



Action for Inclusion in Europe City Working Groups :

Migrant Parental
Involvement in Education

Improving Engagement
with Migrant Parents
in Glasgow

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Plan Summary

Context

Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland with a population of almost 600,000. More than 90,000 are from a Black or Minority Ethnic background, which is about 15% of the population, making Glasgow the most ethnically diverse city in Scotland. Ethnic diversity is increasing – 55% of people in Glasgow who were born outside the UK arrived in the UK between 2004 and 2011. In Glasgow's schools, there are almost 15,000 children and young people with English as an additional language. This is about 20% of the total school roll, a percentage which has more than doubled since 2000 when it was around 9%. One of the major challenges facing the city is poverty. Some key statistics on poverty are outlined in this infographic.

Education in Glasgow is improving, and there have been improvements in attendance, attainment, achievement and positive destinations following school leaving over the last few years. Although Glasgow's performance is below the national average for Scotland in some measures, there is evidence that Glasgow schools perform above the national average for children and young people who are living in poverty. The Scottish Government's Scottish Attainment Challenge aims to close the gap between children from deprived and less deprived backgrounds. In Glasgow, this funding has been used to develop the Glasgow Improvement Challenge, which aims to use evidence based practice to improve outcomes for learners from areas of deprivation. Glasgow has a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people from migrant backgrounds. The main vehicle for this is the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service. The EAL Service has 110 full time equivalent teachers who provide direct support to children and young people with EAL and also build the capacity of schools to better meet EAL needs.

The EAL Service has a role in promoting better engagement with parents and has been involved in a number of projects which aim to do this. However, while these have been useful and well received, they have been ad hoc in nature, developing in response to particular short term funding opportunities or promoted by an enthusiast. There is a need for a more coherent, planned strategy for engaging with migrant parents and the city council sought involvement in the *Action for Inclusion* project as a means of influencing this process. This is a timely development, since Education Scotland (the national agency which oversees educational developments in Scotland and which is responsible for school inspections) published a document called How Good Is Our School 4 (HGIOS4) just as the project began. This document is a guide to self-evaluation for schools and is also used by HM Inspectors when they inspect schools. For the first time



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there was a Quality Indicator for Family Learning, which could be used to help to inform developments on parental engagement.

Brief description of action plan

The aim of the project is to promote bilingualism, through encouraging parents to support their children's home language. We know from research that the maintenance and development of the first language helps learners to develop an additional language and that well developed bilingualism leads to cognitive advantages. Parents are the people best placed to support their children's home language so it is important that they understand the benefits that doing this can have through working with schools. Promoting bilingualism should have a positive impact on bilingual children's attainment and achievement in education.

There is already a considerable amount of work going on in the area of (migrant) parental engagement in Glasgow so a secondary aim of the project was to embed and share practice so that there could be more consistency of practice.

The action plan had 4 strands. These were:

- 1) **To hold an event for early years and primary establishments** to share the research evidence on engaging migrant parents, to examine the Quality Indicator on parental involvement from How Good is Our School 4 (HGIOS4) and to share examples of existing good practice. The aim of this strand was to ensure practice was shared and spread widely rather than being ad hoc.
- 2) **To support educational establishments who had identified working with parents as a strategic action in their improvement plan** with assistance from Senior staff from the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Service. This group of staff were already working strategically with schools, but would now make sure that work with parents was included in the range of support they could offer. This would continue beyond the timescale of the project.
- 3) **Develop the skills of a group of teachers from the EAL service in working with parents** and develop a programme of parental engagement work in establishments that they were working in.
- 4) **Contribute to the development of Education Services' literacy strategy and associated website**, including guidance on supporting the engagement of migrant parents as part of the wider advice on supporting EAL learners.

The four strands would provide more guidance for establishments which would lead to more cohesion across the city and support improvement. Although there were some short term outcomes from the action plan, most of the outcomes were expected to be long term and ongoing, as engagement with parents is an ongoing process. The actions were primarily aimed at supporting establishments and school staff but ultimately the beneficiaries would be parents and families.

Theory of change

In order to promote bilingualism with parents and their children, it is necessary first of all to engage with parents by finding out what they want and try to meet those needs. While doing this, the message of the value of bilingualism should be promoted, both explicitly (e.g. by telling parents about the benefits of being bilingual, by suggesting ways they can use their first language to support learning at home) and through the ethos of the projects and meetings in schools (e.g. providing interpreters, giving opportunities to contribute in parents' first language).

The actions of the plan developed here built on work that had been done previously; however while there had been examples of good practice, these were not particularly well shared. The expectation was that

following the Action Plan, more establishments would have access to good advice and guidance on how they could support greater engagement with migrant parents.

Achievements and Experiences

Some of the actions were achieved (2, 3), some partially (4) and some were not yet achieved (1).

- 1) The event has not yet taken place due to a number of unforeseen factors interfering with the possibility of it taking place, such as staff illness, IT issues, and budget complications.

However, the city council still plans to go ahead with the event at a later date in autumn 2016 and this delay may work to our advantage because it has given time for some of the projects in schools to be developed and therefore there will be more practice in the city to draw on for the event. Additionally, for the 2016-17 school session, family learning is one of the priorities for Glasgow's Improvement Challenge, meaning that the event will have a clear relevance to one of the city's priorities and therefore will have a higher profile.

- 2) Some interesting work with parents has been developed with senior staff from the EAL Service. Two examples are summarised here:

- a. **The Language of Maths in early years:** An EAL Area Leader worked with an early years establishment around developing the language of maths. She worked with the staff to develop strategies and resources they could use in the playroom to help children develop their mathematical language and invited parents to take part in workshops where they could find out about what their children were learning about in the nursery and suggested ways they could build on this at home in their everyday lives – by playing games, discussing and interacting with their children. She encouraged them to use their first language when doing this, so the children would develop this use of mathematical language bilingually.

- b. **A school based parental engagement strategy informed by consultation with parents:** Another EAL Area Leader worked with a secondary school, and specifically the EAL teacher who had asked for support in developing their engagement with migrant parents. They consulted as many parents as they could to find out what they would like to find out more about, encouraging parents to respond in any language they were comfortable with. The majority wanted to know more about the Scottish curriculum, subject choices and post school options. They devised a series of workshops over a number of weeks, involving colleagues from within and outwith the school, to provide information about these topics. They involved interpreters, where necessary, and also involved senior pupils, who were able to use their first languages to welcome and support parents.

- 3) A number of teachers from the EAL Service have become involved in doing some parental engagement work. There have been 2 models for this.

- a. **School based parent workshops led by EAL Teachers:** We issued a general invitation for schools to request support to engage with migrant parents, which was met with a good response.

One example of a successful initiative has been where a group of EAL teachers worked with a nursery school, which had a large number of Chinese families who were recent arrivals in the city. The aim of the workshops was to share with the parents the play based learning that took

place in the nursery and encourage them to develop their own play and interaction skills. The initial plan was for 6 sessions, which were very popular with parents and well attended. It became clear during the sessions that the parents were at different stages in how they played and interacted with their children. Some were very confident at doing this and others were looking for a lot of support with basic play and interaction skills. The school has decided to continue running the group but with a number of developments. They will run 2 different groups – one for the parents who are less confident and one for the more confident parents who will be given more challenging activities and will look for ways to get the parents to support each other. They have identified one of the parents who was a teacher of 4 and 5 year old children in China and they will support her to do storytelling sessions in the nursery. These developments will be taken forward by staff in the school, without the support of the EAL Service, so we are pleased that the school staff have developed their confidence in working with parents. We have run similar groups with other schools which have followed a similar model.

- b. **Support with Additional Support Needs:** This work refers to more specialised and tailored one-to-one support by our small team of teachers who specialise in working with children and young people who have EAL and another additional support need (eg autistic spectrum disorder, language and communication disorders etc.) To plan support, the teacher meets with the parent to find out more about the child's needs and to find out what strategies the parent finds useful in working with the child. The teacher would then plan an intervention for the child which would include a role for the parent and the school, working with the parent to understand their role. There would be ongoing discussion between the parent and the teacher with feedback on whether the suggested strategies were working and on the basis of this, future strategies would be developed.
- 4) The new Literacy strategy and associated website is still in the development stage, but will include information about engaging with migrant parents. It will be informed by the developments that have taken place during the life of the project.

Impacts

The work has generated some **positive and unexpected impacts**. In general, there are signs that some of the overarching aims of the project have been met while more specific aims also having impacts:

- In terms of promoting bilingualism, many parents felt surprised at the schools promoting the value of bilingualism and of using first language for learning. They had felt that if they did not speak much English, they would not be able to help their children with anything to do with school. This suggests that our plan's aim of promoting a positive message about bilingualism in order for the parents to be more confident about their ability to support their children with education is getting across.
- Second, the aim of sharing and spreading good practice has been making good progress. However, one aspect of this is sustainability since all of these projects have involved an EAL specialist working with a school in addition to the school staff, to develop some aspect of practice. The EAL specialist will move on once their work with the school is completed. It will be interesting to follow up with schools to see how many of them have sustained this work without the additional support from the EAL Service with indications already that some schools will be more likely to take things forward than others.

More specifically, the second aim of the project has been met:

- One of the initiatives, *The Language of Maths in early years*, for example generated positive feedback. Parents said they had found the workshops interesting and they were using the ideas in their everyday interaction with the children. One mother has agreed to take part in a presentation about the impact that involvement in this project has had on her and her interaction with her daughter.
- In the other case of the *parental engagement strategy informed by consultation with parents*, some of the parents have gone on to become active members of the Parent Council and the school plans to continue these workshops as part of their ongoing parental involvement work.

The third aim of the project has also been successful:

- **The school based parent workshops led by EAL Teachers were all** provided in response to requests from schools. From the evaluation form, it was evident that schools that had the workshops found them useful, helped them form relationships with parents and gave them ideas to take forward. However, it is interesting to note that the teachers who delivered the workshops had a more nuanced response since they felt that while the workshops themselves had worked well, the long term impact depended on the buy in from the school. In some schools, workshops were delivered jointly with school staff and there was a clear commitment to learning from the experience so that the school could continue to offer this support. In other places, the EAL teacher delivered the workshop with little input from school staff, so it is unclear if this type of support will continue.
- **The more tailored support for parents with children with Additional Support Needs** again has been much appreciated by parents, for whom many are recent migrants with little family support as a result of a lack of extended family. Some of them come from cultural backgrounds where there is little understanding or knowledge of conditions like ASD. For many of them, caring for their children is a challenge and some of them have reported that this is the first time anyone has given them advice on how to care for their children.

Measuring

It is difficult to measure whether the aim to promote bilingualism has been achieved or not, although in our encounters we have found anecdotally that many parents were surprised at schools promoting the value of bilingualism and of using first language for learning. In the more specific initiatives, we measured success using more tailored methods, sometimes in quite informal ways – for example, for the Maths initiative, parents gave feedback on the school based workshops by writing comments on ‘post-it’ notes in the language they were most comfortable using, which were translated where necessary. For the schools involved in the parental engagement strategies informed by consultation, feedback was gathered from parents in a number of ways with a questionnaire, with bilingual young people available to help translate if necessary. There were visual methods, which allowed parents to respond even if they were not confident in English e.g. plotting how much they knew about something on a target before and after the workshop.

We can also seek evidence from the inspection reports on family learning from Education Scotland, the body responsible for inspecting schools in Scotland. They use the Quality Indicators in How Good Is Our School 4 to do this and these can also be used for Self Evaluation, so a next step for this project would be to self- evaluate initiatives using the QI for family learning.

Experience

The experience has enabled a lot of learning and generated some unintended consequences. In particular, running the new initiatives/projects gave staff new understanding of the isolation of new migrants with

SEN children. They also learned to work in engaging pupils in secondary school through coming up with activities together (in the consultation informed strategy) and understood how even just giving young people roles as front of house guides gives confidence.

The project has also generated an unintended consequence or point of learning in enabling some self-reflection and realisation that our projects are focused in some way on helping our children and young people to develop their bilingual skills and recognising the key role of the parent in helping this happen. As an EAL Service, we are passionate about the importance of maintaining and developing the first language and in all of our dealings with parents, we want to convey to them the importance of their role in doing this and empower them and their children to feel proud of their bilingualism. However, another point of learning however is considering whether as a service we should reflect on whether this is imposing our agenda on parents rather than listening to what they want and build in more opportunities for dialogue about the shape of the service.

Challenges and Modifications

The biggest obstacles have been in **organising the event** and it was not possible to do this in the original timescale, with little way to overcome that. However, it will take place at a later date, allowing us to use the activities that have taken place during the project as examples of practice.

There is a challenge too around **building capacity**. In the work we have done with schools, we have tried to work alongside school staff to build their capacity to continue developments, but it can take a long time for staff to feel confident about doing this work on their own without an experienced EAL expert alongside them. There is a balance between withdrawing the specialist support too soon so that developments don't get taken forward and between staying too long so the specialist support is taken for granted. This applies to all the interventions the EAL Service does, not just work with parents. We have plans to keep in contact with schools we have worked with to see how they are continuing to take this work forward.

Further Plans

Work with parents will always be a part of our future plans. We will continue to develop our practice in this area and work with establishments to help them improve their practice and also aim to hold the event in the near future.

In our future work, we can draw on two major developments in Scotland that have occurred since the project started that have had an impact on this area. One is the Scottish Attainment Challenge- a Scottish Government initiative which has seen funding go to local authorities to help reduce the attainment gap between children from deprived and non-deprived areas. Work with parents is part of this, although migrant parents are not specifically mentioned. Every local authority has an Attainment Adviser and as part of their job they are expected to identify good practice within their authority and share it across Scotland.

The UK government has also now started a Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. This will see a number of refugees from Syria resettled to the UK over the next 5 years. The first refugees to arrive on this scheme came to Scotland in December 2015 and were settled in local authorities all over Scotland, including Glasgow. Many of these authorities had very little experience of supporting refugees. There has been a considerable amount of work done, led by Cosla's Strategic Migration Partnership, to ensure that knowledge and resources are shared around authorities. Glasgow has been involved in this and Glasgow's EAL Service led a seminar for education colleagues from all over Scotland in November 2015, just before

the arrival of the first Syrian refugees. The indications are so far that this sharing of practice is helping ensure that the Syrian refugees are being well served.

As the number of Syrian refugees settled in other parts of Scotland increases, schools are starting to look for support with aspects of their education. The network of Attainment Advisers has been active in supporting this and Glasgow staff have been involved in supporting other local authorities (Perth & Kinross and Aberdeenshire so far.) One issue that appears to be arising in various parts of Scotland is how best to engage with refugee parents. It is hoped that through the Attainment Adviser network, it may be possible to share some of the learning that has come from our involvement in this project with colleagues from across Scotland.

Finally, Education Scotland will be using the Quality Indicator on Family Learning to evaluate how well schools perform in this area. This QI is new in HGIOS 4 and as the number of schools inspected in this way increases there will be more information about what Education Scotland identifies as good practice. This will be available from inspection reports and potentially from Education Scotland events and publications.

