

**Growing up in Scotland**  
**Assessing contribution and impact**  
**Executive Summary**  
**June 2012**



The Growing Up in Scotland study (GUS) is a major longitudinal research project that tracks the lives of several groups of Scottish children through their early years and beyond. The study is funded by the Scottish Government and carried out by ScotCen Social Research. Launched in 2005, the families taking part in the study have regularly been providing information on a wide range of topics including family circumstances and experiences, child health and development, parenting, access to and use of services (such as childcare) and experiences of school and pre-school. Findings from the study have been published annually since 2007.

From the very start of the project, the partners involved agreed that it was very important to maximise the value of the research by making sure that the findings are widely used. This has been achieved by implementing an Engagement Strategy which ensures that the findings and data from GUS are accessible to, and used by, a wide range of audiences. Working closely with the Scottish Government and ScotCen, a Dissemination Officer based within the Knowledge Exchange Team at the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh, carries out a range of activities, including maintaining and developing the study website, organising events, writing newsletters, articles and briefings, exhibiting at conferences and giving presentations.

Carrying out these activities has enabled the study to build up a strong following across the health, local authority, voluntary and academic sectors. For example, over 1,400 people have signed up to receive regular information about the study and during 2011 there were 12,400 visits to the GUS home page. The study has 458 followers in Twitter and over the past 6 years, a total of 870 people have attended GUS events whilst members of the GUS team have visited 14 Scottish Local Authorities to present findings. Training in using the data has been delivered to almost 200 people, and over 30 academics outwith the GUS research team have downloaded GUS data to inform their own research leading to a number of journal articles.

GUS provides crucial, current information, not available from other sources, to inform the development of policies and services for children and their families at the national and local levels. It provides contextual information about the experiences of and outcomes for children growing up in Scotland today. Local agencies are able to use GUS data to benchmark their own data against national trends whilst the design of the study also enables the monitoring and evaluation of policies over time. GUS has highlighted the inequalities faced by children in Scotland from the very start of their lives and has made an important contribution to debates around early years and early intervention by highlighting the need to tackle these inequalities.

By engaging with our users, we know that professionals and practitioners across Scotland are using findings and data from the study in a variety of ways. At the national level, GUS has informed the development of a number of key policies. At the local level, GUS findings have been used in policy development, service planning and as a resource for teaching, training and continuing professional development. Evidence from GUS has been used in responding to consultations and in applications for funding. From gathering this information from users we can demonstrate that GUS is making an important contribution to the work to improve outcomes for children and their families. Assessing the impact of the research is an on-going process and will be updated regularly.

**'Growing up in Scotland'**  
**Assessing contribution and impact**  
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## **1. Introduction**

Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is the longitudinal research study following the lives of thousands of children and their families from birth through to the teenage years. With a strong focus on the early years and child outcomes, GUS is a resource that can be used by policy makers at national and local levels, practitioners, service planners, the voluntary sector, academics, parents and the wider community. GUS is funded by the Scottish Government and is carried out by the ScotCen Social Research in collaboration with the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) at the University of Edinburgh and the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow.

GUS was launched in 2005. Findings on a range of topics have been reported annually since 2007. Reports published in May 2012 analysed data from the first six sweeps of data collection. This report covers dissemination and impact up to early 2012. It is a live document and will be updated over the course of the study.

This report aims to demonstrate the contribution of the study so far and to make recommendations for on-going monitoring of use and impact. It utilises work by Sarah Morton on assessing the contribution of research and is based on an approach adapted from John Mayne's Contribution Analysis. This approach acknowledges that change in complex issues is caused by many factors and no one activity or set of activities can claim that it causes change. This is helpful when looking at the impact of research as we know that there are many factors influencing policy-makers and practitioners, and research is only one of these. The idea that research makes a contribution to policy or practice change is more realistic.

The rest of this report details how we can link activities from the GUS dissemination programme to immediate, intermediate and final outcomes. It provides an overview of the GUS contribution as well as some specific examples. Contribution is considered over the three themes of **'activities', 'use' and 'impact'**. A 'results chain' table (see page 13) identifies potential outcomes, risks/ assumptions in achieving these outcomes and some suggestions for monitoring criteria.

The ways in which GUS findings and data have been used can be summarised as follows:

### *Context*

GUS provides data that is current, Scottish and not available from any other source. This is crucial contextual information for all those developing policies and services for children and their families.

### *Benchmarking*

Local agencies are able to benchmark their own data against national data from GUS.

### *Evaluation*

The design of the study means that findings can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and services over time.

### *Motivation*

GUS has highlighted the inequalities affecting many children and families experiencing disadvantage, motivating politicians and professionals to effect change in order to address these inequalities. GUS has been particularly useful in providing evidence to support the arguments for increasing activities around early intervention and prevention.

The report draws on the following sources of information, available as Appendices on request:

Appendix 1 - List of documents referencing GUS findings

Appendix 2 - List of research projects using GUS data

Appendix 3 - GUS Review on-line survey of GUS 'mailing list members

Appendix 4 - Annual Events 2010, 2011 & 2012 Feedback form – using GUS findings

Appendix 5 - Record of activity/ Dissemination Programme for each sweep

Appendix 6 - List of e-mail enquiries received

## 2. Activities

A Dissemination Officer, employed for 3 days a week at CRFR, has enabled a programme of engagement activities to be planned and delivered to make findings from GUS widely accessible to policy-makers, practitioners and members of the public. Members of the Research team at ScotCen, CRFR and the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit have also contributed to the dissemination activities.

### *Overview of dissemination activities*

- New findings publicised through GUS website ([www.growingupinscotland.org.uk](http://www.growingupinscotland.org.uk)) and through social media (Twitter @growingupinscot 458 followers at 19.06.12)
- E-mail alerts and bulletins to GUS interest list (e-mail list) (1400 people)
- Hard copy newsletter to study participants
- Annual conference for between 120 and 170 delegates to highlight and discuss key findings
- Workshops or smaller seminars on particular reports
- Press Release to highlight new findings/ publications
- Targeting of new findings to stakeholders (by e-mail and hard copy)
- Promotion of new findings through targeted articles in publications aimed at different groups of professionals
- Promotion of new findings through links to other website (eg Education Scotland, Health Scotland)
- Targeted Briefings to particular groups of practitioners, often developed in collaboration with others e.g. Improvement Service, Scottish Child Care and Protection Network.
- Presentations at conferences and to smaller groups (by request).
- Exhibiting GUS material at conferences and events
- Data workshops to promote and support the use of GUS data by academics and others

The following table summarises some of the key statistics relating to GUS dissemination and engagement activities:

<b>Over the last 5 years (since 2007)</b>	<b>At 31 May 2012</b>
No. of people signed up to receive regular updates	1394
No. of people attending events (total number of delegates, not individuals)	870
No. of followers on Twitter	458
No. of newspaper articles	30
No. of references to GUS in other documents (that we know of)	
Non- Scottish Government documents	67
Scottish Government publications	9
No. of visits to the GUS Home page during 2011	12,400
No. of presentations given by members of the GUS team at conferences, seminars and meetings (excluding our own events)	65
No. of Scottish Local Authorities visited in person	14 (out of 32)
No. of conferences attended with GUS exhibit	42
No. of mentions in Scottish Parliamentary debates	To confirm (but at least 6)
No. Data Workshops (over 4 locations)	8
No. of people attending Data Workshops	193
No. of people downloading GUS data from the ESDS	To confirm (but at least 30)
No. of publications in Academic journals	4

### 3. Use (Engagement and Involvement)

In order to have an impact it is important to engage with the right stakeholders and to ensure they are involved with the study from as early as possible. This has been achieved through careful targeting and review of those engaged with on an annual basis.

GUS activities are carefully targeted to policy-makers and practitioners who may be interested in the most recent data and findings available. To start with midwives, health visitors, Sure Start practitioners, and others concerned with pregnancy/birth and very early years were targeted alongside those interested in the first child cohort – mostly early years practitioners. As the study children have grown older other policy and practice fields have become relevant, particularly the nursery sector and education.

#### *Interest list*

Anyone interested in the study can sign up to the GUS e-mail list which has been growing steadily. As at June 2012, around 1400 people had signed up to receive regular updates by e-mail. The breakdown by sector is as follows:

**Table 1: GUS Interest List – breakdown by sector**

Nature of interest		
Academic (staff)	156	11%
Academic (student)	126	9%
Government (Scotland)	98	7%
Government (UK)	3	0%
Health sector	274	20%
Local Authority (education)	196	14%
Local Authority (other)	66	5%
Local Authority (Social Work)	56	4%
Other	64	5%
Other (Non departmental public body)	3	0%
Other (police)	2	0%
Personal interest	68	5%
Private sector	43	3%
Voluntary sector	237	17%
TOTAL	1392	100%

Count taken 06/06/12

Professionals from the health sector form the biggest group of members, followed by those from the voluntary sector.

The e-mail list has been regularly ‘cleaned’ to ensure that any redundant e-mail addresses are removed. Based on the joining dates of the current members of the list, the growth of membership has been as follows:

**Table 2: GUS Interest List, annual growth**

Sign ups pre- August 2007	75
Sign ups Aug 2007 – Dec 2007	34
Sign ups 2008	167
Sign ups 2009	251
Sign ups 2010	266
Sign ups 2011	348
Sign ups 2012 (to 14 June)	211

The figures above illustrate the growing interest in the study as the data becomes richer and more findings become available on an increasingly wide range of topics.

### **Annual events**

GUS annual events have been attended by between 121 and 180 delegates. The annual events are free (supported by the Scottish Government) and are always over-subscribed. The figures suggest a growing interest from Health, Social Work and from the voluntary sector.

**Table 3: GUS Annual events, attendance by sector**

Delegate sector	2005 Launch	2007 Year 1 event	2008 Year 2 event	2009 Year 3 event	2010 Year 4 event	2011 Year 5 event
Academic	17	35	27	23	23	29
Govt agency	10	18	10	9	19	4
Health	6	20	28	30	21	41
LA (Education)	1	8	2	7	9	18
LA (other)	10	14	14	14	18	11
LA (Social Work)	1	4	0	6	10	7
Other	12	8	7	8	14	14
Scottish Govt	15	12	4	10	10	7
Voluntary	9	12	29	34	33	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>170</b>

Quotes from Annual Events 2008-2011. See Appendix 4 for full list of comments.

*‘Overall a very interesting and informative day which will inform practices’*

*‘Knowledgeable and passionate speakers. Very pleased to hear pre-birth also being considered and the importance of support for mums. Our own experience at the frontline agrees with the higher levels of mental health issues of mums caring for very young children and babies, which can go undiagnosed for some considerable time.’*

*‘Would have also liked the findings speakers to show how the findings have been used to tackle problems in practice.’*

In addition to the annual event for external stakeholders, an annual seminar presenting the latest findings is held for staff in the Scottish Government.

### ***GUS website***

The GUS website is another important way in which interested parties can engage with the study. During 2011, the GUS website home page was visited 12,400 (5000 times more than in 2010). The website lists all our publications and provides an A-Z index of 70 topics to help users navigate to relevant findings quickly. The website also provides links to all Data Documentation, which includes copies of the survey questionnaires. An on-line quiz 'Just an ordinary family?' provides an opportunity for website visitors to see how their family compares to GUS families (all families in Scotland with children of this age) and to find out about how GUS findings are being used.

<http://www.gus-online-quiz.co.uk/>

Some pages aimed specifically at the GUS children have recently been added:

<http://www.crfr.ac.uk/gus/kidshomepage.html>

### ***Queries***

Responsive engagement is also an important part of our work. We regularly receive queries from academics and students seeking further information about the content and timing of GUS data collection. We also receive queries from those carrying out similar studies in other countries and have developed working relationships with those involved in 'Growing up in Ireland' and 'Growing up in Australia'. Queries are also received from those seeking information or clarification about GUS findings (see Appendix 6 – List of Queries)

### ***Media***

GUS has received quite extensive coverage in the national media. For more detail see:

<http://www.crfr.ac.uk/gus/newspapers.html>

### ***Presentations***

Since the launch of the findings from Sweep 2 in 2008, the GUS team have delivered almost 70 presentations at conferences and to smaller groups (see Appendix 5). Presentations have been delivered to 14 of Scotland's 32 Local Authorities and to 2 Health Board meetings. Members of the team have also delivered presentations to networks of people from Local Authorities (e.g. Association of Directors of Education Early Years Network) and to conferences with a majority attendance of people from Local Authorities e.g. Educational Psychologists in Scotland Annual Conference.

### ***Twitter***

Over the last 18 months, Twitter has become an increasingly valuable tool in complementing our existing engagement strategy. GUS (@growingupinscot) has 458 followers (on 19.06.12) with new followers most days. Several key followers have re-tweeted findings to their thousands of followers across the UK and the rest of the world. While it is difficult to judge the overall impact of using Twitter there is no doubt that it has helped to promote the on-line presence of GUS and has been invaluable in making contact with new audiences.

## Impact

### 4. Immediate Outcomes (changes in awareness of issues)

There is some good evidence that these engagement activities lead to some immediate outcomes in terms of people's change in awareness of the issues facing young children in Scotland. Data has been gathered from the GUS mailing list and from delegates at events which shows some examples of this. Although it is not complete, this provides some evidence of immediate impact:

- Greater awareness across sectors about the impact of very early circumstances and experiences on children and young people e.g. readiness for school and for work.
- Greater awareness of the impact of disadvantage on young children and their short term and longer term outcomes, particularly in terms of their health and development.
- Greater awareness of the impact of parenting and family adversity on outcomes for young children, leading to greater awareness of social inequalities.
- Greater awareness of the importance of informal support networks for families, including the extensive support provided by grandparents in Scotland, including regular childcare.

For example, in a presentation given to the GUS/ Scottish Government Parenting event in June 2011, Dr John O'Dowd, Consultant in Public Health Medicine (Child Health) for NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde mentioned GUS as one of the sources of evidence informing his work to improve child health in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde Area. This has resulted in the re-introduction of a 30 month universal child health surveillance contact to establish communication problems and any requirement for parenting support.

Link to presentation:

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/gus/GUS%20events/Parentingevent/JohnODowdNHSGCC.pdf>

Quotes from the feedback form from the GUS Year 4 event April 2010:

*'GUS is always a useful source of information for funding applications'*

*'We are using GUS to help develop a Family Support Network for our area'*

*'I disseminate the findings to schools so they can use the information to inform practice and health improvement activities'*

*'We have created briefing papers about physical activity and food and nutrition for key staff within Culture and Sport Glasgow (play workers, community education teams etc.)'*

*'I use the findings to provide a research evidence base in reports and recommendations for our children's plan/ social work'*

## **5. Intermediate Outcomes – use in policy and practice development**

In order to record intermediate impact, we have collected evidence of those stakeholders who have engaged in the GUS study using the findings to influence change. Here the GUS dissemination role helps to support the kind of activities that may lead to lasting policy or practice changes. These include the incorporation of GUS into CPD or training, the citing of GUS data in the development of policy, and evidence from stakeholders that GUS is used to develop different approaches or practices in relation to children and families.

### ***GUS and policy debates***

GUS evidence has been used as evidence in responses to a number of Government and Parliamentary consultations. The campaigning organisation, Children in Scotland referred to findings from GUS in their submission to the Scottish Parliament's Finance Committee Enquiry into Preventative Spending:

<http://archive.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/finance/inquiries/preventative/PS-ChildreninScotland.pdf>

GUS evidence has also been discussed in parliamentary committees and has led to parliamentary questions. The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) recently produced a Briefing Paper on Early Years, making use of GUS and other research evidence:

[http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB\\_11-51.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefingsAndFactsheets/S4/SB_11-51.pdf)

The GUS team were asked to present evidence to the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee as part of their on-going work on preventative spending (March 2012)

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=6901&mode=pdf>

Policy makers and analysts across the Scottish Government contribute to the questionnaire development and the reporting. Engagement across Government ensures the study is relevant to the development of Scottish policy in a range of areas impacting on the lives of children and their families. Involving Scottish Government staff also ensures raised awareness.

A Briefing aimed at Local Elected Members has been produced in collaboration with the Improvement Service to provide local councillors with some background to GUS and some of the key messages from the findings relevant to policy development and decision making at the local level.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/reports/GUS%20EM%20Briefing%2013.pdf>

## ***GUS as a resource for training and Continuing Professional Development***

Getting GUS findings used in training and CPD materials is an important way of increasing impact through influencing the practitioners and policy makers of the future.

GUS is being used as a resource in training and CPD across sectors. For example, we know that GUS is used as course materials for the BA in Childhood Practice. Individual students have told us that they refer to GUS for their coursework for a number of different qualifications, including the BA in Childhood Practice, Degree in Social Work and BEd in Primary Education.

Members of the GUS team contribute to an annual session for students in the third year of their B.Ed degree at Moray House. The aims of the session are to introduce future teachers to GUS and its key findings, to summarise research design processes and the benefits of longitudinal studies, to encourage teachers to engage with research and think about the implications of GUS findings for them in the classroom and to stimulate discussion and debate around issues affecting children and their parents in Scotland today. Students and organisers have provided very positive feedback about these sessions.

References to GUS on various topics are used extensively throughout 'Pre birth to three – Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families' National Guidance issued by Learning and Teaching Scotland in 2010.

[http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/PreBirthToThreeBooklet\\_tcm4-633448.pdf](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/PreBirthToThreeBooklet_tcm4-633448.pdf)

In 2010, 2011 and 2012 'Head to Head' the magazine of AHDS (Association for Headteachers and Deputies Scotland), the union representing nursery and primary school leaders, carried long articles on the 4 GUS summary reports on social, emotional and behavioural characteristics; cognitive abilities of children as they start school; the transition to primary school and parental involvement in school activities.

Articles summarising GUS findings have been included in other publications aimed at practitioners – Children in Scotland magazine, Education Scotland's 'Early Years Matters', Parenting Across Scotland's Practitioners' Newsletters and Health Scotland's Maternal and Early Years website (for full list see Appendix 5)

An article contributed to the Scottish Childminding Association magazine in 2011 has been used by local Childminding development officers in training sessions for childminders.

In response to a consultation carried out by the Scottish Child Care Protection 'What can research do for you', a Briefing was produced to bring together evidence from GUS. This has been widely circulated among Social Work practitioners:

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/gus/GUS%20SCCPN%20Briefing%20April%202011.pdf>

The GUS Briefing on Lone Parents has been reproduced by an educational publisher in a series of publications called 'Issues – The Changing Family' aimed at students studying for a wide variety of courses including GCSE, A-level and further education courses.

<http://www.independence.co.uk/>

Findings from the GUS report on the impact of maternal mental health on child behaviour and development are used in a book 'Mental Health Nursing – an evidenced based introduction' (SAGE 2011).

To encourage Local Authorities and other local agencies to use GUS findings and data, a working paper was produced in 2008 and updated in 2010. The paper has been presented at local events organised by LARIA Scotland and Fife Council.

<http://www.crfr.ac.uk/gus/guideforLAs.pdf>

## **6. Changes in policy or practice**

Through this process of engagement, involvement and capacity building, GUS can contribute to policy and practice change. GUS data can help inform the direction of policy and is cited in policy documents. Practitioners have better knowledge of the context in which they are delivering services. For example, teachers have knowledge of the impact of poverty and disadvantage on early years experiences and readiness for school and may adjust their teaching practice or methods accordingly.

Within the Scottish Government and partners, GUS was key evidence resource for the development of the Early Years Framework and has already informed the development of the Child Poverty Strategy and a new Parenting Strategy. Please see Scottish Government documents listed in Appendix 1 – List of documents referencing GUS findings.

### **Examples of practical use of GUS findings**

#### *Antenatal education*

Findings from GUS in relation to attendance at antenatal classes were just one of the pieces of research evidence used by NHS Health Improvement Scotland to develop a new core syllabus for parent education in Scotland. The purpose of the national syllabus is to support professionals in Scotland to deliver consistent parent education that respects and reflects the individual needs of pregnant women and their partners. The aim was to develop a core syllabus of support which is universally applicable, but targets the needs of vulnerable and socially-excluded women. GUS suggests that improving antenatal support for younger and/or more vulnerable mothers will improve health and development outcomes for children.

Launch of new Scottish Antenatal Parent Education Packs June 2011

<http://www.maternal-and-early-years.org.uk/the-scottish-antenatal-education-pack>

## West Lothian Sure Start

Quote from Paula Huddart, Manager

*'It's not a big deal, but we work a lot with very young parents (70% are under 22) and your research about older parents being less well supported has helped us to rethink our focus to ensure that we offer more support to older parents. Specifically, we have been piloting a group for mothers with postnatal mental health problems and this research supports us continuing this work, as most of the mothers attending are in the older age range. Another 2 workers are looking at offering group for older parents to drop-in over the course of a day, which is not our usual format but which we hope will attract more interest. We also run universal groups which are play sessions for parents and children, again attended by older mothers usually and your research ( and our own evaluations) validates this as a way of helping them form their own local social networks.'*

*Glasgow Life, Future Families project*

*(Bounce & Rhyme, Toddlers Tales, Group Triple P)*

The Future Families Project is an early intervention programme of activities and workshops designed to enable parents to develop and improve their parenting and communication skills and increase interaction between parents/carers and their child, better equipping parents to support their child's development.

<http://www.glasgowlife.org.uk/policy-research/future-families-project/Pages/default.aspx>

GUS findings on the impact of parent-child activities and on informal v. formal support were used to inform the development of the project.

(Source: Presentation from Janette White, Senior Parental Support Assistant, Glasgow Libraries at NHS Health Scotland Early Years Conference 01/03/12)

## Education Scotland

Quote from Jean Carwood-Edwards, Programme Director, Education Scotland

*'GUS is uniquely Scottish, it's current, it's live, it's relevant to almost everything that we do at Education Scotland where we seek to support policy, practitioners, and parents to ensure that all of Scotland's children have the very best experience in childhood and for life chances. Having an evidence base such as GUS ensures that we don't use the past as a reference point, or use perception as a reference point – we use an evidence base for the work that we do. GUS is incredibly critical for us in our work.'*

## **7. Final outcomes**

While it is impossible to measure the contribution of research as separate from other factors, we can see that the activities described above contribute to children in Scotland having a better start in life with subsequent positive impact on later outcomes such as educational attainment and health. Improved outcomes are better for the children themselves, better for the economy and will mean less financial impact on services in future (health, learning support, benefits, social work, criminal justice). Evidence of GUS's contribution to this development may be seen in these wider changes, although given the current financial downturn it will be even harder to evidence positive change against the current of difficulties which many families will be part of.

### Identifying the contribution of Research - Results Chain

Source of template: Sarah Morton 'Assessing Research Impact – Pilot Framework'

		Risk/Assumptions (to get to next step)	Monitoring Criteria
Contribution (Final Outcome)	Children in Scotland have a better start in life with subsequent positive impact on later outcomes e.g. educational attainment and health – better for the children themselves, better for the economy and less financial impact on services in future (health, learning support, benefits, social work, criminal justice)	Impossible to measure impact of research separate from impact of other factors – economy, social change, wider policy framework	Scotland's National Performance Framework Education statistics Health statistics GUS! Other surveys – Scottish Health Survey, School attainment Other research & evaluation
Behaviour/Practices (Intermediate Outcomes)	Policies, practices and services are improved or developed. Practitioners have better knowledge of the context in which they are delivering services e.g. teachers have knowledge of the impact of poverty and disadvantage on early years experiences/ readiness for school and may adjust their teaching practice or methods accordingly.	Wider structural influences mean that new policies, services or practices might not produce better outcomes for children. Not the only source of information May challenge existing knowledge Policy-makers and practitioners have the capacity to act	Changes in policy/ practice/ service delivery.(how would we know?) Feedback from stakeholders
Capacity (Immediate Outcomes)	Policy makers, service planners and practitioners are better informed – GUS contributes to the evidence base for developing policy and services. Practitioners are re-motivated – findings confirm the issues and inequalities they are trying to address GUS findings enable development of new/deeper understanding of issues	Political and/or financial climate makes it difficult for changes to be made. Research findings/ evidence based knowledge does not reach decision makers. Competing priorities.	References to GUS in a range of documents inc policy frameworks, guidance. Use of GUS in CPD material. Use of GUS as course materials/ resource in a variety of courses – early years, teaching, social care. Feedback from stakeholders
Awareness/Reaction (Immediate Outcomes)	Stakeholders engage with the study which is relevant to their needs Stakeholders engage with findings as relevant to their work Increased awareness of the needs of children and families	Time to fully engage with findings and time/ resources to consider the implications. Clear communication of findings	Event feedback form On-line comments? Tweeting of coverage? Visits to website New sign ups Requests for further information

Engagement/Involvement	Open mailing list of interested stakeholders developed and reviewed annually. Annual event open to all Targeted activities to relevant personnel Review of targeting and people reached	Findings perceived as not relevant or too complex Media picks up on 'negative' messages and people 'switch off'	No. of delegates at events Extent of media coverage Take up on other websites
Activities/Outputs	Series of activities aim to make GUS widely accessible to relevant policy-makers, practitioners and members of the public: New findings highlighted on website Annual event 'Policy' seminars Press Release News e-mail to GUS interest group Scottish Govt news alerts Targeted work – e-mailing, hard copies, articles, further briefings aimed at groups of professionals	Busy practitioners not able to attend events  Media don't pick up on Press Release  People overloaded with 'news' e-mails Ineffective targeting	Recording of engagement/ dissemination activity (see Dissemination Programme for each sweep)
Inputs (Resources)	GUS findings / GUS reports Costs of funding Dissemination Officer		

## 8. Conclusions

From the evidence presented in this report, it is clear that GUS is making a valuable contribution to the evidence-base for early years generally and for early years policies and practices in Scotland.

Over the past 7 years, GUS has made a significant contribution to the growing awareness of the importance of the early years, early intervention and prevention across public services in Scotland. Through implementation of an Engagement Strategy, the study has developed a strong following across the health, local authority, voluntary and academic sectors. Our Annual Conferences are well attended and well received. We have achieved extensive coverage in the media. Our findings have been referred to in a wide range of publications and websites. Practitioners are telling us that they use GUS as evidence in local policy development and service planning. Many use findings in applications for funding. Some have even told us that GUS findings motivate them in their day to day work, by providing a reminder of the issues they are trying to address. Students across a range of disciplines use GUS as a source of information while those providing on-going training, support and CPD to the children's sector are using GUS as a teaching resource. Academics and others are using GUS data to carry out further analyses and inform their own research.

GUS has high level support from across sectors – from key personnel in Education Scotland, Health Scotland, COSLA, Children in Scotland, Parenting Across Scotland and from academics. In his closing speech to the Year 6 GUS Annual Conference, Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young people said that *'information from GUS and from other research makes us a much better informed group of professionals who have the same passion and desire to improve the lives of children and young people in Scotland. GUS helps to feed this passion'*.

Recording of use and assessing contribution or impact is an on-going process. Mechanisms to improve the recording of evidence use and impact will be developed by the GUS team. Further work will be carried out to consider the contribution of particular findings in greater detail. In the longer-term, the wider impact of the research can only be judged by considering outcomes for children and young people, recorded as part of the National Performance Framework and by GUS itself.

## **Actions for the future**

Seek to extend engagement with practitioners at the local level (annual event delegates have requested more presentations and exhibits at local events aimed at practitioners) – target the 18 Local Authorities we have not yet visited.

More targeted Briefings – Play Briefing, Starting School Briefing

Make contact with the other Teacher Education Institutions (Glasgow, Strathclyde, West of Scotland, Aberdeen and Dundee)

Data use – follow up with workshop delegates to find out who is using the data, and if not, what are the barriers to working with the data

Investigate the potential to use GUS as a teaching resource in schools

Further development of website including inter-active pages for children

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