A parenting support strategy for practitioners and managers

Building parenting capacity in Lanarkshire

going it right for every child in Lanarkshire
Strong, loving families are essential to ensure that all Scotland’s children get the best start in life. But parenting isn’t always easy – and all parents can struggle at times – which is why it’s important to ensure that families are able to find the advice and support they need to bring up their children to be the healthy, confident citizens of tomorrow.¹

Foreword

This Parenting Support Strategy is a clear and shared commitment to supporting parents, using consistent approaches and enabling them to fulfil their parenting roles to maximum effect. North and South Lanarkshire Councils and NHS Lanarkshire, in consultation with the voluntary sector and parents, recognise that by working together towards common goals, we can achieve more for the families of Lanarkshire.

Building parenting capacity is central to our plan for Getting it right for every child in Lanarkshire (GIRFEC). It is also at the core of our Early Years Framework and embraces a range of key national policy drivers.

This parenting support strategy has been endorsed by the GIRFEC programme executive:

• Jane Liddell
  Head of Education, Quality and Development
• Andrea Batchelor
  Head of Inclusion
• Richard Burgon
  Unit Manager
• Jackie Irvine
  Manager Children and Families
• Jill McLeod
  Superintendent
• Geraldine Queen
  Associate Director of Nursing – Public Health
• Robert Swift
  Head of Children and Justice
• Susan Stewart
  Associate Director of Nursing – Midwifery

Throughout this strategy document the term “parent” is used to refer to mothers, fathers, grandparents and other carers including foster carers and young carers.

¹ Ipsos MORI poll 2010
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Who is this strategy for?

This strategy will assist practitioners and managers in their work to support parents - providing better outcomes for children, young people and families in Lanarkshire, through early years provision and early intervention.

As outlined in the Early Years Framework, the early years multi-disciplinary sub groups in North and South Lanarkshire Children’s Services planning structures, have a responsibility for developing a formal parenting support strategy. However supporting parents is not limited to the early years’ workforce. It should span all ages and stages of children’s development, particularly in relation to key transitions, giving parents support when they need it most.

“Improved knowledge of children’s early development and of the impact of early childhood experiences must inform research, policy and practice decisions.” 2
Strengths Approach

Each family is unique. It has its own unique set of circumstances and unique set of strengths and difficulties. Each family, regardless of composition or circumstances, will experience good times and times of challenge.

Parenting can be one of the most rewarding experiences and can bring joy and fulfilment—however, it can also be unpredictable and can present some difficult and challenging situations. Some parents will experience additional pressures such as financial worries, health problems or personal issues which can have a significant impact on their capacity to parent.

Valuing the role of parents means building on individual strengths—"assets," and supporting parents, families and communities in a non-judgmental way to do the best for their children.

Jane Foot and Trevor Hopkins in their report 'A Glass Half Full,' and the new 'Child Poverty Strategy for Scotland' recognise the need for an asset approach. This relies on the ability of professionals to recognise that individuals, communities and populations have significant potential to be a resource rather than just simply consumers of services.

Building on individual strengths, we will avoid the culture of parent blaming or professional dependency when things go wrong. At times this may be as simple as signposting to services/information or alternatively may require more intensive support.

Experience shows that parents develop both confidence and the ability to cope and find solutions to their individual situations, when they have good quality support and a positive relationship—a friend, a family member, a member of the community or a professional.

Why—The Need for a Lanarkshire Parenting Strategy

Attachment

It is accepted that the role of parents is crucially important to the healthy development of children, and parents have a stronger influence than any other experience or any other relationship.

Babies have a genetic instinct to tune into their primary carer. They are born relationship ready. Research has shown us the outcome of developing this relationship depends on what happens. This process is what we recognise as attachment.

In most cases there is a strong two way relationship, but in some situations this may fall short leading to poor attachment.

Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, as well as Learning Teaching Scotland’s Pre-Birth To Three guidance, highlight the wealth of information that exists on the importance of improving our children’s earliest experiences, leading to better long term outcomes.

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“As the number of problems or risk factors grows and resilience factors diminish, the harder it is for parent and child to cope and flourish.”4

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2. The Early Years Framework—Scoping Its Impact—Aline Werts Dunlop, Tam Baillie, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People (2011)
3. NHS Lanarkshire—departmental presentation, Zeta April (2011)
5. (Pages 8-10) The Foundation Years Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults, report of the Independent Review on poverty and life chances, Frank Field (2010)

Babies are born relationship ready.
What do we want to achieve? – Our Vision For Lanarkshire

Our vision for every child and young person in Lanarkshire is that they grow, develop and reach their full potential within strong, confident and resourceful families and communities who are fully equipped to contribute to their children’s wellbeing.

Grow, develop and reach their full potential based on the eight wellbeing indicators – safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included.

“It’s not who parents are but what they do that matters” 5

Our strategy is founded on this vision - recognising the strengths of families, building confidence and enabling them to access appropriate support.

Every parent should have the right kind of help at the right time from the right person. It is recognised that not all parents have the same level of requirements and that services will support a wide spectrum of need.

The strategy recognises the importance of providing services for parents to ensure that they can successfully support their child’s journey from early years to early adulthood in the best possible way, developing confidence in their role.

It is recognised that children’s and parents’ needs can change quickly from very low level non-intrusive support requirements to intensive support needs and vice versa, as circumstances change.

The GIRFEC diagram, does not represent needs as a continuum with children or families moving up or down but a spiral with the family, community and universal services wrapped around the child as closely as possible.

GIRFEC
The Child/Young Person’s Pathway

The family and universal services
- Additional help from universal services
- Joint working – additional help from another agency
- Integrated working
- Complex intervention

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Children will grow, develop and reach their full potential within strong confident and resourceful families.
How are we going to achieve this?

Implementing our strategy relies on having an action plan. In part two we have outlined core commitments, short term actions and medium to long term aspirations for the Lanarkshire parenting support strategy.

What do parents say?

Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) commissioned an Ipsos MORI poll to seek parents’ experiences of a range of key parenting issues. One thousand parents of children aged 0-16 years were interviewed in summer 2010.

The results showed that 72% of parents still say that they don’t know where to go for advice and support in bringing up children. The figure rises to 82% among parents in the most deprived areas of the country.

In Lanarkshire, when asked what they felt was helpful, parents said:

- “She helped me to realise I was playing with my child and doing it right.”

- “They are definitely a good chance for the parents themselves to get more involved with other parents, it helps the kids to break the ice as well, they see their parents talking and joking with other parents they wouldn’t normally talk to and they think they can do it too, it helps break down barriers, the kids learn from their parents.”

What have professionals told us?

Practitioners are aware of what is working well and what isn’t working well. For example:

- “If parents need to talk to you, make time to listen to them.”

- “They are definitely a good chance for the parents themselves to get more involved with other parents, it helps the kids to break the ice as well, they see their parents talking and joking with other parents who are the same as me and we can help each other.”

What has guided us?

There has been a consultation process with parents, practitioners and managers across Lanarkshire which has guided the development of this strategy. More information on this can be found at: www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk.

More information on practitioner consultation and feedback can also be viewed at: www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk.

These valuable comments from both parents and practitioners have helped to shape the Lanarkshire parenting support strategy core commitments and actions.
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Introduction

This strategy has already outlined who, why and what we aim to do – however, we need to consider how we put this into practice.

There are many examples of excellent work taking place to support parents, children and young people across South and North Lanarkshire. However we recognise the need to coordinate practice and create consistency across services.

Consistency and practice will only be achieved when staff work together across disciplines to share common principles and values and when each practitioner feels respected by their colleagues. Stronger and confident practitioners will lead to stronger children, young people, carers, families and communities.

The GIRFEC core competency framework\(^*\) reflects practitioners’ views of the essential knowledge and skills necessary to enable staff to work, either as single agencies or together as multi-agencies to develop children and young people’s well-being. The Lanarkshire Partnership is now working towards workforce development plans which will offer the right support to practitioners and, in time, workforces will have access to the training and support they need.

\(^*\) More information on GIRFEC core competency framework can be viewed at: www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk

“If there is another group like this in the future we will be the first to sign up for it. It is also really good that it is free, as parents on benefits can enjoy it.”
Aims

• To build parenting capacity in Lanarkshire by maximising the collective resource across the Lanarkshire Partnership including parents themselves and community networks.
• To establish a coherent, multi-agency approach to support along the continuum of need from planning for a family through conception, pregnancy, birth and beyond.
• To ensure a consistently high standard of accessible support to parents which is appropriate, proportionate, timely and effective.
• To increase the capacity of professionals to deliver appropriate, effective and evidence-based parenting interventions within a shared set of values and principles.

Objectives

• To make sure that across agencies information systems capture parenting activity which can be monitored collectively through locality structures.
• To profile resource requirements which will help to inform future resource planning.
• To create opportunities for professionals engaged in building parenting capacity to share practice, exchange information and build relationships with each other.
• To ensure that every parenting intervention funded through the Lanarkshire Partnership is based on the integrated framework of developing children and young people’s well-being. This means every professional will be able to evidence:
  - clearly recorded information including concerns and significant events
  - appropriate and proportionate assessment of strengths, capacity and risks
  - action plans with explicit outcomes that include clear goals, outcomes, timescales and reviews.
• To ensure that professionals and agencies share information, coordinate and agree responsibilities where more than one professional is working with a family.
• To equip the workforce with improved knowledge, information and the core skills to build parenting capacity in Lanarkshire.
• To ensure that practitioners understand, respect and maintain the content, structure and delivery of existing evidence-based programmes.
• To proactively promote the important role of male care givers in all parenting activity in Lanarkshire.
• To work together to find solutions to the practical barriers to accessing parenting support.

* Male care givers acting as positive role models are crucially important to the growth and development of babies and children and may include a relative such as grandfather, brother or close family friend.

“One to one support and group work for parents isn’t only available and needed in the early years.”
CC. 1. We will ensure the unique role of parents as the child’s most important resource is promoted, and in particular will emphasise the crucial contribution of male carers.

Benefits
Children will: understand the importance of being a parent which will be developed as a life skill through positive promotion within schools and through positive role models
Parents will: feel valued and respected in their role
Staff will: promote the parent role and focus on engaging more with male carers

Outcomes
Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed

CC. 2. We will ensure the ambitions of the key policy documents* and the early years agenda are at the heart of service delivery for communities, being vital in supporting parents to give “our children the best start in life and be ready to succeed.”

Benefits
Children will: be more resilient and live longer, healthier, happier lives
Parents will: be more empowered and confident in their roles as parents
Staff will: be better informed

Outcomes
We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.

CC. 3. We will ensure that all staff working with children, families and communities will be supported to develop culture, systems and practice change in line with the national GIRFEC practice model. We will promote the benefits of partnership working.

Benefits
Children will: benefit from being safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included
Parents will: feel better supported and involved in the needs of their child
Staff will: share a common language and understanding of parenting support, leading to improved job satisfaction

Outcomes
We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk

CC. 4. We will ensure that all interventions are underpinned by appropriate and timely assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation which promotes decision making and actions to address parents’ support needs.

Benefits
Children will: receive planned support which is based upon their individual need, and regularly reviewed
Parents will: be fully involved in the assessment process and consulted in the evaluation. They will understand their own and others’ contribution to their child’s well-being
Staff will: plan and deliver effective interventions in partnership with other services and families

Outcomes
Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs

CC. 5. We will ensure that staff will be encouraged to build on the capacities of our parents and families using the “strengths approach”.

Benefits
Children will: benefit from confident parents
Parents will: be more confident and competent to deal with the daily demands of being a parent
Staff will: understand the importance of parents as partners

Outcomes
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others

* See the three key policies on page 12

The North and South Lanarkshire early years sub groups, endorsed by children’s services, will have responsibility for implementing the following core commitments and reviewing short and long term actions on an annual basis.
CC. 6. We will ensure that the need to consult with parents and children is recognised throughout all aspects of work in developing and delivering support.

Benefits
Children will: feel included and valued
Parents will: understand and value their contribution to children’s lives
Staff will: benefit from using the knowledge and experience of parents and children in addition to all available community resources resulting in increased community capacity

Outcomes
We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.

CC. 7. We will ensure that managers understand and commit to the need to work in partnership. They must support and promote:
- resource commitment and time allocation for practitioners to carry out their parenting support role
- the content and delivery of evidence-based programmes

Benefits
Children will: see the same people
Parents will: have access to a shared and consistent approach
Staff will: extend their skills and experience through collaborative working to support parents

Outcomes
We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need

CC. 8. We will ensure a strategic and structured approach to the development of local practitioner networks which are maintained and monitored as a method of:
- supporting existing practice, identifying areas for professional development
- sharing information
- building relationships
- identifying collaborative working opportunities.

Benefits
Children will: benefit from services that are appropriate, proportionate and timely
Parents will: benefit from more positive, constructive relationships and approaches across agencies
Staff will: be better supported and more effective in their work with families

Outcomes
Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people’s needs

CC. 9. We will ensure that key messages around building positive relationships will be a foundation for practice, e.g. understanding the importance of attachment and maintaining good relationships throughout children’s lives. This is equally important for male and female parents or care givers.

Benefits
Children will: enjoy improved family relationships and feel safe, secure and nurtured
Parents will: understand the critical early days in a child’s life for bonding and forming strong relationships
- understand that it is not who you are but what you do that matters
- be able to understand and manage their own and their children’s emotions effectively
Staff will: understand the importance of early intervention and prevention

Outcomes
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

CC. 10. We will ensure that staff will share information and good practice with each other and parents on an ongoing basis and in particular at key transition periods in their children’s lives.

Benefits
Children will: experience positive transitions at key stages, being supported and prepared to cope successfully with change
Parents will: be knowledgeable and better equipped to deal with their child’s needs at different stages
Staff will:
- feel valued and respected for their contribution
- signpost parents to local resources and support
- liaise appropriately to ensure effective transitions and support parents through these changes

Outcomes
We live longer, healthier lives
1. What: Locality structures will carry out an audit – central template to be agreed – of existing parenting support interventions and use of resources on an area basis. This will inform strategic planning across Lanarkshire. We will use the NHS Lanarkshire community profiles and the Growing Up in Scotland statistical information to give insight into our communities.

Why: We need to have an overview of what we are delivering in our localities. In so doing, we are working in a consistent way, achieving a coherent approach as set out in the early years framework.

Who: ICS in SLC and LPGs in NLC

How: Improvement targets agreed through early years sub groups

2. What: We will use the knowledge from localities to coordinate ongoing parenting group work interventions.

Why: We need to have a coordinated approach, maximising resources in localities – more efficient use of staff time, skills and knowledge.

Who: ICS in SLC and LPGs in NLC

How: We will be working in partnership in our localities to plan, coordinate and share resources around parenting interventions

3. What: The results of the audit in localities will identify parenting support interventions across Lanarkshire. Staff will be tasked with gathering evidence of the effectiveness and impact of their intervention.

Why: Knowledge of what works will be used to inform the development of our staged intervention model.

Who: ICS in SLC and LPGs in NLC

How: Qualitative and quantitative evidence will be gathered and made available as a baseline to inform future development of work

4. What: Discussion and agreement at a senior level around the sharing of financial resources.

Why: To make better use of the collective resources available.

Who: Service leads/resource group

How: We will be using our collective resources more efficiently and ensure new funding sources are considered by our collective services in the planning, application and delivery process. This will result in more effective parenting support.
5. What: An induction pack will be developed for new staff in relation to the parenting support strategy policy drivers and key actions.

Why: To help staff understand key information and be confident in their role supporting parents.

Who: Short life working group with representation from children’s services themed groups. Responsibility will sit with the early years sub groups.

How: An induction pack and training will be offered to all new staff and students from key services, e.g. health, social work, education.

6. What: All staff will develop core skills to support parents through GIRFEC core competency framework training.

Why: By adopting the principles of working with children, young people and families outlined in the core competency framework we will improve practice.

Who: Short life working group with representation from children’s services themed groups. Responsibility will sit with the early years sub groups.

How: Staff will be able to evidence that they are using the core competency framework.

7. What: Evidence from the audit, combined with knowledge of nationally recognised programmes and our North Lanarkshire research, will be used to identify specific key interventions which will form a core menu for staged intervention in Lanarkshire.

Why: We need to acknowledge and build on what we are already doing to identify the right intervention, at the right time, by the right people, with the right resources.

Who: Service leads/resource group.

How: We will have an agreed Lanarkshire staged intervention model of practice.

“Tea with the teacher in my son’s primary school once a month has given me a great insight into my son’s first year at school and also allowed me to make some great crafts things too!”
NextSteps

As this strategy is reviewed, there are a number of key issues which will need to be considered to drive further change. These have been suggested from consultation with staff across Lanarkshire and will form our aspirations for future development. In addition, consultation will continue with parents, children and staff.

When the strategy is reviewed on an annual basis, these issues will need to be taken into account alongside our core commitments and short term actions to define our next steps.

Considerations for induction

- Staff should strive to engage with male care givers as early as possible, encouraging them to have a positive, active role. Target information from national campaigns such as Play, Talk, Read and promote positive male role models.

- We will promote inequalities sensitive practice, recognising equality and diversity across religion or belief, ethnicity, disability and sexual identity, to ensure minority groups of parents are supported and targeted with resources that are specific to their needs.

- Recognition of the need to link with key strands of health improvement work, for example gender-based violence, oral health, smoking and alcohol.

- The sharing of information and resources with parents and parents to be must be planned and coordinated to avoid duplication and inconsistency of access, for example Health for All Children resource materials, Book Bug, Play@ Home.

- We will promote the importance of one to one support within the home learning environment from universal staff provision and additional services such as community mothers, first steps workers, grassroots volunteers.

- All agencies should encourage the uptake of one to one support offered outwith the home, for example antenatal appointments, child surveillance programmes, counselling sessions.

- All agencies should signpost and encourage the uptake of locally arranged parent and child activities, for example rhyme time, parent and toddler groups, managing teenage behaviour.
Training and resources

- Commitment for resources to support parents to take up opportunities should be agreed in North and South. This could include innovative use of nursery centres and classes to support childcare and parent groups as well as out of school support.

- Following the mapping of parenting provision, skills and knowledge of our staff, appropriate training will be offered to strengthen the workforce based on the staged intervention menu.

- Family information service/ICS training calendar and database will be linked.

- Actively encourage male care givers to participate in antenatal information sessions with a focus on brain development and attachment (development of a booklet).

Suggestions for staged intervention

- Using a staged intervention approach, parents will be encouraged into group work settings through non-threatening, relaxed, informal programmes such as infant massage, rhyme time, play sessions and progressing to other interventions as confidence grows.

- We will support young people prior to becoming parents who may be at risk of disengaging or engaging those at risk focusing on More Choices More Chances and teenage pregnancy intervention work.

- We will develop the existing healthy reading scheme in Lanarkshire as a new form of population-wide parenting support.
1. Ipsos MORI poll, What Scottish parents tell us, undertaken for Parenting across Scotland, (2010)

2. The Early Years Framework - scoping its impact, summary report on behalf of Tam Baillie, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, Aline -Wendy Dunlop, (2010)


5. Early Years Framework, final report from the parenting task group, (2008), http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14121428/6


10. The Best Possible Start, Scottish Government, (2011)


17. http://www.gartlea.lanarkshire.co.uk

www.girfecinlanarkshire.co.uk