

Building the capacity of student teachers through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Placements in Family Learning Teams

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Pilot Placement Programme

Evaluation Report

October 2025



EducationScot



@Educationscot

Contents

	Page
1. Background	4
2. Learning Together: National Action Plan on Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home.....	6
3. Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home	8
4. Pilot Programme Overview	10
4.1 Stage 1 – May 2024	11
4.1.1 North Lanarkshire Council - Background.....	11
4.1.2 University of the West of Scotland (UWS) - Background.....	11
4.1.3 Identifying potential placement students.....	11
4.1.4 Activity opportunities.....	12
4.1.5 Placement overview	12
4.1.6 Feedback from North Lanarkshire Council	13
4.1.7 Feedback from the student teacher.....	14
4.1.8 University of the West of Scotland (UWS) Feedback	15
4.1.9 Summary	16
4.2 Stage 2 – October-November 2024	17
4.2.1 North Lanarkshire Council - Background.....	17
4.2.2 Strathclyde University - Background.....	17
4.2.3 Identifying potential students	17
4.2.4 Activity opportunities.....	18
4.2.5 Placement overview	18
4.2.6 Feedback from North Lanarkshire Council	19
4.2.7 Feedback from student teachers	20
4.2.8 Feedback from Strathclyde University	21
4.2.9 Summary	23

4.3	Stage 3 – January 2025	24
4.3.1	North Lanarkshire Council - Background.....	24
4.3.2	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland - Background.....	24
4.3.3	Identifying potential students	24
4.3.4	Activity opportunities.....	25
4.3.5	Placement overview	25
4.3.6	Feedback from North Lanarkshire Council	25
4.3.7	Feedback from student teachers	26
4.3.8	Feedback from Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)	26
4.3.9	Summary	27
4.4	Stage 4 – May 2025	28
4.4.1	Aberdeen City Council - Background.....	28
4.4.2	University of Aberdeen - Background.....	29
4.4.3	Identifying potential students	29
4.4.4	Activity opportunities.....	30
4.4.5	Placement overview	30
4.4.6	Feedback from Aberdeen City Council	31
4.4.7	Feedback from student teachers	32
4.4.8	Feedback from the University of Aberdeen	33
4.4.9	Summary	34
5.	Conclusion.....	35
6.	Key messages and recommendations.....	37
Appendix 1 – Stage 1 – University of the West of Scotland		40
Appendix 2 – Stage 2 – Strathclyde University		44
Appendix 3 – Stage 3 – Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.....		45
Appendix 4 – Stage 4 – University of Aberdeen.....		48
Appendix 5 – Reflective log – Stage 1 - UWS.....		51
Appendix 6 – Reflective log – Stage 4 - Aberdeen.....		59

1. Background

Involving and engaging parents in their child's and their own learning has been an evolving journey in Scotland's education system over many decades. By way of a short historical overview, the 1946 Education (Scotland) Act established a framework for the development of public education in the post-war period. Within this Act, education was made compulsory for children aged 5-15 and parents were given a duty to provide education for their children.

Following the Act, a number of developments took place in terms of parental rights and parental choices. Scotland's education system was then redefined during the 1960s and 1970s in light of educational reform and social changes. During this period, Family Learning was also established in Scottish education as an effective approach utilised by settings and schools to engage parents and families and the wider community.

Beginning in the 1980s, Scotland enacted a suite of educational reforms. It passed the Education (Scotland) Act in 1980, Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act in 2000, and Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act in 2004. While this national legislation was impactful, it did not explicitly focus on the issue of parental involvement. Accordingly, the Scottish Government began looking for ways to promote more meaningful interactions between families and schools. This was in response to research at the time highlighting the benefits of parental involvement in children's learning, as well as a general consensus that the previous School Board arrangements, which had been in place since 1988, required reform.

To this end, the [Scottish Schools \(Parental Involvement\) Act](#) was passed in 2006. The legislation mandated that Scottish ministers and local authorities take a number of actions to increase parental involvement. Officials in local authority areas were mandated to develop a strategy for schools to increase parental involvement in their learning community. To support the legislation, the Scottish Government created accompanying [Statutory Guidance](#) and the [School Handbook Guidance](#).

Ten years after the introduction of the Parental Involvement Act, two independent reviews were undertaken in 2017 by [Ipsos MORI](#) and the [National Parent Forum of Scotland](#) to consider its impact. The reviews acknowledged the progress made along with areas for consideration. NPFS concluded that the '2006 Act has helped to support a step change in the way in which parents are recognised and supported to be involved in their child's education' ([NPFS, 2017, p51](#)).

To further support and embed the legislative duties of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 Education Scotland set up a knowledge exchange group in 2015. This was for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers, Scottish Government policy colleagues and national parenting organisations to share knowledge, priorities and good practice amongst peers and organisations across Scotland. It also helped to facilitate a shared interest and vision to drive improvements in parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. This would in turn support the practice of student teachers.

2. Learning Together: National Action Plan on Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home

Using the evidence from the reviews and building on the previous policy changes, the Scottish Government decided to create a national action plan for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. The government worked collaboratively with local partners and stakeholders to create a more parent-focused education system. Collectively this provided the overarching vision within which local authorities, early learning and childcare settings, schools and practitioners would be guided. Scottish Government brought these together and provided practitioners and educators with a focus and direction for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home in what can sometimes be viewed as a complex policy landscape.

To accomplish this, Scottish Government worked alongside Education Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA), a number of partner and stakeholder organisations including parents' groups and teacher associations to create the '[Learning Together National Action Plan](#)' (2018-21). The plan set out a vision and structure for how the Scottish Government would promote parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home within the education system, covering the journey a child and family take from pre-birth to age 18 and beyond. It also helped ensure that practitioners and educators had clarity on the actions required of them. Streamlining and providing easy access to the various legislative and policy requirements placed on practitioners and educators who are, or will be, leading on this work and/or delivering training at a local and national level, is a necessary process.

At the same time, a variety of researchers sought to enhance efforts to understand the impact of involving and engaging parents in the wider life and work of the school and their children's learning beyond legislative and statutory requirements. As one important example, findings from the 'Early Learning and Child Wellbeing' study show emphatically that what parents do is pivotal for their children's development. The day-to-day activities that parents undertake are highly correlated with children's learning and development. Regardless of socio-economic background, the study found children did better when their parents were engaged ([OECD, 2020](#)).

In 2021/22, findings from the [Parental Involvement and Engagement Census](#) (PIE) data and subsequent surveys of parents by local authorities and national parenting organisations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic showed increased parental expectations and desires to engage with early learning and childcare (ELC) settings and schools. Many settings and schools also reported an increase in parental engagement through existing and new communication approaches offered by emerging technology and access to digital devices as a result of the [Connecting Scotland](#) initiative.

3. Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home

In addition to the current work already established by settings and schools to engage parents and families, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) providers, local authorities and partner organisations across Scotland are committed to building the capacity of student teachers, probationers, post-probationers and existing staff, and developing their knowledge, skills and experience of working with parents and families. Improving outcomes for children and young people, parents and families remain a key priority across Scotland's political and educational landscape.

To achieve this, there is an ongoing need to ensure that the workforce has the appropriate values, competencies and qualifications to work effectively and meaningfully with children and young people, parents and families. This is also a key element of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) accredited teacher training courses in the revised GTCS standards (2021) which now features parental involvement and parental engagement.

Intelligence gathered over a number of years from a range of sources including settings, schools, practitioners and two national mapping exercises, undertaken by Education Scotland, showed a demand for clarity on what practitioners need to know when engaging and working with parents and families. In response, work began in 2022 to develop a [Strategic Framework](#) on Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home. The Framework was subsequently launched in May 2023 by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

During the formal launch of the Strategic Framework, one of the keynote speakers from Edinburgh University discussed a student placement programme within Edinburgh City Council's Family Learning Team using The First Ministers [Read, Write, Count](#) book bags. After the launch, Education Scotland were contacted by a different local authority (North Lanarkshire) to discuss the possibility of providing placement opportunities for student teachers within their Family Learning team. This idea was presented in September 2023 to the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Knowledge Exchange Group, led by Education Scotland. ITE providers were asked to take the suggestion back to their establishment for consideration and discussion.

Unanimous agreement was given by ITE providers in January 2024 to work with Education Scotland and look at scoping this idea out further.

Following the meeting in January 2024, an email was sent to the ITE Knowledge Exchange Group with minutes of the meeting and a request for universities within the Greater Glasgow area to contact Education Scotland to formally note their interest in the pilot. This would allow a meeting with North Lanarkshire Council and the participating university to be arranged to begin planning for the pilot. Two universities within the Greater Glasgow area (Strathclyde University and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and two outwith (University of the West of Scotland and University of Aberdeen) responded to this request. After discussion with North Lanarkshire Council, it was agreed that they would accommodate three universities. As one university covered the Aberdeen area, Aberdeen Family Learning Team were contacted to gauge their interest in being part of the pilot. They agreed to the request and were formally added to the placement programme. Planning meetings were held with all four universities and the two local authorities. As a small test of change, it was agreed to go ahead with four stages of the pilot. Each university and the two local authorities were asked to identify a suitable point within their course timetable and programme of family learning activities to undertake the pilot. The timescales were agreed as follows:

- University of the West of Scotland and North Lanarkshire Council – May 2024
- Strathclyde University and North Lanarkshire Council – October-November 2024
- Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and North Lanarkshire Council – January 2025
- University of Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council – May 2025

Learning outcomes for students participating in the pilot were focused on building confidence and developing strategies to work effectively with parents and families. Limiting the number of students for the pilot would allow for effective monitoring and evaluation to be undertaken before making any adaptations and deciding to scale up.

4. Pilot Programme Overview

Parent/carer Engagement and Family Learning is one of six drivers in the [National Improvement Framework](#) intended to help all children achieve the highest standards whilst reducing inequity and closing the attainment gap. Family learning sits within this driver, and it is an approach utilised to engage families in learning outcomes that have an impact on the whole family. It encourages family members to learn together as and within a family, with a focus on intergenerational learning. Additionally, it supports parents to meaningfully engage in their child's and their own learning.

Placing student teachers within Family Learning teams would provide them with an opportunity to work alongside family learning staff who use a wide range of engagement strategies to engage parents and families from varying demographics, in a learning outcome based on their needs. This would significantly benefit the student teachers' confidence in being able to work with parents and families, better understand barriers to participation and partnership approaches.

Initial planning meetings were arranged to scope out the logistics of each placement model. Discussions focused on placement dates, times, duration, timetable, learning outcomes, number of students, year stage of student, geography of programmes running in settings/schools, paperwork, evaluative processes, emergency contacts and transport.

Each placement was nuanced and required a degree of flexibility on behalf of the local authorities. Provision was made to accommodate each student to ensure a quality experiential learning opportunity. Students had more flexibility due to the placement not being part of their ITE programme.

4.1 Stage 1 – May 2024

Local authority:	North Lanarkshire
University:	University of the West of Scotland (UWS)
Duration of placement:	2 weeks
No of students (max):	6
Learning outcomes:	Build confidence in working with parents and families

4.1.1 North Lanarkshire Council - Background

North Lanarkshire's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Family Learning Team sits within the Education and Families service. The CLD Service has four strategic and operational managers who line manage four operational teams. The team work with parents who have children from birth – Primary 7 and families who are identified as benefiting from CLD Learning support.

4.1.2 University of the West of Scotland (UWS) - Background

The BA (Hons) Education course at the University of the West of Scotland provides the formal teaching qualification for provisional registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC). It gives students the skills, knowledge and experience to become an effective primary school teacher. Flexible study options allow students to combine their studies in education with a specialism, including Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Education, Languages, Literacy, Mathematics, and Science. As part of their studies, students spend 30 weeks on integrated classroom placements to gain hands-on experience to complement their academic studies.

4.1.3 Identifying potential placement students

To support students to gain knowledge and experience of working with parents and families UWS provided information for students about the ITE placement opportunity. This was initially distributed to 3rd year students in person encouraging them to take advantage of the placement (see Appendix 1). The invitation was then extended to 2nd and 4th year students via the virtual learning environment.

Given the short time constraints between the planning meeting in March 2024 and the identified pilot date (May 2024) only one 4th year student from UWS was available to undertake the pilot. This could have been due to students having previously committed to alternative arrangements after their course finished at the end of May.

4.1.4 Activity opportunities

Below are some examples of the types of programmes North Lanarkshire CLD Family Learning team offer to parents and families throughout the year. The learning offer responds to the needs identified by families and by partners such as schools, social work, and health via the empowering cluster model.

- Solihull Understanding Your Child
- Relax kids
- Let's Introduce Anxiety Management
- ASN Parent Support Group
- Emotional works
- Food for Mood
- Forrest School
- Health Issues in the community
- Solihull Dad's Group
- Sleep Scotland Workshops
- Bookbug
- Family Escape Puzzle Group
- SQA Improving Wellbeing
- Living Life to the Full

4.1.5 Placement overview

The focus of the placement was for students to work alongside operational staff within localities and with families that have at least one child at primary school. The three Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) Development Officers within the Family Learning team would supervise a maximum of two students each. A copy of the agreed timetable for students undertaking the pilot can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1.6 Feedback from North Lanarkshire Council

When considering this pilot programme, North Lanarkshire Council used the Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home. This provided the starting point for their decisions. They were conscious that the main priority of any student teacher would be the child whereas family learning staff look at the interaction between the child and the family. Helping student teachers to focus more widely was therefore one of the objectives.

Staff at North Lanarkshire who worked with the student teacher were overwhelmingly positive about the placement experience. They advised that the student teacher was more than willing to get involved in every aspect of their work. He was initially trepid about engaging with the parents as his comfort zone was working with the children but after some coaching and observing family learning staff, his confidence grew, and he became actively involved. He was exposed to shared outcomes for parents and families and how partnership working created a robust early intervention approach.

The student teacher visited as many offices as possible to meet family learning staff and observe the delivery of programmes. Without being requested to do so, the student teacher kept a reflective logbook (see Appendix 5) with an overview of what he had been involved in and what he had learned. Given that the student teacher had completed his course work, he had more opportunity to keep the reflective journal. Family learning staff provided the student teacher with some background reading e.g. terms and definitions, research (Gale Macleod, Janet Goodall). He left a positive impression with everyone he met in the local authority and was described as 'a breath of fresh air'. In addition, the student teacher wrote a very positive article about his placement in the Family Learning team for the local authority's newsletter called 'Aspire'.

Staff in North Lanarkshire Council fed back that a bit of additional work was initially required for the ITE pilot programme, but it was manageable. Although lessons had been learned from previous CLD placements, the ITE pilot had provided a new positive learning experience. They felt better placed to undertake stage 2 of the ITE pilot programme. Significant progress had been made within a short period of time and there were a lot of benefits which had not initially been anticipated.

North Lanarkshire staff viewed this as an opportunity to work with a new generation of teachers and form strong partnerships from the outset. This would ultimately benefit parents and families in a positive way. Similarly, they highlighted that working with UWS staff had been a great opportunity for them to establish a mutually beneficial partnership. Although the timing around the first placement was tight, staff from both UWS and North Lanarkshire were able to come together and deliver a robust learning opportunity for the student teacher. Moving forward they now have a clearer understanding of the time it takes to lead into this type of process and the demands it may make of staff and students.

Education Scotland captured feedback from North Lanarkshire CLD team. See links below:

Louise McLean - [North Lanarkshire Council Placement Programme: Staff](#)

James Fagan - [North Lanarkshire Council Placement Programme: Staff](#)

4.1.7 Feedback from the student teacher

The first stage of the placement programme was a positive experience for the student teacher. He commented that his confidence had increased when engaging with parents and families and he now felt more comfortable working with them. He believes this will enhance his teaching practice and help him to provide a more holistic approach. He also felt that being exposed to different learning styles, as demonstrated by the family learning staff, increased his knowledge, skills and experience as a new teacher in the field.

In addition to increased confidence working with parents and families within different socio-economic communities, he also spoke about how much he valued understanding the breadth of partner and stakeholder groups based within the community that could support schools. This knowledge he believed, would be beneficial for all teaching staff to support their work with children, their parents and families.

The student teacher said he would recommend this type of placement to anyone embarking on a teaching career. He did not understand why more students had not taken up the opportunity. The student teacher stated that he was really grateful to have had the opportunity to take part in this pilot programme.

Following the pilot, the student teacher was successful in gaining a place in a local primary school within North Lanarkshire Council for his probationary year. While this may not happen for every student, the pilot programme gave the student teacher an insight into the partners that the local authority link to. The student teacher gained confidence through the pilot and was able to share his knowledge with colleagues at the school, thus providing longer term benefits.

The student teacher found the groups interesting and interactive. Having an opportunity to do home visits gave him an insight into the lives of the families which he found particularly valuable. This helped build his understanding of the challenges and issues affecting parents and families.

North Lanarkshire Council captured the student teacher's feedback on film. See link below:

Student teacher - [University of the West of Scotland Placement Programme: Student Teacher](#)

4.1.8 University of the West of Scotland (UWS) Feedback

Staff at UWS also viewed the placement as a positive experience. They advised that the student teacher clearly learned a lot during his placement with North Lanarkshire. Moving forward UWS would like to embed a more robust reflective process to capture learned experiences perhaps building on the student teacher's logbook and video evidence.

UWS also commented on the flexible nature of the placement dates and commended North Lanarkshire staff on their professionalism during their time working together. They see value in this type of placement opportunity which gives students an opportunity to engage with partner organisations working with parents and families, learn about different demographics, barriers to participation and engagement techniques. The pilot programme provided all sorts of interesting possibilities in terms of adding to students' experiences in future.

Having one student involved in the pilot made arrangements easier to manage. If larger numbers of students or local authorities are to be involved in future, this may require a member of staff to have responsibility for the oversight of placements.

Education Scotland captured feedback from the University of the West of Scotland. See link below.

Dr. Louise Barrett - [University of the West of Scotland Placement Programme: Staff](#)

4.1.9 Summary

The first stage of the pilot has been very positive. Lessons learned were fed into stage 2. These included:

- A longer lead-in time to raise awareness of the opportunity with students
- A presentation be delivered by Family Learning staff to students
- Keeping a learning log becomes a requirement of the pilot programme
- Ongoing discussion about the best time within ITE programmes and for students to undertake this kind of placement
- Continue to capture feedback via film and/or podcast

4.2 Stage 2 – October-November 2024

Local authority:	North Lanarkshire
University:	Strathclyde University
Duration of placement:	7 weeks including one study week (2 hours per week)
No of students (max):	12
Learning outcomes:	Build confidence in working with parents and families

4.2.1 North Lanarkshire Council - Background

See 4.1.1 above.

4.2.2 Strathclyde University - Background

The BA (Hons) Primary Education programme at Strathclyde University places social justice at the heart of teaching and learning. Primary Education is a degree programme designed to meet the recommendations of the 2010 Donaldson Report, Teaching Scotland's Future. The course allows students to study Primary Education along with other subjects in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and to work with a wide variety of students throughout their four-year programme. Students undertake work placements with children and young people from 0-14 years. They benefit from opportunities to develop a primary teaching specialism. For example, languages, STEM or creativities.

4.2.3 Identifying potential students

During a lecture, a Mentimeter activity invited 4th year BA students to reflect on their experiences of working with parents and families. Students indicated that their direct experience to date had been limited, and they expressed interest in developing greater confidence in this area. They welcomed the prospect of further opportunities to engage with parents and families as part of their professional learning.

Fourth year BA Primary education students are allocated 12 hours between September and December to undertake a Professional Specialisation module. For the 'Building Partnerships with Families' specialisation, this gives students the opportunity to connect theory and practice in order to develop their understanding of engaging with parents and families in meaningful

ways. Information about the ITE placement programme was included in the catalogue of Professional Specialisations which is distributed to all fourth-year undergraduate students.

Thirteen students responded to the advert in the catalogue. As with other Professional Specialisation options, students are chosen on a first-come, first served basis by the Course Administrator. Checks were made to ensure that students who had chosen parental engagement for their dissertation topic were aware of this placement opportunity and did not miss out. Six students were chosen from the thirteen but one transferred to another course before the pilot commenced. Five students took up the pilot placement opportunity.

4.2.4 Activity opportunities

The model for stage 2 of the pilot was different to stage 1 in that students had 12 contact hours in total across a seven-week period, one of which was a study week. Half of these hours were spent on campus and the remaining six hours were in North Lanarkshire Family Learning teams. Staff from North Lanarkshire Council attended the first session on campus to provide an overview of their work and outline what would be involved in the placement.

During the placement the five student teachers got the opportunity to be involved in a range of opportunities including Solihull, Bookbug and learning about CLD Family Learning approaches. Student teachers were unable to attend the dad's group because they are delivered on a Saturday.

To support professional learning during the seven-week placement, students were provided with a curated reading list of twelve academic sources focused on parental and family engagement in schools and the wider community. This was complemented by access to webinars and recorded materials, which offered varied perspectives and practical insights. Together, these resources were intended to enhance students' understanding of the importance of parental engagement and to encourage reflection on how this might be fostered in their future practice.

4.2.5 Placement overview

See 4.1.5 above.

4.2.6 Feedback from North Lanarkshire Council

Staff from North Lanarkshire Council advised that all five student teachers were very well received. Colleagues spoke very highly of them and commented that their level of engagement was very high. Time with the student teachers was limited but they were given an opportunity to look at the definitions and language used around parents and families. This was considered necessary to ensure everyone had a common language. Taking the time to do this was considered valuable by the student teachers.

Staff encouraged the student teachers to work closely with the parents and families alongside the family learning team and broker off existing trusted relationships. This ensured that students were able to engage with the parents and families quicker due to trust being established from the outset.

Staff were keen to reduce the barriers for student teachers as much as possible to allow them to engage fully in the pilot. They very kindly collected some of the student teachers from the train station.

Parents were a few weeks into the Solihull programme and were having a few open and frank discussions. Student teachers were split into groups of 2 and 3 to ensure there weren't too many adults in with the parents and families at any one time. Student teachers were advised that anything they heard was to be kept confidential. This gave student teachers an insight into the Solihull approach and the dynamic interactions between the parent and the child.

Consideration must always be given to what stage parents are at in a particular programme and whether it is appropriate for any other adult to join at that time. Staff approached one group of parents and advised it was student teachers who would be joining. Parents were very open and liked the idea that it was student teachers. Staff will investigate a bit further to see why parents felt differently about student teachers coming into the group.

Student teachers were able to visit the Bookbug sessions to give them an insight into Family Learning. These sessions were being run in school time, but others took place after school. Having students at different times of the year was manageable. There were definite benefits to having student teachers placed in Family Learning teams and even more so when they returned to the same local authority for their probationary year. The Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home provides the

opportunity to take this forward. This can only strengthen and develop the workforce. It was recognised that no one model would fit every placement opportunity and that slight adaptations would be required.

Education Scotland met online with North Lanarkshire Council and Strathclyde University to capture feedback.

4.2.7 Feedback from student teachers

Student teachers advised that they would have liked this placement opportunity to have featured more in their course and have had more time allocated to it. Having the placement opportunity earlier in their course would have been of benefit to them.

All student teachers felt they benefitted from their initial conversations with staff around the Strategic Framework and their understanding of terminology, and the differences and synergies between Parental Engagement and Family Learning. This provided them with a solid understanding of the theory before they engaged in practice.

When student teachers were given the timetable of sessions that the Family Learning Team deliver, they were highly impressed with the volume and variety of programmes on offer. They were also impressed with how hard the CLD Family Learning team work to engage parents and families.

Student teachers asked if there was an opportunity for them to share how their perceptions of engaging with parents and families had shifted because of the placement.

Education Scotland captured feedback from three of the student teachers via a podcast. See link below.

Student teachers - [Strathclyde University Placement Programme: Student Teachers](#)

4.2.8 Feedback from Strathclyde University

Staff at Strathclyde University advised that all five student teachers gained a lot from their placement. Some students can face challenges when talking to parents and families. Taking part in The Solihull Approach reframed how they thought and spoke to parents. Content within Solihull on relationships, connections and understanding the challenges facing parents and families was helpful to them.

The pilot was useful for university staff to understand how student teachers engage with parents and families. All student teachers expressed that because of the pilot they now realised that more practical opportunities and strategies to engage with parents and families was required.

The timing of the placement and the theme dovetailed very well with the assignment. For their assignment associated with the Professional Specialisation module, students were required to reflect on their personal and professional learning journey gained through participation in the module. In relation to their chosen professional specialisation within the primary setting, they were asked to report on:

- (a) their understanding of the principles and approaches that support effective engagement with parents and families;
- (b) contexts within schools and the wider community that can create and enhance positive relationships and collaboration; and
- (c) examples of strategies or activities that could be used to strengthen family engagement.

In Part B, students were expected to consider how participation in the module might influence their future study in their professional specialisation, identifying a clear focus for further professional learning. This structure supported students in connecting theory with practice and in recognising the value of family and community partnerships in children's learning.

Staff at the university were interested to see if the placement had a positive impact on the module assignment which was due in January 2025. The students' assignments reflected positively on the opportunities provided through the placements with NLC. A key theme that emerged was the need for a stronger emphasis on engaging parents and families earlier in Initial Teacher Education, to better prepare students for this important aspect of professional practice.

Having an input from North Lanarkshire Council CLD Family Learning Team was beneficial for student teachers because they had been unaware of the volume and extent of their work prior to that. There was some duplication between the university's input on campus and the local authority's input in the field. The first on campus input by the university focused on the content and the background on engaging parents. There was some overlap between the university's on-campus input and the local authority's field-based input.

The initial on-campus session provided by the university focused on the background and key principles of engaging parents and families. This was complemented by opportunities for students to reflect on their own experiences of working with parents and families, and to critically consider assumptions or deficit views that can sometimes shape perceptions of parental engagement. The second input on campus by the university came later on in the placement and it focused on the legislation surrounding the involvement and engagement of parents and families.

Student teachers were invited to maintain a private reflective journal throughout the placement. Most students engaged with the forum weekly, which provided prompts for discussion in the following week's session. While journals were personal and not intended for sharing, the reflections students recorded clearly informed their reflective assignments, supporting deeper consideration of their experiences with parents and families.

Education Scotland met online with Strathclyde University and North Lanarkshire Council to capture feedback.

Education Scotland captured feedback from staff at Strathclyde University. See link below.

Clare Mouat - [Strathclyde University Placement Programme: Staff](#)

4.2.9 Summary

The second stage of the pilot was also very positive. Lessons learned were fed into stage 3. These included:

- Providing student teachers with the opportunity to be part of the Bookbug activities in the 2nd year of their course would be good for a future placement opportunity.
- Have time and space to collaborate with partners (e.g. the university and the local authority) and share presentation materials ahead of time.
- Consideration could be given to providing opportunities for second-year BA students to have vertically integrated projects which could then be developed further in their 4th year. This would be as opposed to leaving this placement opportunity until year 4 of the BA course.
- Having a mid-point check-in with the local authority would be good practice.
- Student teachers requested longer input and more opportunity to work with parents and families.

4.3 Stage 3 – January 2025

Local authority:	North Lanarkshire
University:	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Duration of placement:	Two days per week (Thursday and Friday) for 4 weeks
No of students (max):	2
Learning outcomes:	Build confidence in working with parents and families

4.3.1 North Lanarkshire Council - Background

See 4.1.1 above.

4.3.2 Royal Conservatoire of Scotland - Background

The Bachelor of Education (Music) with Honours is a vocational programme for musicians who aspire to teach music in schools. Students are enrolled in one of the most highly regarded routes into classroom music teaching in Scotland, qualifying them for both primary and secondary school teaching.

Students study aspects of teacher education in developing their skillsets for effective classroom practice and preparation for school experience. With a focus on professionalism, practitioner enquiry and career-long professional learning, students develop a personal educator identity. They undertake intensive music studies focusing on creativity, performance and collaboration. Students also develop their skills and knowledge in musicianship, musicology, technology, piano and classroom instruments.

With school placements in every year of study, students have different opportunities to embed learning and develop the practical application of skills through teaching practice.

4.3.3 Identifying potential students

The number of students on the Bachelor of Education (Music) course varies each year. There were 13 students in total across years 2 and 3 of the programme. It was agreed that the two 3rd year students on the course would both be given the opportunity to take part in the placement programme.

4.3.4 Activity opportunities

See 4.1.4 above.

4.3.5 Placement overview

See 4.1.5 above.

4.3.6 Feedback from North Lanarkshire Council

Staff in the local authority advised that the two students were fabulous. Their interpersonal skills were 'phenomenal', and they were both able to effectively and meaningfully engage very quickly with the young people, parents and staff. Both student teachers got involved in as much as they could and were able to visit the recording studio facilities and meet with staff on a Friday. Both student teachers spoke very highly about their course at RCS.

The delivery model with each university has been different and it has been important to be as flexible as possible. This has proven to be beneficial and resulted in a good learning experience and collegiate partnership working.

The pilot took place on a Thursday and Friday over a four-week period just after the Christmas and New Year break. This caused some challenges because:

- there were severe weather warnings during the month of January
- some staff had not returned from annual leave or were off sick
- some groups had either not been put in place or hadn't recommenced

All these reduced the opportunities for students to join the wide variety of activities which are normally on offer.

Moving forward, it would be possible to tailor placements with RCS students more towards music. However, it was felt that providing opportunities for student teachers to engage with parents and families remained key.

Education Scotland met online with North Lanarkshire Council and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland to capture feedback.

4.3.7 Feedback from student teachers

All student teachers from RCS advised that they enjoyed working with the Family Learning team and were surprised by how many programmes they ran and their reach with families in the North Lanarkshire community. They also felt that their confidence to engage with parents and families had increased and that this would help them immensely when they started their teaching career.

Both students enjoyed working with the families utilising their music skills. This allowed them to engage in conversations with parents and families and showcase their strengths. It also allowed them to see how they could adapt some of their classroom programmes and extend them to family learning opportunities at home.

Both students also felt that the timing of the placement would be better if it was later in the year. In January the family learning programmes were just being set up after the Christmas break, so it took time for the class numbers to increase to full capacity.

They also advised that they really valued the conversations that they were able to have with the parents about their child's learning and the engagement techniques they use at home. This was particularly helpful with the parents of additional support needs children, and they both felt they would utilise this when they started their teaching career.

The students presented their experiences to their peers at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland during the professional learning week. This was very well received.

Education Scotland captured feedback from the student teachers via a podcast. See link below.

Student teachers - [Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Placement Programme: Student Teachers](#)

4.3.8 Feedback from Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS)

Having the North Lanarkshire and RCS staff meet at the start of the pilot to shape the programme was very helpful and allowed everyone to take part in shaping the placement programme. This also facilitated relationship building which was crucial for its success.

RCS staff advised that North Lanarkshire Council delivered an input to the students on campus prior to them taking up the placement opportunity. Communications between the local authority, the students and the university have been excellent.

RCS staff fed back that student teachers were very positive and ‘buzzing’ about all the things they had been involved in. This included the ukulele music group and the walking group. Both students talked about the impact of music and how it was an important mechanism for children and young people to engage with. They stated that they had been ‘blown away’ with the amount of work that North Lanarkshire Council undertake with parents and families. They don’t know how they do it. They work really hard to engage families.

Staff were also delighted that their students were being given a great opportunity to experience an environment that looked at whole family support, the importance of partnership working and seeing the bigger picture when it came to educational outcomes.

Within the course timetable there are currently two windows of opportunity for the placement – term one or the first five weeks of the New Year (January/early February). January was chosen for this particular pilot.

Education Scotland captured feedback from staff at RCS via a podcast. See link below.

Claire Hyslop and Nicola Ewing - [Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Placement Programme: Staff](#)

4.3.9 Summary

The third stage of the pilot was also very positive. Lessons learned were fed into stage 4. These included:

- Considering the timing of the placement and when family learning programmes were being run in the local authority.

4.4 Stage 4 – May 2025

Local authority:	Aberdeen City
University:	University of Aberdeen
Duration of placement:	2 weeks
No of students (max):	4
Learning outcomes:	Build confidence in working with parents and families

4.4.1 Aberdeen City Council - Background

Family Learning with Aberdeen City Council has grown significantly since the Covid-19 pandemic and has carved a niche for itself through offering high-quality, early intervention support to families, whilst increasing opportunities for families to learn together.

Several funding streams has enabled the expansion of the Aberdeen City Council Family Learning team to provide a citywide service, offering a holistic, family-led approach with the primary focus of encouraging families to learn, develop and play together.

The team specifically design activities to enable parents to understand how best to support their family's learning and development. Their method of engagement specifically fosters positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promotes socio-economic resilience, and challenges educational disadvantage.

There are 24 dedicated and committed staff made up of:

- 8 Development Workers across eleven Associated School Groups (ASGs)
- 2 Development Workers in Promise Pilot secondary schools
- 2 Development Workers in two primary schools
- 1 Development Worker for an ASG's Partnership Forum
- 1 Development Officer in Social Work Kinship team
- 2 Development Officers supporting the wider team
- 6 City-wide Development Workers
- 1 Team Manager
- 1 Coordinator

4.4.2 University of Aberdeen - Background

The University of Aberdeen provides ITE programmes enable students to train to become Primary and Secondary teachers, through their undergraduate MA Primary Education and postgraduate Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) Primary / Secondary. The programmes develop students both on campus and in school placements which prepares them with the skills required for their teaching careers.

The university aims to transform student teachers into adaptable, flexible teachers who can instil a love of life-long learning and face the challenges of teaching to support all learners and foster collaborative working. A diverse selection of courses is offered which challenge student teachers' thinking and give them the skills needed to become an effective teacher in the classroom.

Both the MA Primary Education and PGDE Primary degree programmes at the University of Aberdeen aim to produce critically reflective, responsive practitioners who are ready and equipped to enter the first phase of their lives as professional teachers. Student teachers benefit from opportunities to engage with placement learning from year one whilst on-campus learning develops their understanding of theory and research. Academic studies are supported by exceptional staff within the School and the wider university so that, with experience in school each year, student teachers can become equipped to inspire and guide young minds in the 21st century.

4.4.3 Identifying potential students

Aberdeen City Council Family Learning team sit within Community Learning and Development. Two members of staff visited the MA and PGDE primary students to talk about the work of the Family Learning team and the placement opportunity. By doing so, this provided an opportunity to share about the range of intervention services and programmes Family Learning offer in a range of settings across Aberdeen. Having this contact session with staff from Aberdeen City Council also provided students with an opportunity to ask questions about the organisation and support their interest in undertaking the Family Learning placement.

Student teachers who were interested in the pilot placement programme then completed a questionnaire, developed by staff at the University of Aberdeen via [Microsoft forms](#). The questionnaire asked students to provide their name, ITE Programme and Year and. Using no

more than 100 words, they also had to answer the question 'Why are you interested in completing a Family Learning Placement as part of your ITE experience?'

A short interview was then held with the MA and PGDE students who had undertaken the questionnaire. This approach replicated the process that students undertook to get into their programme of study and what they will need to do to get a job. Following on from the short interview, three MA students and one PGDE student were given three questions in advance of a second interview (see below). These interviews were conducted by two members of staff from the University of Aberdeen.

1. Why do you think family and community learning is important as an emerging primary teacher?
2. How will this experience support your development?
3. Is there anything you would like to us about the Family Learning placement opportunity?

4.4.4 Activity opportunities

Below are some examples of the types of programmes that Aberdeen City Council Family Learning Team offered during the May 2025 placement. Family Learning programmes are offered based on the needs of families and are therefore subject to change throughout the year.

- Fussing eating info session
- Resettled Scots event
- ASN Parent Support group
- Parents R Us Group
- I'm a Parent Get me Out of here
- Toddler Group, Parental information
- Learn to Ride Sessions
- Roots Of Empathy
- Nursery/P1 Induction

4.4.5 Placement overview

The focus of the placement was to give student teachers a structured overview of the work of the Family Learning team in Aberdeen and the partners they engage with. Student teachers would get the opportunity to choose from the wide range of Family Learning programmes

running over a two-week period and support these sessions. A copy of the timetable showing the various programmes on offer for parents and families can be found in Appendix 4.

4.4.6 Feedback from Aberdeen City Council

Staff from the local authority delivered an input to all four student teachers on Family Learning activities programmes which were on offer for families. This went well and was a catalyst to engaging student teachers in the placement programme. Staff felt that this high level of participation would have been less likely had student teachers just been given links to key documents.

A timetable was presented to student teachers showing the various activities. Student teachers felt this was a reassuring process and they liked getting a timetable knowing what to expect and seeing the variety of options. Student teachers were offered the choice of attending the Family Learning sessions being delivered that week. One student attended activities in the second week only.

Local authority staff spent time talking to all four student teachers about what they could expect, what the different groups and activities were for, and what they were likely to experience and see. One-to-one sessions were not undertaken with families.

The application process helped the students clarify why they wanted to engage in the pilot and set expectations from the start. This mirrored the GTC Scotland process for a job application. Two questions were asked in advance, and three questions were posed at the interview stage with a scoring system used throughout.

A WhatsApp group specifically for the placement programme was created and student teachers were able to message any time from Sunday throughout the week. This was a simple communication tool, and Family Learning staff were fast in responding to questions from the student teachers. It was felt that this could be used more fully in the next cohort.

Wider staff teams had previously been advised that student teachers might be coming along to their group. Where that did happen, staff were to debrief student teachers on the programme being run and engage them in the session as well as allowing time for reflection at the end.

At the time of the placement programme, a review of the Family Learning programmes was being undertaken as part of a whole team meeting. The PGDE student teacher was invited to join in these discussions which included everything from budgets to intended outcomes.

The Family Learning Team's Development Manager was a guest speaker at one of the MA lectures and delivered a presentation on what Community Learning and Development is. This provided all MA students with an overview of what a CLD Family Learning offer could look like in whichever local authority they are placed in for their probationary year. The four student teachers could also consider third sector support during their probationary year.

During their reflection process, staff from the local authority felt that both themselves and the university had successfully achieved their objective which was to provide a positive placement opportunity for student teachers.

Education Scotland captured feedback from Aberdeen City Council Family Learning CLD team. See link below:

Grainne Casey and Emma McPherson - [Aberdeen City Council Placement Programme: Staff](#)

4.4.7 Feedback from student teachers

All student teachers appreciated staff from Aberdeen City Family Learning Team and the University staff coming together to introduce the week and set expectations. This encouraged a self-reflective process with the students prior to their placement.

All student teachers were 'blown away' by the engagement of the families and how open they were to talk to them and share their learning journey. They also felt they had increased their knowledge and understanding of working with parents and families and how they could support them in their teaching career.

Student teachers liked the wide variety of Family Learning programmes and sessions on offer. They gained a wealth of knowledge and experience from these. Student teachers were pleasantly surprised at how relaxed the parents and families felt when attending the programmes. This created a nurturing environment for them to engage in learning.

One student teacher who attended an ASN programme found it particularly useful as she advised she had never experienced how families support their ASN child at home. This gave her insight that she didn't think she would get. She advised that she would be able to utilise this learning in her teaching practice.

All student teachers felt that writing a Reflective Log (See Appendix 6) was beneficial. This allowed them to create a portfolio of their learning and development during the pilot. Staff from the University of Aberdeen provided guidance for this (See Appendix 6).

One student teacher advised that she believed it would be easier for MA students to participate in the placement programme as the PGDE course is so intensive and tight that it might be problematic.

The student teachers tried to record their experiences using One Note, but it didn't work due to technical issues, so they reverted to a word document.

Student teachers were surprised to learn about the number of partnerships which are available for families to access.

One student asked if she would be able to volunteer with the Family Learning Team during their summer programme.

Feedback was captured from two student teachers about their experiences of the placement. See link below to the videos.

Student teacher - [University of Aberdeen Placement Programme: Student Teacher](#)

Student teacher - [University of Aberdeen Placement Programme: Student Teacher](#)

4.4.8 Feedback from the University of Aberdeen

Staff from the University of Aberdeen felt the partnership working with the local authority Family Learning team was very positive. They were delighted that student teachers were given the opportunity through the placement programme to develop confidence in engaging with parents and families, and they could see the benefit of this placement programme.

Discussions took place on how the placement programme could be developed and rolled out utilising the feedback from staff and students during the previous stages of the pilot.

University staff felt that there was an opportunity to build on the existing timetable on Eventbrite to streamline the process of matching students to placement opportunities. This would involve a mapping exercise on behalf of the local authority and would give the students access to geographically appropriate placements.

Staff from the University of Aberdeen also stated that it was 'nice to be involved in things that just work'.

Education Scotland captured feedback from staff at The University of Aberdeen via a podcast. See link below.

Alyson Young - [University of Aberdeen Placement Programme: Staff](#)

4.4.9 Summary

The fourth stage of the pilot was a great success. Lessons learned from the previous stages contributed to a more well-rounded placement process which in turn benefitted everyone involved. Lessons learned:

- Consider geographical spread of programmes running and matching these to the student's needs and interests.
- Discuss how a placement programme could be incorporated within the PGDE programme.
- WhatsApp was highlighted as a good form of communication by students and staff. Consideration should be given to embedding this for any future placement programmes. It could also be considered more widely across local authority teams.

5. Conclusion

Scotland has much to be proud of in terms of its journey, transformational change and continuous commitment to parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. These reforms have taken the format of legislation, strategies and frameworks in an attempt to find ways to promote more meaningful engagement and interactions between early learning and childcare settings, schools, parents and families. Much of this reform has been shaped over time and in response to new and existing research which continues to highlight the benefits of parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home. Our work in this area is not static and we continually strive to seek improvements. This is reflected across education as a whole as we are now entering into another period of educational reform. This will include further involvement and engagement of parents and families in the Scottish education system.

Sustained improvements at a local level is dependent on leaders and practitioners implementing policy and research into practice to meet the individual needs of the family and community specific contexts. This would be enhanced by an increased awareness and engagement with the most up-to-date research and how this is used as part of practitioner enquiry. Building the confidence and capacity of student teachers, probationers, post-probationers and existing staff is crucial to changing the culture across Scotland. Parents and families are the first educators of their own children, but they also bring a wealth of untapped skills, knowledge and expertise. The need to work in partnership with parents and families in a meaningful way has never been more pressing to improve outcomes not just for children and young people today but for future generations.

As the national body for supporting quality and improvement of learning and teaching in Scottish education, Education Scotland has a key role to play in supporting practitioners and educators who work with parents and families.

The Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home has been pivotal to establishing a collective clarity around what practitioners need to know when engaging and working with parents and families. It was produced to be a catalyst to bring about a system wide change by providing a framework for practitioners and educators who work with parents and families and/or are involved in delivering training to the workforce. The Strategic Framework was the central point by which staff from the two local authorities and four universities engaged with and develop the ITE Placement Programme.

During any future rollout phases, it would be advantageous for future ITE Placement Programmes to utilise the Strategic Framework for Parental Involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home to guide their planning, delivery and evaluative processes. This should be used in conjunction with other relevant self-evaluation frameworks as appropriate.

6. Key messages and recommendations

There are a number of key messages resulting from this ITE Pilot Placement Programme and current research on engaging parents and families which are important to highlight. The subsequent recommendations identified below take cognisance of both these key messages and research.

Key messages

- Student teachers have identified a need and desire to develop their confidence and improve their practice to effectively and meaningfully engage parents to improve outcomes for children and young people, and their families.
- Increasing the skillset of student teachers allows them to relate theory and concepts of engaging parents and families into their practical application. This learning can be utilised in teaching practice.
- Family learning reaches the most disadvantaged, helps close the attainment gap and extends beyond the duration of the intervention.
- Family learning is an approach that has an impact through the different age ranges. As programmes and activities are identified and tailored to meet the individual needs of families, this allows for flexibility and targeted outcomes to be agreed.
- Current research continues to highlight that engaging parents and families is a key to all aspects of education, including attainment, absenteeism, inclusion and health and wellbeing.
- Initial Teacher Education providers and local authorities recognise the mutual benefits to student teachers working alongside experienced members of the workforce through this type of placement programme. Learning engagement strategies from experienced Family Learning teams widens and compliments existing course content within ITE programmes. It also contributes to meeting the GTC Scotland requirements for student teachers.

Key messages from research

Research from different sources indicates that effectively and meaningfully engaging parents and families can lead to significant learning gains for children and young people, and their families. Key findings indicate:

- Effective parental engagement can lead to learning gains of +3 months over the course of a year. Parents play a crucial role in supporting their children's learning. Parental engagement is consistently associated with better academic outcomes especially for families from disadvantaged backgrounds ([Education Endowment Foundation](#), 2021).
- Engaging parents promotes good mental health and supports the whole family, leading to better outcomes for children, young people and their families ([Department for Education](#), 2017).
- Parents 'have tremendous influence to create and cultivate environments that unlock their child's engagement' ([Anderson and Winthrop](#), 2025).
- Children who have strong relationships with their parents are twelve times more likely to flourish than those without it ([Bethel, Gombajav and Whitaker](#), 2019). Family Learning programmes have a focus on the interaction between the child and the family.

Recommendations

- This evaluation report be presented to the wider Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Knowledge Exchange Group (which includes the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) and then to local authorities for further discussions on the next steps.
- Learning which has emerged from the four stages of this pilot be used to inform discussions when rolling it out to other interested ITE providers and local authorities.
- The key findings and recommendations of this pilot placement programme form part of the National Improvement Plan for Scottish Education. Discussion should take place with local authorities on the potential of including suitable text within Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategies to support professional learning at a local authority level.
- Discussions be held with key national partner and stakeholders including the Centre for Teaching Excellence.

The above findings and recommendations highlight the importance of engaging parents and families in their child's and their own learning not least because of the positive impact this can have on educational outcomes, mental health and attendance at school. Settings, schools, national partner and stakeholder organisations play a vital role in supporting families to do this effectively and confidently.

To achieve this, it is important that the future workforce and existing staff are informed, developed and equipped to:

- effectively and meaningfully engage with parents and families
- engage parents and families in the Curriculum Improvement Cycle. This is particularly important to ensure that parents are able to support their child's learning at home
- support parents and families to become involved in the wider life and work of the school
- support parents and families to engage in their child's and their own learning
- improve attendance at school
- support children and families to improve their health and wellbeing.

The ITE Placement Programme supports the delivery of the Scottish vision for parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning at home and encourages local and community innovation and flexibility. At the heart of this ITE Placement Programme is relationships based on trust, meaningful and open communication, mutual respect and collaboration. This work is by its very nature required to ensure that improvements and progress continue to be made across the workforce. In addition to this, there is more emphasis across national cross-cutting agendas for services to work together to improve outcomes. This ITE placement programme provides the ideal opportunity to develop this work further and work in partnership with ITE providers and local authorities.

Placing student teachers in local authority Family Learning teams provides the opportunity to work with a new generation of teachers to equip them to build strong effective and meaningful relationships with parents and families from the outset of their teaching career. This will have long lasting impacts and influence generational change.

Appendix 1 – Stage 1 – University of the West of Scotland

Information sent to University of the West of Scotland (UWS) students regarding the placement opportunity



Placement Overview

North Lanarkshire, CLD, Family Learning team have recognised the potential benefits of working with I.T.E. providers on an initial pilot to offer primary education students a placement experience. This would provide opportunities to further develop partnerships with formal education whilst promoting the professional skills required for parental engagement and family learning within a community setting.

Placements for students would be within the Family Learning Team with a maximum of 6 students for this pilot. We anticipate that the focus of these placements would be with families that have at least 1 child at primary school. Students would work alongside operational staff within localities. The 3 SAC Development Officer's within the family Learning team would supervise a maximum of 2 students each.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) is a field of professional practice that enables people to identify their own individual and collective goals, to take action to bring about change and through this to achieve these goals. CLD uses a range of formal and informal methods of learning and social development with individuals and groups in their communities.

CLD programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants, working particularly with those excluded from participation in the decisions and processes that shape their lives.

CLD is unique and it matters (*CLD Standards Council*).

Within North Lanarkshire CLD sits within Education and Families service. The CLD service has four strategic and operational managers who line manage four operational teams.

For more information on the work of CLD, you can view our current action plan [here](#).

The Staffing Structure

The teamwork with parent/carers and families who have children from birth – P7 and families identified as benefiting from CLD Learning support.

Family Learning Manager	Strategic responsibility for Family Learning and Parental Engagement within the CLD service. Operational responsibility for the Family Learning Team.
SAC Development Officers (Parenting and Family Learning)	Strategic role within the Family Learning team with a focus on practice and performance. CLD lead for Empowering Cluster model within NLC Education and Families.
CLD Worker Schools	Linked to primary schools*. We will work alongside parent/carer and child to provide Family Learning and Parental Engagement opportunities.
Home-link Workers	Work with parent/ carer and child to provide Family Learning and Parental Engagement opportunities. There is a focus on 0-3 years, working closely with NHS and NLC Early Years.
Support Worker	Supports group work activities across the Family Learning Team.

North Lanarkshire / University of the West of Scotland Timetable – Week 1

Week 1	AM	PM
Monday	Welcome and Introduction: All placement students are invited to come together with Family Learning staff. This session will be led by Family Learning Manager and Development officer. • Placement planning • Meeting wider team members/operational staff • Confirmation of geographical area/venues/ • Overview of Family Learning programmes We will endeavour to give all students an experience of: • Parental engagement • Family Learning • Delivery within educational establishments • Delivery in community settings.	First Steps to Family Learning, SCQF L5, will be offered to all students over both Mondays to all students. This programme was developed by staff within the CLD Family Learning in North Lanarkshire. The award has been developed to meet the needs of the Family Learning and Parental Engagement sector in NLC for a nationally recognised qualification which levelled at SCQF L5. The learning outcomes are: 1. Participants demonstrate an understanding of CLD, the CLD ethics, CLD Standards Council competency framework and plans for delivery of effective CLD Family Learning. 2. Participants identify characteristics of needs of parents/ carers, including the issues facing them and the role of the CLD family learning worker. 3. Learners understand how CLD approaches effectively support inclusive family learning.
Tuesday	Placed within operational FL team	Placed within operational FL team
Wednesday	Placed within operational FL team	Placed within operational FL team
Thursday	Placed within operational FL team	Placed within operational FL team
Friday	Placed within operational FL team	Catch up and reflections: All placement students will be invited to come together and meet with the FL Manager and DO to reflect on first week experiences. Feedback will be captured and collated.

North Lanarkshire / University of the West of Scotland Timetable – Week 2

Week 2	AM	PM
Monday	All students are together to continue First Steps to Family Learning.	All students are together- First Steps to Family Learning.
Tuesday	Placed within operational FL team	Placed within operational FL team
Wednesday	Placed within operational FL team	Placed within operational FL team
Thursday	Placed within operational FL team	Placed within operational FL team
Friday	Placement reflection and evaluation. All students will be invited to come together with the FL manager and DO to reflect on placement experience. Evaluation and feedback gathered. Celebration with operational staff to mark end of placement.	

Appendix 2 – Stage 2 – Strathclyde University

Information submitted to Strathclyde University's specialisations catalogue to inform students about the placement opportunity

Building Partnerships with Families: A Collaborative Approach to Family Learning

'Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage.' (Scottish Family Learning Network, 2016)

In 2023, Scotland became what we believe is the first country in the world to produce a national Strategic Framework for Parental involvement, Parental Engagement, Family Learning and Learning at Home <https://education.gov.scot/resources/strategic-framework-for-parental-involvement/>

Excellence in working with parents and families is recognised as something which is acquired and nurtured over the career journey of teachers. This Professional Specialisation module will give students the opportunity to connect theory and practice in order to develop their understanding of engaging with parents and families in meaningful ways. Through a unique collaboration with North Lanarkshire Council Family Learning Team, students will also have the opportunity to develop the professional skills required for parental engagement and family learning within a community setting.

The Staffing Structure

See Appendix 1 above.

North Lanarkshire / Strathclyde University Timetable – Weeks 1-7

In terms of how the 12 contact hours are divided between students being on campus and on placement, the programme below has been proposed.

Week	Date	Time / Location	Location
10	Tuesday 8/10	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	On campus – Room GH630
11	Tuesday 15/10	Study week	
12	Tuesday 22/10	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Fieldwork
13	Monday 28/10	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	On campus – Room GH630
14	Tuesday 5/11	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Fieldwork
15	Tuesday 12/11	10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Fieldwork
16	Tuesday 19/11	11:00 am – 1:00 pm	On campus – Room GH630

Appendix 3 – Stage 3 – Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Information sent to Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS) students regarding the placement opportunity

The following information was sent to two students in their 3rd year of the Bachelor of Education (Music) programme. They are undertaking the Primary Music Elective Module. The assessed outcomes are a folio (detailing experiences of teaching & learning in primary placement) and a presentation demonstrating reflective practice.

Placement overview

North Lanarkshire, CLD, Family Learning team have recognised the potential benefits of working with ITE providers on an initial pilot to offer primary education students a placement experience. This would provide opportunities to further develop partnerships with formal education whilst promoting the professional skills required for parental engagement and family learning within a community setting.

Placements for students would be within the Family Learning Team with a maximum of 6 students for this pilot. We anticipate that the focus of these placements would be with families that have at least 1 child at primary school. Students would work alongside operational staff within localities. The 3 SAC Development Officer's within the family Learning team would supervise a maximum of 2 students each.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) is a field of professional practice that enables people to identify their own individual and collective goals, to take action to bring about change and through this to achieve these goals. CLD uses a range of formal and informal methods of learning and social development with individuals and groups in their communities. CLD programmes and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants, working particularly with those excluded from participation in the decisions and processes that shape their lives.

CLD is unique and it matters. (CLD Standards Council).

Within North Lanarkshire CLD sits within Education and Families service. The CLD service has four strategic and operational managers who line manage four operational teams. For more information on the work of CLD, you can view our current action plan [here](#):

A link to North Lanarkshire's Community Learning and Development Action Plan 2022-2025 can be found [here](#).

The Staffing Structure

The team work with parent/carers and families who have children from birth – P7 and families identified as benefiting from CLD Learning support.

Family Learning Manager

Strategic responsibility for Family Learning and Parental Engagement within the CLD service.
Operational responsibility for the Family Learning Team.

SAC Development Officers (Parenting and Family Learning)

Strategic role within the Family Learning team with a focus on practice and performance. CLD lead for Empowering Cluster model within NLC Education and Families.

CLD Worker Schools Linked to primary schools*

We will work alongside parent/carer and child to provide Family Learning and Parental Engagement opportunities.

Home-link Workers

Work with parent/carer and child to provide Family Learning and Parental Engagement opportunities. There is a focus on 0-3 years, working closely with NHS and NLC Early Years.

Support Worker

Supports group work activities across the Family Learning Team.

Family Learning and Parental Engagement Programmes

Family Learning and Parental Engagement programmes not only recognise a parent's and carer's role as primary educators, but also promotes the importance of parents being fully engaged as equal partners in their child's learning. This principle is a key driver in achieving improved outcomes for children, raising attainment for all, and closing the poverty related attainment gap. This approach has its roots in the ethos underpinning Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

- Solihull Understanding Your Child
- Relax kids
- Let's Introduce Anxiety Management
- ASN Parent Support Group
- Emotional works
- Food for Mood
- Forrest School
- Health Issues in the community
- Solihull Dad's Group
- Sleep Scotland Workshops
- Bookbug
- Family Escape Puzzle Group
- SQA Improving Wellbeing
- Living Life to the Full

Above are some examples from staff activity grids on the types of programmes the team offer. The learning offers respond to the needs identified by families and by partners such as schools, social work, and health alongside via the empowering cluster model.

The Solihull parenting group 'Understanding Your Child' is a core programme and approach adopted across services in North Lanarkshire. The Solihull Approach parenting group has evolved from the Solihull approach model which supports the parent/child relationship by emphasising the need for emotional containment and the presence of a reciprocal relationship in order to form the framework for thinking about behaviour management.

Food for Mood is a cooking programme that is co-delivered alongside a nutritionist with the aim of developing healthy eating habits, cooking on a budget and self – care for parents.

Adult Achievement Awards and a range of SQA accredited programmes are available across the team and vary from term to term.

North Lanarkshire / Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Timetable – Weeks 1-4

Thursday 12 th Dec 2024 10.00-13.00 Room 2.48 RCS Campus	Opportunity for a slot during this 3 hour session for North Lanarkshire CLD Team members and Education Scotland Staff to visit RCS to meet with the two student teachers and their tutor. Discuss shape, structure and content of days, travel arrangements, expectations of the reflective log and any other relevant aspects of the placement.
---	--

Week 1	Thursday 9 th January 2025	Friday 10 th January 2025
Week 2	Thursday 16 th January 2025	Friday 17 th January 2025
Week 3	Thursday 23 rd January 2025	Friday 24 th January 2025
Week 4	Thursday 30 th January 2025	Friday 31 st January 2025

Online or in-person meeting in February/March – this will be an opportunity to debrief and review the placement.

Appendix 4 – Stage 4 – University of Aberdeen

Information sent to University of Aberdeen students regarding the placement opportunity

Family Learning Placement

Family Learning have recognised the potential benefits of working with ITE providers on an initial pilot to offer primary education students a placement experience. This would provide opportunities to further develop partnerships with formal education whilst promoting the professional skills required for parental engagement and family learning within a community setting.

Placements for students would be within the Family Learning Team with a maximum of 2 students for this pilot. We anticipate that the focus of these placements would be to further develop a professional understanding about partner agencies and how these work together for the benefit of the child and their family.

Placement Dates

The Family Learning Placement is a 1 week placement experience which will take place in May 2025.

MA4 – week commencing 19th May 2025

PGDE Primary – week commencing 26th May 2025

Application of Interest

If you are interested in this placement opportunity, please click on the link below to complete an application form. The closing date for applications is **Friday 7th March 2025**.

[Family Learning Application Form 2025](#)

Once the closing date has passed, the Programme Team will review the submitted applications of interest as part of the leeting process. Students whose applications are taken forward will be invited to attend a short informal meeting to discuss further why they would like to undertake this experience.

We look forward to receiving your application soon!

Aberdeen City Council / University of Aberdeen Timetable – Weeks 1-2

Week 1	Place	What	Who to organise with
Mon 19 th May 9:00-11:00 am	Kingswells Primary School	ASN Parent Support Group	Samantha / Sharon
Mon 19 th May 4:00–5:00 pm	Online Teams	Group Sup	Fiona / Chris
Tues 20 th May 6.30-8.00 pm	Teams	Fussing eating info session	Fiona / Chris
Tues 20 th May 3.30–5.30 pm	Manor Park Community Centre	Resettled Scots event	Emma
Tues 20 th May 9.30-11.30 am	Tilly Community Campus	ASN Parent Support group	Fiona / Lisa
Tues 20 th May 10:00-12.30 pm	The Grove Hazlehead Park	Self- Care Week 3	Sarah / Angela
Wed 21 st May 1.30–3:00 pm	New Riverbank School	St Machar ASG	Emma
Wed 21 st May 10:00-12:00 pm	Seaton Community Centre	Parents R Us Group	Fiona / Andrea
Wed 21 st May 9.30-11.30 am	Cummings Park	I'm a Parent Get me Out of here	Helen / Angela
Wed 21 May 12.00- 1:00 pm	Heathryburn	Toddler Group, Parental information	Angela
Thurs 22 nd May 3.30-4.30 pm	Aulton Pitches	Learn to Ride Sessions	Fiona
Thurs 22 nd May 9.30-11.30 am	Cummings Park Community Centre	ASN Parental Support Group	Helen / Angela
Frid 23 rd May 9.15-11.15 am	Countesswells primary	ASN Parent Support group	Sarah / Lisa

Week 2	Place	What	Who to organise with
Mon 26 th May 1:00-2:00 pm	Bramble Brae Primary	Roots Of Empathy	Helen
Tues 27 th May 1:00-3:00 pm	St Peters RC Primary	Nursery / Primary 1 Induction	Fiona
Tues 27 th May 2:00-4:00 pm	Heathryburn Primary	Heathryburn Community Cafe	Angela
Wed 28 th May 10:00-12:00 pm	Seaton Community Centre	Parents R Us Group	Fiona / Andrea
Wed 28 th May 9.30-11.30 am	Cummings Park Community Centre	I'm a Parent get me Out of here	Helen / Angela
Wed 28 th May 12:00-1:00 pm	Heathryburn Primary	Toddler Group, parental information	Angela
Wed 28 th May 3.30-6.30 pm	Cornhill Primary	Aberdeen Science Centre & Family Learning Session	Fiona
Thurs 29 th May 9.30-2.30 pm	Seaton Community Centre	Team meeting	Gráinne / Emma
Thurs 29 th May 3.30-4.30 pm	Aulton Pitches, Seaton	Learn to Ride Sessions	Fiona
Thurs 29 th May 9.15-10.45 am	Dyce Community Centre	ASN Parent Support Group	Sharon / Samantha
Fri 30 th May 9.30-11.30 am	Hazlehead Learning Centre	ASN Parent Support group	Sarah / Lisa

Appendix 5 – Reflective log – Stage 1 – University of the West of Scotland

Reflective log 1 - Reflections and my Professional Background prior to attending the Family Learning Placement

The opportunity to participate in a placement in North Lanarkshire was promoted through my course's communication page. The information outlined that the Family Learning Placement (FLP) would involve understanding a variety of ways that children and their families are supported by education services. This description intrigued me as I have previously worked with children and their families in my previous job as an Additional Support Needs Assistant for two years. Also, I studied an HNC Childhood Practice course where I was placed in a Family Learning Centre and gained experience working with children at the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) setting. My prior experience before attending my BA (hons) Education course, at university, has supported me to recognise the importance of working with children and their families.

Therefore, the opportunity to gain further experience by working with a range of individuals within the education service would help strengthen my knowledge. During my course at university there have been modules that have focused on professionals and external services who work with schools and children. In particular, there have been individuals and services who have attended classes and provided presentations to enable myself and my peers to inform us about their work. This has enabled me to gain an insight into their work and how they can work to support children in various ways through collegial practices. However, the experience on my placements during this course has been mainly focused on school based establishments, apart from a short placement at an ELC setting.

On reflection, this empowered me to consider who else can support children and the families that are around them. Reading the brief information about the FLP made me think that this placement would involve me learning about various programmes that are delivered to children and families to support them with their holistic wellbeing.

Day 1 - Monday 13th May 2024

On my first day of my placement, I met the Development Officers working as part of the Family Learning (FL) team within the Community Learning and Development (CLD) service at North Lanarkshire Council. They welcomed me and briefly outlined how my placement could be structured based on my interests and showcasing the work that others in their team do to support children and their families.

I was given copies of documents that are the core foundations of CLD and the FL Development Officers highlighted the priorities within FL. In particular, they directed me to The Competent Practitioner Framework that illustrates the elements practitioners need to follow and provide for all stakeholders. Exploring this enabled me to identify that building and maintaining relationships with individuals and groups is one of the fundamental values and principles of their work.

Reflecting on my learning and subsequent role as a primary school teacher, this is embedded in all documentation associated with my role. This supported me to gain an understanding of the

importance for all workers working with children and families. The need for building meaningful and maintaining relationships is required to support and embed a community of trust. Also, the FL Development Officers provided a visual highlighting the community family tree of workers within the CLD service and allowed me to see who is involved.

Day 2 - Tuesday 14th May 2024

The second day was my first day experiencing practical work and travelling around the community. I was feeling excited to explore and meet with workers in CLD and the children and families they support.

Parent Voice Meeting

My first visit was a Parent Voice group where they provided information to the FL Development Officers with the challenges they are facing in the local and wider community they are living in. This was recorded on a numbered sheet by focusing on the priorities of what the participants felt were the challenges and this was linked with the numbered dots on an enlarge map to pinpoint the exact or estimated locations. The evidence would allow the FL Development Officers to feedback their views and try to work collegially to improve the outcomes of the area. The meeting was informal to try to enable the participants to feel relaxed to give their honest opinions and link the needs for building positive and meaningful relationships.

Adult Cookery (Part of the SumItUp Project)

Then, I visited a cookery class where adults were learning and developing their knowledge of making meals using their numeracy and literacy skills through following recipes and weighing and measuring ingredients. The project SumItUp is embedded within this group for improving adults' numeracy abilities. The atmosphere where the adults had discussions around cooking and their homelife with each other seemed relaxed. This appeared to link with the importance of building relationships with the workers from CLD and everyone in the room. The optional element to gain a qualification while engaging in cookery was offered to everyone in the room and many seemed interested in taking up the offer. This highlights the importance of life skills, experiences and ways of engaging in lifelong learning. The tasks after the main cookery input involved the adults discussing further about their health and wellbeing with nutritional values and their families' opinions about the meals they were serving to them.

I found this aspect of the session valuable as I was able to listen to their views around the meals they have previously cooked and their children's opinions. From my personal experience on school placements, I have taught lessons relating to nutrition and Eat Well Guide. The consideration of the difference between the adults' opinions and those from my previous experience has supported me to understand that many families are learning in similar ways.

LEGO Club

Finally, my last visit was at an afterschool club which was run by a worker from CLD. The club focused on LEGO and the importance of parental engagement using this medium was the main priority. The building tasks were given to families and the intention was for them to work collaboratively. I actively participated in this session and took on the role as the supplier for a child within a family. Observing and engaging in this session allowed me to see how the worker and the families communicated with each other. The informality of the adults and children focusing on the medium of LEGO, allowed the worker to speak with each family and check in with how they are doing at home. This demonstrates the importance of their health and

wellbeing and building relationships. The children seemed engaged for the majority of the session and their verbal communication skills, imagination, creativity and cognitive abilities seemed to be evident as they used the LEGO.

After the session finished, I spoke with the worker and shared my own practice and experiences using LEGO. They seemed engaged in my research and learning at university during one of my modules and I was confident to give them a copy of a journal article aimed at LEGO. The CLD worker was able to explain to me their views and aims for this group and the possible way forward to enable them to work collaboratively with tasks.

Day 3 - Wednesday 15th May 2024

My second day involved me meeting with families at different groups. Also, I was going to focus on a mapping exercise with an imaginary scenario of a case study and how I would identify possible supportive networks for the family.

Mapping Exercise

I was given a scenario which I could be presented with in a school with a family. The task was to identify the support the school, FL and wider team at CLD could offer and other services and charities. I approached the task by focusing on the child at primary school and investigated what support they could give internally and worked out with the school and local area. The task made me consider the possible factors and barriers to support the child within a possible school setting. Then I began to focus on the parent and older brother by using my knowledge of the clubs and groups I had observed the previous day. After this, one of the FL Development Officers showed me how they would approach the scenario and the importance of community and external services.

I found this beneficial and compared my practice and expertise with theirs. Furthermore, this reminded me of the importance of working with other professionals and services. This linked with my learning at university during my Interprofessional Working module. The skills I have developed during this mapping exercise will support me during my probationary year and how I can support the families I will work with.

Baby Bookbug

I was able to observe and participate in a Baby Bookbug session. Although there was only one baby and their parent/carer, I was able to see how they interacted with the CLD worker. The short session allowed me to gain an insight into the vitality of the parent/carer responding and being close with their baby. Through songs, actions, toys and stories the baby is exposed to verbal and non-verbal communication which will support them as they grow and develop. Also, the session enables the parent/carer to use and adapt stories and songs to continue this at home and strengthen their bonds. This links back to my Early Years placement and my Childhood Practice course and the main caregiver being the most crucial part of a baby's life.

Retro Gaming

In the afternoon, I was invited to the Retro Gaming group. The sessions run with a focus on the family engagement and working together to complete games. The informal sessions allow children to experience playing games that have familiar game characters using retro gaming devices. The session begins with a discussion and reminder of the core values of being resilient, respectful and communicating with each other.

Also, the CLD workers try to embed numeracy and literacy skills within the game play by encouraging the children and their families to focus on their scores and using leaderboards to motivate them. However, the main focus is on their enjoyment, engagement and supporting their health and wellbeing. The CLD workers use various activities at different points of the session to utilise the children and families' imagination, creativity, problem-solving and cognitive abilities like encouraging them to create their own game characters using various mediums. In addition, stop-animation and clay has been mentioned that they are using to allow them to consider how they can express their learning using 3-Dimensional and digital literacy skills.

During the session I was able to observe that the families would work at times together and their enjoyment seemed to be evident. In particular, they began to communicate with one another, depending if the games were two player co-operative play or games that involve players playing against each other. The parents/carers seemed to enjoy the play too. At times the CLD workers spoke and played with the families using the games and the parents/carers seemed to respond to this and spoke to the CLD workers about challenges they are facing at home. This exemplifies the relationships that are being formed with everyone during the session.

Day 4 - Thursday 16th May 2024

Today I was back out in the community and was interested in the walking group and observing a home visit. When I was on placement during my Childhood Practice course I was given the opportunity to experience going out to a home visit but I never got the chance to experience this due to unforeseen circumstances.

Walking Group

I met the CLD workers and some of the families that are part of the group. The group is intended to support both CLD workers and families and their holistic health and wellbeing. The vitality of self-reflection and evaluating their goals for their holistic wellbeing is embedded within each session. Resilience and considering various coping strategies towards challenges that they might be facing at home is discussed. During the walk everyone communicates with one another and supports them to keep going to improve their fitness.

They reflect on their socio-emotional wellbeing and self-regulation is considered before and after their walk. Also, learning is embedded within the walk where they can identify what they have seen in nature, collecting and categorising animals, plants etc. Evidence of this is recorded by each individual and a qualification can be worked towards to strengthen and improve their motivation. Also, the individuals who attend have been empowered to do a charity walk which highlights their resilience and enjoyment in the walk.

Home Visit

In the afternoon I observed a home visit with one of the CLD workers. I was welcomed into the family home and was able to observe how the CLD worker communicated in the home environment. The CLD included everyone present in the family home by focusing on what the children were playing with. Also, they spoke with the parents/carers and tried to engage them in conversations but focus on what they were finding challenging. The CLD worker listened and provided possible suggestions related to support that they could give them and the service.

The children appeared to respond well by communicating with the CLD worker and used their preferred communication methods to initiate conversations. This illustrated the importance of using communication methods to meet the children's needs and linked with Getting it Right for Every Child and the United Convention on the Rights of the Child. The CLD worker also asked how the school is supporting the family and highlights the importance of partnership working.

Going on the home visit has supported me to gain an insight into children and their family homelife. On reflection, it has been extremely beneficial as I was able to identify possible reasons why parents/carers might be reluctant to come to school settings and participate in communication with schools. However, through building meaningful and maintaining relationships with families can strengthen communication. I will take this on board as I develop my professional practice.

Day 5 - Friday 17th May 2024

This was my last day of my first week on placement. I was going to experience a Wild Wellness programme which centres on outdoor learning and strengthening young people's health and wellbeing.

Wild Wellness Programme

I arrived at a high school where the CLD workers deliver the sessions, during school hours, to a select group. The young people have been referred to them mainly from the school but also from the CLD service. The CLD workers work with the young people using outdoor learning as the main stimulus to help them. Each session focuses on different activities. The activities are aligned to the Living Life To The Full (LLTTF) outcomes which concentrate on young people's emotions, coping strategies and how to progress positively in their learning and out with the school environment.

The session today, involved the young people using archery to develop resilience and confidence. The majority of the young people seemed engaged and appeared to improve using their hand and eye co-ordination. This was interesting to observe and consider how each young person approached the activity. Also, how they dealt with success and their resilience was evident in their approaches and their wellbeing. When I attempted this activity I was surprised by my resilience and how I coped with my success. I immediately stated that I would be rubbish and I felt this was evident in my performance. However, I realised this was not necessarily a good role modelling technique and focused on the target in the second round and was able to hit a bullseye. This demonstrated my persistence, resilience and emotional wellbeing. Hence, the realisation how the others might have shown similar feelings. Although, the young people seemed comfortable communicating with the CLD workers and discussed their classes in school and other interests. This shows they have built strong relationships with them.

Also, the CLD workers showed me their planning and other activities that they are using in other high school settings. They illustrated and informed me that different groups have different young people with a mixture of personalities and interests. They adapt their practice to meet the young people's needs and use the LLTTF for the learning but use differentiated activities. This links with teaching and the importance of building community with the children and use this to coincide with the context of the learning. Consequently, this can be developed through differentiation to meet the children's needs.

Day 6 - Monday 20th May 2024

Today was the start of my second week on my FL placement and I was excited to meet the team from the Youth sector from the CLD wider team.

Youth Services

In the morning I was given a tour of one of the buildings where the Youth work is held. The facilities and spaces on offer appear to support young people to become involved in a variety of interests and skills. In particular, a beauty room is available for young people to focus on hair and make-up, a music recording studio with a variety of musical instruments and rooms focusing on quiet spaces with advice available on personal health care.

I found this very interesting and observing the facilities demonstrates the importance of engaging young people in their interests to enable them to have safe and welcoming spaces. This shows how young people can be given the opportunities to explore their talents and improve on their skills and abilities while enabling to concentrate on making better choices in life.

Compass Project

In the afternoon I met with the core team at the building and they informed me about the Compass Project. The main focus is to work with young people who have not made good choices and have been referred to the Youth team. The team work with the young people by focusing on their interests and activities and interlink the challenges they are facing. They use this for the young people to concentrate on this and eventually identify how they can improve their actions to make better choices.

I found this very interesting to gain an insight into the collegial work between the FL Development Officers and the Youth team by sharing the information in a professional manner. This highlights the need for sharing expertise and considering how consistent and crucial relationships are maintained.

Day 7- Tuesday 21st May 2024

I was excited to revisit two of the groups that I visited from last week. In particular, I was interested to observe and participate in the activities.

Adult Cookery (Part of the SumItUp Project)

The group were exploring numeracy and listing the different units of measurements in cooking. I found it very interesting to listen to the group discussing the imperial and metric conversions and considering when this might be evident. They seemed to be engaged in this aspect and investigated the importance of the uses. Then they began to work on some of the questions as part of their SQA qualification. On reflection I have realised the essentialness of everyone learning regardless of their age. Focusing on life skills can be just as vital as gaining qualifications.

Lego Club

In the next session I participated in new challenges and worked with a new family on the tasks. This week the challenges focused on specific criteria and each individual in each team had their specific roles of the engineer, supplier and builder. The child in my team used their creativity and imagination as they were the builder but suggestions could still be made by engineer and the supplier facilitated by giving the bricks. The importance of communication was evident between myself, the parent/carer and the child. This helped to create an effective build.

Then the parachute and a game involving this piece of equipment was used to encourage the families to become engaged in the activity. Using each other's names and verbal communication was vital for this activity. On reflection, this session was valuable for me to participate in. Often in my school placements, in the first stages of my university life, the schools have focused on the child and promoting their achievements. The parents/carers have been involved to observe and have been shown the children's work. However, engagement through play was not evident as much. Although, in my final placement the community and working with parents/carers was being embedded more. I feel this crucial for teachers to meet and greet children and their families and make and maintain strong relationships.

Day 8 - Wednesday 22nd May 2024

Today I was going to be observing what groups are on offer to parents/carers and their babies. Previously I have worked with children at ELC settings but with children from the age of four-years-old.

Explorers and Baby Massage Sessions

The workers at the groups were very welcoming and were able to show and explain what they do. In particular, they were able to explain how sensory play can support both the parent/carer and their baby. In the Explorers session the babies were investigating the sensory aspects in the tuff tray. The parents/carers were playing with their babies and each other. Then I observed the Baby Massage session. The worker was supporting the parents/carers by demonstrating on a toy the areas they could massage. Everyone in the room seemed engaged and there was a happy atmosphere. Observing the interactions was really beneficial for me and I could see the love and nurturing approaches by the worker and the parents/carers too.

Also, the worker gave information about the breastfeeding awareness week coming up and how the mothers could become involved in events. They were also keen to receive feedback regarding their experiences and took notes. This demonstrates their professional commitment and building positive relationships with everyone in the room.

Baby Bookbug

This week there were two babies and their parents/carers. The session had a similar structure to last week. However, the engagement between the babies and the parents/carers were interesting to observe. The atmosphere was similar to the morning sessions and it was great to be part of it. The importance of early intervention and working with the positive bonds between parents/carers is crucial regardless of their environment. I will ensure I have a welcoming and professional manner towards all parents/carers and their babies and younger children.

Day 9 - Thursday 23rd May 2024

Today was my final day of travelling to my groups. I was looking forward to visiting the walking group and explore a new walking environment.

Walking Group

I went with the group to a new walking environment where there was a historical building which was the main focus of the learning. The workers were using this as the stimulus for encouraging the parents/carers and the young child, who were present, to observe their surroundings. I found it fascinating to watch how everyone interacted with each other. A sense of belonging and nurturing approaches could be seen and heard from the workers and the parents/carers and the child. I have felt an improvement in my health and wellbeing after being with the group. On reflection I have enjoyed being with the group over the two sessions. Walking and focusing on goals in life has enabled me to consider my own personal challenges in my life and how I can think of ways to work through them.

Appendix 6 – Reflective log – Stage 4 - Aberdeen

Reflective log 1 - Family Learning Placement Diary

Tuesday the 20th May 2025

Walking in, I saw a group of women of all ages around the table. Most of them were there for the tea and biscuits. Along with the company that goes with them. When I first got to the place, one of the workers made a throwaway comment, "Should we tell them she's a trainee teacher." She says many parents in this group aren't huge fans of schools and teachers. Before meeting these parents, the opposition between teachers and parents was already apparent. I have heard a lot recently in pop culture and my day-to-day life about how teachers are the bad guys and that we aren't doing our jobs.

These women were funny. They all are comfortable around each other, which shows a supportive environment. Except for a parent who was new to the group, they presented as apprehensive. The support group is there to make friends and talk about lived experiences while developing skills which can help them manage the real daily struggles of parenthood to an autistic child.

In a few weeks, they have a visitor from autism outreach coming to provide some training for these mothers. One of the mothers also discussed how there is an autism outreach programme that has six workers for the whole of Aberdeen. This service works with the parent and the school to act as an impartial party who can advocate for the rights of the autistic person and help put provisions in place to try and improve their schooling.

Task 1: Something that has challenged my understanding

- When chatting with some parents, I noticed some were very frustrated with their child's school, and some were also mad with the teacher.
- It was distressing to hear about their experiences, and they felt they had little say in how their children were being handled in a school setting. They often feel like they are fighting with the school system rather than working with them. Despite having the same intention, this feeling of being at odds with the school is a significant barrier to a productive relationship. A relationship barrier between the school and the parents must be broken down. Schools are becoming detached from the community that they are based in. I think sometimes we all forget that humans are flawed.
- From these parents' experiences, the schools sound like the bad guys, and it's their fault the child isn't coping well in school. However, I have also seen from the school's perspective that many teachers blame current parenting styles and lack of parent interaction as the reason the child struggles at school. Do we live in a world where both may be true? Or neither? The fault may be the current lack of communication and community. Humans are social beings, and we crave connection and support. In my future practice, I want to work harder with parents instead of against them. One of my favourite sayings is that it takes a village to raise a child, and I would like to ensure that I am a part of all of my students' villages and interact with their families positively and proactively. Today changed my view on how sometimes blame shouldn't be placed on an

individual, especially one who is doing the best they can, be it a teacher or parent. Sometimes, you need to break the barrier, listen and work together.

Task 2: Why must partnerships work together in a multi-agency approach?

A 'multi-agency approach' is crucial. It acknowledges that family planning or schools alone can't address all aspects of a child's development. It's about supporting parents in developing their skills while also recognising the contributions of other agencies, such as autism outreach programs, in creating a holistic support system for children.

Task 3: Why do successful family partnerships with schools and teachers need to extend beyond formal 'parents evening'?

- Parent's evenings are very short and formal. Teachers use them as a very transactional meeting to express how the child is getting on and what needs to be done to help them improve their development.
- Parents' evenings are rarely described as safe and comfortable by either party (both resent them).
- Schools must break through the formal constraints of parent evenings and encourage a more empathetic understanding from both parties.

Wednesday 21st May 2025

Today, I was with a parent support group in a different area. One of these parents had a school refuser and struggled to get her child to school on time daily. She expressed a lack of concern from the adults in the school as to why she is always late to school and that much blame is put onto her when she believes she is trying her best. She thinks the school doesn't offer her any support and only complains about getting her son to school on time because he misses valuable learning. This is where I learned that family learning provides one-to-one support for parents. They can have a staff member go over in the morning to try and help mum get her child to school.

Task 1: Something that has made me question my knowledge about working with parents

Parents will always look out for and advocate for their children. Since parents have a lot going on in their lives and may be struggling with their child's behaviour, they may struggle to see a teacher's side or evaluation. As a teacher, I believe missing the school morning every day is detrimental to the child's learning and disruptive to the classroom. I also think it is not the school's job to ensure the child is there on time in the morning. However, it is the job of the adults in the school to make it a welcoming and comforting place for all children, and clearly, this isn't being done effectively. If there was more consistency between home and school life and all adults worked together, the child might want to start coming to school in the morning. It also reinforced what I learned yesterday: that wider partnership units are vital to supporting this mother. This group gave the mother a safe space to express her feelings and discuss how she wasn't heard, and she was met with reassurance and positive advice, which could help her situation.

In this case, the school should take a proactive approach and reach out to the family to try and find the root of why the child doesn't want to go to school and find a suitable way to combat this.

Instead of blaming or getting frustrated, the parents and teacher should work together to find a solution in the child's best interest, through open and proactive communication.

Task 2: In what ways have parents and carers engaged with different partnerships?

When introducing myself as a student teacher, I noticed an apprehensive barrier to how the parents receive me. They see the family planning unit as a form of support and help, whereas they see the school as a challenge and a barrier. Parents appreciate and value the support they get from the family planning unit.

While at this session, I also asked about the different partnerships the parents are in contact with or that the family learning leaders work with. In response, I learned about lots of other organisations.

Some organisations which I heard about include:

CAMHS: A group of NHS staff who work with young people to navigate their mental health.

Youth work - Work with children to help their social and personal development.

Adult Learning - They help adults learn new skills and knowledge.

Autism Outreach - Provide support for individuals and families who have a member who is autistic.

Task 3: So what now? How can you change your practices as a new teacher entering the profession?

I am going to approach parents with empathy. I am going to listen but be firm. I will point them to partnerships and advise them where I can. I will try to show them we are on the same side and working towards the same goal. I will also ask them to understand the teacher's perspective and that we are there to look after multiple children throughout the day.

I will be proactive and ask questions instead of designating blame.

Thursday 22nd May 2025

This was my final day at family placement. I was at another support group for parents, but this time in a different community. This community centre had a food bank for anyone in need. When arriving at the session, the women were very welcoming and kind. This group was more interested in making me feel welcome; they asked me many questions and included me in their discussions more than the other groups.

Task 1: Something Hard

Something I found hard about this placement is the realisation that not every parent starts on the same playing field. One of the mothers was very distressed and in a challenging situation at home, which would make looking after your child very difficult. I also witnessed a mother swearing at her child at the meeting due to personal circumstances. This placement helped me acknowledge the profound influence that external pressures and personal circumstances have on a parent's ability to manage and cope. I recognise these parents do their best in their unique, often challenging circumstances.

Task 2: Selecting a session from today, how has partnership working impacted the child or the parent?

The parents received support from a community of parents who understand and relate to their struggles. This parent seemed to have very little support outside of this support group.

Being in this support group makes the parents feel a little less isolated. This consistent weekly meeting to see the other parents and share your frustrations and issues is an excellent way of forming community and friendship.

This support group also lets the parents share strategies for dealing with their everyday lives, specifically their children. They provide each other with tips and tricks to simplify life. One mother suggested to another that they get their child a young Scots card so that bus travel would be free for their children, and so it would be cheaper to travel to places. The mother then received help attaining a young Scots card from the support worker during the session.

This support group also emphasised letting the parents lead the session to an extent. The support workers were very relaxed and valued and appreciated the experiences of each parent there. They allowed the mothers to discuss and chimed in when they felt they had something constructive to say.

In what ways could you make professional partnerships with Family Learning as a probationer / post probationer?

I will introduce myself and become familiar if I am in a school with a family planning liaison. I will verify if any families could use their support and get in contact. I could attend some of their casual family events to learn about the community more. I will work with the plan for parental involvement and engagement 2024-27.

Reflective Log 2 - Family Learning Placement Diary

PGDE Primary – Reflective Tasks

Date	Event	Observations	Reflections
Monday 26 th May 2025	Roots of Empathy	Welcomed by office staff, met PSA and Deputy Head. P4/3 class of 17, 7 absent. Teeth brushing before class. Emotions check-in, time to ask and answer. Thumbs up / down – opportunity to share. Talk about baby A and how he has changed since last time. A not well, so not in school, so instead there was a story about ages and the importance of being you. The complete a sheet on “the important thing about me is..”. For example: I can play football and I am good at Maths / I am good at skipping and dancing. Opportunity to stand at front or at desk and share. Everyone waits until there is quiet – respectful. H is known by her first name, for familiarity and to put children at ease. Welcome song and goodbye song. Reminder of what doing next time when A returns. Make sheets into a folder for A’s Mum.	Made you love teaching Caring about children and their basic needs. For example: teeth cleaning in the class before our lesson on emotions. A good idea to support children with their health hygiene and keep them healthy, so they are ready to learn.
			How has partnership work impacted the child? Developing positive relationships with Helen, helping with communication skills and confidence, positive health and wellbeing by giving the children chance to speak, share their feelings and be listened to in a supportive, caring environment.
			How can you change your practices as a new teacher? Ensure build in enough thinking time for children to answer Qs. Don’t rush asking Qs and allow children time to think and provide a safe, supportive space for asking and answering Qs.

Date	Event	Observations	Reflections
Tuesday 27 th May 2025	Nursery / Primary 1 Induction – F/J	17 parents. Refreshments provided. PowerPoint presentation on starting school about hygiene, sleep, importance of play, communication, routines, reading, screen time. Welcoming environment, open to ask Qs. F and J sharing anecdotes as parents – supportive. Good bridge between nursery and starting school. Fiona is doing three sessions on this. Children were in P1 having a look round, while parents were at this informative session.	Been hard Hearing more about the challenges for some parents financially, juggling work with spending time with children, managing screen time, financial constraints to getting resources but find ways round this. For example: Books – library services, Book Bug scheme, 10 books for £1 at charity shops etc.
			How does partnership working cross over between school and home? Good advice given about family household management and getting children all set for starting school. Useful advice for the home in terms of routines, sleep etc. will aid the transition to school and will help children, parents and teachers.
			Share a resource you have seen being used, which you would like to find out more about Family Learning team website and Eventbrite events / QR codes to support parents. A useful resource to help parents and point them in the right direction for tailored support.
Wednesday 28 th May 2025	'I'm a parent get me out of here' – H/A	4 parents: 1 with 6 children, 1 with 5, 1 with 2 boys and 1 with 2 children. Mums attending with ADHD, addiction and self-harm backgrounds. Opportunity to learn about being a parent and share top tips and advice. Learn about events in area. Topics included setting rules, consequences, praise, communication, routines. Sad to hear that parents often get negative feedback from school and no mention of positives / praise from the day. Resilient women trying to help their children and getting them support for ADHD, negotiating the system, consistency of parenting with partners or as single mums, managing basics like enough food to eat.	Challenged your understanding? From the "I'm a parent get me out of here" Disappointing to hear that teachers have not always been as supportive as I would hope. Giving negative feedback about the child's day at school, rather than praising the successes. Positive recognition does make a difference and helps to motivate the child and builds trust and relationships.

Date	Event	Observations	Reflections
	Toddler group parental information	4 mums with children about to start nursery: 1 with 6 children (eldest 15, youngest toddler), mum with 2 boys, 2 mums with 1 boy each. Qs about nursery places, toileting. Refreshments and play for the children.	How do other agencies practically make effective working relationships with all? Great example with ASC event involving Family Learning, CLC, school, parents, children and ASSC. Hands-on practical session about the water cycle, took place at end of school day, accessible, refreshments provided, parents and children involved.
	Aberdeen Science Centre and Family Learning session - F	V from ASC and L from CLD. 20 children and 6 parents / carers. Learning about the water cycle. Hands-on session open to all via Eventbrite website, in conjunction with Scottish Water. Tupperware container, add sand, pretend trees, stones, warm water. Put clingfilm on top, hold taut, add ice cubes x 2 on top, add lid and leave for 5-10 minutes. Pick up clingfilm and underneath the water has condensed into water droplets. Filtering water - dirty water poured into funnel with gauze, filter paper, charcoal, stones. Clean water comes out. Tested with litmus paper to see how clean / acidic water is. Tried with orange juice too. Average person uses 165 litres of water a day. Boy with hood up finding session too noisy, as in main hall. Didn't want ear defenders, so I sat with him, he had some time out and then joined in. I praised children for their good ideas about how to save water, handwriting, filtering water. Lovely comment from one of the boys about me being a teacher and how my class "will be lucky to have you." Good partnership working with ASC, CLD, Family Learning, school, parents, children and Scottish Water. Positive feedback from children at end "what I learnt today" written on laminated water droplets and markers. Ideas also shared during session on how to save water – children wrote ideas on sheets.	Why do successful family partnerships with schools and teachers need to extend beyond formal parents' evenings? Helps to build trust and relationships. Builds confidence in parents and pupils about school. Stronger the relationship, the more it will help with learning in school – children will feel at ease and comfortable to learn.

Date	Event	Observations	Reflections
Thursday 29 th May 2025	ASN Parent Support Group – Sh/Sa	Two Mums – 1 with 2 children, 1 with 3 children. This is a new group, which is getting established to support parents whose children have autism/ADHD. Issues with bed wetting, toileting, bullying at school, overstimulation. Watched podcasts and discussed. For example Chris Packham and lecturer on autism (BBC podcast), American ADHD expert giving advice on choices.	Surprised me? Breadth and depth of courses available through Family Learning team to benefit children and their families. 35 in total. Option to condense sessions and pull out parts to make smaller, tailored sessions, depending on needs of clients. Great resource and an experienced, supportive team delivering the courses.
	Team meeting – G/E	22 staff in attendance at monthly meeting. Discussed various topics including: summer activities, digital learning opportunities / video courses. Condensing sessions and pulling out parts from bigger sessions for clients. Education Scotland presentation resource on school avoidance. Sleep course for tweens and teens is available from Family Learning team. Dashboard to monitor attendance by clients – PIES (Performance Indication Evaluation System) and Power B I. Going through errors in entering data on clients. Opportunity for staff to shadow someone in team, do extra learning / change roles – good so the team does not get stagnant. Reflective Qs in pairs on “how good is our community learning and development?” (HGIOCLAD). 35 courses available – review courses in pairs. SensationALL (run by Michael and with bases in Rosemount and Westhill) family chill out – this is where there is ASN sensory equipment to try out. Managing my money course. Cfine food pantry service – pay £3 a year, then £2.50 per visit and can choose up to ten items.	In what ways have parents / carers engaged with different partnerships? For example learn to ride event, promoted by the Family Learning team via Eventbrite and supported by partnership with Sport Aberdeen and bikes provided by Stella’s Voice charity. Strength of working in partnership to deliver services to those who need them.

Date	Event	Observations	Reflections
	Learn to ride session - F	L from Sport Aberdeen runs this session with F. Stella's Voice is the charity that helps supply bikes. Very well resourced facility of Frog bikes, helmets, bikes for adults, children and those with mobility issues. Soft surfaced area at back with cones for learning how to ride. P2 girl and mum – first time learning. Start by removing pedals and balance while moving. When pass red cones = use brakes and stop. Blue cones = put feet up and glide through, imagining it is water. P1 boy and Mum – third visit. Competent at cycling now. 2 boys and mum arrived too but they had already had lessons and can now cycle, so no need for them to attend the learner session.	In what ways could you make professional partnerships with Family Learning as a NCT? Share details about Family Learning resource with my university tutor group, promote it via my 5 minute reflection video for university, share details about Family Learning with my new school and ensure children are appropriately supported.
Friday 30 th May 2025	ASN Parent Support Group – S/L	Established group of 7 mums, sharing ideas and best practice with each other – very supportive and encouraging. EG Teach tray resource that one mum is using. Visit from Autism Outreach – N and colleague. Pupils can be referred by Aberdeen City schools. Provide support in schools for teachers and pupils, but do not go into homes. Resources can be used in school and shared with families to use at home.	Interested you? Learning more about the work done by Autism Outreach team and what support is available to parents and children via their school using this service.
			Why is there a need for partnerships to work together in a multi-agency approach? For example: of ASN support group and how numerous agencies work together with specific skill sets to help individual cases. For example: Family Learning, Social Work / care worker, schools, teachers, parents, children, Autism Outreach. Each child is different in their individual needs and in order to GIRFEC a well-coordinated, multi-agency approach is needed to give the best support.
			What will working with parents / families in your probation year look like? Listen to parents, review files of all pupils, especially ASN, to get best understanding, meet parents, ask Qs, give honest feedback.

Family Learning Placement MA4 and PGDE P – Reflective Tasks

Following each day on your Family Learning placement, the School of Education Tutor Team and Family Learning CPD staff would like you to reflect upon the sessions you have participated in and how this has supported your professional development as a new teacher entering into the profession.

Each day, please select **3 tasks** to engage with, **one from each section**, and upload your reflections to your OneNote Folder. On the final day, please engage with **Section 4**.

Section 1 – Thinking about your thinking

Reflecting upon your experiences from today. Share something which has...

 Surprised you	 Challenged your understanding	 Interested you
 Made you question what you know about working with parents	 Made you love teaching	 Been hard

Section 2 - Thinking about partnership working

Using the mind map on the back page which outlines an overview of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, add your experiences to the mind map which share how environment can impact learning and development.

<i>Selecting a session from today, how has partnership working impacted the child or the parent?</i>	<i>In what ways has partnership working crossed over between 'school' and 'home'?</i>	<i>In what ways have parents and carers engaged with different partnerships?</i>
<i>Give a brief overview of how effective partnership working can have a sustainable effect.</i>	<i>How do other agencies practically make effective working relationships with all?</i>	<i>Why is there a need for partnerships to work together in a multi-agency approach?</i>

Section 3 – Thinking about your probation year and beyond

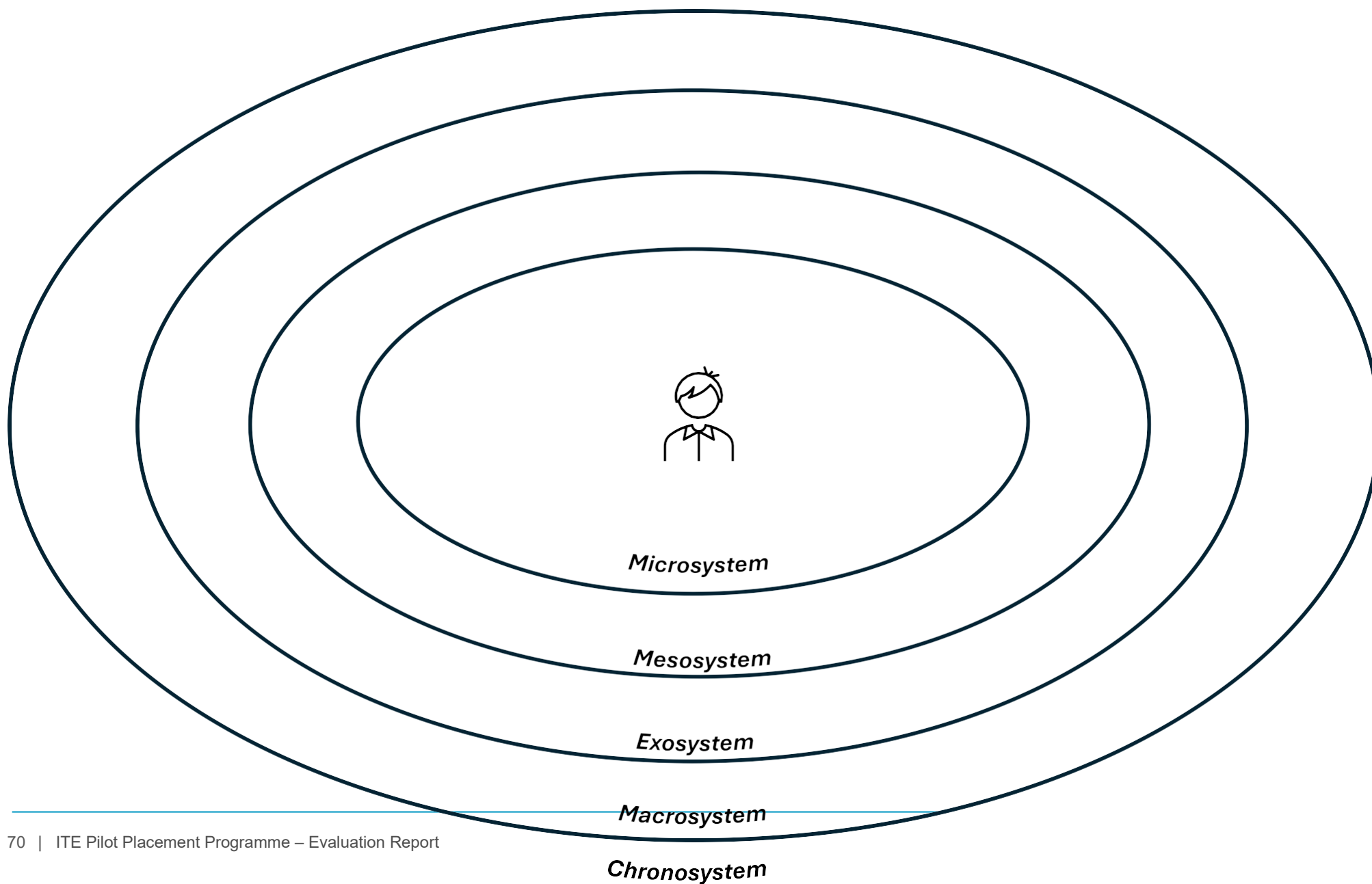
<i>So what now, how can you change your practices as a new teacher entering the profession?</i>	<i>What ideas do you have for entering into your probationary year, now that you have gained some further experience?</i>	<i>Share a resource or strategy you have seen being used during a session which you would like to find out more about and why.</i>
<i>Why do successful family partnerships with schools and teachers need to extend beyond formal 'parents evening'?</i>	<i>In what ways could you make professional partnerships with Family Learning as an NQT?</i>	<i>What will working with parents and families look like in your probationary year?</i>

Section 4 – A round up

Following your experiences from the Family Learning placement, the team would like you to create a short (5 minute max) Panopto video which summaries your time on the Family Learning placement and the key take aways from the experiences you have had.



***Family Learning Placement
MA4 and PGDE Primary – Reflective Tasks***



Education Scotland

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston
EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)131 244 4330
E enquiries@education.scotland.gov.scot

<https://education.gov.scot/>

© Crown Copyright, 2025.

You may re-use this information (excluding images and logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence providing that it is reproduced accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Education Scotland copyright and the document title specified.

To view this licence, visit <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence> or
Email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.