

Title of paper: **Encouraging parent and carer involvement at transition to secondary school: exploring a novel school-based programme in three Scottish schools.**

Theme: **Social Justice and Inclusion**

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#### Aims:

In policy and practice in Scotland, as elsewhere, there is a drive to encourage the involvement of parents and carers in their children's education, as a means of improving educational attainment, experiences, and post school destinations (e.g. Education Scotland, 2016; Scottish Government, 2016).

An innovative 'Parents in Partnership' (PIP) programme took place, supported by CELCIS, in one local authority area. The transition to a new school can be challenging (e.g. Smith, 2006; Brewin & Statham, 2011), and PIP therefore focused on parents/carers of pupils who had recently entered secondary school. The programme aimed to encourage and support the engagement of parents/carers with their child's new school, and to improve knowledge of the school premises, school life, and available support. A total of 37 parents and carers took part.

#### Methods:

10 parents/carers participated in focus groups. Findings from these, and from post-programme questionnaires (n=23) are reported here.

#### Main findings:

Participants reported feeling more knowledgeable about school following the programme, and explained that this helped them discuss school life with their children. They also suggested that PIP helped them to feel that school staff are approachable, and that there is a genuine home-school partnership. Some also reported maintaining contact with other parents and carers following the programme.

#### Conclusions:

PIP shows encouraging signs of having improved parent/carers' knowledge, communication with their children about school, and confidence in approaching school staff. We believe that initiating a positive relationship between school and home establishes a good foundation for ongoing school experience.