

EAST RENFREWSHIRE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

RELATED TO LEARNING

Engaging with Parents and Families
Promoting Parental Involvement

An Outline Strategy

November 2006



FOREWORD

The Education Department enjoys a strong partnership with parents in East Renfrewshire. The support of parents has contributed significantly to the success of our schools. Parents play their part in many ways; by supporting their child's learning at home and in the community, by communicating with school staff and supporting homework, by volunteering, by being a member of a Parent Teacher Association and through representing other parents on School Boards. Parents have responded enthusiastically to services that seek to promote their involvement, such as Curriculinks; Family Learning; Personal Learning Plans; and the Parent Information Line.

We are proud of what we have been able to achieve with our parent partners; however, it is time to do even more. We are aware that some parents find it difficult to play their full role, and we want to help release that untapped potential. We want to provide better, more flexible means for parents to take part. We want to provide opportunities to get involved at a time, in a place and in a way that suits parents' aspirations, skills, and needs.

We therefore welcome the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, 2006, which has offered a fresh opportunity to look together at how we can increase parental involvement. We hope this Guide will help schools and parents when formulating their strategy to implement the Act.

Councillor Mary Montague
Convener for Education, Work, Skills and Equality

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INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 lays down the legislative requirements for Parent Councils, the parent representative bodies that will replace School Boards in August 2007. The guidance that accompanies the Act makes it clear that the intention behind the legislation is to support parental involvement in a much wider sense, which is not only the representation of parents¹, but also the involvement of parents in children's learning and school² education. We value highly the input of parent representatives who help us manage our schools, appoint senior staff and help us shape policy. However, we also value greatly the contribution that parents and other family members make in supporting their children's learning, both at school and at home.

In 2005, the Education Department established a Family Learning Service. The policy of the Service is the starting point for considering our approach to parental engagement and involvement.

LINKS TO KEY POLICIES, PLANS AND LEGISLATION

Making a difference for East Renfrewshire: The Corporate Strategy, ERC (2003) The Council has made the following commitments:

'We will target the core skills of literacy and numeracy from the earliest contact with nurseries and schools and engage parents/carers to support their children's learning.

'We will improve information to, and communication with, parents about the education of children and young people to enable parents to participate more effectively in their children's care and education.'

Local Improvement Plan, ERC (2005-2008): The Education Department has made a commitment to '*promote better, more flexible parental involvement in children's learning*'.

Family Learning Policy, ERC (2005): This policy sets out the Education Department's approach to engaging with parents through a community learning and development approach.

Working and learning together to build stronger communities, Scottish Executive (2004): This document provides guidance on community learning and development approaches, which have an essential role in improving all public services and promoting community regeneration, social inclusion, life long learning and active citizenship. It therefore provides guidance on approaches that support the greater participation of parents, especially those who have more restricted opportunities and influence.

¹ Throughout the strategy, the term 'parent' refers to the child's parent, carer and or guardian. It also refers to parents who are not resident with the child.

² Throughout this document, the term 'schools' refers to schools, nurseries and family centres. The Act legislates for the involvement of parents of children in nursery classes only, but in East Renfrewshire, our strategy also includes our stand alone nurseries and family centres, including the establishment of parent councils.

A Curriculum for Excellence, (2004): Schools are required to develop in pupils' four key capacities for their pupils, i.e. that they become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. This strategy seeks to affirm and to strengthen the complementary role of parents and families in helping children develop these capacities.

Assessment is for learning: A key feature of an AifL school is that 'pupils, staff and parents are clear about what is to be learned and what success would be like'. This strategy proposes improved communication between home and school to ensure that parents have increased opportunities to be clear about what their children will be learning.

How good is our school: The Journey to Excellence, 2006: One of the dimensions of excellence is 'working together with parents to improve learning'. There are three themes within this dimension that are reflected in the strategy's model for parental involvement, i.e. parental involvement in their children's learning, involvement of parents in school education and collaboration and representation.

Being Well-Doing Well: A framework for health promoting schools in Scotland, 2004: Partnership, including partnership with parents, is a key characteristic of health promoting schools. This strategy recognises the value of schools engaging with parents in promoting the health of their pupils.

HMIE Guide Inclusion and Equality Part 3, Promoting Race Equality, 2004: The guide provides specific measures to ensure that parents from minority ethnic backgrounds are able to be fully involved in their child's education.

Learning with Care, HMIE (2001): This report makes recommendations on the involvement of the parents and carers of looked after children.

Partnership with Parents, HMIE (2006): This guide provides quality indicators for evaluating a school's performance in parental involvement.

How good is our community learning and development 2, HMIE (2006): This guide provides quality indicators for evaluating a school's performance in engaging with parents.

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004; This Act introduces new rights for parents of children with additional support needs. Further guidance is provided in *Supporting Children's Learning: Code of Practice, 2005*

STRENGTHENING INVOLVEMENT THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

We believe that the route to better parental involvement lies through increased engagement with parents and with families. This strategy sets out how we plan to engage more actively with parents, in order to bring about a fundamental change in parental involvement in children's learning.

Parental involvement can be defined as the inclusion of parents as partners in the educational process, both through home and school based activities. Parental involvement has been characterised as taking place at six levels, i.e. parenting, communicating between home and school, volunteering, supporting learning at home, taking part in decision making and developing community partnerships³.

Engagement with parents can be defined as the process of working collaboratively with parents to address issues affecting their support for their children's learning. Engagement with parents can be a powerful vehicle for bringing about change. It may involve groups of parents, families and others that help mobilise resources and influence systems, change relationships among partners, and serve as catalysts for changing policies, programs, and practices.⁴

PRINCIPLES

Engagement with parents is fundamental to our Family Learning Policy, which takes a community learning and development approach, based on a commitment to the community learning and development principles. These principles also underpin our Parental Involvement Strategy and are as follows:

Empowerment - increasing the ability of parents to have an influence on their children's learning, for example through programmes such as Families Reading Together, story sacks, bilingual support, English as an additional language classes and paired reading.

Participation - supporting parents and carers to take part in decision-making about their own child's learning, for example through involvement in reviewing and setting targets in the personal learning planning process where practical and being involved in out of school hours and holiday programmes.

Inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination - recognising and providing for the fact that some parents need additional support to overcome the barriers they face in being full partners in their children's education, for example because of literacy issues, their own negative experience of schooling, chronic illness or lack of resources.

Self-determination - supporting the right of parents to make their own choices and to define for themselves how they can best support their child's learning, and can best be represented, and recognising that this may or may not be through involvement in any formal structure; and

Partnership - recognising that many agencies (such as Adult Learning and Library Services) have skills and resources that can contribute to the promotion of parental involvement, and recognising also that parents and families have skills and assets to contribute, and that schools and pre 5 centres involve families more effectively when they work in partnership.

³ Epstein, J. (2001). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Boulder, Colorado, Westview Press.

⁴ Adapted from Fawcett et al. 'Using empowerment theory in collaborative partnership for community health and development.' *American Journal of Community Psychology* 1995;23(5):677-697.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Consultation on the Strategy was carried out during August and October 2006

PARENTS

Parents were provided with a variety of means to reflect on their views on four key issues:

- What does being involved in my children's learning mean to me?
- What does being involved in my child's school learning mean to me?
- What barriers exist and how can I best be supported to overcome them?
- What form should the parent councils take?

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents who had been involved in Family Learning and Adult Learning Programmes, including holiday programmes, English as an Additional Language classes, sewing classes and healthy eating classes

Consultation was conducted through regular meetings with the Minority Ethnic Parents Forum, the Forum for parents of children with Additional Support Needs, the Pre 5 Forum and the School Board Chairs. Parents were provided with interpreting services in Urdu, Punjabi and sign language as required.

RELATED TO LEARNING EVENTS

All parents were invited to one of four events staged in different areas of East Renfrewshire. The events used an open space approach, and were facilitated by members of the Family Learning Service, the Adult Learning Service, the Health Team and the Quality Improvement Team.

DIRECT RESPONSES

All parents were given the option of responding by email to the questions posed.

Numbers who responded were as follows: 298 in person, 5 by email and 8 by phone.

HEAD TEACHERS

Head Teachers were consulted through regular sector meetings, prior to the first draft of the strategy. Head Teachers were invited to share their views on the detail of a second draft. A seminar will be held for Head Teachers in December, where they will have an opportunity to discuss the possible models and to be provided with the materials and training required to take forward consultation in their own schools.

PUPILS

Consultation with pupils will take place at school level.

OTHER GROUPS

Head Teachers, the EIS, School Boards, denominational nominees, Psychological Services, Family Learning and Adult Learning were all represented on the Implementation Group and therefore were able to contribute to the process from an early stage.

THE NATURE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

When faced with a small turn out at a curriculum evening, or when seeking to find nominations for a School Board, schools have often felt that they were not successful in involving parents. Yet there is no evidence that parents do not wish to be involved, only evidence that not all forms of involvement attract all parents. Research suggests that parental apathy is a myth, and that the true picture is that all parents are concerned and interested in their children's learning and in their education at school⁵. Much of that involvement is invisible to schools, however, as it takes place informally in the home and the community. The traditional means that schools have used to involve parents, dependant as they are on the professional expertise of teachers who have a body of knowledge to share, have unintentionally tended to distance the parents schools most often wish to reach. However, we have many programmes that have positioned the parent as an equal partner and used an appreciative, affirming and accessible approach, and these have had success in involving parents in new and exciting ways

THE VIEWS OF PARENTS CONSULTED

The consultation process provided an opportunity to reconsider what parental involvement means to parents. From a broad range of responses provided by parents, these common themes emerged:

VALUES, GOOD MANNERS, MORALS AND FAITH

The parents consulted see a clear role for themselves in sharing their values with their children, in teaching morals and manners, and, where appropriate, supporting their growth into faith. They value the complementary role of the school in developing these attributes, and appreciate schools' sensitive approach to diversity. They feel equal partners with schools in this area, especially when the school is explicit in declaring its values, and when parents have an opportunity to be involved in deciding what these should be. Parents also welcome invitations to school assemblies where values and faith are celebrated and fostered.

CREATING FUN, HAPPINESS AND MEMORIES

Activities that involve the whole family are regarded as very important. As children progress through school, activities become more age specific, and family times become more fragmented. Many parents speak of the difficulty of finding time to do things together as a family, especially as their children became older and became more involved in clubs and activities outside the home.

⁵ Coleman, P. (1998) *Parent, Student and Teacher Collaboration: The Power of Three*, London, Sage

The school holidays are seen as a prime family time. Support to facilitate families getting together during holidays is highly valued. Fun is regarded as an essential element, as it helps children to learn, and encourages less confident parents to be involved. Creating memories of these special events through art, drama and photography is regarded by parents as a powerful means to helping their children learn about values, to increase their social skills and to encourage literacy.

SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The wellbeing and safety of children and young people is a supreme concern for parents. Transition from home to nursery through primary, secondary and post school options are key points for concern, as systems change and children and young people begin to negotiate their increasing independence. The role of schools in helping pupils to become more independent and responsible is highly valued, as are the efforts of schools to promote health. Parents welcome knowing more about the teaching of sexual health, drugs and alcohol, and feel that although they are consulted at key stages, they would like to know more about the developing health curriculum throughout their child's school life. Most importantly, they want more guidance on what they can do at home to support the health curriculum.

The role of parents in eliminating bullying has potential for development. Parents want to be involved more in knowing the extent of bullying (including bullying by text message), in developing and monitoring policy, and in knowing how best to protect their own child.

LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Parents are confident of their role in encouraging literacy and numeracy with their pre school children; however, many feel that once their children are in school, the rapidly changing curriculum and the role of the teacher as the professional expert inhibit their ability to be fully involved. Some feel ashamed of not being able to help their child with homework, as they do not wish to confuse their child by using different approaches or terminologies. Parents appreciate the efforts of the schools to run curriculum workshops, however, some parents do not wish to attend as they feel they may expose their own lack of knowledge. Preference is for support with activities involving them together as a family, demonstrating how to use the home and community environment for learning, for example through 'word walks' and shopping trips.

Parents who are learning English as an additional language are appreciative of the additional supports their children receive, but would welcome extended opportunities to learn English for themselves. Although there is a range of classes across the area available to all EAL learners, there are access issues, which can restrict attendance to one class per week. Learners felt that they could more adequately support their children and more fully engage with the school if provision was increased.

LISTENING AND TALKING WITH THEIR CHILD

Communicating, negotiating and showing an interest in children's lives outside the home are seen as critical roles for parents. Parents want to know and understand what their children are doing when not with their parents. Talking with children and young people about their school experience is aided by school newsletters, emails from school, and opportunities to join in the life of the school, e.g. through an open day, or at a school concert. With older children and young people, good communication from the school can help avoid parent/child conflict, especially when the school's expectations are negotiated and shared with parents.

TIME WITH TEACHERS, DEVELOPING 'PERSONAL PARTNERSHIPS'

Parents are unanimous in their praise of their children's teachers. However, because of the high regard they have for the teacher role, they feel the time allocated for talking with teachers about their child's progress is insufficient to support a genuine and personal partnership. Parents highly value the amount of time schools provide when a child is experiencing difficulties, but sometimes feel remote from their child's experience of learning when things are apparently going well. Many parents have questions for teachers, concerns to express and information to share, but they feel inhibited from contacting the school in case they are wasting valuable time on issues the school may regard as minor.

PERSONAL LEARNING PLANNING

Where parents are directly involved in personal learning planning, the experience is highly rated. However, there is a strong feeling that this process should now be universal, throughout nursery, primary and into the second year at secondary, where this can be practically arranged.

CONFIDENCE

Some parents' spoke movingly of how their own experience at school affected them emotionally, meaning a visit to their child's school could cause considerable stress. Some had experienced effective support from their peers or from a member of staff to overcome these difficulties and gain in confidence.

HOMEWORK

Homework is valued as an opportunity for parents to know what their children are learning, and to encourage regular studying. However, parents feel that homework is often issued without sufficient guidance for parents on how the task is to be undertaken. Rather than practising processes already mastered, pupils are often asked to embark on new learning that parents are unable to support. There is also concern at the amount of time homework takes, especially at the secondary level, and the stress it can cause both parent and young person. Parents value clear guidance on their role in supporting homework, and involvement in developing homework policies.

SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Social activity is regarded as helping to build trust between parents and staff, and the role of parent teacher associations and other groups in supporting social activity is appreciated. Social activity that involves the whole family is deemed to be particularly effective in bringing staff, parents and pupils together.

FAMILY LEARNING

Involvement with the Family Learning Service is highly valued, as it is regarded as approachable and flexible in creating new and innovative ways for parents to be involved in their child's learning. There is recognition that resources are limited, however, parents would welcome schools adopting more of these approaches, and suggested the Family Learning Service offer training to all schools in the approaches taken.

REPRESENTATION

Parents express a high degree of confidence in how schools are managed by Head Teachers and senior staff. The role of the school board is not generally well understood in some groups of parents – indeed two parents interviewed were not aware that school boards consisted of parents. Many parents are keen to see more flexible and less formal arrangements. Being a member of a parent group is seen as being valuable, particularly if that group exists for a particular purpose, e.g. to plan holiday programmes, to help run a school event, to support children's behaviour, or to provide a voice for a minority group, e.g. parents who are learning English as an additional language.

Good representation is expressed as relying on good communication, openness, transparency and trust. These features are believed to be sometimes lacking between parent groups, between parents and the schools, and between parents and the Education Department.

The chief issue parents wish to see discussed at parent council meetings is involvement in children's learning. There is feeling that school boards had been too engaged with practical issues, e.g. buildings, transport, appointments and finance, and that although these issues were important, the core business of children's learning has rarely been on the agenda.

Flexibility is understood to be necessary to increase parental involvement; many parents therefore want to see parent council meetings taking place at alternating times and venues, and to have open membership so that they can attend when the agenda is something of particular importance to them. Crèches are of vital importance, and some parents would like to see parent council meetings and school clubs scheduled at the same time, to create a true family experience.

There is a plea for less bureaucracy and a view that more parents would be involved if they did not need to stand for election. However, some parents express anxiety about 'disruptive parents' and want to see clear measures in place to ensure meetings are not hijacked by extremists.

It is recognised that parents have particular issues and concerns at different stages in their child's school career. Therefore, there is some feeling among parents that it would be useful to have parent representation for each year group in a school, including the nursery class.

UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

New teaching methods, new curricula, and new means of assessment can often appear to be incomprehensible to parents, especially at the secondary stage. Although curriculum workshops and leaflets are appreciated, many parents are looking for experiential learning about the system, rather than didactic approaches. For example, having had the Assessment is for Learning approach explained to them, parents feel they would prefer to experience the approach practically, either through having their workshop run using the approach, or through watching a DVD of pupils being taught in this manner.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology is regarded as a useful tool in improving parental involvement. Parents are excited about the advent of *Glow*⁶ and parent space within *Glow* to access online what their children are currently learning, and how they can best support their children. The school websites are welcome, but parents don't always find it easy to access the information they need. More parental involvement is required, to offer advice on navigation and content. *Glow* can also be a tool for parent councils to consult with parent forums.

THE THREE ASPECTS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Based on parents' views of involvement, the role of the Education Department and the role of the school in promoting parental involvement have been established under three types of involvement, i.e. involvement in children's learning, in education and through representation.

INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

The role of the Education Department:

1. Establish a Parental Involvement and Engagement Group chaired by the Head of Service (Children and Young People) to ensure an integrated approach across the Education Department and in association with other council Departments and partner organisations.
2. Continue to promote family learning in all pre 5 establishments and primary schools as an effective means of engaging parents with their child's learning.
3. Provide continuing professional development on family learning activities and approaches.
4. Establish a network for parental involvement and engagement co-ordinators from each school.
5. Consider means of increasing support for Teaching English as an additional Language.

The role of the school:

1. To affirm the role of the parent as co-educator by actively seeking the views of parents on their child's progress in learning and valuing the learning that takes place in the home.
2. To maximise parental involvement in learning by using family learning activities and practices that encourage parent/child activity, e.g. the Families Reading Together programme.
3. To identify a member of staff to act as a co-ordinator in each school and pre 5 establishment, with the task of driving forward engagement and involvement with parents and families.
4. To work with other sections and agencies to maximise parental involvement.⁷

⁶ Formerly called the Scottish Schools Digital Network, *Glow* is a national secure intranet, which will digitally link Scotland's 800,000 educators, pupils and parents. *Glow* is funded by the Scottish Executive and managed by Learning and Teaching. Benefits for parents include: access to reliable, up-to-date information, online discussions with other parents and the chance to see what the child will do next at school - and how they performed in any class tests. There will be public areas where parents can view school news that's tailored to them. This information may include, timetables, homework and news targeted to parents

⁷ See Appendix for Directory of Resources
Outline Parental Involvement Strategy as November 2006

Practice Examples:

The **Families Reading Together** programme was piloted in Thornliebank Primary, and has been introduced elsewhere. The programme engages parents in reading to their children from nursery to primary two, with paired reading used later in the primary. Parents reported reading more with their children, having more fun with their children and taking their child to the library more often, sometimes for the first time. Central to the programme is creating an interest in books through story telling and communicating with parents through a log book.

A **Walking Group** developed to give an opportunity to parents studying English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) an opportunity to practice their English in an informal and supportive environment, while taking exercise together.

A DVD was made of the **Celebration of Family Learning, 2005**, an event that brought together over 90 families from different parts of East Renfrewshire to celebrate a range of activities and learning that had taken place.

Busby Parents have formed a constituted group to raise funds, organise and manage holiday programmes for their children. The preparation included learning first aid and committee skills.

Story Sacks and **Play Maths** are packs containing books, toys and other materials, which are lent to parents to encourage reading together and an interest in literacy and numeracy. There are bi-lingual bags available.

Word Walks are popular with families. Parents and children follow a route prepared by the Family Learning Service, and enjoy the fun of using environmental print as a means of encouraging literacy.

The **Health Promotion in the Home** initiative is a joint venture between Education and the Community Health and Care Partnership. Health Kits are being piloted in Madras and Thornliebank Nurseries and Arthurlie Family Centre. The kits encourage parents and children to become involved together in activities that support healthy eating, physical activity and emotional well-being. Parents are invited to special sessions to demonstrate how the Kits can be used.

Arthurlie Nursery invites parents to join their child's key worker for '**Coffee and Cake**'. These events provide parents with the opportunity of informal discussion of any issues concerning their children.

INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

The role of the Education Department:

1. To provide information and advice to parents on general aspects of school education, and to provide this in a variety of formats to ensure access by all.
2. To provide guidance on homework policies that are designed to strengthen parental involvement and increase the confidence of parents.
3. To work with Learning and Teaching Scotland to develop *Glow*⁸ as a means of communicating with parents about what is to be learned, what success will look like, and how parents can be involved.

⁸ Formerly called the Scottish Schools Digital Network, Glow is a national secure intranet, which will digitally linking Scotland's 800,000 educators, pupils and parents. Glow is funded by the Scottish Executive and managed by Learning and Teaching. Benefits for parents include: access to reliable, up-to-date information, online discussions with other parents and the chance to see what the child will do next at school - and how they performed in any class tests. There will be public areas where parents can view school news that's tailored to them. This information may include, timetables, homework and news targeted to parents

4. To raise awareness about the factors that may inhibit parental involvement.
5. To ensure that personal learning planning is thoroughly embedded in all schools, and that parents are fully involved where practical.

The role of the school:

1. To provide general information and advice for parents on education within their child's school, and to provide this in a variety of formats to ensure access by all.
2. To provide specific and detailed advice and information to parents on their child's education.
3. To involve parents fully in reviewing progress and planning next steps through personal learning planning.
4. To review homework policies during Session 2007/8 in the light of Education Departmental guidance.
5. To work with colleagues in pre 5 establishments to sustain parental involvement at transition.
6. To support the use of *Glow* as a means of improving and personalising communication between home and school, and in particular, between class teacher and parent.
7. To raise the awareness of all staff about the factors that may inhibit parental involvement.
8. To work with other sections and agencies to maximise parental involvement.⁹

Practice examples:

St Cadoc's Primary school uses **DVDs** to aid parental involvement and transition between nursery and school. Nursery children all receive a 'What's great about St. Cadoc's' DVD at induction and take this home to share with parents to promote discussion about the next step in their education. A homework DVD is distributed after the P1 parents workshops evening in September.

Netherlee Primary School holds **informal parent events** each term, with no formal agenda. Parents bring points for discussion to the meetings. Promoted staff join parents at these meetings, and a record of the discussion is included in the monthly newsletter. Parents who are unable to attend the meetings are invited to submit discussion points.

Kirkhill and St Cadoc Primaries have made use of the increased non-class contact time to involve children and parents in **Personal Learning Planning** interviews.

The **Health Promotion in the Home** initiative is developing materials to encourage parent involvement in the curriculum for emotional well being and sexual health in primary schools.

Many primary schools engage with **Parent Volunteers** to support pupils with learning through play. The best examples involve the parents in training about the use of play in learning, and also involve parents in reflection on activities and improving practice. It is also

⁹ See Appendix for Directory of Resources
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common for parents to support Golden Time¹⁰, and to bring their expertise in providing a range of activities.

St Luke's High School has introduced a DVD to demonstrate to parents the use of **Study Cards**, materials that encourage and support preparation for assessment.

Woodfarm High School is committed to an approach where **pupil participation leads to greater parental involvement**. An audit of parental involvement has been conducted, and plans are in place to make a step change in the amount of parental involvement. One method is to keep a log of pupil involvement in activities such as concerts, functions and fund raising events, so that all pupils have a reason to invite their parents to see them take part. Another is to provide demonstrations of the curriculum, with pupils introducing their parents to their curriculum.

Many schools have compiled a **Business Link Directory**, which provides a list of parents who are willing to offer their professional and business skills and knowledge to the school.

All nurseries in Barrhead and Neilston offer **Healthy Family Cooking on a Budget** courses for parents, as the result of a partnership with the Community Health and Care Partnership and funding from the Scottish Diet Action Group.

A number of schools have established **Walking Buses**, with parents supporting walking to school as a healthy alternative to the school run.

Busby and Thornliebank Primaries have offered parents training in **Story Telling**, as a means of involving parents in telling stories in the classroom and at home.

Parents regularly join staff in Glenwood Nursery to carry out the short term planning of the **programme for learning through play**.

Uplawmoor Primary School run **Creative Learning** sessions, led by a parent working with a small group of pupils, activities such as making smoothies, filming, making and flying kites and active sports.

Thornliebank Primary have produced a **parent information leaflet on enterprise**, inviting parents and grandparents to become involved through talking to groups of children about their job, hobby or volunteer role.

Braidbar Primary School produces a **welcome leaflet** for each class at the start of the session, welcoming the child and parents to the class. The leaflet gives parents information about the curriculum for the stage of the class and identifies all staff who will be working with the class.

Meet the teacher evenings are used by many primary schools to encourage parental involvement at the start of a new session. Teachers outline the curriculum for their class during the coming year, answer any queries and establish a rapport with their group of parents.

PARENTAL REPRESENTATION

The role of the Education Department:

1. To inform parents of Parent Forum Membership and plans for the year of transition.
2. To notify parents of intention to prepare schemes, seek preferences as to Parent Council make up, constitution, etc.

¹⁰ Golden Time is a time, usually in Friday afternoons, when primary children can choose from a range of fun, educational activities. It is used to encourage good behaviour, as the entitlement to Golden Time can be earned through good behaviour during the week.

3. To provide support and training as necessary for schools to establish parent councils through the Quality Improvement Officer (Parental Involvement)
4. To establish continuing support and training for parent councils through the Quality Improvement Officer (Parental Involvement)
5. To work with Learning and Teaching Scotland to develop *Glow* as a means for parent councils to consult with parent forums¹¹
6. To continue to consult with special interest groups of parents
7. To provide training for council members involved in the recruitment process for Head Teachers and Deputies
8. To provide models of how parent councils may be established (see Appendix 2)
9. To respond to any *reasonable request*¹² for advice and information from the parent of any child attending one of their schools on the education their child is receiving and to ensure that the head teacher and staff of the school are available to give advice and information to the parent, in a manner consistent with the authority's duties under the Act.

The role of the school:

1. To consult with the parent forum as to the format of the parent council
2. To support the establishment of the parent council
3. To support the ongoing operation of the parent council as required by the Act
4. To encourage parents councils to work closely with parent councils within pre 5 establishments
5. To work with other sections and agencies to maximise parental involvement.¹³

Practice Examples:

Busby Primary School has initiated discussion on the parental involvement strategy with three very active parents groups within the school: the School Board, PTA and the Nursery Parent Group.

The Nursery Parent Group is a very active organisation that supports the nursery through fundraising as well as providing support for parents through meetings and courses such as Well Being, Parenting classes and planning and managing highly successful summer programmes for families. To raise funds the group carry out an annual sponsored environmental print walk around the local area and a hugely successful ladies night which is very much a community event.

The group have also recently seen 20 parents set up Individual Learning Accounts for themselves and have used this to fund a computing class where parents are working towards their European Computer Driving Licence. A member of the Family Learning Service facilitates the group, and also supports the school. As a result excellent partnership working has been established and parental involvement has significantly increased.

¹¹ *Glow* for parents is not likely to be fully operational until 2008/9

¹² A reasonable request would be one which concerned the education and welfare of the parent's child or children. It would not be reasonable to expect the authority or school to provide extensive information and advice at frequent intervals, except in exceptional cases, for example where a child has recently moved school (but not in the normal transition periods), or where the child has additional support needs.

¹³ See Appendix for Directory of Resources

RECRUITMENT OF HEAD TEACHER OR DEPUTE

Parent councils have a right to be involved in the recruitment of a new Head Teacher or Depute, except when the appointment is made on an acting basis. When a position becomes vacant, the Education Department will invite the parent council to nominate members, to assist the Education Department in drawing up the person specification, selecting a short list and interviewing the candidates. Training will be provided by the Quality Improvement Officer (Parental Involvement).

PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS

Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) have contributed enormously to schools in a variety of ways, e.g. through fund raising, social activity and practical support. PTAs have also offered opportunities to be involved in supporting the life of the school, without having to stand for election. As the Act takes effect, Head Teachers are concerned not to lose the good will and support of the members of the PTAs, and PTAs are concerned not to lose their opportunity to be involved.

More recently, some schools have benefited from the formation of Parent Student/Staff Associations (PSAs), increasing participation of parents and students.

Under this strategy, the independent role of PTAs and PSAs is recognised and fully supported. Options for becoming involved in the parent councils are reflected in the different models of parent councils outlined in the Appendix. However, we recognise that PTAs and PSAs may wish to determine their own future, and have the right to do so.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

Parent councils have the option under the Act of co-opting teacher members to the council.

EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ensuring equality in our practices implies not only providing equal access to opportunities for parental involvement, but tackling any discrimination, intended or otherwise, against parents on account of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic status or age. It also involves making special efforts to provide for those who may have most to overcome in order to play their full role. Furthermore, it implies that action should be taken to ensure that all staff who have contact with parents understand and provide for those parents who experience difficulty in becoming involved. This includes the need to raise awareness of the range of barriers experienced. These include:

The additional support needs of children, which may place extra demands on parents and serve to isolate them from their peers.

Lack of resources in the home to support learning (e.g. books, quiet spaces, and money for outings) can make it difficult to provide a learning environment in the home.

Parents' own experience of schooling may lead to lack of confidence about school or negative attitudes towards school.

Parent's abilities in literacy and numeracy may inhibit their support for children's learning, and lead to lack of confidence and isolation from others.

Belonging to isolated or excluded communities can inhibit involvement.

Cultural issues, e.g. respect for authority figures such as teachers, which leads to a reluctance to raise issues or express an opinion.

Lack of confidence, due to the first language not being English, can impede communication with the school.

Family stress (e.g., bereavement, housing difficulties, ill health, poverty and family breakdown) can dominate parents' attention, leaving little energy for involvement in learning.

Chronic illness may mean the parent is too tired or too sick to be as involved as they may wish.

Stressors in the community (e.g. fear of money lenders, sleep disturbance, peer influences on their children, etc) can overshadow and rob parents of the confidence and emotional space they require to be involved.

Disability may mean that measures must be taken to ensure equality of access.

Role of the Education Department:

1. To provide equality of access for all parents, and arrange for communication in a range of ways suitable to the needs of all parents.
2. Implement the findings from the recent audit of efforts to address the impact of poverty on learning

Role of the School:

1. Ensure all staff are aware and respond appropriately to diversity, practising respect with all groups of parents.
2. Ensure parents have access to interpreters as required.
3. Communicate through telephone or personal contact with parents who may not have access to written language, in English or their own language.
4. Use informal approaches that encourage less confident parents to take their part.
5. Provide wheel chair access and sign language interpreting where required.
6. Offer to meet parents in their own home where chronic illness and disability prevents the parent coming into school.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Some parents experience difficulty in playing their full role in supporting their child's learning. For some this will last throughout their child's schooling, due to factors such as living with intergenerational poverty, disability or the constraints caused by their own lack of education. Others will experience a shorter period of difficulty, perhaps because of bereavement or trauma. For some, lack of fluency in English may be seen as a limiting factor.

Effective support for families is based on a two-pronged approach; firstly to affirm the family's ability to support the child's learning in spite of personal difficulties and secondly to work with other agencies to attempt to resolve or to minimise the constraints.

The role of the Education Department:

1. To continue to work with other Education Departments and agencies to ensure the strength of the multi-disciplinary team working with schools and with parents, i.e. educational psychologists, campus police, behaviour support teachers, school based social workers, social justice managers, family learning, youth counsellors, school nurses and health co-ordinators.
2. To organise resources available in order to provide a high level of co-ordinated support to parents whose children may be identified as having the potential to become NEET¹⁴ on leaving school.
3. To work with the Integrated Children's Service Planning Group, auditing the range of parenting classes, approaches and support being offered locally by all agencies.

The role of the school:

1. To offer support, and, where appropriate, to provide information on support available, e.g. Social Work, Women's Aid, Housing Department, etc.
2. To ensure parents are involved throughout the process of offering additional support to their children through Staged Intervention
3. To ensure a high level of co-ordinated support is available to parents whose children may be identified as having the potential to become NEET on leaving school.

Practice examples:

Schools work with a wide range of services that support families. These include family learning staff, school based social workers, youth counsellors, psychological services, school nurses, campus police officers, inclusion facilitators, social justice managers and adult learning services. Staged intervention offers a route to assess and respond appropriately to need.

A Family Learning Co-ordinator who is fluent in Punjabi and Urdu works with parents who require support to access opportunities for involvement with their children's learning.

The Directorate meets regularly with the following groups of parents to consult and to shape policy and provision:

Black and Minority Ethnic Forum
Additional Support Needs Forum
Pre 5 Forum

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

'Looked after children' may be cared for in their own home, or in a foster home, residential unit or residential school. They face special barriers to achieving success in education due to a range of possible factors, including:

- sudden removal from home
- intrusive investigation
- fear of the unknown
- mourning the loss of a parent or other family members and friends
- anxiety about the welfare of their parents or other family members

¹⁴ Not in Employment, Education or Training
Outline Parental Involvement Strategy as November 2006

- separation from brothers and sisters
- feelings of rejection
- frequent moves, perhaps with little or no warning
- changes of school, and maybe periods of non-attendance
- embarrassment at being 'looked after' or 'in care'
- the belief that teachers know all about you or that they don't know you at all
- feeling excluded from 'normal' family life and opportunities

Role of the Education Department:

1. Continue to work through the sub-group of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Group, which takes a strategic approach to co-ordinating services for looked after children.
2. Ensure all schools in East Renfrewshire have an identified member of staff who co-ordinates support within the school and liaises with the child's social worker.

Role of the School:

1. To ensure that children who have contact with parents receive regular information about their children's progress in school, including end of session reports, unless the child's social worker advises that there are good reasons not to do so.
2. Ensure that carers, including residential staff and foster parents, receive regular information on the progress of a child's learning, are involved in personal learning planning and are equipped to support that learning, especially when there have been gaps in attendance or the child has not been performing to its full potential.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

The parents of children with additional support needs¹⁵ face particular challenges in supporting their children's learning. They also have the same needs and rights as parents of children without additional needs. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 establishes new rights for children with additional support needs and their parents. The Education Department is committed to its role in meeting with the Parents Forum for Additional Support Needs to permit full involvement of the parent group in shaping policy and ensuring these rights are provided for.

PUPILS EDUCATED OUTWITH THEIR HOME AREA

East Renfrewshire schools attract a large number of placing requests for children resident in neighbouring local authorities. We are committed to the best possible outcomes for all of our pupils attending our schools, and therefore seek to promote the involvement of their parents, regardless of their home address.

In cases where we fund the placement of a pupil at an independent special or grant-aided special school, we ensure that there are appropriate arrangements in place for the pupil's parents and carers to receive the advice and information they need to be involved with and to support the child's education.

¹⁵ The term 'a child with additional support needs' refers to any child or young person who, for whatever reason, requires additional support for learning. Additional support needs can arise from any factor which causes a barrier to learning, whether that factor relates to social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, disability, or family and care circumstances. For instance, additional support may be required for a child or young person who is being bullied; has behavioural difficulties; has learning difficulties; is a parent; has a sensory or mobility impairment; is at risk; or is bereaved.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Ensuring the continuous improvement of the quality of parental engagement and involvement is the responsibility of the Education Department and of schools, using the well established quality improvement framework, and the cycle of planning, self evaluation and reporting on standards and quality. *Partnership with parents*, the HMle guide to self evaluation of parental involvement, provides guidance for self evaluation of parental involvement.

The principles of this strategy are the principles of community learning and development. The community learning and development approach is relevant to all agencies providing a public service, not only those which have a specific community learning and development role. If parental involvement is to become more widespread and more meaningful, then the process of engagement with parents is essential. This process can best be evaluated through relevant indicators drawn from *How good is our community learning and development 2*. These indicators are summarised below. The Family and Adult Learning Service will provide support for head teachers in using these indicators.

Role of the Education Department:

1. To adapt the Education Department's templates for school plans and school standards and quality reports to meet the requirements of the Act.
2. To monitor and evaluate the progress of schools using *Partnership with parents*, the HMle guide to self evaluation of parental involvement and a selection of relevant quality indicators from *How good is our community learning and development 2*.
3. To provide training and support in using the Quality Indicators form *How good is our community learning and development 2*.

Role of the school:

1. To self evaluate using *Partnership with parents*, the HMle guide to self evaluation of parental involvement, and a selection of relevant quality indicators from *How good is our community learning and development 2*.
2. To monitor, evaluate and report on the school's approach to parental involvement, as part of the school's cycle of planning, self-evaluation and reporting on standards and quality.

Quality Improvement Indicators

Key Question	QI from <i>How good is our community learning and development</i>
How well does your school work with other agencies to engage with parents to identify and plan to meet their own needs?	5.6
How well does your school develop the skills and confidence of parents to engage with and involve other parents?	5.7
How well does your school assist parents to exercise power and influence to achieve learning outcomes for themselves and for their children?	5.8
How well does your school include excluded communities, parents and children?	5.9
Key Question	QI from <i>How good is our school: Partnership with Parents</i>
How well does your school communicate with parents about children's progress, achievement and attainment?	3.5
How well does your school inform parents of children's progress in all aspects of school life?	3.6
How good is the exchange of information between your school and parents on issues relating to children's care and welfare?	4.1
How effectively does your school make full use of parents' knowledge and expertise to support the curriculum and the vocational guidance programme?	4.3
How effectively does your school develop the relationship between parents and relevant agencies?	4.8
How effectively does your school work in partnership with parents, professionals, key agencies and support workers?	5.1
How welcoming is your school to parents?	5.1
How successfully does your school consult with parents and take full account of their views and concerns? How effectively do you communicate with all parents?	5.4
How well does your school survey parental views as part of your self-evaluation process?	7.2

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Council has a clear procedure for complaints, which is advertised on the [East Renfrewshire website](#)¹⁶. The procedure outlines the range of ways that a customer can complain about, or indeed compliment, the service, and reassures customers that their complaints will be dealt with in a fair, confidential, consistent and effective manner. It also outlines how customers will receive immediate acknowledgement and a timely response.

The Council is committed to monitoring complaints, and using the information for improvement and service planning. The procedure outlines a staged approach (through the Director to the Chief Executive and finally to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman) if the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily at the point of service delivery, i.e. the school. In practice, complaints will most often be resolved at the school level.

Role of the Education Department:

1. To ensure schools are familiar with the Council complaints procedure, and advertise it on their premises, through newsletters and on their websites.
2. To review the information on parental complaints and compliments regularly and to use information in planning for improvement at the Education Departmental level.
3. To ensure that parent councils, as a body are aware they may raise a complaint with the Education Department and that Departmental staff know how to respond.

Role of the school:

1. To ensure parents are aware of the complaints procedure and are encouraged to raise any issues or concerns at an early stage.
2. To advertise the complaints procedure in their premises, through newsletters and on their websites.
3. To ensure staff are aware of how to receive complaints and deal with them in the first instance.
4. To ensure senior staff are skilled in dealing with complaints at the school level, and that these complaints are logged and the information used for service improvement and planning at the school level.

Practice example:

In 2004, the Education Department was awarded the Charter Mark, the UK Government's national standard for excellence in customer service. The assessors described the Education Department as one where 'the staff are happy, and the customers are even happier'. Following a Review visit by the Charter Mark Assessment Team in October 2005, the Education Department was found as continuing to meet the Charter Mark Standard for excellence in the delivery of customer services.

¹⁶ http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/council/customerfirst/complaints_comments_compliments.htm

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

An implementation group has been established by the Head of Service (Children and Young People), representing parents, church nominees, Head Teachers, teachers unions, quality improvement officers, family learning, adult learning and psychological services. An implementation calendar has been approved (See Appendix 3).

The Head of Service (Children and Young People) will review the strategy with a similar group of stakeholders when it becomes necessary, or three years from the date of the strategy, whichever is sooner.

APPENDIX 1: PARENT COUNCIL MODELS

These models are presented as possible options. Each school's parent forum has the right to design its own model of parent council, and to draw up its own constitution.

MODEL 1

This model is broadly similar to the existing school board, but with wider membership as follows:

Pupil role, including nursery class, where applicable	Maximum number of parents who may be elected	Maximum number of co-opted members	Maximum number of teachers of the school who may be co-opted
<100	4	2	1
100<175	5	2	1
175<250	6	2	1
250<325	7	2	1
325<400	8	3	1
400<475	9	3	1
475<550	10	3	1
550<625	11	3	1
625<700	12	4	2
700<775	13	4	2
775<850	14	4	2
850<925	15	4	2
925<1000	16	5	2
1000<1075	17	5	2
1075<1150	18	5	2
1150<1225	19	5	2
1225<1300	20	6	2
1300<1375	21	6	2
1375<1450	22	6	2
1450<1525	23	6	2
>=1525	24	6	2

Under this model, PTAs may wish to continue or to disband, in which case members would be encouraged to stand as parent council members, to strengthen the council with their experience and expertise.

CONSTITUTION

1. Name

The name of the association will be theSchool Parent Council, hereinafter called the Parent Council.

2. Functions

The Council is established in accordance with the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, hereinafter called the Act. Its functions are as described in the Act and are, in brief, to:

- (a) support school management to improve the quality of education which the school provides, and develop to their fullest potential the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the pupils attending the school.
- (b) develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of pupils.
- (c) promote contact between the school, the Parent Forum, prospective parents and the community.
- (d) report on the council activities to the Parent Forum at least annually.
- (e) identify and represent the views of the Parent Forum.
- (f) comply with any reasonable request made to it by the head teacher of the school or by the education authority for information relating to its exercise of those functions.

3. Membership

Full membership of the Council will be open to:

- (a) elected members of the parent forum.
- (b) members co-opted by the current members of the council, one of whom must be a denominational nominee in the case of denominational school.

In multi-denominational schools, co-opted members may represent denominational groups, however, the Council will have due regard to the cultural and religious diversity of the school population in co-opting such members.

Membership will terminate four years from appointment, or when a parent's youngest child leaves the school, or when a member gives notice of resigning position. In the event of a vacancy arising during a full member's term, an election will be held to fill the vacancy.

4. Officers

- (a) Only a person who is a member of the school's Parent Forum may chair the Parent Council.
- (b) The Chair, Vice Chair, and any other honorary officers will be elected at the inaugural General Meeting and when elected should hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

5. Committees

The Council may appoint such special or standing committees as it deems necessary and will determine their terms of reference, powers, duration and composition. All proceedings of such special committees will be reported to the Council.

5. Meetings of the Council

- (a) All meetings of the Council are open to all members of the parent forum and to the public, however, the Council (including the Head Teacher), has the right to meet in private during discussion of any matter which the Council considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis.
- (b) Individual cases relating to pupils, teachers or parents at the school are not matters for direct Parent Council involvement.
- (c) The Head Teacher has both a right and a duty to attend Council meetings or to be represented at a Council meeting.
- (d) There will be an annual general meeting of the Council in (name month).
- (e) Notice of all meetings must be made at least two weeks in advance of the meeting to all members and to the Parent Forum.
- (f) The quorum will be one quarter of the membership, providing that the number of co-opted members in the quorum does not exceed the number of members of the parent forum.
- (g) Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each full member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
- (h) The Parent Council will meet at least once in every school term.

6. Finance

The Council may raise funds by any legal means, other than borrowing, and may expend these sums to carry out its functions at its discretion and in line with appropriate legislation.

- (a) The Council may receive gifts.
- (b) The treasurer will ensure that proper accounts are kept.
- (c) An auditor, who should be independent of the Parent Council, shall be appointed at the Inaugural General Meeting and thereafter at the Annual General Meeting.
- (d) An audited annual statement of accounts shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting and circulated to the Parents Forum.

7. Review constitution

The Council may review and amend its constitution at the Annual General Meeting, but only with the consent of the majority of the Parent Forum.

8. Dissolution of the Council

Should the Parent Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the education authority to be used for the benefit of the school.

MODEL 2

This model allows for representation at each stage within the school, and seeks to encourage parents to become involved at the early stages and to remain in the council as their child moves through the school. As council members would represent only one stage within the school, consultation with the other parents in the parent forum would be more practical. In addition to the functions described in the Act, it has an additional function to support the establishment, continuation and representation of parent special interest groups, e.g. nursery parent groups, parent volunteers, adult learning groups, parent support groups, etc. This model reflects the views of special interest groups looking for opportunities to continue to focus their involvement within their interest group, but also to have representation in any Parent Council.

Under this model, PTAs would have the option of remaining as special interest groups, functioning exactly as before, but having full mandatory representation on the parent council.

School	Maximum number of parents who may be elected	Maximum number of co-opted members	Maximum number of teachers of the school who may be co-opted
Primary school with nursery class	22+ (i.e. 3 parents for each year group) + 1 representative from any parent special interest group within the school	4	2
Primary school without nursery class	21+ (i.e. 3 parents for each year group) + 1 representative from each parent special interest group within the school	6	3
Secondary school	24+ (i.e. 4 parents for each year group) + 1 representative from each parent special interest group within the school	8	4

CONSTITUTION

1. Name

The name of the association will be theSchool Parent Council, hereinafter called the Parent Council.

3. Functions

The Council is established in accordance with the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, hereinafter called the Act. Its functions are as described in the Act and are, in brief, to:

- (a) support school management to improve the quality of education which the school provides, and develop to their fullest potential the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the pupils attending the school.
- (b) develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of pupils.
- (c) promote contact between the school, the Parent Forum, prospective parents and the community.
- (d) report on the council activities to the Parent Forum at least annually.
- (e) identify and represent the views of the Parent Forum.
- (f) comply with any reasonable request made to it by the head teacher of the school or by the education authority for information relating to its exercise of those functions.

4. Membership

Full membership of the Council will be open to:

- (a) elected members of the parent forum.
- (b) representatives of *special interest parent groups within the school who will be nominated by the special interest group.
- (c) members co-opted by the current members of the council, one of whom must be a denominational nominee in the case of denominational school.

In multi-denominational schools, co-opted members may represent denominational groups, however, the Council will have due regard to the cultural and religious diversity of the school population in co-opting such members.

Membership will terminate 4 years from appointment, when a parent's youngest child leaves the school, or when a member gives notice of resigning position. In the event of a vacancy arising during a full member's term, an election will be held to fill the vacancy.

5. Officers

- (a) Only a person who is a member of the school's Parent Forum may chair the Parent Council.
- (b) The Chair, Vice Chair, and any other honorary officers will be elected at the Inaugural General Meeting and when elected should hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

6. Committees

The Council may appoint such special or standing committees, as it deems necessary and shall determine their terms of reference, powers, duration and composition. All proceedings of such special committees shall be reported to the Council.

7. Meetings of the Council

- (a) All meetings of the Council are open to all members of the parent forum and to the public, however, the Council, including the Head Teacher, has the right to meet in private during discussion of any matter which the Council considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis.
- (b) Individual cases relating to pupils, teachers or parents at the school are not matters for direct Parent Council involvement.
- (c) The Head Teacher has both a right and a duty to attend Council meetings or to be represented at a Council meeting.
- (d) There will be an annual general meeting of the Council in (name month)
- (e) Notice of all meetings must be made at least two weeks in advance of the meeting to all members and to the Parent Forum.
- (f) The quorum will be one quarter of the membership, providing that the number of co-opted members in the quorum does not exceed the number of members of the parent forum.
- (g) Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each full member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having the casting vote in the event of a tie.
- (h) The Parent Council will meet at least once in every school term.

8. Finance

- (a) The Council may raise funds by any legal means, other than borrowing, and may expend these sums to carry out its functions at its discretion and in line with appropriate legislation.
- (b) The Council may receive gifts.
- (c) The treasurer will ensure that proper accounts are kept.
- (d) An auditor, who should be independent of the Parent Council, shall be appointed at the Inaugural General Meeting and thereafter at the Annual General Meeting.
- (e) An audited annual statement of accounts shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting and circulated to the Parents Forum.

9. Review constitution

The Council may review and amend its constitution at the Annual General Meeting, but only with the consent of the majority of the Parent Forum.

10. Dissolution of the Council

Should the Parent Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the education authority to be used for the benefit of the school.

* A special interest group is a group of parents which has an established role in the school and meets regularly.

MODEL 3

This model is derived from the views of many parents who felt they wanted to be more involved, but who neither wished to stand for election nor to be involved long term in every aspect of the school life.

In this model, membership of the parent council will be by self nomination annually; elections take place only for honorary officers of the council, and these elections take place at the AGM.

PTA committee members can bring their experience and expertise to help establish the council.

1. Name

The name of the association shall be theSchool Parent Council, hereinafter called the Parent Council.

2. Functions

The Council is established in accordance with the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act, hereinafter called the Act. Its functions are as described in the Act and are, in brief, to:

- (a) support school management to improve the quality of education which the school provides, and develop to their fullest potential the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the pupils attending the school.
- (b) develop and engage in activities which support the education and welfare of pupils.
- (c) promote contact between the school, the Parent Forum, prospective parents and the community.
- (d) report on the council activities to the Parent Forum at least annually.
- (e) identify and represent the views of the Parent Forum.
- (f) comply with any reasonable request made to it by the head teacher of the school or by the education authority for information relating to its exercise of those functions.

3. Membership

Full membership of the Council will be open to:

- (a) self nominated members of the parent forum on an annual basis.
- (b) members co-opted annually by the current members of the council, one of whom must be a denominational nominee in the case of a denominational school.
- (c) teachers who are co-opted annually by the Parent Council.

In multi-denominational schools, co-opted members may represent denominational groups, however, the Council will have due regard to the cultural and religious diversity of the school population in co-opting such members.

The right of membership will terminate when a parent's youngest child leaves the school.

4. Officers

- (a) Only a person who is a member of the school's Parent Forum may chair the Parent Council.
- (b) The Chair, Vice Chair, and any other honorary officers will be elected at the Inaugural General Meeting and when elected should hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.
- (c) At the Inaugural meeting of the Parent Council, the Head Teacher or Head Teacher representative will chair until the election of honorary officers has taken place. Nominations will be received by the Head Teacher one week in advance of the inaugural meeting.

5. Committees

The Council may appoint such special or standing committees as it deems necessary and shall determine their terms of reference, powers, duration and composition. All proceedings of such special committees shall be reported to the Council.

6. Meetings of the Council

- (a) All meetings of the Council are open to all members of the parent forum and to the public, however, the Council, including the Head Teacher, has the right to meet in private during discussion of any matter which the Council considers should be dealt with on a confidential basis.
- (b) Individual cases relating to pupils, teachers or parents at the school are not matters for direct Parent Council involvement.
- (c) The Head Teacher has both a right and a duty to attend Council meetings or to be represented at a Council meeting.
- (d) There will be an annual general meeting of the Council in (name month).
- (e) Notice of all meetings must be made at least two weeks in advance of the meeting to all members and to the Parent Forum.
- (f) The quorum will be one quarter of the membership, providing that the number of co-opted members in the quorum does not exceed the number of members of the parent forum.
- (g) Should a vote be necessary to make a decision, each full member at the meeting will have one vote, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
- (h) The Parent Council will meet at least once in every school term.

7. Finance

- (a) The Council may raise funds by any legal means, other than borrowing, and may expend these sums to carry out its functions at its discretion and in line with appropriate legislation.
- (b) The Council may receive gifts.
- (c) The treasurer will ensure that proper accounts are kept.
- (d) An auditor, who should be independent of the Parent Council, shall be appointed at the
- (e) Inaugural General Meeting and thereafter at the Annual General Meeting.
- (f) An audited annual statement of accounts shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting and circulated to the Parents Forum.

8. Review constitution

The Council may review and amend its constitution at the Annual General meeting, but only with the consent of the majority of the Parent Forum.

9. Dissolution of the Council

Should the Parent Council cease to exist, any remaining funds will be passed to the education authority to be used for the benefit of the school.

APPENDIX 2: FAMILY LEARNING POLICY (2004)

1. INTRODUCTION

The policy provides a description of how East Renfrewshire primary schools and pre five centres intend to actively promote and develop family learning, and how they will be supported in the task. Consultation has been carried out with School Board Chairs, Primary and Pre 5 Head Teachers, the Quality Improvement Team and the Family Learning Team.

2. RATIONALE

All the evidence is that children do better when parents are actively involved in supporting and helping their children's learning.

Peter Peacock
Making a Difference – improving parents involvement in schools
Draft Consultation, 2005

Research commissioned by the Scottish Executive has established that 'most parents find formal means of formal structures for their involvement to be intimidating, closed and not necessarily there to seek or to represent their views' (Making a Difference, 2005).

The Council is committed through its Corporate Strategy to 'improve communication with parents about the education of children and young people to enable parents to participate more effectively in their children's care and education'.

The Education Department is committed through the Local Improvement Plan *to develop our partnership with parents and promote better, more flexible parental involvement in their children's learning.*

In East Renfrewshire we have built on the experience of integrated community schools and family literacy to develop a new approach to parental involvement that engages not only parents, but also the whole family in learning together and with other families. We have established its significance in and beyond school, and its enthusiastic acceptance by a wide range of families, including previously excluded groups. Moreover, we have demonstrated that the approach is having a long-term impact on sustaining parental involvement in learning, and ultimately on attainment. This approach is called family learning.

3. PRINCIPLES OF FAMILY LEARNING

Family Learning derives from a community development model and is one of the major contributions of the Education Department to Community Learning and Development. It encompasses the key principles of Community Learning and Development, as outlined in *Working and learning together to build stronger communities*, the Scottish Executive Guidance for Community Learning and Development:

Empowerment - increasing the ability of parents and carers to have an influence on their children's learning, for example through programmes such as Families Reading Together, story sacks, bilingual support, English as an additional language classes and paired reading.

Participation - supporting parents and carers to take part in decision-making about their own child's learning, for example through involvement in reviewing and setting targets in the personal learning planning process and being involved in out of school hours programmes.

Inclusion, equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination - recognising and providing for the fact that some people need additional support to overcome the barriers they face in being full partners in their children's education, for example because of literacy issues, their own negative experience of schooling, chronic illness or lack of resources.

Self-determination - supporting the right of parents/carers to make their own choices and to define for themselves how they can best support their child's learning, and recognising that this may not be through involvement in any formal structure; and

Partnership - recognising that many agencies, including families themselves, have skills and resources that can contribute to promoting Family Learning, and that schools and pre 5 centres involve families more effectively when they work in partnership.

4. AIMS OF FAMILY LEARNING

To support parents in the challenging and critical job of being co-educators of their children.

To promote reading and learning as valued family activities that encourage positive interactions and shared experiences.

To enhance the ability of parents to support their children's literacy development from birth and throughout the school years.

To design and deliver to families developmentally appropriate learning opportunities and resources that support continuity and progress in learning at home, in nursery and at school.

To provide an opportunity for parents to pursue their own educational goals.

To promote and support a culture of literacy and learning for life.

To address poverty and advance social inclusion.

To work with other agencies and education professionals in raising achievement and attainment.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND PRE FIVE CENTRES

Our schools and pre five centres are required:

To embrace the principles of family learning and to seek to build partnerships that will help them develop their practice.

To develop a policy for family learning by August 2007, demonstrating how the school or pre five centre uses family learning approaches to meet the standards expressed in *How good is our school* 5.4 and *Child at the Centre* Key Areas 4 and 5. The policy will be based on the Principles of Family Learning and make clear how the school intends to promote participation, and how consultation and communication with parents and policies on homework reflect the principles of family learning.

To self-evaluate their practice in family learning by August 2008.

To develop multi agency approaches to address the needs of parents that would benefit from additional support to overcome the barriers they face in being full partners in their children's education.

FAMILY LEARNING TEAM

The Family Learning Team is required:

To support primary schools and pre five centres to develop their practice in family learning.

To jointly plan and deliver family learning programmes and activities.

To engage with others, eg Cultural Services, Adult Learning, Adult Literacies, Further Education, Social Work, and Sport and Leisure, to provide family learning activities that provide a rich learning experience for families.

To help develop the Staged Intervention approach to address the needs of parents that require additional support to overcome the barriers they face in being full partners in their children's education, e.g. through small group work and home visiting.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Through its quality improvement function, the Education Department will support and challenge schools in the development of family learning, and review progress by developing a Thematic Review in Family Learning by 2007.

The Education Department will work with Voluntary Action and Langside College to produce a new strategy for opportunities for parents to volunteer in schools and pre five centres, providing clear guidelines and support for recruitment, training, and accreditation of learning.

APPENDIX 3: IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR

August 2006	First meeting of implementation Team convened, consisting of school board chairs, head teachers, teachers unions, denominational nominees, psychological services, adult and family learning.
September – October 2006	Education Department consults with all parents and other stakeholders on the outline strategy. Preparation of outline strategy.
December 2006	Consultation with head teachers on outline strategy. Seminar for head teachers.
January 2007	Education Department notifies parents of intention to parent schemes and seek preferences to make up of parent councils. Approval of outline strategy sought at Education Committee.
January – March 2007	Head Teachers carry out school level consultation on parental involvement and preferences for parent councils.
April – June 2007	Head teachers support parent forums in selection of parent councils. The method of election shall be according to a scheme approved by the Parent Forum.
August 2007	Parent Councils replace School Boards.
By December 2008	Parent Councils review outline strategy, amend if necessary and finally approve strategy.

APPENDIX 4: DIRECTORY OF RESOURCES

Name	Provided by	Services offered	Contact
Family Learning	East Renfrewshire Education Department Family and Adult Learning Service	A dedicated team of Family Learning Co-ordinators (including a bilingual Family Learning Co-ordinator) and Family Learning Teachers who encourage parental involvement in children's learning and school education in all primary schools and pre-five establishments, and also provide operational support in the schools and pre five establishments affected most by socio-economic deprivation and community isolation. The Family Learning Team is skilled in engaging with the most excluded parents, and in providing support to the most vulnerable families. They design and provide programmes that schools and pre five establishments use to promote parental involvement and run holiday programmes that involve the family together in learning activities.	Sheenagh Schmidt Family Learning Manager 0141 577 4512 SchmidtS@ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk
Adult Learning	East Renfrewshire Education Department Family and Adult Learning Service	The Adult Opportunities Team provides customised guidance and learning for people who wish to, or are thinking about returning to learning. The team can provide help to parents with becoming more skilful and confident about supporting their child's education, being more involved with the PTA, School Council or having their voice heard within the School Forum. The learning will focus on the needs and aspirations of the parents and will usually take place within small groups.	Eric Whitfield Adult Learning Manager 0141 577 3239
Adult Literacies	East Renfrewshire Education Department Family and Adult Learning Service	This team helps people to improve their skills in reading, writing and working with numbers. The team also provides help with learning English as an additional language. Help can be given in small groups and one to one by experienced and skilful staff. Parents who want to brush up on their own skills to perhaps support their children with homework or to have a better understanding of school policies and procedures can meet with a member of the team to get help tailored to their individual needs.	Eric Whitfield Adult Learning Manager 0141 577 3239

School Based Social Work Service	East Renfrewshire Community Health and Care Partnership	Social workers provide a service in four of the seven school clusters. This service is dedicated to early intervention, often through joint working with other agencies in response to staged intervention at the school level. They are involved in individual case work, group work and work with parents and families.	Ann Marie Shields...
Sure Social Workers	East Renfrewshire Community Health and Care Partnership	Two Sure Start Social Workers provide support for parenting through pre 5 establishments in the Lavern Valley area (check?)	Ann Marie Shields....
Health Promotion Team	East Renfrewshire Education Department with the Community Health and Care Partnership	Each cluster is served by one of the three Health Co-ordinators who support parental involvement in health related activity, e.g. establishing healthy eating courses for parents in pre 5 establishments, consulting with parents on sexual health education, leading the <i>Health Promotion in the Home initiative</i> , and supporting the health related elements of family learning programmes.	Jeannie Mackenzie Quality Improvement Officer 0141 638 6538 mackenziej4@ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk
Psychological Services	East Renfrewshire Education Department	The service runs authority wide parenting workshops twice a year for all parents. Invitations are sent out via schools and pre 5 centres. Parenting classes are also jointly run with Social Work for targeted parents. Psychologists also work closely with parents involving them in assessment and intervention programme planning. Direct work with parents is done individually or in small groups at a local and school level.	Joyce Fullerton Principal Psychologist 0141 577 8510
East Renfrewshire Youth Counselling Services and WellSpring	Renfrewshire Association for Mental Health	Although these mental health services are primarily directed at children and young people, where appropriate, a service is also offered to the parents or the family as a whole.	Wendy Kinnin Senior Youth Counsellor 0141 577 2612 kinninw@ea.e-renfrew.sch.uk

Libraries Service	East Renfrewshire Community Services	In addition to providing books to help children with homework and encourage reading skills, libraries also provide free broadband internet access for all. Libraries also provide IT classes from basic skills to ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence). Also available is free online information e.g. Encyclopaedia Britannica, by logging on to www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/eresources .	Janice Weir 577 3500
Bilingual Support Assistants	East Renfrewshire Education Department	Four Bilingual Support Workers (Urdu / Punjabi) provide support for BME parents and their families (for children 3-18 yrs)	Victoria Fleming 0141 577 8529
Parent Information Line	East Renfrewshire Education Department	Education Department provides a free phone Parent Information Line, which provides assistance and advice on educational matters, related to children's learning in East Renfrewshire. This phone line is operational Monday – Friday, 8am-6pm and is also available in Urdu and Punjabi.	0845 84 100 10

APPENDIX 5: SCHEME FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF PARENT COUNCILS

East Renfrewshire Council Education Department

SCHEME FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF PARENT COUNCILS

ACTION	SUPPORT	TIMESCALE
Letter to parents	Head of Education Services (Children and Young People)	January 2007
Schools consult with parents regarding the establishment of Parent Councils. Schools can use a variety of methods – establish a working party, questionnaires, meetings etc.	ER Strategy 'Related to Learning' 'Toolkit' Pages 80-84 Publicity materials from Education Department to raise awareness – leaflets, posters etc. Statements in school handbooks Powerpoint presentation for parents online Seminars for Head Teachers Meetings for School Board Chairs / Parents	January – March 2007
School to explore options for format of parent council.	3 suggested models (including draft constitutions) provided by the Education Department in the strategy 'Related to Learning' HT to support parents in consulting parent forum 'Toolkit' Pages 88 - 102 HT to provide advice/support in making choice	January - March 2007
Parent forum or working party to suggest a preferred format of parent council and draft constitution	HT to support parents in arrangements for establishing/selecting the parent council 'Toolkit' Page 84 Education Department to be consulted on any model that differs from the 3 suggested models	By May 2007
Selection process to be undertaken	HT (on behalf of Education Department) to inform all parents of arrangements and method of selection 'Toolkit' Page 85	May/June 2007
Parent Council to inform HT, ER Education Department, parent forum and pupils that it has been established, who its members are and how to contact them from August 2007		June 2007