

One Parent Families Scotland

65th Anniversary Parliamentary Reception on 18th November 2009

Speakers

Kirsteen Mackay (Board member)

Kirsteen Mackay has been a lone parent to three children for the last ten years and joined the Board of Directors in November 2006. Two of her three children have been registered disabled at some point during their formative years – the eldest of these now being a first year university student. Kirsteen is currently undertaking doctoral research into the Views of Children in Child Contact.

Kirsteen talked about the value of the policy work OPFS does and also of the issue of lack of funding for postgraduate students making it very difficult for lone parents to continue to this level.

Gail Kirkland, Lone Parent user of Helpline

Gail currently works with Bield Housing Association. Previous posts include managing a Business Centre, Administrator for Media Education and various other admin posts working with the Public. Gail talked about her original contact with OPFS at a time of great crisis when she had just separated in very difficult circumstances and how the Helpline had helped her to sort everything out, then her subsequent help received with maintenance claims and with getting into university.

Tom Carroll, Lone Fathers' Worker

Tom has an HNC in childcare and early years. He has recently helped co-found the Fathers' Network Scotland network. He outlined the work of the Dad's group and introduced Neil.

Neil Sutherland, Lone Parent member of Edinburgh Dad's Club

Neil Sutherland is the father of two boys. As a result of marital breakdown he has been a single parent for five years. He gave up work to care for his children, but as they are now getting older, 8 and 11 years old, he has completed a University degree and is currently undertaking a Post Graduate course in teaching. Neil spoke of the benefits he had gained from the Edinburgh Dad's Club for lone and contact fathers in meeting other Dad's and the fact that the club helped Dads to demonstrate that they are equally well able to look after children after separation as mothers are.

Anne Adam, Manager, Childcare@home Renfrewshire and Glasgow South

Anne Adam joined One Parent Families Scotland as a Childcare Worker in 2006. She soon progressed to Assistant Manager, and became Manager earlier this year. Anne explained the service offered and introduced Stewart.

Stewart Horne, Service User, Childcare@home Renfrewshire

Stewart started using the childcare@home service in November 2005. Stewart's son has an un-diagnosed behavioural condition and at the commencement of service required two staff to look after his son. Stewart said that "childcare@home is not just your average childcare provider, they have helped me access other external agencies, taking an active role in seeking further assistance where needed to in order to make life easier for me and my child."

Sue Robertson, Director

Sue Robertson has been Director of One Parent Families Scotland since 1988, having previously worked as Training Officer. Sue spoke of the social changes over the 65 years, with lone parent families now much more common but also now expected to be more self supporting through employment. OPFS too was working hard to increase its sustainability and Sue called on those present to assist with that in any way they could.

Karen Hooton, Convener

Karen Hooton took over the Convener's post in 2008 having been a board member for several years before that. A single parent since her son was born nearly 19 years ago she received support and advice from OPFS through the ever changing benefits system, her retraining (including university) to become a multi-disciplined complementary therapist and latterly her son starting university. Karen now works part-time for Midlothian Sure Start a voluntary sector charity as their complementary therapist, teaches for adult education, runs her own business and is midway a diploma in nutritional therapy.