottish Government's aspiration for all parents (National Parenting Strategy, 2012).

> *'There are lasting effects of early years experiences in shaping students' longer term academic outcomes up to age 18.'*
> **(Sammons, Toth and Sylva, 2015)**

Despite this, the role of parents continues to evolve along with care-giving arrangements, number of parents in employment, family structures and a growing culturally diverse population.

> *'We want to ensure that Scotland's parents have the skills, knowledge and respect to provide that support with confidence.'*
> **(National Parenting Strategy, 2012)**

Research also shows that 'positive parenting experiences, especially a more stimulating home learning environment when children were young, helped to promote better long term outcomes' (Sammons, Toth and Sylva, 2015). Highlighting to parents the positive impact that they can have on their children's learning is crucial.

Early learning and childcare settings, schools and communities must be open to the involvement of parents in the work they do and they should develop ways to create effective partnerships. Additionally, providing information, practical support and developing strategies for supporting parents to help them engage with the setting and their children's learning is a key priority. There may be support for settings, schools, communities and parents from a range of practitioners and partner organisations such as Home/School Link workers, Family Support teams, those delivering community learning and development or other third sector organisations. Further information is available on the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations website. The Engaging With Families website has information on how to complete successful funding bids and identified sources of funding.

Supporting children's learning: Home partnerships to support children's learning

Successful partnership working depends on the development of mutual trust and respect between practitioners and parents. The skills, knowledge and experiences that all parents and practitioners contribute, should be used to support children's learning.

The development of good relationships when things are going well can make it easier for both parents and practitioners to make contact when either of them has a concern.

There are many opportunities for staff to contact parents informally:

- Day-to-day contact in the playroom/playground, at the gate or out in the community

- At breakfast or after school clubs

- Fundraising events

- Social events

- Events such as sports day, concerts, assemblies, community activities

- Introductory home visits, enrolment days, family learning opportunities

Working in partnership with parents may be new to some practitioners and they may need support to make this work effectively. Local Authorities may want to consider what development opportunities are available to support practitioners in their communications and partnerships with parents. For example, workshops on 'Making the most of one-to-one meetings with parents' or 'How to engage parents in their children's learning' can help develop ideas and skills. Further information and research is available on the Engaging with Families website.

What it looks like when things go well

- Parents feel they are welcome in the setting and that staff are approachable.

- There are lots of opportunities for parents to get involved in different activities.

- The setting understands the needs of parents, the local community and develops ways of working which are supportive and inclusive.

- Parents and practitioners are asked about what is important to them, what they would like to see happening and the actions taken as a result.

- Children and young people contribute their ideas about what is important to them and how their parents and families can become involved.

- Parents are motivated and encouraged to be engaged in their children's learning but also to continue their own lifelong learning.

- Practitioners recognise and take account of the diversity in family structures as well as other competing priorities, commitments and responsibilities.

- Parents are able to become involved in one-off short term projects as and when their circumstances permit, without being committed to a longer term arrangement.

- Parents have the confidence to take part and their skills are recognised and utilised within the setting.

- Practitioners engage with parents in a variety of ways to help build positive relationships and capacity.

- The setting recognises cultural diversities amongst parents and is inclusive. For example, there is information about the ways parents can take part in the life of the setting in different formats and languages. Interpreters and signers are provided when necessary to ensure that all parents have access to information. Facilities and venues are accessible by all.

- The setting recognises the concerns of parents resulting from their own experiences of education and provides positive or alternative ways for those parents to become engaged in their child's learning. Where necessary, settings should work with other practitioners or partner organisations to help parents become involved and engaged.

- Support and development opportunities are offered to everyone who is taking on a new role such as membership of the Parent Council, parent group, volunteering to help practitioners with activities or leading a group.

- The School Improvement Plan identifies priority areas in which parents can become involved to raise attainment for all across children's learning.

Activity 1: Promoting parental engagement in children's learning

Purpose

Working with partners or other practitioners to increase parental engagement in children's learning

Questions from this activity could also be shared with parents to gather their views. The activity could be carried out again to evaluate and measure the changes and impact of partnerships with parents.

Consider the following reflective questions:

- How welcoming is your setting to parents in terms of how it looks when parents come in and in the way practitioners greet them? How often do you ask parents and pupils for their ideas to improve and enhance the setting? How is the information used and fed back to parents?

- Consider the possibility of creating an area specifically for parents within the setting and including them in the process of developing the space.

- Identify the range of ways parents and practitioners are able to meet to share ideas about supporting your setting. How could you improve this to increase engagement?

- How flexible and in what ways does your setting meet the needs of parents in terms of when activities are arranged.

- How are parents and the local community or other practitioners informed of and involved in new initiatives? How effective is communication about new initiatives and how do you know?

- As well as the on-going tasks and roles that parents can fulfil, what opportunities are there for parents to do one-off tasks with no long-term commitment?

- In what ways does your setting enable parents to get to know each other outside the setting (barbeque in the summer, ceilidhs, family nights)?

- How is information made available to parents? Is the information provided in different formats and through channels that reach everyone? Consider if there are any groups of parents who could be missed out eg non-resident parents, service families, teenage parents, partners of parents who are in prison.

- What practical support is there to help parents become involved? For example, on a parents' evening or curricular night, does the setting organise transport for parents and families who are unable to get to the setting after hours due to a lack of finances or transport options?

- How clear is it that members of the child's extended family such as grandparents or other relatives are welcome to be involved? How are families made aware of this?

- How is information about adult and family learning classes made accessible to parents and families? Do you have a referral system set up with partner agencies?

- How are parents guided through the respective roles and responsibilities both they and practitioners fulfil when volunteering and working with other children and young people, as well as their own?

- Do you have the information you need on matters such as the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) requirements for people working alongside children and young people? What system is in place to support parents through the process should they require some assistance?

- Are there families in your setting that would benefit from targeted support due to singular or multiple needs that are impacting on their health and wellbeing, development and/or learning? Further information is available in the 'How Good is our School (4th Edition)?'

Example 1

Involving parents in planning parents' evenings

Parents at a primary school in North Lanarkshire were consulted on how the school could improve their partnership with parents. Many parents felt that the arrangements for parents' evenings could be improved. The meetings were held in the hall and waiting parents could overhear what the teacher was saying to others. Parents felt uncomfortable about raising issues with the teacher.

To solve this problem, the layout of the hall was changed. Plants and dividers were used to separate tables from waiting areas. Soft music was also introduced to help prevent others overhearing what was being said.

At a secondary school in North Lanarkshire, parents were asked what time they preferred for parents'

evenings. After the consultation, parents' meetings were arranged between 4.00-6.30 pm and young people were encouraged to come along as well.

Example 2

Partnership with Families

An Early Childhood Centre aims to provide an inclusive and supportive quality service for children aged 0-8 and their families. It was noted that there were some children attending who had been diagnosed as having Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The families of this group of children highlighted to staff their concerns regarding challenging behaviours displayed and the difficulties parents faced in dealing with these behaviours.

Staff recognised the importance of making the parents feel valued and listened carefully to their assessment of their children and their needs and difficulties. The Head of Centre approached the Educational Psychologist, who agreed to facilitate a meeting with these parents, to give advice and guidance on their concerns.

These regular meetings have not only given support and access from professionals to help deal with issues relating to the children and ASD, but have also given the parents the opportunity to support one another.

The group has grown to seven parents, including two parents whose children currently attend a specialist provision. They have set up a 'WhatsApp' link on their phones and contact each other regularly. They also meet at other times and support each other in outings with their children. Feedback from the parents has been very positive with comments such as:

> 'Everything you hear, especially on Facebook, is about how "perfect" other people's children are, you could cry, so it's good to talk to others who understand' and 'not only have I had support for my child but I have made friends'.

Next steps include establishing regular meetings with the children's grandparents and Communication/Play sessions to be offered to both parents and grandparents of children with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The Centre has now established a network of support comprising of Additional Support Needs Co-ordinator, Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapist and Peripatetic Teacher for Support who all have different but complementary roles and who are currently working towards having an Autism and Communication Friendly Centre which will be of benefit to all children and their families.

Activity 2: Gathering parental views

Purpose

To identify times and methods to make it easier for parents to attend parents' meetings or to gather parental views

This activity can be adapted to gather views on a variety of topics or to review the current approaches to gathering views and assessing how successful they have been. For example, you may wish to do a 'vox pop' via smart phones to gather the views of parents. The results will help influence areas for future development.

Organising and collating a survey will take around a day or so each, but can fit around other work. Working in partnership with your Parent Council or organised parent group will provide support to practitioners undertaking this activity. Children and young people should also be included in the process.

It will be important to give parents and families enough time to respond to the questions. Give the survey out well in advance of the parents' meetings or other event that you are gathering views on.

Step 1: **Planning the survey**

- The Parent Council/parent group works with practitioners to plan the questions to ask – see the sample parent survey which can be adapted.
- Agree how long parents will be given to respond to the survey – four weeks is standard.

Step 2: **Contact parents**

- Send the survey to each parent.
- Put up a poster in the entrance to your building, asking similar questions.
- Ask children and young people what they think through their classes, the School/Pupil Council or clubs.
- Encourage children/young people and their parents to discuss with each other what they think will work best.

Step 3: **Analyse findings and agree the best action to take**

- Collate the replies and analyse the responses.
- The Parent Council/parent group could do this in partnership with the headteacher, Head of Service/centre or other practitioners, children and young people.

Step 4: **Informing all parents**

- Report back on the survey results and the action which will be taken to practitioners, parents, children and young people.
- Use a variety of methods to get the information across.

Sample parent survey

Parental surveys should be adapted to take local context into consideration.

Parents' evenings are held each term. We want to be sure that these are as useful for you as possible. We would appreciate any suggestions you have to make these meetings convenient for you and your children. Please tell us your views.

As an alternative, you could use a visible voting system and allow parents to place coloured balls in a tube to identify their preferred options for parents' meetings.

Question 1: Time and day of meetings

Parents' meetings are usually held on a weekday evening from 7.00-9.00 pm. Would you prefer:

- the current time – a weekday from 7.00-9.00 pm
- a weekday from 4.00-7.00 pm
- an afternoon over the weekend?

Question 2: The place meetings are held

Meetings are currently held in the main hall at the setting or school. Some parents have told us they find this noisy and cold in the evenings. We would appreciate your ideas on what is working well and what we could change to make them better.

- Are there any aspects about the existing arrangements that are working well?
- What would you like to see changing or improving?

Question 3: Providing information about activities in the setting/school/community

The Parent Council/parent group and the Pupil Council have both offered to have a stall at parents' evenings. Are there other groups or activities in the setting or community that you would like information on when you attend parents' meetings?

Please list any:

Question 4: Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to make?

Thank you for your help.

You can return this to the office by post, with your child, or by email – a copy of the form is on our website. Forms should be returned by_____.

This survey was carried out by the school Parent Council/parent group in partnership with practitioners, children and young people.

Communications and positive relationships

Both practitioners and parents agree that the basis for developing positive relationships is good communication. Consideration needs to be given to this and some local authorities and settings have developed communication strategies which outline the principles of good communication and the various ways it will be undertaken. The language used in all communications with parents should be free of educational jargon or terms, easy to read and understand, using colour and pictures where appropriate and possible.

Below are a few of the ideas that practitioners and parents have suggested:

- Reach out to parents at places they already visit: shops, post offices, supermarkets, libraries, doctors' surgeries, nail bars and ensure that information is available there and a positive image of the setting or school is presented. Make use of face-to-face contact and visual materials. Utilise children and young people as ambassadors.

- Use local media channels eg radio, newspapers, magazines, posters etc, to let parents know what is happening in the setting or school and share 'good news' stories about what children and young people are learning or involved in.

- Have one-to-one direct conversations and communications with parents. Personally invite them to attend an event or get involved.

- Use electronic methods such as text messages, emails, blogs or social media where possible or relevant.

- Build relationships through contact with parents at drama, music and sport events, parents' nights, other social/community events.

- Make use of parent-to-parent contacts such as 'snowballing' (where one parent agrees to bring along or introduce another), meeting at the gate, parents' nights, information sessions led by parents.

- Make use of existing opportunities, for example transition phases (early learning to primary, primary to secondary, community groups).

- Share key facts such as the research findings on the difference parents make.

- Know your local community and adapt communications accordingly. Add in your own ideas and approaches.

- Use your Parent Council as a focus group to make sure that communications sent to parents are written in a user-friendly way.

Activity 3: Communications and relationships

Purpose

Create effective methods of communication with parents in a way that is meaningful to them. This fosters positive, lasting relationships.

Consider the following as a team. Your Parent Council or parent group could ask the wider parent forum what they think.

- Write as many methods of communication as you possibly can.

- List the six most effective methods of communicating with your parents. What makes these particularly successful?

- Does digital communication exclude parents in your setting or school? How can this be addressed?

- How does your setting overcome the challenge of letters and other information remaining in school bags?

- How regularly do you consider the quality and variety of communication with your parents? What is the process for this?

- What guidelines are in place in your setting for parents and staff regarding communication? How are these devised, how regularly are they reviewed and who is involved?

- How do you keep parents informed so that they understand why and how Scottish education is changing? Consider the National Improvement Framework, Scottish Attainment Challenge, Developing the Young Workforce.

- How do you communicate with parents about the progress, achievement and attainment of their children and young people?

- How do you judge the quality of relationships with parents? What evidence do you have for this?

Example 3

A secondary school in Stirling Council identified the need for a more efficient means of communicating with parents and received support to develop an email system. The project piloted a dedicated email address for parental enquiries. All parents in the school were surveyed to ask if they were interested in using email and if so, for what types of communication. The email addresses were collected and entered into a new system and a protocol was developed to ensure efficient and effective responses or acknowledgments within a reasonable timescale. Guidance was given to parents and staff as to what the email system could and could not be used for.

Approximately 60% of parents in the school signed up to using the new system. During the 3-month trial period the school used the system to send out various information documents to parents including the school newsletter and information on drug awareness events. Parental enquiries included pastoral care issues, fundraising and meeting arrangements and they were keen to make use of the system as a means of easier access to information relating to the school. Feedback from parents was positive:

> *'Just to say that I am finding the system very useful and efficient.'*

'I am very pleased, as a parent, that I now have access to the information certain teenagers in my house leave lying in the bottom of their bags.'

'I think this system will benefit many and has benefits perhaps not envisaged for parents like me working away from home.'

Activity 4: Good relationships depend on staff and parents working together to ensure that the ethos in our establishment is a positive one

Purpose

Case study example

Think about a particular case where the outcome was successful and contrast it with a case which was not successful. Review both cases and identify what you would do differently to bring about a better outcome.

Reflective questions:

- How did you support the family to understand the purpose and impact of their engagement in their children's learning?

- What methods of communication were used?

- How often did you communicate with the family?

- What other approaches did you use to influence a change in the relationship?

- How do you judge the quality of the relationships you have with parents and families?

How children and young people can be more involved in the process

Children and young people often know what would work best for their parents and their families. Settings and schools are encouraged to develop pupil discussion groups as part of their work on Citizenship and Enterprise Education. There may be committees or groups considering equality issues in the setting or school; a Hungry for Success Committee; or an Eco Group. All of these groups could be asked to consider how parents and the wider community and partners could be involved or engaged and support their learning in these areas.

Ways for local authorities, settings, schools and parents to involve children and young people include:

- School/Pupil councils

- An authority-wide young person's forum

- Through community learning and development dedicated youth work staff

- An authority-wide consultation forum for all in line with the Disability Equality Duty looking at support issues

- A representative on the Parent Council

- Circle time/golden time – where practitioners and children in primary schools have a chance to talk together and share news and information informally

- Youth involvement in locality planning and community planning networks

- The use of suggestion or ideas boxes or perhaps through the local Dialogue Youth Team

- Graffiti/noticeboards which act as a permanent comment boards

- Joint work or projects between staff, parents and children and young people representatives. Including children and young people in formal and informal consultation processes when new ideas are being developed

- Being part of social events

- Helping in practical ways with activities at the setting

Example 4

Pupils, parents and practitioners working together – outdoor learning boxes

In a setting in Perth and Kinross, parents with children in the early years were invited to sessions to explore learning activities through the use of outdoor learning boxes. The Early Years Support teacher ran a number of outdoor learning sessions for parents focusing on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These were very popular events and parents became empowered to try activities themselves. Parents were also involved in creating new outdoor learning boxes using resources which were easily available. The resources were used by parents and children to learn together in the outdoors.

The positive relaxed ethos created during these activities built a good relationship between pupils, parents and teachers. The project enhanced the active learning in the outdoors and encouraged parents to replicate and extend this learning in the home environment. Aims of the project were to:

- encourage parents to feel comfortable coming into school and to share in their child's learning

- focus on literacy and numeracy activities using outdoor resources

- promote a link between rich learning experiences in school and home/family learning.

Resolving disagreements

No matter how good communications are, there will be times when there are disagreements or misunderstandings. Using some of the ideas in these guidelines can be a way of helping parents to communicate their concerns.

Guidelines you may provide to parents

If your concerns are in connection with an individual child:

- Raise the matter with a member of staff in the way that is easiest for you, by talking, emailing, phoning, or in writing. Concerns are more easily resolved by talking about them at the earliest possible stage. The setting or school will want to know if you have a concern. The sooner you tell them about it the better the outcome is likely to be.

- If your concern is urgent make sure you let staff know this.

- Complaints/concerns are usually resolved by people coming together, talking and agreeing a suitable way forward or action plan. However, there are some situations where a complaint will have to be investigated and a decision made at a later stage.

- If you are going to a meeting in the setting or school you may want to take someone with you for support.

- Sometimes it helps to write things down in advance of a meeting or talk things through with someone else.

- Try to stick to facts and feelings. Expressing how you feel is very important and it will help staff.

- Decide whether it would be helpful to have your child with you at the meeting or whether an initial meeting with staff would be better.

- If you feel you are not being heard or taken seriously, you can ask to speak to another member of staff, have someone from the local authority to support you, or an independent advocate or mediator.

- The headteacher should be made aware of any unresolved concerns, but if the complaint is about the headteacher and it cannot be resolved, you should contact someone from your local authority. Your local authority will have a complaints procedure.

If your concerns are about something else:

The same applies as in a concern about an individual child or young person and you should start by talking to staff. However, you can also raise your concerns with the Parent Council (if you are in a primary or secondary setting). If, after discussion with the setting and local authority, the Parent Council is unable to reach a satisfactory outcome for these concerns, they are able to make representation to Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Assessment and reporting

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. Knowing what has been learned and understood provides a picture of a child or young person's progress and achievements. It also helps to identify next steps in learning.

As with all aspects of Curriculum for Excellence, assessment practices should be seen from the perspective of the learner. Learners should be engaged in all aspects of assessment processes and be afforded an element of choice and personalisation in showing that they have achieved the intended outcomes.

As learners move through the curriculum, they will experience a range of approaches to assessment. From the learner's perspective, assessment will begin in the early learning and childcare setting by focusing on personal development and feedback with experiences built around the developing child, while in the senior phase young people will experience assessment practices which lead to qualifications.

Building the Curriculum 5: a framework for assessment outlines the key purposes and features of reporting within *Curriculum for Excellence*. The focus of reporting is to support and improve learning:

> *'Reporting has two main purposes. Firstly, it provides clear, positive and constructive feedback about children's and young people's learning and progress, looking back on what has been achieved against standards and expectations. Secondly, it creates an agenda for discussions between learners and those teaching and supporting them about their next steps in learning.'*
> **(Building the Curriculum 5: A framework for assessment, p42)**

Reporting allows information to be shared and exchanged among children and young people, parents and staff. At the centre of reporting are informed discussions between teachers and parents on their child's learning. It focuses on what information is needed to ensure that parents know what their child has achieved and how well he/she is doing against expectations. It provides a summary of what the learner has aimed for; describes progress in terms of what the learner has achieved so far; and sets out for the learner, parents and staff what needs to be done to ensure continued progress and improved standards of achievement.

Reporting makes the child or young person's learning and achievement explicit to all and helps engage parents actively in their child's learning. It encourages active parental engagement as well as providing information and feedback to them on their child's progress and achievements.

Activity 5 - Purpose of Assessment

Purpose

To ensure parents understand the purpose and methods of assessment and reporting

Consider the following reflective questions:

- How are parents being supported to understand the purpose of your assessment approaches to support children and young people's learning and in planning next steps?

- How are you demonstrating to parents that, as part of the assessment process, they can support their children and young people's learning and planning next steps?

- How effective are you in doing these? Suggest possible changes in your current practice which would lead to better understanding and involvement/engagement of parents.

Activity 6 – Assessment and reporting evidence

Purpose

To find out how useful parents find the information given to them about their children's learning and progress

Consider the following reflective questions:

- How is information shared with parents so that they understand the relevance of the wide range of evidence gathered to assess their child's progress?

- Find out how much of this your parents are aware of. How are you planning to improve on this?

- How useful have parents found this evidence in helping them understand how their child is progressing and the next steps in their learning?

- How do you demonstrate approaches to assessment and reporting so that parents have a better understanding of the different types of approaches you use? For example, what would parents understand by peer- and self-evaluation? How effective are you at doing self-evaluation? What evidence do you have that would suggest you are particularly effective?

Activity 7 – Assessment information

Purpose

To consider how information is shared with parents and how effective this is

1. Consider how you share assessment information with parents eg range of reporting approaches. List them here:

    - On an on-going basis

    - Periodically

    - At key transitions

2. How effective are each of these reporting approaches in describing to parents how their child or young person is progressing? How do you know?

3. How effective are these approaches in providing opportunities for dialogue between staff, parents and pupils about progress and achievement?

4. How could parents' consultation nights (parents' evenings, meetings) be more productive in taking account of parents' views and in supporting learning?

Activity 8 – Reporting to parents

Purpose

Improve how your reports are written so that parents have a full understanding of how their children and young people have been assessed and how they can support their learning at home.

- Consider a sample of a written report your setting, school or centre has produced to report to parents.

- Individually take a closer look at the report and identify (by highlighting) the qualitative statements.

In groups consider the qualitative statements you have highlighted within the written report to parents and discuss the questions below.

1. To what extent does the language used clearly describe to parents how their child or young person is progressing in their learning?

2. How well does the report give a clear indication of the learner's strengths and areas for development?

3. To what extent does the information within the report set out next steps and how parents might support their child or young person to progress in their learning?

4. How well does the report encourage parents and their children and young people to talk about their learning and progress?

5. How do you encourage parents to give feedback and how is this taken into account to support learning?

6. Consider how the report could be improved and how parents, children and young people could be involved in this.

Activity 9 – Taking account of parental views

Purpose

To ensure that parents' views are taken into consideration when reporting on progress and how these views can improve attainment in their children and young people's learning.

Consider the following reflective questions:

- What opportunities are there for all parents' views about their child's progress and learning, to be heard and taken into consideration?

- Taking account of any barriers that parents may face in expressing their views, what other opportunities might you consider to allow all parents to make their views known?

- Consider how you encourage children and young people to talk to their parents about their learning and progress.

- In preparing profiles what account is taken in recognising achievements outwith the setting or school?

- How can a profile be best used to share a child or young person's achievements and strengths with their family?

Activity 10 - Involving parents in transitions

Children and young people are entitled to support to help them prepare for and deal with transitions from stage to stage, class to class and between sectors and establishments. Recognising the vital role of parents in supporting their children at these key transitions is important. Transition stages are also a time of change for parents who may also need support and reassurances themselves.

Reflective questions:

- How do you currently communicate and involve parents in transition arrangements?

- What makes a positive or negative transition experience?

- What are the challenges to communicating and involving parents in transition arrangements?

- What are the benefits of improving parental involvement in transitions?

- How are parental views and knowledge taken into consideration to support children and young people through transitions?

- What steps are taken to gather feedback from parents to inform future transitions?

- How are parents helped to understand how their involvement and support can best continue after the transition?

Example 6

Stay and Play Group

In an isolated rural area where there was no local playgroup or early learning and childcare setting, a childminder provides places for 3 and 4 year olds in partnership with the local authority. Six families asked the childminder if they could use her playroom for a parent and toddler group. A trial period was agreed for 6 weeks with the aim of:

- providing a social and stimulating experience for local children which will ease transition to an early learning and childcare setting and support their overall development

- encouraging parents to develop a network of support for each other

- providing an informal setting where parents can learn about their child and develop their parenting skills by sharing ideas and good practice with the childminder, staff and each other.

The trial period was very successful and the activities are continuing. Comments from parents included:

'I have more friends.'
'My child has more friends.'
'I feel more supported.'
'I have people to talk to when I need them.'
'My child and I do more things together.'
'I feel I belong in this neighbourhood.'

Example 7

Community Childminding

A child who was taken into care was displaying signs of low self-confidence, lack of trust and attachment difficulties. The child's family were anxious for her to be able to build strong, healthy relationships with her peers before transitioning into an early learning and childcare setting. A smaller setting was considered more beneficial to meet the child's needs.

As an early intervention, the Community Childminding Service was contacted with a view to helping reshape the child's life journey and develop her skills. After only a short period of time, it was evident that the child was benefiting from the service in a range of ways. These included: increased trust; appropriate toileting habits; eye contact; improved communication skills; improved engagement and socialisation with other children; and increased speech and language abilities. The family felt that the Community Childminding Service and the early intervention had positively impacted on the child as well as the wider family. It has also made the transition to an early learning and childcare setting much easier.

Example 8

Joint Transition Project

In Argyll and Bute two joint transition projects in Oban and Lorn and Mid Argyll involved parents as partners. The projects were based around a storybook, both projects had a literacy focus but the learning was taken forward in different directions by the children. Additional books were provided for nurseries to involve parents from the start and both projects culminated in a celebration event for parents, children, community partners and staff. Short reports detailing parental involvement and parental quotes can be found on the Sharing Argyll Learning Blog in these posts on the Gruffalo Oban and Lorn Transition Event and the Blue Kangaroo Mid Argyll Transition Event.

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