



71st Annual Report 2018-2019

Connect is a trading name of Scottish Parent Teacher Council
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The Scottish Parent Teacher Council is a Company Limited by Guarantee, Company No SC151086, Scottish Charity No SC019168

Connect's Mission

Connect's mission is to support the development and maintenance of high quality parental engagement in children's learning and school lives. We will achieve this by:

- **sustaining Connect** as a robust, parent-led, independent membership organisation with a focus on research and evidence-based development.
- **working with parents and carers** to build their confidence, knowledge and skills so they feel able to engage in the way they wish, with their child's school and wider education services.
- **working in partnership** with organisations and individuals in the educational and wider Scottish community, to build awareness of and engagement with parental involvement and its benefits for children, families and communities.

Connect's Values

We are a membership organisation committed to treating all Members and stakeholders with **respect, honesty and integrity**.

- The Directors and staff work tirelessly and passionately to create productive, creative partnerships which support **positive educational outcomes for all young people**.
- We engage with our employees respectfully and flexibly, supporting their learning and progression and **encouraging their enthusiastic involvement** in the development of the organisation.
- We support parents and carers to be **involved in the way that is right for them**: with their own child's learning; the local school; local authority or at national policy level.
- We are committed to **equality and dignity** for all parents, carers and children.
- We utilise **evidence and research** to advance our work and to support policy and practice.

Convenor's Report

A very warm welcome to Connect's Annual Report for 2018–19. As we move on from our 70th Anniversary, Connect continues to work hard to establish our new name and brand, though we know (thanks to our Member Survey) that the majority of our parent Members like our new look and message. Our strategy to work more, and more effectively, across the Scottish education system is bearing fruit and helping us to have a clear understanding of the impact we have on the many individuals and groups we talk to and work with each year. Just like our parent Members, our aim is to improve outcomes for children and young people – it's great to work alongside you to achieve that goal.

Our Projects

Connect Members' Survey

In May, we launched our Members' Survey, to find out if what we do is what our Members want and need. We were delighted with the positive feedback – and we appreciate your ideas and suggestions. You also told us about the amazing work you do in your school communities: Scottish education is lucky to have you! We received **150** responses from parent groups in **26** local authority areas. You told us your **top five Connect services** are:

- Membership-linked insurance
- our website (full of leaflets, links and news stories)
- face-to-face Information Sessions
- online Information Sessions
- our Facebook page.

You can read the full report here [http://bit.ly/](http://bit.ly/ConnectMemberReport)

ConnectMemberReport.

We're using your responses for the following improvements:

- an annual calendar of Information Sessions so everyone has lots of notice
- finding ways to put our online sessions on the website for you to access at any time

- expanding our Facebook use for sharing ideas
- self-managed online membership
- making podcasts and films to support Connect Members in their roles
- creating more webpages to answer your questions
- piloting specific Facebook groups by theme or geographical area.

Partnership Schools Scotland

2018/19 was the fourth year of the Partnership Schools Scotland (PSS) programme, with funding and support from Skills Development Scotland.

Using the well-established and proven model of school, family and community partnerships from the Johns Hopkins University in the United States, we continue to see how it makes a difference to schools as more and different families become engaged with children's learning.

In a first for Connect, we shaped a proposal for academic research with Stirling University to undertake desk and field research, including looking at the work of some of our Partnership Schools.



The Reference Group continued to provide great support and advice to the PSS team. The group is a mix of representatives from across education, schools, universities, early years, government and third sector organisations and comes together twice a year to review the work of the programme.

Our submission to the National Network of Partnership Schools 2019 publication **Promising Partnership Practices** featured Kilwinning Academy and looked at the health and wellbeing work the school community is doing. You can read the piece here <http://bit.ly/PSSpublication>.

Our Projects continued

Professional Learning

Our Professional Learning programme goes from strength to strength. We benefit from the deep knowledge of our consultants, George Gilchrist, former headteacher, and Dr Janet Goodall, author and academic specialising in family engagement.

We introduced a third module, *Evaluation - Assessing the Impact of Family Engagement*, with its highly-regarded Toolkit. This module complements *Engaging Families in Children's Education* and *Family Engagement for School Improvement*.

We ran **nine modules** in a wide variety of settings - in a school cluster, for a local

authority, for Education Scotland, with Children in Scotland and as open sessions. Our professional learning is highly-regarded - **96%** of participants rated nine different aspects of the modules as '**8 or above**'. Courses were delivered to **130** educators.

Feedback from Professional Learning

'I have now identified ways to go forward in my establishment which can promote and build positive and productive relationships with parents'

'A very interesting session - ideas from many minds'

'Lots of good ideas shared that I can use back in Nursery'

Membership & Member Services

Engagement with our Members continues to be high. Our Members' Survey in May 2019 showed that our Members rate our services highly, with the most popular services being our website, our Information Sessions (online and face-to-face), the membership-linked insurance and our Facebook page.

We continue to add resources to the website and to improve the user experience. Our registered users continue to grow and we create new pages in response to the queries of our Members.

In 2018-19, we welcomed **479** people to our Information Sessions, **334** face-to-face and **145** online. Member schools hosted **29** face-to-face sessions in **17** of our group member local authorities; Connect hosted **31** live online sessions.

Parent Council Essentials remains the most requested face-to-face session. *Communication & Social Media - Let's Make it Work!* is a new addition to our programme. It was developed with Glasgow City Council during the summer term of 2019.

The drop-off between bookings and attendance will be addressed by over-booking; plans for online sessions, available 24/7, are being developed. Feedback remains overwhelmingly positive.

	1 Star	2 Star	3 Star	4 Star	Grand Total	2017 to 2018
Club/ Group			10	8	18	17
Individual	8				8	N/A
Parent Council	N/A	10	1563	133	1706	1848
PTA	N/A	5	75	90	170	188
Corporate					24	25
Grand Total	8	15	1648	231	1926	2090

Feedback from Information Sessions

'it was good to feel crystal clear on roles and responsibilities'

'I particularly enjoyed when people shared ideas'

'It built my confidence about what we should do as a Parent Council and how to do it'

'I learned many new things'

'It was great to meet other PC members from other schools'

'Excellent ideas for how we can become more involved in school life'

'I now understand what the full involvement of the Parent Council means. I can actually make a difference to my daughter's school'

Communications

Connect offers its Members a wide range of publications and opportunities for support and information-sharing. These include:

- our telephone helpline
- email
- monthly eNewsletters (**2533** subscribers)
- our termly newsletter Backchat (**300** by post; **939** by email)
- daily Facebook posts (**2064** followers)
- messaging via Facebook
- surveys
- Twitter (**6252** followers)
- our annual Members' leaflet
- our Information Sessions leaflet
- stalls at conferences and events
- leaflets and resources on our website
- a regular eNewsletter for educators
- a dedicated Twitter feed for educators to support their professional learning (**706** followers).

All figures are as at 12 August 2019.

Social Media

The popularity of Connect's social media platforms as a means of communicating with parents and educators continues to grow. We launched a dedicated Twitter

feed for educators, building up its followers with two Twitter chats and with links to free resources on our website to support their professional learning around parental engagement.

Press and Publicity

In 2018/19, we were involved in several media stories which ran and ran. We had mentions in **55** print and online publications. We also made **15** television and radio appearances. Many of these were based on research, campaigns and stories generated by Connect and our campaign partners. Among the issues and stories covered were:

- Primary 1 Scottish National Standardised Assessments
- teacher Christmas gifts
- early learning and childcare (1140 hours) roll-out
- the cost of school uniform and school trips
- teacher shortages
- musical instrument tuition fees
- school lets and access to schools
- teacher pay
- budget cuts
- school building repairs
- advertising in schools
- teacher shortages



- changes to seatbelt legislation
- subject choice narrowing
- reduction in school inspection days
- changes to national nutritional guidance.

Leaflets and Resources for Parents & Parent Groups

New leaflets and resources were created in 2018/19 and a large-scale review of all leaflets took place during the summer of 2019. The latter was a huge logistical task for staff. The leaflets are very popular with parent groups and are used at Information Sessions and events, as well as being a key component of our website.



supporting partnerships in education

Policy

As Scotland's long-standing independent parents' organisation and registered charity, Connect develops its policy positions in consultation with parents and carers and with partners. We do this through our parent surveys and through gathering views and ideas from our Members and our partners eg at events, at meetings, on our Facebook page, through our helpline and by email. We take the perspectives of parents to Government, Parliament, local authorities and the very many organisations and bodies involved with education in Scotland. We share the different and diverse priorities and views of parents.

In 2018/19, we ran **eight** surveys with **1969** respondents. Our most popular surveys were:

- musical instrument tuition charges (**729**)
- food nutrition standards in schools (**364**)
- early learning and childcare 1140 hours expansion (**230**).



Parents' Voice



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Scottish Government consultations we took part in during 2018-19 included:

- Nutritional Requirements for Food and Drink in Schools
- Supporting Disabled Children, Young People and their Families
- Consultation on Scottish Charity Law
- Children's Services Planning: Provision of Statutory Guidance
- Protecting Children: Review of section 12 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 and section 42 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009

We also submitted evidence to the following parliamentary committee inquiries:

- Young People's Mental Health Services (Public Petitions)
- Music Tuition in Schools (Education and Skills)
- Scottish National Standardised Assessments (Education and Skills)
- Young People's Pathways (Education and Skills)
- Subject Choices. (Education and Skills)

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Our staff team and board members are invited to take part in a wide range of consultation events and reference or advisory groups. During 2018-19 these included:

- Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate's Shared Inspection Framework External Reference Group
- Scottish Government National Working Group on Guidance, Training and Support Materials – Parental Involvement and Engagement
- Scottish Government 'Learning Together' National Action Plan on Parental Involvement and Engagement Steering Group
- The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills Education Leaders Forum
- National Parent Engagement Network
- National Parent Forum of Scotland Empowering Schools Guidance
- Scottish Government Volunteering in Schools Working Group

In addition to formal consultation from Government, Parliament and a range of other bodies, we are regularly asked to comment on many documents and proposals relating to education. We worked with different organisations on diverse topics:

- Play Not Tests campaign against Scottish National Standardised Assessment for P1s
- Anti-bullying with respectme
- GiveThemTime campaign on clearer and consistent support for parents requesting P1 deferral for their child
- Cross Party Group on Children and Young People (Parliament)

We also attended and spoke at a range of conferences and workshops, including:

- Mental Health in Scottish Schools
- West Partnership Regional Improvement Collaborative
- South East Improvement Collaborative
- Re-Imagining Parental Engagement Conference, University of Bath with Dr Janet Goodall
- Holyrood Insight Parental Engagement Conference
- Scottish Learning Festival
- Clackmannanshire Additional Support Needs Conference
- Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in Scotland (CILIPS) Autumn Conference
- The Gathering
- Skills Development Scotland Parliamentary Reception
- Health and Wellbeing Conference, Kilwinning Academy
- CALL Scotland Annual Conference
- Scottish Education Awards

Our Executive Director, Eileen Prior, is a member of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Advisory Council and participates regularly in these round-table events.

Staff

This was a busy year (as always!) for our staff team. A stimulating team 'away day' in Dundee in August 2018 led to a Board strategic review, with lots of ideas and suggestions for innovation and improvement. Staff and Connect Directors are working their way through these, with a Connect Strategic Framework 2019-2022 and a Work Plan with six work streams, each led by staff members with Connect Director support.

Staff changes during 2018/19 included: Sara McFarlane became Policy and Support Officer. Our Regional Advisor structure was reviewed and replaced with a Trainer role, to which former Regional Advisor Dorothy Hooper was appointed.

Our Memberships

Connect as an organisation, and individual members of the team, are members of a number of organisations for the benefit of our Member parents and the charity. These include:

- **Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations**
- **National Network of Partnership Schools**
- **Scottish Child Law Centre**
- **Royal Society for the Encouragement of the Arts, Manufacture and Commerce**
- **Association of Chief Officers of Scottish Voluntary Organisations**
- **Children in Scotland.**

In conclusion

The small staff team and the volunteer Directors at Connect continue to work hard on behalf of our Members and all parents, children and young people. Our focus is on helping family members and staff in education settings – nurseries as well as schools – to create strong and co-operative relationships that are focussed on outcomes for children. We do this through our membership for parent groups and our information and advice for parents (available through our website and face-to-face or online Information Sessions). The sessions we offer are regularly reviewed and updated so they stay relevant and current. This year we undertook both a Member and a Stakeholder survey to check out how we are doing – many thanks to the folk who took part in these.

We also offer Professional Learning courses for nursery and school staff to help them understand the how and why of parental engagement and give them practical tools to help. Work like Partnership Schools Scotland – a hands-on programme of work with school communities around the country – gives us the chance to help whole school communities put into practice what the research tells us. As we enter our fifth year of a five-year pilot for PSS, we are actively pursuing funding to keep up this important work.

Connect also works with other groups and organisations who support families or are involved in education, and we keep in close contact with both Parliament and Government about a wide range of laws and policies on the same themes. You can read about our work in this Annual Report. I'm proud to see Connect continue to thrive and to witness the ways in which we help and support the reality in schools and nurseries around Scotland.

Thank you to all our staff and Directors for their continued commitment and passion, to all of our partners and colleagues who work with us and support Connect in many different ways, but most of all thank you to the parents up and down Scotland who support the learning of our children. You do the most important job there is! I hope you enjoy this whistle-stop tour of Connect's year and we look forward to working with you in 2019-20.



Lindsay Law
Connect Convenor



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