



Closing the poverty related attainment gap:

Before and beyond
the school gates

August 2018

Believe in
children
 Barnardo's
Scotland

“

Our ambition is to enable Scotland's children to arrive at the school gates ready to learn. We will achieve this by helping parents build strong and healthy relationships with their children, which will in turn increase their educational attainment and life chances.”

Martin Crewe, Director, Barnardo's Scotland

Introduction

Barnardo's Scotland has a long history of working in partnership with families, schools and communities, however, the introduction of the Scottish Attainment Challenge in 2015 to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, has enabled us to extend our work to reach over 400 schools, which is 16% of the Scottish education estate.

We recognise that there are a number of complex issues which can affect children and young people's educational outcomes, however, those living in poverty often face the greatest challenge reaching their full potential.

Not having enough money can compromise *any* family's stability.

Living on a low income is not just about the struggle to pay bills. Families in poverty can find it difficult to be fully emotionally available to their children when their resources are absorbed by the stress of not being able to afford necessities like housing, food and fuel.

Children living in poverty are more likely to be delayed in terms of language acquisition, and have a higher incidence of behavioural problems than their more affluent peers.¹ One of the key findings from the longitudinal survey Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) suggests children in poverty have less access to a wide range of 'home learning' activities which we know "have an impact on cognitive development and can moderate – although by no means eradicate – the effects of sociodemographic advantage."²

We also now understand more fully the impact that the stress caused by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and early trauma can have on a child's development, their ability to learn and their mental health and wellbeing.

Schools are increasingly on the frontline of responding to children and young people who come through their gates with a range of unmet material and emotional needs.

“

Where you might think it is difficult to address poverty in a school setting, I believe that this approach can bring many benefits for children.”

Head Teacher



¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2010/feb/15/poor-children-behind-sutton-trust>

² Growing Up in Scotland (2018) Key findings <https://growingupinScotland.org.uk/about-gus/key-findings/>

Our Approach

Our approach to achieving better outcomes for children, young people and families is built on promoting understanding of the impact of poverty and toxic stress. We work holistically with children, young people and families to address all the issues that may be affecting their ability to thrive, alongside raising awareness of ways they can support healthy brain development and emotional regulation through positive, nurturing, parent and child interaction.

“

I learned we are all beautiful in our own ways. I feel reassured.”

Child

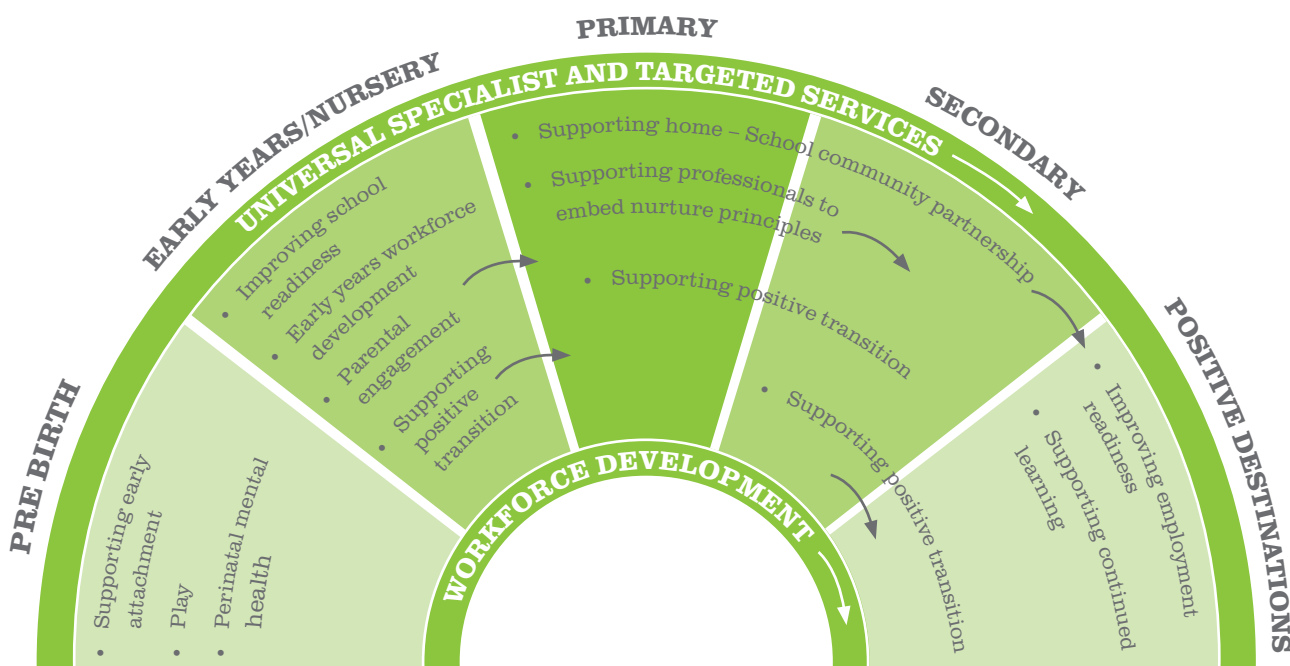
Our work with schools and families is relational, attachment aware and trauma-informed; when children and young people feel safe, they are better able to engage and reach their full personal and academic potential.

“The single greatest predictor of academic success that exists is the emotional stability of the home it's not the classroom and if you really wanted to do educational reform, you would start with the home.”

John Medina, Developmental Molecular Biologist specialising in human brain development³

Our Model

In order to achieve our ambition of building whole child, whole family and whole community resilience, we offer support across the full continuum. We take account of the different developmental needs and intensity of assistance required at different points in a child or young persons' journey.



³ John Medina; cited in 'From Surviving to Thriving' Lincoln High School by Jim Sporleder – 'The trauma informed schools – a step by step implementation guide for administrators and school personnel' by Jim Sporleder & Heather T. Forbes, LCSW

When commencing a partnership with schools we engage with education colleagues to hear about what they feel would be most helpful in supporting the children and families in their school community. We then co-design a plan which meets the specific needs and budget of each individual context.

Our services work in partnership with head teachers and other school staff, providing a crucial link between home and school and seeking to strengthen whole family participation in the learning process.

We know children in Scotland spend approximately 15% of their waking hours in school.⁴ The remaining 85% of children's time is spent at home or in their communities and this presents a potentially significant opportunity for learning.

“Equipping, supporting and building the capacity of Scotland's parents to maximise children's opportunities for learning is key to raising attainment.”⁵

Our support can include;

- **family support** – being alongside families in their communities, identifying immediate needs and providing compassionate, consistent, practical support, including income maximisation and strategies which can help to prevent or mitigate against the adverse effects of living in a low-income household as well as encouragement to listen to, nurture and play with their children.
- **family learning** – providing opportunities for engaging in nurturing activities as a whole family or wider school community, learning through bespoke universal and targeted programmes, including homework clubs, holiday activities with respectful food provision, transition support and bespoke groupwork on themes identified by individual schools.
- **community capacity building** – engagement in joint training, workshops and learning events to strengthen whole community expertise which ensures there is a shared, multi-agency approach to supporting children and young people which is relational, attachment aware and trauma-informed.

“

Felt it helped us step outside and see from a different perspective. Without that support we wouldn't have been able to see, it helped get things back on track.”

Parent



⁴ Education Indicators in Focus (22) OECD 2014

⁵ The Scottish Government (2016), 'Review of family learning supporting excellence and equity'. <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/documents/family-learning-report-full-document.pdf>

Our Programmes

Barnardo's Scotland also have a number of programme approaches which work on a universal level to ensure children and young people develop their social and emotional literacy, avoid risky and negative influences, and build their resilience and problem-solving skills.

We hold the UK licences for a number of internationally recognised, evidence-based whole school programmes such as **PATHS®**⁶ and **Lifeskills**⁷ which are featured in the Early Intervention Foundation Guidebook⁸ which provides information about early intervention programmes that have been evaluated and shown to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Feedback from our **PATHS® Programme for Schools (UK Version)** whole-school programme work shows the impact of the approach on a range of areas including pro-social skills, emotional understanding, social problem solving and self-control.

Delivered by teachers within the classroom, a Barnardo's **PATHS®** Coach provides implementation support, plus a range of extension activities to help embed a positive whole-school ethos.

Our **LifeSkills** programme is an effective, evidence-based prevention and early intervention approach for children and young people aged 8-14 years which has three main components;

- Personal competence
- Social competence
- Drug resistance

The programme provides children and young people with skills, knowledge and experience which supports them to make healthy choices leading to a reduction in early initiation to smoking, alcohol and drug use.

Another resource is our **Real Love Rocks**⁹ healthy relationship education programme for **primary** and **secondary** schools which focuses on key skills and learning in relation to understanding what makes a healthy consensual relationship, both in the real world and online. Although designed to be delivered in a universal setting, RLR has the flexibility to be used with small targeted groups and on a one-to-one basis.

We also have an approach to supporting individual children and young people impacted by bereavement, trauma or loss called **Here and Now**. Although this primarily focuses on children and young people, there is also support through this to parents/carers and school staff, to strengthen their understanding of the impact of these experiences on the children and young people in their care.

“

I've noticed a difference since coming here, I've stopped shouting at my son and he has got much better.”

Parent

6 http://www.pathseducation.co.uk/pdfs/public/PATHS_Plus_Briefing_Paper.pdf

7 <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/lifeskills.htm>

8 <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/>

9 <http://www.barnardosrealloverocks.org.uk/>

Our Impact

Barnardo's Scotland has a robust Outcomes Framework which is used to **evaluate and measure impact**. This framework is underpinned by the Scottish Government's Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) framework with specific measurable outcomes that capture progress across the wellbeing indicators; Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included.

This framework ensures that we are outcomes focused and forms the basis of the reports we develop and share with schools so there is a clear record of our activities and impact.

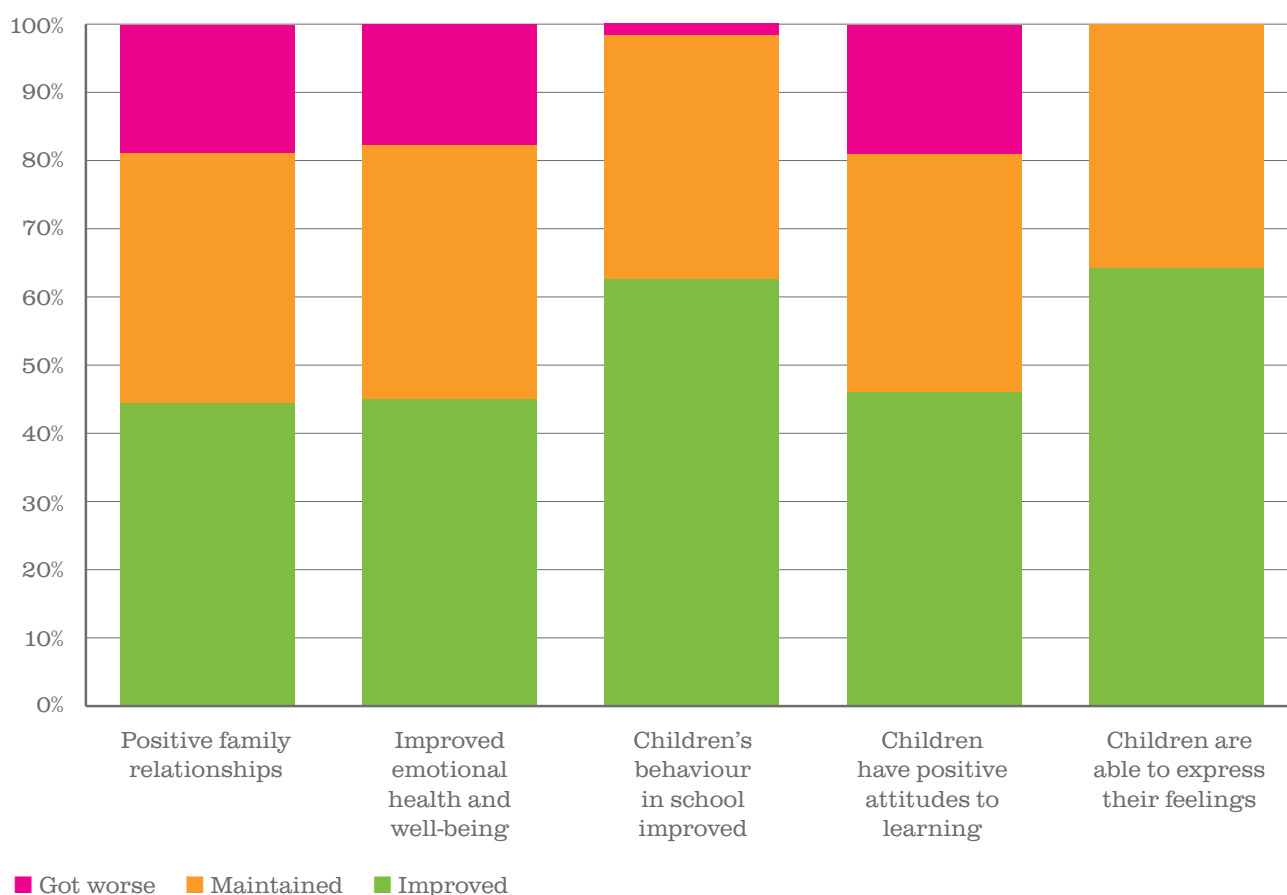
The graph below captures our 2017/18 outcomes data from across our attainment services in Aberdeen City, Glasgow, Inverclyde and North Lanarkshire.

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The family support worker is able to engage and build positive relationships with families who previously kept their distance from the school.”

Teacher

Barnardo's Scotland Attainment Outcomes



We listen to children, young people, families and all of our partners and work alongside them to make improvements to attendance, engagement, participation and ultimately attainment.

Contact us

If you would like to learn more about the services Barnardo's Scotland can provide in your area, please get in touch.

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