

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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| COMMITTEE | Education Operational Delivery Committee |
| DATE | 3 June 2021 |
| EXEMPT | No |
| CONFIDENTIAL | No |
| REPORT TITLE | Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan |
| REPORT NUMBER | OPE/21/134 |
| DIRECTOR | Rob Polkinghorne |
| CHIEF OFFICER | Eleanor Shepperd |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Donna Cuthill |
| TERMS OF REFERENCE | 1.1.1 |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the refreshed Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan (PIE) 2021 -2024.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee -

- 2.1 note the evaluation of the existing plan;
- 2.2 approve the new Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan 2021-2024; and
- 2.3 instruct the Chief Education Officer to report progress through the regular updates provided to Committee on the service's delivery of the National Improvement Framework Plan.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 The Scottish School (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 recognises the vital role that parents and other carers play in children's learning and development. Parents are the first and ongoing educators of their own children.
- 3.1.2 Local Authorities have a duty to prepare and regularly review approaches to parental involvement and engagement and the current document covers the period 2018-2021. It details how the Local Authority will:
 - involve parents in their own child's education, and that provided by a school to its pupils generally;
 - give advice and information to parents in respect of their own child;
 - promote the establishment of Parent Councils in schools and support their operation; and
 - establish a complaints procedure for their duties under the Act.
- 3.1.3 The education authority must seek and take account of the views of all those with an interest in the authority's implementation of its duties, or its complaints procedures, when developing or reviewing its approach. A range of approaches have been used to engage and consult with key stakeholders including in evaluating and planning including:
 - regular engagement with parents through early focus groups (pre pandemic), with Parent Councils at termly meetings, liaising with two Aberdeen City Parent Representatives from the National Parent Forum

of Scotland and by using a survey to check emerging themes for further development;

- regular engagement with schools and the establishment of a PIE working group across all sectors which included those with corporate parenting and kinship caring responsibilities;
- the establishment of a working group to help identify key areas of future focus; and
- children and young people by reviewing survey responses.

3.1.4 COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of valuing and supporting parents in their children's lives, learning and development and relationships between home and school have been strengthened in many cases, The service are keen to build further on this.

3.1.5 The last year has presented a number of challenges to families and highlighted a need to address issues such as mental health and wellbeing, fuel and food poverty, loss of employment, isolation and lack of access to some family support services.

3.1.6 The education service has tried to use the refresh of our Plan to re-set our approaches and have deliberately kept planning high level to enable on-going agility through the more detailed and routinely monitored National Improvement Framework Plan.

3.2 CURRENT STATE – WHERE ARE WE WITH REGARD TO PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT?

3.2.1 The PIE for 2018-2021 used J Epstein's model to reflect six areas of parental engagement:

- Communication – high quality communication from home to school;
- Sharing learning – at home, school, and community;
- Supporting parenting – strengthening families to support children in all aspects of their learning and development;
- Volunteering – contributing to the life and work of the school;
- Parental Voice – genuine influence in decision making in planning, policy making and school improvement; and
- Collaboration with community – working in partnership with parents and partners to support families.

3.2.2 Schools made good use of the six themes to help develop practice at school level and the model provided a useful structure. A visual resource was created to support Parent Councils' understanding of the existing plan. This proved helpful in not only supporting a shared understanding of the six themes but developing Parent Council involvement in supporting wider parental engagement. Examples cited were the further promotion of volunteering opportunities and using parents' views to plan specific events such as 'Confident Parenting' and 'How to build a Mathematician' events.

3.2.3 In reviewing the impact of the 2018-2021 Plan, each of the themes has been explored with Focus Groups of parents, the City-wide Parent Forum and

through a survey issued to all parents and carers in April 2021. National Census data and Learning at a Distance survey responses have also informed our evaluation.

- 3.3.1 **Communication** – National Census data indicates that 89% of Aberdeen parents found schools were approachable and welcoming to parents which is in keeping with the national average. 79% of parents were confident their school would respond helpfully to comments and feedback which is higher than the national average of 75%. During the period of school building closures 83% of parents reported that they felt confident about contacting staff with questions or concerns (Learning at Distance Survey 2020). The range of communication methods extended beyond those usually used by schools to support two-way communication with greater use made of Group Call and virtual platforms. More flexible approaches have been welcomed by families and schools report greater attendance at Parent Council and parent meetings.
- 3.3.2 Local Government Benchmarking data shows that there has been an increase in the number of adults expressing satisfaction with local schools (68.4% in 19/20 compared with 67% in 17/18). This positive trend is welcomed but the service is keen to further improve.
- 3.3.3 Census Data suggests 65% of parents value regular communication (weekly /monthly) with their school. Examples include E-newsletters, Twitter, Facebook, and the Aberdeen Learns monthly E-newsletter which makes use of Microsoft Sway. The monthly service newsletter provides a regular opportunity for parents to help shape the work of the education service and provides an opportunity for parents to hear how parental views are informing planning to close the feedback loop. 72% of parents who responded to a survey in May 2021 said that they regularly accessed the newsletter. 95% of the parents who reported that they accessed the newsletter stated that they found the information helpful to them.
- 3.3.4 Communication has been accelerated over the last 14 months and it will be important to build on this practice as we move forward.
- 3.4.1 **Sharing Learning** – schools continue to share learning and are creative in how they celebrate children’s achievements. A move to virtual delivery of the curriculum saw progress in this area accelerate beyond the more traditional open days, stay and play sessions and use of Interactive Learning Diaries. National Census data pre lockdown indicated that 70% of parents felt schools kept them well informed about their child’s progress but Learning at a Distance survey responses indicate this has increased further during the period of digital delivery.
- 3.4.2 The use of Seesaw and Google Suite for Education (G Suite) enabled parents to share learning from home to school and celebrate their children’s progress. Almost all schools provided opportunities for families to better understand how to effectively use the platforms to support learning. Parents noted that the quality of the offer improved from the first to the second period of lockdown. 92.4% (strongly) agreed they had access to the necessary digital resources to

support their child's learning which is an increase of 1.8% for the first period of school closure in March 2020. 18% of parents who responded to a survey in May 2021 noted that they would value further support in using digital tools to support their child's learning.

3.4.3 Individual schools and the education service sought regular feedback from parents and carers to help highlight issues and strengthen our response to the pandemic. The Council invested in a significant number of Chromebooks to address technology barriers identified and as a result 16,500 Chromebooks were issued to families. 92% parents reported they had digital access to support their child's learning.

3.4.4 Significant progress has been made in sharing learning more consistently.

3.5.1 **Supporting Parenting** – many schools have used Scottish Attainment Challenge funding to provide families with 1:1 or group support sessions. Family Learning opportunities have become more innovative and have helped build capacity in families. Pre lockdown the Family Learning Team were engaged in very traditional face to face support with 48 families. During lockdown, the team continued to support by moving onto digital platforms and using social media. Successes include:

- The creation and distribution of 170 outdoor learning packs;
- Co-delivery of the citywide Food and Fun initiative in vulnerable hubs;
- Co-delivery of summer holiday activities;
- Supporting 123 families connected with vulnerable hubs Spring 2020 and providing arts/crafts material for children;
- Supporting 170 families to prepare for a return to school covering areas such as routines and sleep;
- The delivery of a number of on-line courses including Mindfulness; Canna dine oot, so dine in; Women's Wellbeing Choir; and
- The development and delivery of 300 Rainbow Robin packs.

3.5.2 Secondary schools continue to deliver various parent events which enable school staff to share information on how to support young people both at secondary school and beyond. Areas such as Developing the Young Workforce, pathway planning information sessions and understanding the SQA Alternative Certification Model are routine in schools. During lockdown many of these events went to online platforms using Microsoft Teams, Google Meet and a newly launched Parent Evening Booking System. On-line platforms have helped engage a wider audience of parents who may have traditionally found it difficult to attend because of childcare and working patterns.

3.5.3 55% of parents reported in the February Learning at a Distance Survey that schools regularly share ideas about how they can support their child's learning at home. Similarly, 53% of parents highlighted the activities shared allowed children and their families to learn together. The Parent Learning Hub was developed to try to address this relatively low percentage.

3.5.4 The Parent Learning Hub website was launched in April 2020 designed to support Learning at Home, parenting, and signpost families to a wide range of

support agencies. Nearly 5000 families have accessed the site. Most popular areas visited were Learning at Home (primary), transitions, holiday activities, information on the Accord card and health and wellbeing information. June 2020 saw the highest daily peak of visitors at 1005. Google Analytics indicates that visitors to the site tend to go to specific pages. Google Analytics will continue to be used to develop our understanding of site usage, shape content and promotion. A parent focus group will help inform the further development of the Digital Hub to ensure we maximise the potential of the site.

- 3.5.5 Education continues to work in partnership with a range of partners who give specific support to meet each individual family's needs. Organisations have helped families in many ways and we remain grateful for their expertise in this area. Feedback from a Partnership Survey in June 2020 highlighted the wide range of supports offered through calls, emails, phone calls, learning resource packs, food packages, and garden visits.
- 3.5.6 Progress in this area has been rapid and the Parent Learning Hub should now be more fully evaluated to help guide next steps.
- 3.6.1 **Volunteering** – Curriculum enrichment, supporting fundraising and using parents' skills, time and interests for wider achievement are vital to support the work and life of the schools. Parent councils and fundraising groups contribute many hours in volunteering to ensure the families and staff benefit from activities and community events. Feedback from a school focus group has highlighted a need for a citywide volunteering resource to support parent involvement in school.
- 3.6.2 National Census data prior to lockdown highlighted that 80% of parents were given opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. Of these, 57% parents reported they would like to be more involved in school life. 69% of parents cited work commitments got in the way of greater involvement. The increase in digital engagement over the last year has increased engagement and enabled more opportunities for parents to attend information sessions and parent council meetings without concern for managing childcare and travel in the evenings. The use of digital platforms should be built upon further to remove barriers for families.
- 3.6.3 COVID-19 restrictions have limited face-to-face volunteering although parent groups have continued to raise money and organised socially distanced events to boost morale within the school community. As restrictions are gradually lifted it will be important to open up these opportunities once again.
- 3.6.5 The Aberdeen City Parent Forum has requested that Bikeability training be reinstated as early as possible, and officers worked with Active Schools to respond positively to this request. The service will continue to open up opportunities in keeping with national return to school guidance and plan to carefully monitor levels of volunteering over the year to help secure improvement.

- 3.7.1 **Parent Voice** – Almost all Aberdeen schools have a Parent Council. Parental voice continues to be important in leading improvements within schools. All School Improvement Plans now record the involvement and contribution of parents in self-evaluation. 75% of parents in Aberdeen City report that they feel that Parent Council views and suggestions are considered by senior management whilst 60% agreed / strongly agreed their school sought their personal views and opinions. 83% of parents who responded to a survey of parents in May 2021 stated that their school had an active Parent Council and 22% noted their involvement with their Parent Council. 82% of parent felt that their Parent Council had a positive impact.
- 3.7.2 ACC continues to work together with Aberdeen City Parent Forum (ACPF) and share information on the work of the education service. ACC actively promotes city wide opportunities to support development of ACC policies and frameworks. Parents continue to be represented on the Education Operational Delivery Committee (EODC) as valued voting members.
- 3.7.3 Committee representatives at EODC suggested that a mechanism be established to include parent voice in providing assurance to Committee on the service's performance and the service look forward to now considering how to include the views of the City-Wide Parent Forum in the Education Service Assurance Map.
- 3.8.1 **Collaboration with Community** – schools continue to actively form partnerships with businesses and third sector partners to support the delivery of the curriculum as well as offering targeted interventions to learners and families.
- 3.8.2 A Partnership Survey in June 2020 highlighted the work of city partners and services who were engaged in supporting 538 vulnerable families at that time. They reported parental concerns around transitions and children's additional support needs at that time. Some returns cited low parental confidence, skills, and knowledge to organise and support their children's learning. This feedback will help inform the refresh of the Parent Hub.
- 3.8.3 Family Learning continues to develop strong partnerships with families and are a key partner in our Fit like Hubs. 60 families are supported via the home support team and 40 supported from referrals from the Fit Like hub. Pupil Equity Funding in three primary schools has enabled a variety of opportunities from individual 1:1 support to 27 families and a wide-ranging community programme including freecycle, gardening and cooking.
- 3.8.4 Collaboration across the partnership will be of critical importance as we emerge from the pandemic.

3.9 LOOKING FORWARD 2021-2024.

- 3.9.1 The new plan will require to be high level so that the service can continue to respond to changing needs with high levels of agility. The guiding principles will ensure relationships are at the heart of our practice when working with children

and their families. It will also ensure compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill, ensuring that we fulfil our obligations as duty bearers to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.

3.9.2 A key focus of our work will be to review the content of the Parent Hub to ensure that the resource continues to support families. There is also a need to improve the visibility of a range of Family Supports across the city including those helpful to families of children with additional support needs.

3.9.3 Community partnership working will be critical in the delivery of services to all families particularly the most vulnerable. The impact of lockdown highlights a need to further address inequality and consider how to further support families impacted by food, fuel, and financial poverty. Strong partnership working will be key in supporting family mental health and wellbeing.

3.9.4 Increasing opportunities for parents to build confidence and skills to support their children's learning at home and school will remain our focus. Education services will continue to strengthen partnerships with agencies who can help to support parents creatively in their children's learning particularly with numeracy, literacy and children's health and wellbeing.

3.9.5 Parental Engagement is a driver in the National Improvement Framework Plan. Aligning the new PIE plan with the National Improvement Framework Plan will bring a focus on working together with parents and partners to improve outcomes in the four priority areas:

- Improvement in attainment, particularly 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.

3.9.6 The high level PIE Plan (**Appendix A**) is detailed further in the National Improvement Framework Plan in order to ensure regular progress reporting to Committee, this also enables the service to refresh approaches on a yearly basis to take account of changing circumstances.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires the local authority to prepare a document containing their general policies for implementing their duties under the Act (referred to as a strategy in the Act), to review that document from time to time and to revise it whenever they conclude that it is appropriate to do so.

5.2 The Act further requires the local authority to publish details of activities undertaken annually regarding their parental involvement plan. This reporting will be through the National Improvement Framework Plan.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

| Category | Risk | Low (L) Medium (M) High (H) | Mitigation |
|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Strategic Risk | None | N/A | N/A |
| Compliance | Statutory duties and relevant legislation are referenced in the plan. | Low | Implementation of the PIE Plan will satisfy these legal duties. |
| Operational | Clear guidance and planning together with staff training around PIE. | Low | Strong partnership working with services & parents to engage and support their children's learning and family wellbeing. An increase in staff confidence and capacity to understand and support PIE. |
| Financial | The PIE is unlikely to carry any financial risk. | Low | All activity will be met from existing budgets. |
| Reputational | Not effectively supporting parents and families with their child's learning could present a reputational risk to the Council, including higher numbers of parental complaints. | Low | Effectively implementing the plan and close monitoring of impact will enable the Council to positively report on progress made in involving and engaging parents in their children's learning. |
| Environment / Climate | None. | n/a | n/a |

7. OUTCOMES

| <u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u> | |
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| | Impact of Report |
| Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement | <p>The proposal within this report is to support the delivery of Policy Statement 7 – Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners in the city.</p> <p>The paper seeks approval for PIE plan to be embedded within the ACC National Improvement Framework which will improve outcomes for learners and families, and evidence progress.</p> |
| Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan | |
| Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes | <p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of SO 6.</p> <p>Improvement in parental involvement and engagement will help parents to support their child’s learning and raise aspirations. Parents will be well informed to support young peoples’ choices. These changes will positively impact on our economy and support the theme of Aberdeen Prospers.</p> |
| Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes | <p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of all Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 3 to 7 in the LOIP.</p> <p>Successful implementation of the plan will lead to improved outcomes for children, young people, and their families. There will be a positive impact on children, young people and families including those with protected characteristics and support our work in ensuring that people are resilient, included and supported when needed.</p> |
| Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes | <p>The Strategy takes account of local need and will have a positive impact on individual communities across Aberdeen City.</p> |
| Regional and City Strategies | National Learning Together Plan 2021. |
| UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes | <p>This report considers the local authority’s legal obligations in respect of the legislation below:</p> <p>The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve parents in their child's education and learning; • welcomed as active participants in the life of the school; and |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouraged to express their views on school education generally and work in partnership with the school. <p>The Equality Act 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duties about diversity and equality so that children and their families are not discriminated against on grounds of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, language, faith or belief, and age. <p>Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty of education authority in providing school education. Raising standards. <p>The Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Handbook Legislation. <p>The National Improvement Framework Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.</p> |
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

| Assessment | Outcome |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Impact Assessment | Required |
| Data Protection Impact Assessment | Not Required |

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Goodall, J. (2017) *Narrowing the Achievement Gap – Parental Engagement with Children's Learning*. London, Routledge

Wager, F. (2021) *Impact of COVID-19: Parental engagement and involvement in education during the first lockdown period*. Education Scotland

Crew, M. 2020 Literature Review on the impact of Covid19 on families, and implications for the home learning environment. National Literacy Trust

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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