

Bringing Up Children *Your Views*



Making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up

Best things about being a parent

This is what you've told us

What stops you asking for help?

Fear of being judged is one of your reasons

What do you think about information available?

Too much, too little, conflicting advice

September 2012



The Scottish
Government

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ParentLine Scotland is a free, confidential, parent support helpline for anyone caring for a child in Scotland. You can call about any problem, however big or small on: **0800 028 2233** or by e-mail parentlinescotland@children1st.org.uk

The helpline is open Mon-Fri 9am-10pm and Sat/Sun 12 noon-8pm



This website draws together information for parents and families in Scotland, so that you can find what you need quickly – organisations, leaflets, good websites for parents. www.parentingacrossscotland.org

What's this all about?

I want Scotland to be the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up. To achieve this, one of the key things we need to do is ensure that all parents feel valued and supported to develop their own potential, knowledge, skills and confidence to be the best they can be for their children. This is why we have made a commitment to develop a national parenting strategy. By this we mean a national statement setting out our vision to support parents and carers across Scotland.



Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People

When we refer to support for parents we mean anyone with a parenting role, not just mums, but also dads, grandparents, kinship carers, adoptive parents, step parents and parents to be. We're talking about children and young people of all ages including babies, teenagers and young adults.

To help develop the national parenting strategy and the way forward, we asked our partners (local authorities, health boards, third/voluntary sector) to help engage with parents across the country to seek views on their experiences as parents. This magazine represents the key messages we have received from a variety of parents and carers bringing up children and young people in Scotland.

There are many people I would like to thank, not least the 1,500 participants with a parenting role who contributed thoughtful and valuable insights. And this could not have been achieved without the support of all the people in our partner organisations who arranged over 150 discussion groups. Every local authority area in Scotland is represented, and views were gathered from working parents, parents to be, parents with learning difficulties, fathers, grandparents, mothers, service families, kinship carers, black and ethnic minority groups, parents with drug and alcohol issues, families affected by imprisonment, members of the travelling community and many more!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aileen Campbell".

**Aileen Campbell,
Minister for Children and Young People**

Best things about being a parent your views



Kisses and cuddles

Watching your children grow

Raising happy and healthy children

Helping them learn

Pride when they achieve milestones

Helps us value the roles of parents and family

Knowing I am doing an important job bringing up my children

Being part of a family unit

First milestones, crawling, talking and walking

Playing, reading, spending time, having fun together

Opportunity to see life through their eyes

Saving the kids the trauma of going into care and living with strangers



“unconditional love,

Kids bring happiness that money can't buy

To show them the right path so they don't make the same mistakes as me.

Being there for your kids no matter what

Seeing bits of yourself in them

Hearing your child laugh just melts your heart

Hugs for no reason and when they are adults and they still hug you for no reason

Seeing your child take risks and succeed



Parenting can be:
exhausting
challenging
demanding

but can also be:
exhilarating
worthwhile
rewarding



loving them loving us”



Making new friends at
parent groups

When your child achieves
something, no matter
how small, it is a pleasure,
particularly if they have to
overcome a disability

Their face lighting up when
they see you

Seeing them leave home to
university, being able to cope
and manage life independently

Watching your great
achievement achieve

Watching them become parents

Having a close relationship



Having a child is the best
thing in the world. It
changes your life in the
most magical way.



What are the most common things you need help with?



Childcare:

Parents are looking for information about where to get suitable childcare and want help with the cost. Parents want childcare provision to be more flexible to suit their family needs.

“

Longer nursery hours – it's really difficult to do anything, especially if you have other kids, due to pressures on time.

”

Child development:

Parents want to understand the different stages of their child's development and how to support this positively.

Nursery, school and education:

Parents are looking for information about enrolling children into nursery, how to decide what nursery, what age a child starts and what to expect for their children. Parents want more information about links between nurseries and schools and how to secure a place at their choice of primary school. Parents want to know more about their child's education and how to help them with homework and how to deal with issues such as bullying.

Financial advice:

Parents want advice on how to budget, especially those on lower incomes, how to access benefits and who to go to for financial advice and help to fill in forms.

Children and young people's behaviour:

Parents are looking for practical tips on managing children's behaviour. This includes advice on how to discipline children and how to confidently support children's range of emotions including advice and tips about handling temper tantrums. Parents also want to understand teenager behaviour.

“

Where some schools have different finishing times, it would be better if all classes finished at the same time to avoid parents and young children having to hang around.

”



Health issues:

Parents are looking for medical advice from nappy rash and teething to dealing with colic and caring for premature babies.

Parents want to know how to get help for themselves as adults, i.e. dealing with domestic abuse, stress, drug use and depression. Many parents also said about the need to find time for themselves to recharge their batteries.

Social activities:

Parents want to know about social activities they can do with their children which are free or affordable in their local area. Parents want to know what's available for teenagers, what groups, clubs and activities they could join.

Feeding/Nutrition:

Parents are looking for advice on breast-feeding, when to wean them, what to feed them, dealing with fussy eating and how to get everyone eating together.

“

Reassurance about what is normal.

.....”

Use of nappies, toilet training:

Parents are looking for information on the kind of nappies to use, tips for toilet training and advice on how to deal with bed-wetting.

Sleeping patterns and routines:

Parents want to know how to get their children to sleep at night and advice on the best way of establishing a bed time routine.

Relationships:

Parents are looking for relationship advice and support, including advice and support for families separating; where to go and who to ask for help.

“

All the wee things and the big things.

.....”



What stops you asking for help?

We wanted to know who you go to for help with your parenting role when you need it, but we also wanted to know what things can stop you asking for help.

Many of you said you didn't always ask for help, and these were some of the main reasons...

Don't know where to go

"I didn't know where to go or who to ask."

"I felt very isolated about 10 weeks after giving birth, I had no idea what kind of groups/networks were available."

"I didn't have family, I only had myself."

Culture

"Language barriers can stop us asking for help."

"Lack of understanding of our culture from services and authorities."

Previous experiences

"Scared to ask for help again if first experience is bad."

"Negative feedback from other people engaged with services."

"No one was listening."

"Not being treated as an individual."

"Waiting times."

"Too many forms."

"Having to explain things over and over to different people."

Embarrassment/worried about being judged/failure

"Stigma...afraid to ask for help in case you're judged."

"Feeling embarrassed and ashamed."

"You don't want family thinking you can't cope, don't want them to worry."

"Gender stereotypes can make it hard for fathers to ask - you should know what you're doing. You're the man, you should be the strong character that can deal with everything."

"I think sometimes it's hard to ask for help because you can be made to feel like you're begging."

"If you have older children then you feel you are expected to know everything if you have another child."

"Lack of language and literacy skills."

"Always just handed a leaflet - often can't read the leaflets but then you feel too embarrassed to ask."



Fear

.....

“Concerned about accessing support in case people think you’re not coping with the care of your grandchild.”

“Fear of contacting agencies in case children are removed. Not aware that other support can be offered.”

“Scared to ask, want to hide domestic violence.”

“Because you’re younger [16 years], you’re scared to ask for help – you’ll be judged as a failure. You’re not a good mum.”

“Worried someone will take over and I will lose control.”

“A lot of the time you feel it is up to you to cope so don’t ask for help.”

“Didn’t want to bother anyone.”

Health

.....

“Exhaustion, depression, felt too low and pride stopped me asking for help.”

“Lack of self esteem, lack of belief in own abilities.”

When you've asked for help – these are some of your views and experiences

You told us about lots of different positive and negative experiences when you asked for help

From feedback received, you said services were good where parents and carers:

- ★ Feel they are being supported
- ★ Feel they are being listened to
- ★ Feel they will not be judged by others
- ★ Receive practical advice and tips
- ★ Feel they are treated as individuals
- ★ Feel there is trust and respect between parents and practitioners

You also told us you feel services could be improved by:

- ★ Having better communication between parents and practitioners
- ★ Practitioners boosting parents' confidence and their parenting abilities
- ★ Practitioners giving more recognition and praise to parents and carers for the things that are going well
- ★ Practitioners giving parents the opportunity to be fully informed and involved in any decisions being made about their children. Parents know their children best
- ★ Being more visible and accessible in local communities
- ★ Being more flexible. More choices in the way support is delivered
- ★ Practitioners not taking over if parents ask for a little support. Parents want to keep control of what happens within their own family





Feedback told us about one parent who was initially reluctant to access services in the voluntary sector said:

“.....
It turned out to be extremely beneficial in helping me realise my own potential and self worth as a person, wife and mum. ”
.....

A number of you told us that when you use services, often it's the whole family that needs support.

★ Services should provide a whole family approach

Feedback included the story of one mother who spoke of when her husband went into rehab for his alcohol dependency. She was left alone to look after her three young children. Although the husband got the help he needed, the mother said:

“.....
I felt isolated, scared, alone and although I appreciate my husband needed help, myself and my children needed help too. I feel some support ought to run in parallel. ”
.....



When you've asked for help – these are some more of your views

Some parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities told us:

- ★ There needs to be better continuity of support between child and adult services

“ Support finishing at 16 years of age – they are still kids, they still have the same needs. ”

Lots of you said you need help at an earlier stage:

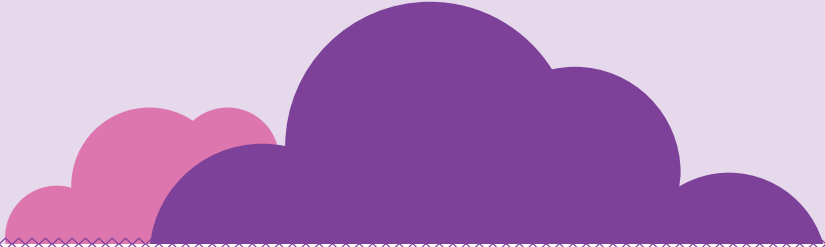
- ★ There was a sense that families had to get to crisis point before agencies intervene



“ Really important to make parents aware of the help and support out there that is available – positive help not just when something goes wrong. ”

Childcare was raised as an important issue:

- ★ Parents told us they are looking for more flexible, easily accessible and affordable childcare
- ★ Parents with two or more children told us they want childcare that is suitable for children of different ages in the same area
- ★ Parents of children with disabilities told us they need childcare which can provide the individual support their child needs



Dads can benefit from support too:

- ★ Several dads told us that attending support groups helped them realise they were not alone. Other dads were struggling with similar things, and it was good for them to meet and discuss their experiences

The dads told us:

- ★ They want to be more involved in bringing up their children
- ★ They feel that services like 'mums and toddler groups' by their name alone can make them feel excluded and unwelcome
- ★ They feel when accessing services, there is a view that men are expected to be able to cope

Some parents told us cultural differences can impact on your use of services:

- ★ Having more services that are culturally sensitive

“.....
Services can make assumptions about the travelling community.”

“.....
Language is a barrier, my English is very basic.”



What do you think about information available?

Some parents feel there is plenty information available whereas other parents feel they can never have enough. Some of you said you find there is too much conflicting advice and you are not sure which source of information to trust. Many parents said having information about what local services are available in their area would be very helpful. Some parents feel a central point for parenting issues would also be good.

Dads told us they feel the information is geared towards mums and that more is needed for dads. Different groups of people with a parenting role and their own unique circumstances said more information would be helpful, including kinship carers, grandparents and parents of children with additional support needs.

Parents told us:

- ★ They want information in easy-read formats
- ★ DVDs are helpful
- ★ Face to face is better than any leaflet
- ★ A good, reliable website would be helpful, like a national parenting website
- ★ Information on transition to parenthood would be useful

Take time for yourself



Many of you said you need a break from time to time. You told us that having time to yourself to recharge your batteries is very important.

WANTED: Unpaid worker for very demanding job

Skills required:

- running a household
- solving problems
- nursing
- cooking
- settling disputes

...preferably all at the same time

Applicants must be:

- committed
- flexible
- very patient
- imaginative

Applicants must have:

- boundless energy
- a sense of humour
- eyes in the back of their head

Minimum length of service: **18 years.**

Training given: **None.** Job constantly changes. Skills learnt by trial and error.

Holidays and days off: **None** – nightshifts are also part of the job.

Looking after ourselves is crucial, as the better and happier we feel, the better this will be for children and young people. The job description on this page has been taken from Parent Network Scotland's website which we thought accurately describes the challenges of parenting!

How you treat yourself sets an example for how your children will treat themselves and you.



Scottish Ministers are



MIKE RUSSELL MSP, CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING talks about his experience as a father. His son is now 24 years old.

Were you present at his birth? “I was and it was a caesarean. I’m glad I was there. It was a big contrast to the experience of my own father who for him, the thought would’ve been unthinkable.”

How has your role of a father changed over time and how did this relate to your experience with your own father? “I think I have become a better parent as I have grown older. I think a lot of people are probably like that. Adjusting to fatherhood can take time for different people. I was very close to my father but it was a different relationship.”

What helped you most with your role as a parent? “I think, on reflection, probably more preparation was needed. I would’ve liked to have known more, even though I was changing nappies, up in the middle of the night and all usual things like that, I don’t really think I was prepared enough for some of the emotional responsibilities of being a parent. Support is essential as we all know, it can be a very stressful time. My son didn’t sleep well for a whole year and of course, that’s a strain.”

What are your aspirations for your son? “Aspirations for our children should always be of the highest, you want them to be happy and to fulfil their dreams and ambitions and you want to help them to do so. And that for me is my job as a parent – to encourage my son, to help and advise him.”

How did having children affect your relationship? “My wife and I were married for eight years before my son was born and it definitely changes an established pattern. It does put a strain on a relationship, but equally people learn by working together and by doing so, you learn more about each other.”

How do you manage work and life balance? “It’s difficult. I think perhaps at times I’ve regretted that work has often come first. If you’re in politics it can be difficult in those circumstances and yes it’s tricky...but I think that idea of the importance of work and focussing on goals is something he’s learned and that’s positive. That said, I do often regret that work sometimes got in the way.”

How do you find time to relax as a family? “We live in the country so when we all get home to some extent we’re away from the pressures. We do find time to do things together. As Cabinet Secretary, I’m keen that the policies we pursue support parents and good parenting and we have to learn from what is being done well and do more of it. The big thing is learning those skills and not being too afraid of anything and not thinking anything is unique or abnormal.”

parents too...



AILEEN CAMPBELL MSP, MINISTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE shares her views and experience as a mum of an 18-month-old boy called Angus.

What are your aspirations for Angus? “I want Angus to have a healthy, happy and fulfilled life. I want him to have fun, to explore and to have as many enriching experiences as he can cram in. Most of all, I want him to have the confidence to be himself.”

When you had children – how did this affect your relationship with your partner? “Nothing can fully prepare you for the changes parenthood brings to your life - the baby you bring home from hospital doesn't come with a handbook, so it was a huge learning experience for both of us! Angus was born five months before the 2011 elections, so it was a real challenge to balance looking after our wee boy, giving him all the attention he deserved, learning about parenthood, campaigning and maintaining a happy family life. It was tough but we were all there for each other, which was really important! After the elections, we decided that Fraser would become a stay-at-home dad. We are very lucky to be able to do this - Fraser loves having the opportunity to spend so much time with our son. It's still quite rare for dads to take on the main day-to-day parental responsibilities for a toddler, but there are encouraging signs that's changing.”

What are the best things about being a parent? “Cuddles! Nothing recharges the batteries like a big cuddle from my wee boy. I also get huge satisfaction from

watching Angus discover new things and seeing him smile. I just LOVE hearing his little giggle too - just the tonic after a day in parliament!”

Who do you go to for information and advice? “I tend to call my mum for help or advice and Fraser, whose mum was a midwife, calls his too. My parents are retired now so we are lucky that they can travel down to Biggar to help us out from time to time. Fraser's folks are in Shetland so we make plenty use of Skype. When Angus was first born, we had a tremendous health visitor, Marjorie, who had so much experience to offer and was also really kind and supportive - just what a new mum needs.”

What have been the challenges for you and your partner as parents? “It's tricky to get a good work/life balance. I am really privileged to have such a wonderful and fulfilling job, although there are many demands that go along with it. So, like many other busy mums and dads, it's a challenge to strike the right balance. When I come home after a day of meetings and parliamentary debates, I feel talked out, while for Fraser, it's often his main opportunity for some adult conversation. We make every effort to ensure we communicate effectively and support each other, as well as doing the very best we can as parents to Angus.”

So what's next...?

We hope you have found this magazine interesting. We are really grateful to the hundreds of you who took part. The messages highlighted within this magazine are just some of your views. We are going to use your feedback as a starting point to help us identify what we can do to support and empower parents and carers across Scotland.

Your feedback will help inform:

The Scottish Government's first National Parenting Strategy to be published in October 2012

This strategy will provide a response to your feedback and will set out what we think about parenting and what we are going to do.

Discussions with local partners (health, education, social work and voluntary sector)

There is lots of good work already under way, nationally and locally, and we will use your feedback as part of our discussions to look at ways of doing more of what works well to empower and support parents and carers across the country.

Getting it Right for children and families

You told us that what works best for you is co-ordinated support when you need it, so you are not passed around from one agency to another, or having to repeat your story over and over again. The Getting it Right approach helps make sure families get that co-ordinated support no matter who they are, or where they live. This means services working across organisational boundaries and putting children and their families at the heart of decision making.



Proposed legislation

Children, young people and their families can come into contact with many different agencies and services as they grow up, such as teachers, doctors, nurses, social workers, youth workers and so on. The Scottish Government is suggesting making it a legal requirement that every child and young person has access to a point of contact - a 'Named Person' - from birth to the age of 18. This is to ensure we get it right for children and families across Scotland, that services work together and that support is better co-ordinated.

Where young people who are in need or are looked after are supported by different agencies and services, the Scottish Government is suggesting a legal requirement for these agencies to have a 'Single Child's Plan'. This will identify what support is needed from which agencies and pull it together into one single plan that takes account of all the child or young person's needs.

Early learning and childcare support - increasing hours and improving flexibility

We know from the feedback that childcare is an important issue for parents. The Scottish Government is therefore proposing to introduce in law an increase in the provision of early years support through greater flexibility and more free early learning and childcare (by raising this from 475 hours a year to a minimum of 600 hours) for every 3 and 4 year old and the most vulnerable 2 year olds.

If you wish to find out more information about the proposed legislation, have a look at:

www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People



Have you seen this?

This is what we want for all our children and young people.

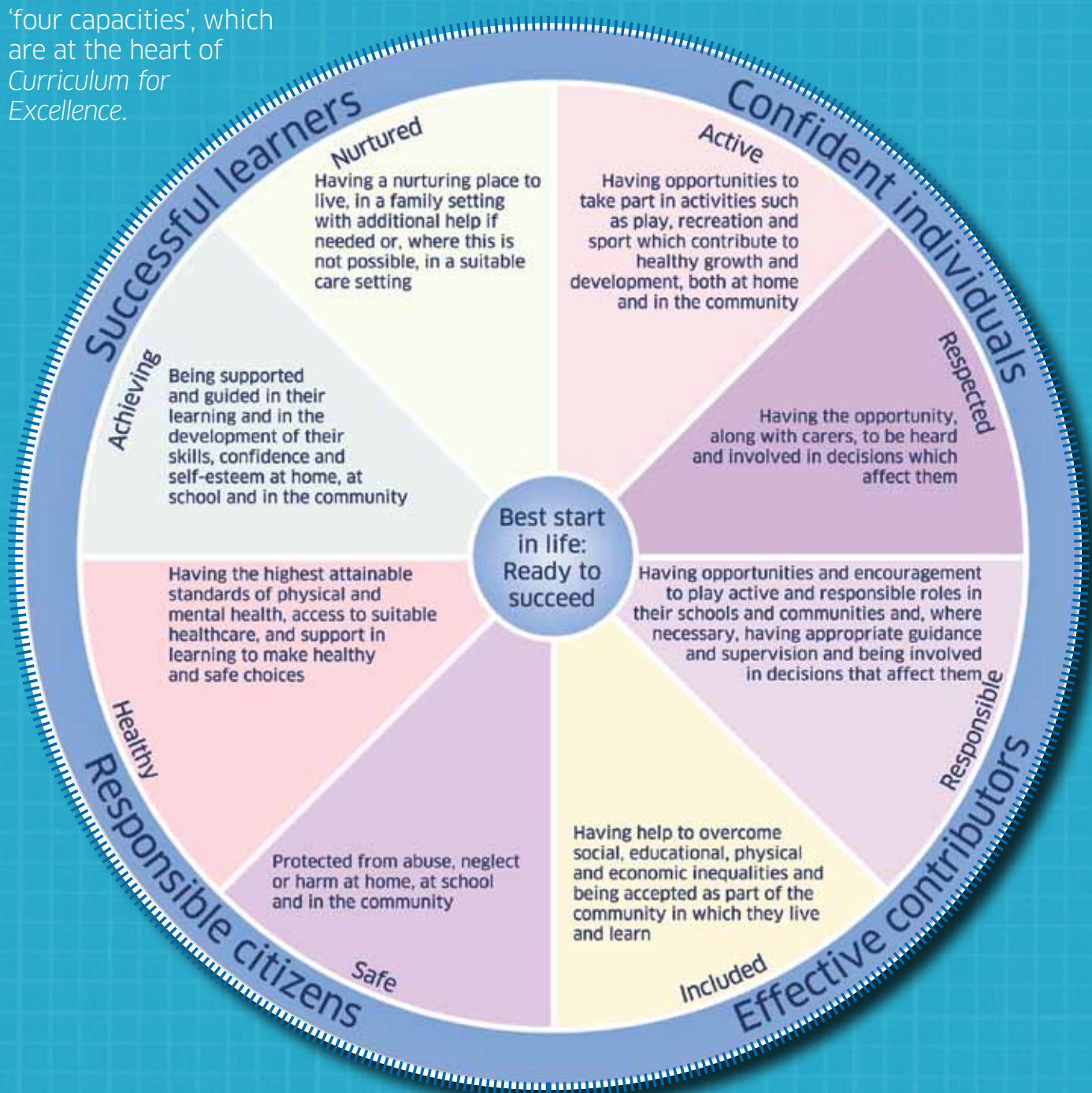
The wellbeing of children and young people is at the heart of *Getting it Right for Every Child*. The approach uses eight areas of wellbeing in which children and young people need to progress in order to do well now and in the future. These eight areas are set in the context of the 'four capacities', which are at the heart of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

The four capacities aim to enable every child and young person to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor.

The eight indicators of wellbeing:

- Safe
- Healthy
- Achieving
- Nurtured
- Active
- Respected
- Responsible
- Included

These are the basic requirements for all children and young people to grow, develop and reach their full potential. They are shown in this diagram which we call the 'Wellbeing Wheel':



Real stories



“

When I had my son, it made me realise that if I didn't want my son to go through what I went through, I had to change my ways and show him the love and affection I never had.

”

Rosemarie's story

“As a child I came from an abusive alcoholic family. I was never shown what good morals and values were, and was never given enough love and support to encourage me to realise my potential and progress through education to gain qualifications to make a life for myself.

“For a long time from the age of 12 onwards, I became very rebellious and turned down a wrong path because of the life I had. I didn't believe I deserved or couldn't do anything better with my life. When I was 15, I got put into residential care which was the lowest point in my life, which just made my behaviour much worse. When I was 18, I fell pregnant with my little boy and obviously not having the family support or guidance made it a scary time.

“When I had my son, it made me realise that if I didn't want my son to go through what I went through, I had to change my ways and show him the love and affection I never had. That's when I decided to go to college to do social care as I wanted to use my past experiences to help other people who have been in or are in the same position I was. Also a big reason in how I managed to change my behaviour is understanding it through doing things like psychology etc through my course but also through REACTs course of peer mentoring which taught me about who I was as a person and what I wanted from life.

“Having REACT as a support network, taking part in courses and being involved in peer education opportunities has helped me gain a healthier thought process. I now have a better outlook on life for myself and my son.”

Anne's story



Anne was a university lecturer in child psychology and development – subjects which stood her in good stead for looking after her three grandchildren when she became their sole carer.

“My son and daughter both have learning difficulties,” she explains, “things that you and I would take for granted, for example, planning a Sunday dinner, is really difficult for them. Two of the grandchildren also have a disability. This means a lot of doctors appointments and hospital visits for them, which my own children found really difficult to plan.”

In 2005, Anne became the carer for her daughter's girl, and the following year she got a phone call from her son saying he was finding it difficult to cope with his two children.

Seven years on, she has had to give up her job so that she can care full time for her three grandchildren who are all getting on fine. Anne explains: “It's not what you expect your life to be, caring for your grandchildren, being back at the school gates and things. It's like a bolt out the blue. You know things aren't going well but you don't think you'll be the sole carer.”

As if she wasn't busy enough Anne set up the West Dunbartonshire Kinship Carers Support Group where people in a similar situation meet up every few weeks. “It's great to have that,” she says, “and the support of friends. My mother, who's in her eighties, has been so supportive. It's not easy, but I wouldn't have it any other way.”

“

It's not what you expect your life to be, caring for your grandchildren, being back at the school gates and things. It's like a bolt out the blue.

”

Graeme's story

Graeme became a single dad of a new born baby and 15-month-old girl after his partner left him. He talked about being up during the night with one child, then the other, getting no sleep at all, to the point he felt sleep deprived.

Graeme started to lose weight, felt depressed and was becoming a shadow of his former self. He said he was feeling really low and asked his health visitor for help.

He managed to move closer to his family and was provided with a few hours childcare to give him a break for a wee while. Graeme found these couple of hours break made all the difference.

He then joined the dads group at Midlothian Sure Start which has made a positive difference for himself and his girls. He finds attending the group really helpful, giving him the opportunity to meet new people and know you are not the only one going through the same things.

“

Attending the group is really helpful and gives me the opportunity to meet new people and know I am not the only one going through the same things.

”

Thomas's story - Dads Rock

“I set up Scotland's first free musical playgroup for Dads and their kids, called Dads Rock along with another local dad as we both had young kids, and we realised there was nowhere to go that was just for dads. I remembered when my son was born that I wanted to speak to other fathers, but found it hard to find them in the right setting.

“Myself and David (the other founder) love music and knew that our kids got a lot from music also so were keen to tie it into a musical theme. The name is also a play on words, as we

wanted the playgroup to be a solid base for dads, as well as somewhere to have fun.

“It is a positive and friendly environment for kids and dads. We're based in the Sighthill area of Edinburgh and have a really great mix of local dads. We are also looking to expand into the Granton area of Edinburgh.”

Dads Rock is part of Fathers Network Scotland. www.Fathersnetworkscotland.org.uk





Play Talk Read

Play Talk Read <http://www.playtalkread.org> is the place to go to get information to give your wee one the best start. Alternatively visit your local library and ask about Bookbug rhyme time sessions.

Free, fun-filled sessions of stories, songs and rhymes for parents and children aged birth to four years, available at your local library or community group.



Find details of your local Bookbug Session at www.scottishbooktrust.com/localbookbugsessions



Play@home books

These contain simple activities, using recycled or homemade materials, which help to increase physical activity, child development and parent-child bonding. Books are available from health visitors and pre-school books from nursery.

This document is also available in easy read format. Consideration will be given to requests for availability in other languages/formats. Contact 0131 244 7608.



The Scottish Government

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