

WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE

THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SECURITY IN SCOTLAND

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN SUBMISSION FROM ONE PARENT FAMILIES SCOTLAND (OPFS) CONCERNING THE FUTURE DELIVERY OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

One Parent Families Scotland is Scotland's leading single parent organisation. Building on seventy years of advocacy and service delivery expertise, OPFS provides expert information, advice and support, along with training activities, work preparation programmes and flexible childcare. OPFS delivers services across Scotland in Edinburgh, Dundee, Glasgow, Falkirk, Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire and provides support to over 7,000 families and 12,000 children.

OPFS has a vision of a Scotland in which all families, without exception, can prosper from life's opportunities. To this end we are working towards a Scotland where single parent families are free from poverty and have sufficient resources not just to survive but to thrive; are treated with dignity and respect and have equal opportunities and life chances, enabling them to flourish and achieve their full potential.

Single Parents and Poverty

There are over 169,707 single parents in Scotland.¹ By 2033, this is projected to rise to 238,000 (24% to 38%).² Because of the additional barriers they face, single parents are more at risk of being in poverty. Over four in every ten (43%) children in single parent families are poor, compared to just over two in ten (22%) of children in couple families.³ Research shows that single parents are more likely to report having poor health (13%) being disabled or having a long term condition (15%) and have a disabled child (17%) than parents in couple families, where the figures are 7%, 9% and 14% respectively.⁴

Overarching considerations

To support social justice and equality, entitlement and access to employability support must be based on assessment of people's individual circumstances. Such an approach requires a national framework which guarantees standards and entitlement across Scotland with the flexibility to codesign support locally and tailor it to meet the needs of those who it is for – be it single parents, people with disabilities or young people.

To ensure a high quality service which puts the needs of service users first, **services should be provided by not for profit providers**. We do not think that the provision

¹ Scotland's Census 2011 - Table KS107SC - Lone Parent households with dependent children.

² Household Projections for Scotland, National Records of Scotland, 2008.

³ Households Below Average Income (HBAI) 1994/95-2011/12, Table 4.5db. DWP 2013.

⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/families-with-children-in-britain-findings

of essential services to families who are in poverty and therefore often in a very vulnerable position, ought to be provided by the private sector whose primary duty is to their shareholders rather than service users. As well as safeguarding individuals, public (and voluntary sector) provision can more readily facilitate opportunities for service user participation and democratic accountability.

When developing and delivering the newly devolved services the Scottish Parliament, Government and Employment Support Contractors should be mindful of their duties under the Equality Act, to promote equality and ensure that provision is meeting the needs of those with protected characteristics.

The UK is signatory to a number of international treaties that guarantee social and economic rights including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). A human rights approach should be incorporated into both the design and delivery of employability services.

OPFS believes the powers being devolved around employability do not meet the recommendations made by the Smith Commission. We have argued that the operation of Jobcentre Plus and all of DWP's contracted services should be transferred to Scotland to facilitate a coherent and more comprehensive approach to employability services to be developed. The devolution of Work Choice and Work Programme offers opportunities to develop a particular Scottish approach to employability but we are disappointed that Job Centre Plus provision, decisions about eligibility and decisions about sanctions were not included.

OPFS is very pleased Scottish Government has decided to consult widely on the new powers and to develop a new Scottish Approach. It is OPFS view that there is an increasingly stark mismatch between the expectations of and requirements for single parents to work in a tough labour market, and the support available to them, as key elements of back to work support and the visibility of single parents within the system have been steadily stripped away. We therefore welcome this opportunity to make a submission to the Welfare Reform Committee Inquiry into the Future Delivery of Employment Support in Scotland

Our submission is based on our experience of delivering a range of employability programmes but also on what single parents have told us about their experiences of existing programmes

Employment Services reflecting the different needs of individuals who are not in paid work.

To work effectively, employability services should:

- Be person-led not programme based. Mass generic scattergun programmes don't work for claimants with complex needs or those who require a tailored response. Programmes need to be flexible and offer the right supports at the right times.
- Use devolved powers to integrate Skills, Employability, Employment support and further education at a local level, with links to other supports such as childcare and welfare rights/money advice.

- Recognise the “Pipeline Model “doesn’t work for all. Single Parents move along an employability pathway in ways which are not always linear. A solution focused approach is needed which supports parents who have sole responsibility for the care of their children as well as the economic wellbeing of their family
- Be non- mandatory and offer support throughout the pathway – integrated holistic model (see attached appendix 1)
- Be personalised with the family/person at the centre
- Not be payment by results
- Not be prescriptive – build the package around the person and with the person, taking an assets based approach
- Recognise the importance of taking the time to engage and involve participants and allowing the time and resource for this to happen
- Offer in-work support to achieve sustainable employment

Existing employment support programmes and delivery mechanisms in Scotland

Work Programme

OPFS has had feedback from parents on their experiences of moving onto the Work Programme. The vast majority of single parents in Scotland are women (9 out of 10). For those that have job seeking requirements as a condition of their benefits (currently those whose youngest child is aged 5 or over) it is important that their needs as parents are taken into account so the jobs that they move into are sustainable for them and their family.

There are presently safeguards in the welfare legislation that mean that single parents’ work preparation and job seeking requirements are different because they also need time to care for their children. (These will be reduced dramatically under the new Universal Credit legislation).

Our submission is based on the lived experiences of single parents. We have cases of both parents with older children at primary school and those much younger children under five years on ESA who have experience of the Work Programme. Most parents and particularly those with the younger children had issues with the transfer onto the Work Programme because little account was taken of the needs of their children. Although it is unusual for parents of younger children to be on Jobseekers Allowance we are finding increasing numbers of such single parents and we are concerned about the lack of support that this group is offered and the negative impact on their children. As of March 2015 145,260 single parents had joined the Work Programme in the UK accounting for 8.4% of referrals since its inception⁴ Clearly numbers of parents with under-fives on the Work Programme will increase when the requirement to be take up work is implemented for *parents of children aged 3yrs and 4yrs*.

⁵Cumulative referrals and job outcomes to March 2015: DWP tabulation tool, accessed August 2015. http://tabulation-tool.dwp.gov.uk/WorkProg/wp_cuml_jo/tabtool_wp_cuml_jo.html

Single Parents Experience

- Single parents found the transfer to the Work Programme stressful due to uncertainty and lack of information;
- There was concern about childcare, for the parents with older children there was worry about before and after school and what would happen to their children in the long summer holiday
- For parents of younger children the Work Programme providers gave confusing and contradictory instructions as to what provision could be made for their children. Both were turned away from appointments because they arrived with their children and one was told not to bring her children again to appointments but was not given help with finding or funding childcare.
- Parents are anxious to comply with the requirements of the Work Programme but are often not given the required support. We have knowledge of Work Programme Providers using the threat of sanctions to pressurise Single Parents into inappropriate employment
- Single parents with older children thought that the adequacy of tailored support depended on the Case Worker that you were given on the Work Programme. They felt that most of the Advisers gave generic support that was not tailored to their need and provided only general information about job seeking.
- Single parents of older children wanted to undertake further training as they had been out of the job market for some time. They were told that there was no budget for training.

Five key themes on Single Parents experiences of the Work Programme

1. A lack of information for Single Parents moving over from JCP to the Work Programme and the anxiety that this causes especially when this coincides with the beginning of the school summer holiday. Jobcentre Plus often provided few details for the parents who are transferring and what it will involve;
2. There is a real confusion about what childcare will be provided for courses and whether this would be paid for. Often Work Programme Advisors are not aware that someone is a single parent with dependent children and organise interviews/training when the parent needs to be at home for their child. For example a Glasgow single parent with three children was told to find childcare as she had to attend a three-hour induction;
3. There is poor organisation of appointments which could take place during problematic times for the parents such as at a time when they would pick up their child from school;
4. There is a concern about the lack of training opportunities on the Work Programme. Some single parents are keen to pursue training so that they can get better paid work that could provide for themselves and their family; and

5. Many of single parents are worried about the lack of job opportunities that are suitable for them but the Work Programme Provider ignores this. Although some single parents are able to restrict their hours there are few part-time job opportunities. Despite the lack of suitable jobs single parents were told by Work Programme providers to apply for a large volume of unsuitable vacancies.

Many single parents are concerned and stressed about how they will be treated over the two-year period of the Programme and how the needs of their family will be taken into account in the future.

This submission highlights the experiences of single parents as they move onto the Work Programme for job seeking support. Single parents are diverse but for all, as well as being a job seeker, they have the responsibility of caring for their children. This suggests that job-seeking services are not normally designed with the needs of single parents in mind and they are therefore failing in their delivery. The Work Programme is failing single parents and failing badly mainly because the 'work-first' model is flawed and is not facilitative of the support that is required to make the transition to work in a way that fits in with family and caring responsibilities.

Recommendations for any new Scottish Approach

1. SG should request that Jobcentre Plus have a specific gender equality objective related to single parent job seekers and this objective should be translated into the contracts of any new Scottish Programme providers;
2. SG should request that Jobcentre Plus reintroduce trained specialist Lone Parent Advisers for JSA Parents. Feedback from parents shows the value of Lone Parent Advisers in understanding the needs of single parents in their journey back to work;
3. The Equality and Human Rights Commission should make assessing DWP, Jobcentre Plus and Employability Programme providers' compliance with the equality duty a priority, given the concerns raised by us about how single parents' needs are not being properly met under the Work Programme and the removal of Single Parent Advisers whose presence the EHRC had previously concluded demonstrated compliance with the gender equality duty;
4. The Work Programme providers do not have specialist single parent advisers but can call on the services of second tier expertise. Any new Scottish Programme should explore how the services of specialist providers can be utilised;
5. Single parents are identified by the DWP and Scottish Government as a group suffering substantial employment inequalities. Both bodies should have effective monitoring in place to ensure that Programmes are meeting the needs of single parents;
6. Greater emphasis should be placed on helping employers design jobs with part-time hours and encouraging employers to advertise more jobs with part-time and other flexible patterns of employment; and

7. Equality objectives must change practice on the ground both at Jobcentre Plus and on any new Programme, including making sure appointments for single parents fit around their children's needs, such as arranging them during school hours.

Working with Business

To meet the needs of different businesses we agree any new programme should

- Respond to local skills priorities;
- Meet the needs of employed adults in the local workforce by adding value to existing provision
- Increase participation by employed adults in education, employment progression or further training through locally defined, delivered and where appropriate innovative interventions.

However we believe that single parents can benefit from interventions tailored to meet the particular support needs of their unique situation that lead to non-accredited and/or accredited learning that concentrate on addressing the individual and employer needs.

The further employability powers devolved to Scotland could provide a foundation for change in the skills system which will enable it to be designed to better understand and align local employers (including those in the key growth sectors) with people who have the skills and experience to provide sustainable solutions to employers' requirements. We hope single parents will be seen as a key group from which employers can recruit reliable, excellent staff committed to getting things done and multi-tasking.

OPFS has a track record of delivering employer –led programmes. Our Glasgow office delivered a partnership programme with **Barclays** for 3 years where we recruited over 200 parents to participate in employability training with work experience at Barclaycard as part of the programme ⁵

We are presently working in partnership with **Marks & Spencer** delivering a series of **Marks & Start Programmes** ⁶ across Scotland which support single parents that are on the Work Programme into work placements with Marks and Spencer with a positive opportunity to move into employment with Marks & Spencer. Working Links are the funders for the project as they are the Work Programme contractor for Scotland, however OPFS doesn't take part in the conditionality element and parents choose to join the programme or not. Referrals for the placements come from Working Links direct to One Parent Families Scotland. One Parent Families Scotland have been involved with

Marks and Start since April 2012 and are currently delivering the placements in Glasgow,

⁵ <http://www.newsroom.barclays.com/releases/ReleaseDetailPage.aspx?releaseId=395>

⁶ <http://www.opfs.org.uk/service/glasgow-choices-employability-service/>

Renfrewshire, Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire and Fife. We support around 100 single parents each year.

Marks & Start 'Parents Returning to Work' is a key strand of Marks & Spencer's flagship corporate social responsibility programme. The programme offers training followed by work experience. The pre-employment training lasts 3 days. This training is designed to boost confidence and recognise existing skills looking at each participant's personal circumstances and highlighting the assistance that is available to help overcome these circumstances with advice on in-work benefits, childcare, interview skills, transferable skills, action planning, and referral organisation details. Participants leave with an individual action plan and are supported in the 13-week post-placement phase to achieve it.

At the end of the three-day training, the parents receive a certificate, and are then placed in a Marks & Spencer store or office for two weeks. The participants receive induction training, uniforms, and are supported by trained Marks & Spencer coaches during the placement, and all completers receive a completion certificate. Travel costs and lunch are provided to all participants during the training and placement.

During the placement the participants follow the Marks & Spencer career path, the process all new employees would follow on commencement of employment. The participants are supported by M&S coaches through "coaching cards" covering customer service and products, and if completed they gain accreditation in those fields.

In Scotland

- 61% of all participants who completed the programme moved into employment for at least 13 weeks.
- 92% of starters go on to complete the 3-week programme.
- 98% of completers said that they felt work ready or in a better position to make an informed decision about returning to work.

At the end of the placement if parents meet the M&S required recruitment standard they can slot into appropriate vacancies without a further interview.

Good practice services which effectively support a transition into work

Human Capital Employability Models

Scotland has a proven track record of delivering very successful **voluntary** welfare to work schemes delivered by voluntary sector / local authority partnerships such as "Working for Families", the Big Lottery funded "Making it Work" programme⁷ and the SCVO Community Jobs Programme.

⁷ www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/makingitworkguide120312.pdf

MIW (2013-2016)⁸

Making it Work is a single parent centre programme and aims to build on the legacy of Working for Families,(see below) by joining up services to tackle the barriers single parents face to going back to work and creating more sustainable local partnerships to support single parents in the future. Big Lottery through Making it Work has invested £7 million to support single parent families affected by poverty.

The model of support includes the following stages:

Early engagement: Making connections. This part of the model focuses on reaching and engaging single parents.

Pre-engagement: Personal development, planning for work and childcare. Focuses on identifying improved and accelerated access to effective services for single parents.

Engagement: Access to mainstream provision (much of which will be delivered by mainstream services). Focuses on supporting single parents in engaging with Regeneration Company programmes SDS funded programmes and Job Centre Plus, ensuring effective access and support. **Post employment:** in work. Focuses on working to support job retention and progression for single parents and encourage family friendly policies by employers.

Key elements

- Peer to Peer support
- Role of Case Worker/key worker
- Integrated Single Parent Tailored services.
- Bring jigsaw together of: employability; childcare support & family support, money and debt advice

Impacts

- Increased choice & empowerment for parents
- self-efficacy strength
- Progression along employability pathway
- Jobs & Training outcomes- not work first

The Big Lottery have contracted Sheffield Hallam University ⁹ to evaluate the programme and the research team have developed a robust mixed method research strategy to measure the success of this complex initiative. Evaluation reports will be available early 2016

The Working for Families Fund (2004-2008)¹⁰

WFF was established to invest in new initiatives to improve the employability of parents who have barriers to participating in the labour market, specifically to help them move towards, into, or continue in employment, education or training. It was a voluntary scheme on the part of clients. It supported the parents through helping them find sustainable childcare solutions and through providing or accessing other relevant employability-related support and services.

⁸ <http://bigblogscotland.org.uk/2012/03/20/big-dedicates-7m-to-support-lone-parents-get-back-to-work/>

⁹ https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/makingitwork/?doing_wp_cron=1444897435.8698151111602783203125

¹⁰ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/20092521/0>

In rural areas, support also combated barriers created by poor transport, limited services and the lack of a critical mass of clients. The programme was administered by 20 local authorities

(LAs), operating through 226 locally based public, private and third sector projects

Over the four years the budget for WFF was £50 million, a total of 25,508 clients were registered, 53% of all clients (13,594) achieved 'hard' outcomes, such as employment, and a further 13% (3,283) achieved other significant outcomes. Successful aspects of the WFF programme.

- The main support provided by WFF was based around Key Workers who supported clients wishing to move into work, education or training by:
 - Helping them to improve their employability; and
 - Addressing childcare and other barriers standing in their way.
- Effective combination of tackling both childcare and employability is an essential.
- The majority of WFF clients were female (89%) and single parents (71%).

We believe the Work Programme¹¹, as currently designed, based on conditionality and sanctions, is insufficient to tackle the problems faced by single parents wishing to move into paid work. Single Parents have told us they want good, well resourced help and assistance with finding and moving into work. They do not need to be threatened with sanctions and would make use of services provided on a voluntary basis (as our experience as a provider and the programmes above have demonstrated time and again).

One Parent Families Scotland's recommended model (See Appendix 1)

An Employability Model for single parents, which includes the following, has a higher chance of succeeding:

- A holistic, integrated response, which is based on an understanding of the complex factors, associated with a single parent's capacity to obtain and sustain employment.
- A partnership approach, involving cross-sector, multi-agency working to maximise single parents' access to appropriate resources through offering a continuum of support & opportunities
- The involvement of trusted intermediaries who have specialist knowledge and skills around the issues facing single parents and who can advocate on their behalf.
- A design which incorporates early intervention integrated into family support, as single parents engage with programmes supporting them to access training, education and employment.

At the core of the approach is the view that the most successful models offer an integrated continuum of support, which creates pathways to sustainable employment. The model offers the following distinguishing features:

¹¹ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmpublic/457/45702.htm>

- The capability to offer **crucial interventions at the point of transitions** in Single Parents lives.
- **Specialist services** which enable single parents to negotiate the changes in their lives caused by separation, homelessness, pregnancy, unemployment or moving from benefit to volunteering, training, education or employment.
- Service delivery is **independent, holistic, family focused and non-judgemental** and aims to give support to children as well as parents;
- It reflects the experiences of single parents in areas of disadvantage, by involving **trusted intermediaries**;
- Expertise which demonstrates that a **continuum of support** can lead to sustainable employment for single parents.
- Ensuring staff employed have skills, abilities and professional training around single parent issues.
- Through a partnership approach the model adds **value to existing provision**.
- Flexibility to offer targeted support during transitions to employment
- Support to access appropriate childcare

Assessing the employment support needs of an individual and ensuring the support they receive meet their needs.

At present on mainstream programmes participants are often not identified as single parents when they are assessed for barrier identification etc. Thus, Personal Advisers are often unaware that claimants on their caseloads are single parents. Often, Personal Advisers only come to know that claimants are single parents by way of conversations. As a result, the special responsibilities and circumstances of single parents are not recognized and given due regard when offering support. Even when participants are recognized as single parents there is an increasingly stark mismatch between the requirements for single parents to work in a tough labour market, and the support available to them. Key elements of back to work support and the visibility of single parents within the system have been steadily stripped away.

A new Scottish Approach should take into account the **single parent status** of participants when coproducing action plans. Staff on generic programmes should be provided **training** to understand the challenges that single parents face whereby there is greater empathy for participants.

The model should **integrate** with voluntary sector programmes, local authorities and child-care services such that the model is centred around single parents' needs as opposed to being focused on outcomes.

Ideally OPFS would support the removal of the **conditionality regime in its present form** to ensure that special consideration is given to the needs of single parents with a view to ending the considerable level of sanctions imposed. There is no place for a system that sees pushing people into poverty with the threat of hunger and eviction as a legitimate punishment for not being seen to comply or because of errors in the system.

If this is not achievable then we believe there is a continuum in the interpretation of the conditionality regime and **good-practice guidelines** should be put in place to ensure more supportive implementation. Such guidelines should be developed with buy-in from Jobcentre Plus.

Recommendations

1. The new Scottish Approach should ensure the commissioning of the development of an improved diagnostic tool to identify barriers to work and specific needs
2. Payment groups should be reformed to ensure more funding for harder to help groups. There should be provision specifically for single parents in particular for younger single parents .
3. Contract funding needs to set at a level that enables harder to help groups to benefit from a better personalised approach, time with trained advisors, access to substantive support including skills training and voluntary work experience opportunities.
4. The payments structure should include progression payments for those who have achieved measurable “movement towards work readiness” indicators and provision of funding for childcare for single parents on training or work experience.
5. The Scottish approach should implement a funding model which enables providers to invest in training and securing high paid stable jobs for participants, potentially linked to hourly income earned.
6. Scottish Government should review the provision of free information, advice and support provision outside of the new employability services for families and disadvantaged groups.
7. New service providers should be trained to understand the need for single parents to have a more flexible approach because of their sole caring responsibilities
8. The new Scottish model should ensure providers must be required to undertake full early assessment of the need for skills training and facilitated to fund SVQ3 level vocational training. Participants need to be allowed to complete any course started before being required to accept a job offer.
9. Scottish Government should address how apprenticeships could work better for single parents, how the scheme fits with any new service, avoiding over reliance on apprenticeships at the expense of a wider range of provision for skills development and work experience
10. It is already considered ‘best practice’ to consider social value contracts, but we would like to see it enshrined in the delivery/commissioning strategy as a

requirement. The social value criteria can then be publicized that they will use to assess bids. This would ensure that all providers from across the sectors account for social value within their bids and allow those assessing bids to capture the full benefit of different models of provision.

Scotland's future employment support service- Commissioning

Since its launch in 2011, the Work Programme has failed to help many individuals, including single parents, with multiple and complex needs.¹² Nearly 70% of participants are completing the Work Programme without finding sustained employment. Voluntary sector organisations have proven success addressing and supporting people facing multiple barriers, yet their skills and expertise in supporting these individuals in the Work Programme has been underutilised.

OPFS believes that the voluntary sector organisations play a vital role in supporting their beneficiaries back to work, providing personalised, innovative and community led approaches. In exploring options for the future of welfare to work schemes Scottish Government should examine ways to better enable charities to engage with the design and delivery of these schemes.

In order to make the most of the third sector's expertise and achieve better outcomes, a new Scottish programme should provide better opportunities for local and specialised providers. This could be achieved through:

- Better pre-procurement conversations with charities and specialist providers.
- Consideration of smaller contract packages or the introduction of a parallel funding stream.
- Less bureaucratic procurement processes through standardised contract terms.
- Including social value in the contracting strategy as a requirement.
- Alternative payment models to payment by results which exclude many charities from being involved in service delivery.
- Ensure the funding model supports programmes for those with complex barriers
- Service users assessment not based on the type of benefits they receive but reflects the support required for the individual.
- Recognising volunteering as a step towards employment.
- Transparency in contracting which is democratically accountable and not based on private contractors commercial confidentiality

Transparency matters not just because the public has a right to know how taxpayers' money is being spent through contracts, but also for effective analysis by

¹² www.parliament.uk/commons-select/work-and-pensions-welfare-to-work-report-15-16

government of publically funded programmes. The absence of better data, restricted by “commercial confidentiality “ has limited the government’s ability to hold Work Programme Primes to account for poor practice such as ‘creaming’ and ‘parking’, and the inappropriate transfer of risk to small subcontractors.

Conclusion

The poor performance of the Work Programme in its present form should ring alarm bells as the number of single parents on the Work Programme will grow as parents with children aged 3 and 4 become subject to conditionality bringing a higher number of younger single parents into the system.

The new Scottish Programme needs significant reform if it is to work effectively for a range of claimants including single parents. Changes are needed in a wide range of areas.

1. Additional specialist provision and improved personalised support.
2. A substantive support offer including work experience, better access to skills training and support for self-employment.
3. Commissioning that funds progression for people facing complex barriers
4. A stronger focus on sustainable outcomes with mechanisms introduced to reduce use of sanctions and mandatory programmes.
5. Tailoring approaches to single parents needs including payment of childcare costs.
6. Accountability for the quality of service and significant reforms to ensure involvement of voluntary charity sector.
7. A radical rethink of how to make work pay: sustainable decent jobs ahead of ‘work first’
8. Funding which facilitates a longer term approach to supporting parents along the employability pathway

We have found Single Parents are largely invisible within the system. Feedback from parents & casework show a lack of understanding amongst providers of the specific barriers they face – in particular finding work that fits around their caring responsibilities, the cost and availability of childcare, low skills and limited work experience – or of how to overcome these barriers, impedes the process of supporting them to find work.

The national evaluation ¹³suggests that, although there is evidence of considerable variation in the referral to specialist providers, cost-pressures are appearing to limit

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-programme-evaluation-findings-from-the-first-phase-of-qualitative-research-on-programme-delivery-rr821#history>

the extent to which providers are willing to buy in more specific or more substantive training provision. Additionally, use of a payment by results framework with tight cost constraints has been widely recognised to have discouraged innovation and therefore the emergence of new models of support.

If the new Scottish Approach is to succeed in supporting the hardest to help, there will need to be investment in measuring “distance travelled towards work” and identifying the outcomes and programmes that contribute to progression. Improving understanding of “distance travelled” also opens up the potential for more subcontracting to charities.

It is OPFS experience of delivering employability services that parents react well to trust in their motivation and aspiration for their family and that supporting a parent to make the decision to take up a work experience opportunity or training opportunity will lead to a better programme outcome than mandation. Single parents are structurally disadvantaged - as “one earner” households -it is a challenge to earn enough to pay childcare costs and lift the family out of poverty. The system requires much more fundamental reform if it is to enable single parents to get decent jobs that fit with their family responsibilities. The labour market is still a long way from being family friendly and the structural barriers to single parents sustaining employment that is a route out of poverty are significant.

A growing number of children in poverty are now in working households: 32% of children in single parent families where the parent works part-time are in poverty; 20% where the single parent works full-time.¹⁴

Over two-thirds (68%) of single parents enter the three lowest paid occupational groups which tend to be the least secure and lowest skilled.¹⁵

This submission highlights the key issues from experiences of single parents as well as that of OPFS as a provider of employability support. Single parents are diverse but for all of them as well as being a job seeker they have the responsibility of caring for their children. Public services should be designed and delivered in a way that meets the diverse needs of all citizens and does not disadvantage any particular groups. However, this analysis suggests that job-seeking services are not routinely designed with the needs of single parents in mind and they are therefore failing in their delivery.

¹⁴ DWP (2015) *Households below average income, 1994/95-2013/14*. Table 4.14ts.

¹⁵ Work Foundation analysis of Labour Force Survey (unpublished); see Newis, P (2012) *It's off to work we go? Moving from income support to jobseeker's allowance for single parents with a child aged five*. London: Gingerbread.

Appendix 1
OPFS Service Model ©

Single Parent Engagement, Consultation & Participation



Influencing Service and Policy development

The OPFS Service Model - Outline

Based upon our extensive experience, and informed by single parents themselves, **OPFS** has identified a core package of activities which forms the basis of the support required to ensure one parent families can achieve their full potential, achieve a decent standard of living and contribute to Scotland's society, economically and socially. Our aim is to ensure that this holistic support package is available to single parents throughout Scotland to be delivered by **OPFS** and key partners, across the voluntary and statutory sectors. The **OPFS CORE PACKAGE** includes:

- **INTERVENTIONS (inner circle of diagram)** which support single parents along the pathway to achieving their potential through:
 - Effective ways of engaging with single parents, including those who may be isolated from mainstream services;
 - One to One & Family Support (advocacy, referral pathways etc.); parenting support to enable families to make decisions about what is best for them;
 - PSD, Employability & Work Experience Programmes/progress onto qualifications and vocational training
 - Group Support, Peer Mentoring & Volunteering.

- **SUPPORT SERVICES (outer boxes of diagram)** which enable the interventions to happen:
 - High quality, affordable, accessible, and flexible childcare services;
 - Welfare rights; Money Advice & Family Finance; Lone Parent Champions □ Information, advice, publications and training for parents & practitioners.
 - Support Mechanisms: travel costs; crèche/ childcare payment; small grants; vouchers

- **SINGLE PARENT CONSULTATION & PARTICIPATION (feeds into OPFS service delivery)**
 - Single Parent involvement is integral to the everyday work of OPFS, putting users at the heart of our strategies and decision-making processes.
 - Involving Single parents in ways that recognise their different needs, experiences, concerns, knowledge, interests and abilities is central to our work.

- **INFLUENCING SERVICE AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT (involvement of parents / service delivery experiences feeds into policy work) :**
 - Involving parents in our policy and campaigning work means it's based on parents' every day experiences.

- OPFS works with single parents, in various ways to positively influence the policy agenda.
- By developing a strong research evidence base on single parent issues, parents' experiences influence policy.

A single parent's first point of contact with OPFS can be through any one of our services. These services are designed to meet the specific needs & barriers facing single parents and are also tailored to our work with teenage parents, single dads and families with disabled children.

Underpinning these activities is a strong commitment to:

- Eradicating child poverty;
- Giving parents choices without compulsion;
- Involving parents in service development;
- Involving parents in campaigning, at local and national levels;
- Participation and engagement of parents and children in service design and policy;
- Legislation and policy relating to human rights and equalities

