

parentsportal.scot

Case Study: parentsportal.scot—Operated by Improvement Service, Powered by SEEMiS Group LLP

In the face of increasing demand from the public for more accessible, 24-hour services which meet their needs and budgets, public service providers are looking to develop innovative solutions for citizen engagement.

In 2017, the Improvement Service (IS) and SEEMiS established a partnership with a joint vision of enabling and creating a digital relationship between parents, pupils and schools.

A vision from which parentsportal.scot was born.

What is it?

parentsportal.scot is a new online service to transform communications between schools and parents. It replaces the schoolbag run with direct digital communications to provide secure access to parents to a wide range of online services and information about their child's education.

The IS – the national improvement service for local government in Scotland - is responsible for designing, building, operating, and providing ongoing support for the portal. parentsportal.scot forms part of the IS's [Digital Public Services](#) portfolio of products and services.

SEEMiS, Scottish local government's Education Management Information System provider, is responsible for provisioning education related data. SEEMiS is used by all Scotland's local authority run schools for education administration including:

- pupil and staff record management
- nursery application management
- attendance
- pastoral notes

Enabling and creating a digital relationship between parents, pupils and schools

Want to know more?
contact

parentsportal.scot

- interfacing external agencies e.g. [ScotXed](#) and [SQA](#). [mygovscot.myaccount](#) is parentsportal.scot's authentication mechanism.

"Within just a few weeks of making parentportal.scot available, parents of over 20% of the total school roll have signed up and begun accessing online educational services.

"Even more are expected to follow suit at the start of the new school term in August, and go on to take advantage of the ease and convenience parentportal.scot offers."

**Karen Cawte,
Digital Transformation
Manager,
West Lothian Council**

Actions/approach

The IS and SEEMiS began the concept of the portal by developing a vision for simplifying educational-related service delivery, to enable and create a digital relationship between parents, pupils and schools.

The two also established their partnership and governance through a Memorandum of Understanding, ensuring clarity over roles, responsibilities and over the use of the data.

They worked together to co-locate teams, form a programme board and a project steering group to monitor progress using an agile methodology approach.

The project team engaged up-front with Scottish local authorities to establish demand for establishing a digital relationship, and to help understand their needs and priorities. They highlighted the requirement for a convenient service using online administrative services at a time which suits them; a 'one stop shop' where information is accessible in the one place; more control over their child's school life, ensuring they don't miss key events; and a greater understanding and knowledge of their child's learning.

The National Parents Forum of Scotland, Local Authority Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network, Education Scotland, Directors of Education and the Information Commissioner's Office were also consulted in the early stages of the portal's development.

Independent research was commissioned by IS and SEEMiS of Ipsos MORI and focus groups were held across Scotland to gather parents and guardians' views. This included their experience of current communication with schools, the potential for an online portal for parents and schools, how provision of online services could sit effectively alongside other more traditional routes, and their demands and priorities for such a service.

A prototype was then built to test concept and business processes, evaluating where improvements were required. From this the 'parentsportal.scot' brand was developed.

Security was built into the concept's design from the outset with risk and threat modelling, ensuring a secure means to link child, parent and school was developed.

Continuous feedback was vital to the programme. Listening to the parents and local authorities was vital in developing a roadmap for the phased introduction of these online services. From this an Early

Adopters' Cohort was established to pilot it prior to a wider rollout. Based on early adopter and parental feedback during piloting, the roadmap was reprioritised, for example, to bring forward the delivery of a digital annual data check, and help replace the existing and costly paper-based approach.

A pipeline of local authorities of those signalling an explicit intention or interest in adopting in 2019/20 has been built

West Lothian Council successfully launched parentsportal.scot for schools in the Linlithgow area on 14 May 2019.

parentsportal.scot was launched for Linlithgow parents with an initial basket of services to access, with the view to more brand new services being added throughout the next year.

Parents will be able to access this service via their school websites, using their mygovscot myaccount to sign in. mygovscot myaccount is the secure and easy way to access public services online in Scotland.

"parentsportal.scot represents a pioneering development, for parents, schools and councils. Combining unique strengths and competencies in SEEMiS Group and Improvement Service made sense..."

Danny Gallacher,
Chief Executive
SEEMiS Group LLP

The benefits

Benefits include:

- Improving engagement between schools and parents.
- Reducing carbon footprint: Potential to save 4.6 million sheets of paper annually by issuing report cards online, and 2 million sheets of paper by the online annual data check
- Saving money: cash and cheque transactions are three times more expensive to process than online transactions
- Saving time:
 - o 30,000 placing requests submitted annually currently involving heavy administrative burden.
 - o provides convenience for busy parents to view information, update details and transact at a time of their choosing.
 - o frees up teachers' time to educate.

The early adopters, North Lanarkshire and West Lothian Councils, were positive about the portal and the benefits it can bring to parents, schools and councils.

The feedback

An external audit by West Lothian Council reported their feedback on the process:

"IS viewed as being positive by early adopter councils and as a national organisation putting forward a solution that will meet all local authorities' needs."

"Feedback about product was positive, viewed as very easy to use."

“Both (organisations) are fully committed to successful implementation and responsive to feedback.”

“IS viewed as being positive by early adopter councils and as a national organisation putting forward a solution that will meet all local authorities’ needs.”

West Lothian Council audit

Danny Gallacher, Chief Executive of SEEMiS Group LLP commented: “parentsportal.scot represents a pioneering development, for parents, schools and councils. Combining unique strengths and competencies in SEEMiS Group and Improvement Service made sense, meaning SEEMiS provisions the educational-related data to flow to and from parentsportal.scot, while the Improvement Service, having designed and built the portal, will operate and support it.”

Karen Cawte, Digital Transformation Manager, West Lothian Council added: “Ensuring good customer service has a prominent presence at the centre of all service development within West Lothian Council. It sits at the heart of our latest Customer Service Strategy and Corporate Plan where digital service development and raising attainment are two of nine priorities.

“We’re proud to be the first council in Scotland to adopt parentsportal.scot.

“We firmly believe this exciting customer-focused development can make a major contribution towards our plans and ambitions for West Lothian, one of Scotland’s fastest growing councils in population terms.

“Over 24,000 pupils attend West Lothian’s eighty-four schools. Within just a few weeks of making parentsportal.scot available, parents of over 20% of the total school roll have signed up and begun accessing online educational services.

“Even more are expected to follow suit at the start of the new school term in August, and go on to take advantage of the ease and convenience parentsportal.scot offers.”

Next steps

Processes and plans are in place to encourage further take-up by councils and parents, and the experiences of North Lanarkshire and West Lothian as ambassadors are likely to assist this. A lessons learned review commissioned jointly by IS and SEEMiS together with a user group will shape and influence future developments.

To find out more about parentsportal.scot:

Email: digitalpublicservices@improvementservice.org.uk

Visit: <https://parentsportal.scot>

Follow: @DPS_ImprovServ