



Choices

Giving Lone Parents in Glasgow a Voice

Mainstreaming Lone Parent Inclusion within Glasgow Works:

A report on research from Glasgow Works Phase 1 Funding
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INTRODUCTION

ONE PARENT PROOFING

Who are the Guidelines for?

What is One Parent Proofing?

Why do we need to One Parent Proof policies and practice?

HOW TO ONE PARENT PROOF

STEP 1: Raise awareness of the challenges facing one parent families

STEP 2: The impact of challenges on lone parents' experiences

STEP 3: Consider how an initiative might respond to
the challenges faced by one parent families

STEP 4: One Parent Proof Action Plan

USEFUL RESOURCES

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Introduction

In 2007 One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) was a partner in a UK wide "Participatory One Parent Proofing" initiative led by UK lone parent organisation SPAN and funded by the Big Lottery. This involved three years of participatory research and development of a one parent participatory toolkit. This document builds on this work with additional input from participative work carried out by OPFS Choices project and GMN Lone Parent Peer Mentoring Project, as part of Glasgow Works Phase 1 funding. This involved consultations with over 60 lone parents in Glasgow through: an Equal Access led focus group on welfare reform (8); Dundee University research on lone parents and churning (6); a focus group to feed into the Scottish Parliaments Opposition Front bench review of their policies (12) and a conference involving lone parents from Glasgow feeding into the Scottish Governments Poverty Framework consultation (33). Choices also held two seminars for employability practitioners in partnership with GWRA (42) and GSWRA (51) - the feedback from these front-line workers has also contributed to this document.

One Parent Proofing

Who are the Guidelines for?

The 'One Parent Proofing Guide' is for those agencies whose work relates to lone parents and in particular those who work on employment strategies and employability services.

What is One Parent Proofing?

One Parent Proofing is a process, which uses Lone Parent feedback (in this case from Glasgow) to inform the development, implementation and evaluation of policy and practice so that they respond effectively to the needs of lone parents. Policies and services are more likely to be effective if they are:

- informed by the views of the lone parents who they affect
- make sense to lone parents
- and fit with the complexity of their everyday lives

The process begins with a consideration as to whether an initiative is likely to have a differential impact on lone parents. It then moves through a series of questions to ensure that, wherever possible, an initiative is modified to meet their needs. Once this process has been completed the One Parent Proofing Action Plan enables identification and monitoring of targets to evaluate the impact of any initiative on lone parents.

Why do we need to One Parent Proof policies and practice as part of Glasgow Works?

1. One Parent Proofed policies and practice will meet the needs of other types of families in Glasgow

- The challenges and problems that one parent families encounter when trying to escape poverty, retain a work-life balance and sustain employment, clarify many of the difficulties faced by other types of families.
- Policies and practices that enable a lone parent to provide and care for their children are more likely to have beneficial effects for two parent families.
- A one parent proofed initiative is a family proofed initiative.

2. One parent families in Glasgow are an important and increasingly common family form

- There are 27,900 Lone Parents with around 43,000 children living in Glasgow. (GCC Dec 04)
- Almost two thirds (63%) of these Lone Parents are in receipt of Income Support or Incapacity Benefit (DWP Analytical Services 08)
- 46.4% of families with dependent children in Glasgow are one parent families (GCC Dec 04)

3. One parent families in Glasgow continue to face a high risk of poverty

- Half of all children living in one parent families are living below 60 per cent of the median income after housing costs, compared to 23 per cent in two parent families (DWP-HABAI, 2006/07).
- One parent families are three times more likely than two parent families to experience persistent poverty (DWP, 2005).
- Although one parent poverty is largely an issue of household structure, it can also be attributed to the fact that one parent families score relatively highly on the remaining key predictors of child poverty, which are: gender, working status, ethnicity, ill health and disability and housing tenure.
- Lone parents also experience a high risk of "time poverty" as they often have sole and/or main responsibility for providing and caring for their children.

4. Lone Parents have low employment rates

- Parents working status is the most significant predictor of child poverty; three quarters of children living in households where no one works are living in poverty (Hirsh, 2006). Westminster has identified lone parents as a key policy priority for addressing child poverty and has set a target to achieve a 70% lone parent employment rate by 2010.
- The UK employment rate of lone parents stands at 56 per cent (DWP, 2006). Half of all employed lone parents are working part-time (ONS, 2006).
- 41 per cent of lone mothers had either no or limited qualifications, compared to a quarter of mothers in couple families (Lyons et al, 2006).
- LP's are twice as likely to 'cycle' between work and welfare: 20% leaving IS return within 6 months; over 25% within 1 year; 33% within 2 years and 40% within 3 yrs. (Lone Parents Cycling Between Work and Benefit, Evans, Harkness and Oritz University Bath 2004)
- One in ten working lone parents leave work in any one year, which is more than double the rate of job exit compared to non-lone parents. 60 per cent of lone parents entering work go into low paid jobs with poor earnings prospects. If government could reduce job exits for lone parents by half, it could potentially reach its target of 70% LP employment. (Sec State for Work & Pensions, Westminster House Magazine, Jan 2007)

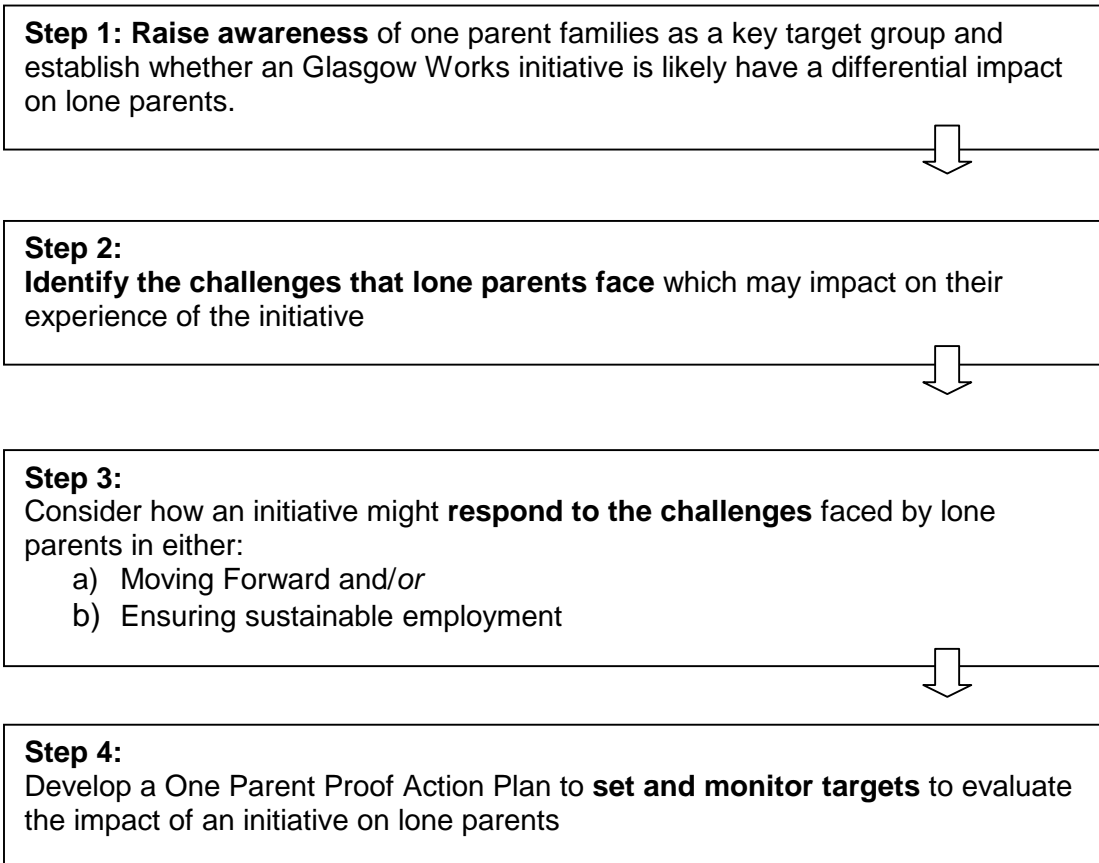
5. Policies and services will be most effective in tackling child poverty if they meet the needs of lone parents

- One parent families are a key policy focus, particularly in relation to employment and child poverty eradication strategies.
- Policy and service provision can only be effective if it recognises the differential needs, experiences and priorities of lone parents and then modifies its content and practice accordingly.
- Decision Makers can only really understand the reality of lone parenthood by listening to what *lone parents* say about their experiences and priorities.

One Parent Proofing in Glasgow

The One Parent Proofing Guidelines present policy solutions as identified by 80 + lone parents who drew on their own 'real-life' experiences of the barriers preventing access to employment and of moving into and staying in employment. The parents represented a diversity of background and experience

One Parent Proofing involves



- Step 1** enables an initiative to develop a better understanding of the challenges that some one parent families face.
- Step 2** invites consideration of whether these challenges will lead an initiative to have a differential impact on lone parents.
- Step 3** then guides through a number of questions that relate to the specific challenges that lone parents identified to moving forward and sustaining employment. The Guidelines offer potential solutions (as suggested by lone parents) to address these challenges.
- Step 4** consolidates the previous two steps in proposing a One Parent Proof Action Plan, which can be offered to a wide range of agencies. The plan will:
 - illustrate that it has acknowledged the position of lone parents and the challenges that they face in regards to the initiative
 - detail how the initiative/service plans to address these challenges to provide equal opportunities for lone parents to move forward and/or remain in sustainable employment
 - indicate how the initiative plans to monitor the impact on lone parents.

These guidelines focus on some of the challenges that lone parents might face when moving forward and/or trying to stay in employment. However, each **individual has their own needs and experiences**, which will impact on their lives. While some lone parents may face significant barriers to sustainable employment, others may experience fewer barriers, which are alleviated or exacerbated over time. However, as previous statistics demonstrate, lone parents represent a group who are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and low rates of employment. Views of parents from diverse backgrounds and experiences further confirm the fact that lone parents as a group face numerous challenges to moving forward and retaining employment. These guidelines provide a framework to encourage policy makers and service providers to recognise and act upon the solutions to these potential challenges, as identified by lone parents.

STEP 1: Awareness Raising

This step raises awareness of some of the challenges facing lone parents moving into and trying to sustain employment to establish whether an initiative is likely to have a differential impact on one parent families. Lone Parents identified the following issues as examples of barriers that they might face in moving forward and staying in employment.

- **Lone parents identify positive aspects of being a lone parent (explicitly a sense of independence and freedom from unequal or abusive relationships), however, they continue to feel stereotyped and stigmatised.**
"We are often criticised for being lone parents, but why should my kids see a violent relationship. I think we should be given an award for we have survived. Because he did what he did, I'm a lone parent, but I'm proud to be a lone parent as well"
- **Most lone parents provide and care for their child single-handedly and therefore need childcare to move forward**
"Me and only me all the time, to be mum and dad. Having to do everything alone and having no one to share these responsibilities with and feeling like the lynch pin holding it all together."
- **Lone parent families are at a very high risk of financial and/or time poverty**
"It's like the juggling balls. Do you buy the food, pay the gas or electric or buy them whatever they need."
- **Lone parent families are more likely to live in temporary private accommodation and social housing**
"If you want to get a mortgage and there is only one income I mean, how are you supposed to move out of rented accommodation?"
- **Lone mothers are more likely than other mothers to have low qualifications and poor work experience**
"I just can't find the time to train and without that I can't move forward."

- **Lone parents and their children are much more likely to suffer from ill health (both mental and physical) and disability**
"Constant stress for everyone and then you get depressed and your children, what happens to them then?"
- **Lone parents are more likely to experience low confidence and low morale.**
"You need the support to develop the kind of skills you need to stand up for yourself and help you identify the different kind of support that you need."

STEP 2: The Impact of Barriers

This involves identifying the impact of challenges on lone parents' experiences of an initiative

1. Challenge: Lone parents are often sole-carers for their children

How it will affect their experience of initiative: Those parents with school age children will find provision, which starts before 9.30 or after 2.30 a challenge. Those with children under 5 yrs will be limited by the availability of childcare.

2. Challenge: Lone Parents in touch with the service have escaped violence, both physical and mental abuse

How it will affect their experience of initiative: (add in as appropriate)

3. Challenge: (add in as appropriate)

STEP3: The Action Plan

Consider how an initiative might respond to the challenges faced by lone parents

The Action Plan should be informed by Steps 1 and 2. It is therefore essential that these steps are completed before Step 3 is undertaken.

- **The Moving Forward Action Plan** provides the questions and solutions to consider when developing/reviewing **Moving Forward** initiatives. These might include: learning/training providers; Employment Zone; City Strategies; voluntary sector providers; Jobcentre Plus

- **The Sustainable Employment Action Plan** provides the questions and solutions to consider when developing/reviewing **Sustainable Employment** initiatives. These might include: employment programme providers; Jobcentre Plus initiatives; employers; local authorities implementing the Gender Equality Duty.

Sample One Parent Proof Action Plan

The One Parent Proof Action Plan provides examples of *potential solutions* to the challenges raised by lone parents. The aim of the process is not for initiatives to offer all of these solutions, but rather to acknowledge that challenges exist and identify a solution, which meets the needs of lone parents within the capacity of the organisation. Once completed the One Parent Proof Action Plan could be integrated into the appropriate sections of an initiative's strategic or operational planning documents and shared throughout the organisation with service users, staff and managers

(A) Setting and Monitoring targets for MOVING FORWARD initiatives Complete the following table if an initiative aims to provide support to individuals who want to move forward into employment and off benefits. For example, through training and work experience

Policy/Initiative/service being One Parent Proofed: (enter details)			
One Parent Proof Question	What solution does the initiative currently offer/plan to offer? Provide details of solution, how it is delivered and whom	Who is responsible for delivering the solution? Provide details of individuals or services responsible for delivering solution	How will impact of One Parent Proofing be measured <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify success indicators – measurable, realistic outcomes which can illustrate change over a given timeframe. How will outcomes be measured? Who has responsibility for measuring/evaluating whether the outcomes have been met?
How will the initiative provide soft-skills development? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide PSD training which brings LP's together for mutual support Referrals to locally provided PSD training Link volunteering with training Cover or provide info. about funding for training fees Provide related transport and childcare advice and costs or childcare on site. Signpost to or identify a lone parent mentor Offer an in depth voluntary skills check service. Recognise Lone Parents sole responsibility for parenting and offer tailored programme 			

One Parent Proof Question	Solutions	Who is responsible	Impact Measurement of One Parent Proofing
<p>How will the initiative offer opportunities to gain medium/high level qualifications and work related skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Medium skills” paid or unpaid work experience opportunities • Join up skills gap with LP training • Structured and accredited volunteering opportunities to foster employability • Career guidance built in to LP strategies; referral to career guidance services • Flexible training times • Provide time off for studying/training • Maximise links with local learning providers who offer family friendly provision • Provide access to information on courses available and appropriate funding to cover childcare costs for further/higher education including NDLP • Invest in partnerships with employers to develop lone parent specialist programmes which involve: PSD; work experience; guaranteed interview and aftercare. • Incentives to take up employment should be flexible, with better use of work trials, clothing assistance, bus passes, benefit run-ons and back to work credits 			

One Parent Proof Question	Solutions	Who is responsible	Impact Measurement of One Parent Proofing
<p>How will the initiative address parents' needs for time to care for their children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entitlement to at least 8 days off for when children are ill. Entitlement to take leave during school holidays. • Opportunities to recuperate lost training/working time/ • Entitlement to take a period of time out due to family or health needs without losing place in the programme/service. • Flexible and short times for programme/service delivery • Access to increased childcare before moving into work 			
<p>How will the initiative address needs for holistic advice to deal with acute need such as ill mental/physical health; disability; debt; domestic violence; homelessness?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an understanding of the impact of these barriers and of the time it takes to tackle them into the design and review of targets and time frames; • Make allowance for the impact of such barriers when assessing individual's performance. • Develop links and signposts to lone parents organisations and local statutory/voluntary advice agencies 			

One Parent Proof Question	Solutions	Who is responsible	Impact Measurement of One Parent Proofing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow time to attend advice meetings • Allow time off for emergencies. • Support lone parents to access childcare to engage with local services • Condition management specific to LP's needs 			
<p>How will the initiative aim to maximise lone parent's incomes?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce benefit flexibilities around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16hr rule - tax credits for mini-jobs • Advice on financial planning on moving into work • Introduce better off advice which spans a 3 year forward plan and includes in-work costs • advice on coping strategies when moving into work to deal with debts (eg water rates) • ensure coming off Income Support /JSA is seamless with no gaps between Income Support stopping and time it takes for tax credits & job grant to kick in. 			

(B) Setting and Monitoring targets for SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT initiatives. Complete the following table if your initiative aims to support individuals in employment. For example an employment programme provider.

Policy/Initiative/service being One Parent Proofed: (Enter details)			
One Parent Proof Question	What solution does the initiative currently offer/ plan to offer? Provide details of solution, how it is delivered and to whom	Who is responsible for delivering solution? Provide details of individuals or services responsible for delivering solution	How will the initiative measure the impact of One Parent Proofing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your success indicators – measurable, realistic outcomes which can illustrate change over a given timeframe. • How will your outcomes be measured? • Who has responsibility for measuring/evaluating whether the outcomes have been met.
<p>How will the initiative provide job and working hour's security?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the work placement / programme or job likely to entail changes in hours or duties? How will this impact on those who single-handedly care for their children? • Offer retraining oppor. during work time • Minimise the need for working hours changes as much as possible for those who have childcare responsibilities • If changes in working hours are expected make this clear at time of offering job or placement opportunity • Provide plenty of notice and allow time to find alternative and suitable childcare arrangements • Provide flexible childcare on site • 30 hr posts offer access to a 30 hr extra tax credit bonus 			

One Parent Proof Question	Solutions	Who is responsible	Impact Measurement of One Parent Proofing
<p>Does the initiative involve atypical working hours and if so how will you enable those with childcare responsibilities to meet this requirement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide childcare on site for atypical hours • Find out whether there are any local atypical childcare providers and provide information to parents • Find out about local youth/community facilities for children aged over 11 and relay information to parents • Provide information on childcare element of tax credits and childcare employment vouchers, which can be used to cover home, based childcare costs. 			
<p>How will the initiative provide opportunities for advancement? Is there a commitment to providing opportunities for advancement to lone parents?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training opportunities and cover training fees • Provide training on the job during working hours • Provide childcare or cover childcare costs attached to attending any training development opportunities run in the evenings or weekends • Provide paid time off for study 			

One Parent Proof Question	Solutions	Who is responsible	Impact Measurement of One Parent Proofing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop links with local further and higher education providers. Signpost to Learn Direct & ILA's • Provide time off to attend open days and taster courses at local training providers. • Aftercare support through a mentor for 4/6 months 			
<p>How will the initiative allow time to care for children?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider flexible working, fostering short working weeks practices, and allowing paid time off for childcare related emergencies • Guarantee flexible working to parents of all children, including those over the age of 11 • At least 8 days paid time off for children's sickness • Parental leave paid at 50% wage • On site subsidised childcare available from 8 am to 6pm 			

One Parent Proof Question	Solutions	Who is responsible	Impact Measurement of One Parent Proofing
<p>How will the initiative ensure access to good information on local childcare provision, tax credits and other benefits available to working families?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop strong links with and signpost parents to: Working for Families; Jobcentre Plus lone parent adviser, lone parents organisations, local CAB or money advice agencies, etc • Make leaflets and information packs readily available in the work place. • Offer service to increase financial planning capacity pre-employment 			
<p>Will the initiative guarantee sufficient childcare opportunities for working parents? Has the need for wrap-around and atypical childcare been considered Has the role played by informal childcare providers been considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review availability of atypical and home based childcare • Assess the need for 11ys + provision • Foster development of home based childcare projects in deprived communities • Consider the costs endured by informal childcare providers. • Consider the implications of insufficient childcare access in terms of the Gender Duty 			

FURTHER DETAILS

You can find out more about this Framework and Assessment tool by contacting Marion Davis at:

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USEFUL RESOURCES

The following lists present details of useful resources, websites and organisations, which provide information about lone parents and the policies, which affect them.

Resources

Websites

Organisations

Acknowledgments: Based on a Toolkit developed by SPAN UK