



**One Parent  
Families Scotland**

Changing lives, challenging poverty

**Strategic Plan 2016–2018**

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Currently in Scotland, 1 in 4 families is headed by a single parent. There are approximately 170,000 single parents, 92% of whom are women, looking after 291,000 children. 41% of children in one parent families are living in poverty; it is twice as likely that a one parent family will be poor.

One parent families face significant challenges, resulting from poverty, stigma, inequality, and poor health. Isolation and lack of childcare lead to low esteem and a lack of confidence, low skill levels, and an inability to find reasonably paid work. Single parents face the unique challenge of being both sole carer and breadwinner – often an impossible balancing act.

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is Scotland's leading single parent organisation, providing expert information, advice and family support, as well as training, work preparation, and flexible childcare. OPFS works closely with partners throughout Scotland, influencing policy and practice in the interests of one parent families.

OPFS works with some of Scotland's most disadvantaged and marginalised parents in local communities. The OPFS Model of Transformational Change enables single parents to increase their self-esteem, confidence, and skills, increasing access to education, training, and employment. Above all, OPFS seeks to raise the aspirations and expectations of single parents and their families, giving them the means to overcome barriers, change their lives, and fulfil their potential.

## **Our vision:**

A Scotland in which one parent families, without exception, can prosper from life's opportunities.

## **Our mission:**

One Parent Families Scotland will ensure that one parent families have the support, contacts, and confidence needed to play a full part in Scotland's economic and social life.

## **Our values:**

One Parent Families Scotland celebrates single parents and their children for their achievements, and recognises the skills, strengths, and capacity of parents, children, and communities. Working together, we seek to find creative ways of solving the issues and problems that they face. Our work is underpinned by the following values:

### **Inclusive**

We work collaboratively, with parents and families, with staff, and with partners, treating everyone with respect and fairness, encouraging active participation, and listening to everyone's views. We believe that it is only by doing so that we can achieve the best outcomes.

### **Professional**

At all times, we aim to provide the highest quality services, acting with integrity, reliability, and responsibility, taking pride in, and ownership of, all that we do and say.

### **Resourceful**

We recognise and share the knowledge, skills, and experience of families, staff, and volunteers, within a co-operative and mutually supportive environment. By working this way, we can build upon success, overcome obstacles, and make the most of new opportunities.

### **Innovative**

We are committed to continuing improvement, reflecting on practice, challenging the status quo, and constantly seeking new ways of ensuring that the needs of single parent families can be recognised, and met.

## **Looking to the future:**

As an organisation, OPFS has identified the services that we believe will have the biggest impact for the families we work with:

- High quality flexible childcare and family friendly working practices – especially important for single parents who often have no one to share childcare/school drop offs and pick-ups or school/nursery/health appointments etc.
- Paid employment that supports one parent families out of poverty – strong links to qualifications and training, career progression and in-work support.
- Tailored family and parenting support for those parenting alone – recognising the challenges of being the sole carer/breadwinner
- A social security system that recognises the importance of parents being with their children in the early formative years and does not push single parents into work that does not meet their family responsibilities

## **The importance of partnership working:**

In each of these areas, we recognise that the solutions cannot be achieved by OPFS alone. We see our role as identifying the issues through our work with single parents and then testing services/models that will make a difference. The learning from these we then use in our work with funders, policy makers and service delivery agencies.

## **The need for evidence:**

OPFS acknowledges the need for robust evidence. To assist us make a strong and coherent case on behalf of one parent families, OPFS will seek funding that will enable us to commission and carry out our own research similar to the work done by Gingerbread in England and Wales. With the resources required, we will combine the experiences of single parents with demographic information, surveys and interviews to produce a set of policy and practice recommendations that will provide an evidence base for us to lobby and influence governments (local, Scottish and UK) and other service providers.

## **Strategic Outcomes**

- 1. Single parents have the capacity and resilience to deal with the complex issues they face and are equipped to ensure that their children can grow up and flourish within a healthy, stable, and supportive home environment.**
  
- 2. Single parents have the disposable income required to ensure a good standard of living and the opportunity to achieve their aspirations and ambitions, for themselves and their children.**
  
- 3. Single parents can participate fully in decision-making in their families, their communities, and in the wider society.**
  
- 4. Scottish and local governments, and partner organisations have a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting one parent families, resulting in the delivery of effective and appropriate services.**
  
- 5. OPFS is a resilient and responsive organisation, delivering quality-assured services, embracing a culture of learning and development, supported by a sustainable financial strategy.**

## Key Objectives:

**Strategic Outcome 1:** *Single parents will have the capacity and resilience to deal with the complex issues they face, and are equipped to ensure that their children can grow up and flourish within a healthy, stable, and supportive home environment.*

1. Single parent families throughout Scotland will be able to access high quality advice and information on a wide range of issues which affect single parents and their families.
2. Single parents living in poverty, or affected by the issues which lead to poverty, will be able to access a range of high quality support services, in accordance with the OPFS Model for Transformational Change, developing parenting skills, providing advocacy, and mentoring.
3. Single parent families will be able to participate in fun activities, which will build relationships, develop confidence, and establish social networks.
4. Local service providers will have access to high quality advice, information, and training in order that they can deliver services which will meet the needs of single parent families, in accordance with best practice, as demonstrated by OPFS 'centres of excellence'.

**Strategic Outcome 2:** *Single parents have the disposable income required to ensure a good standard of living and the opportunity to achieve their aspirations and ambitions, for themselves and their children.*

1. Single parents will have access to high quality flexible, affordable, and customised childcare services, to meet their family's individual needs.
2. Single parents can access a wide range of employability packages, offering personal development, skill building, specific training, and support, leading to sustainable employment.
3. Single parents can access essential advice and guidance on family finance, income maximisation, benefits, and entitlements.

**Strategic Outcome 3:** *Single parents can participate fully in decision-making for their families, in their communities, and in the wider society.*

1. OPFS will pursue its commitment to meaningful single parent involvement and co-production in all aspects of our work, and to involving single parents in every level of decision-making.
2. Single parents will have the skills and confidence to participate in decision-making processes at individual, community, and national levels.
3. OPFS will support a range of effective mechanisms through which service providers and policy makers can involve single parents in service design and policy development.

**Strategic Outcome 4:** *Scottish and local governments, and partner organisations have a comprehensive understanding of the issues affecting one parent families, resulting in effective service design and delivery, and policy development.*

- 1.** OPFS will be recognised as the definitive voice on single parent issues, advising agencies and organisations, participating in a wide range of multi-agency networks, and supporting the engagement of single parents in local and national discussions.
- 2.** OPFS will play a key role in the delivery of national and local policies, including Scotland's Child Poverty Strategy, Welfare Reform, and public sector reform, highlighting the challenges and issues affecting single parent families.
- 3.** OPFS will continue to challenge stereotypes, myths, and perceptions often associated with single parents, raising awareness and understanding of the very diverse circumstances and challenges faced by single parents, and highlighting the implications for policy and practice development.
- 4.** OPFS will challenge policies and attitudes that create poverty, inequality, discrimination, and stigma for single parents, highlighting the fact that poverty amongst single parents is a result of structural issues.

**Strategic Outcome 5:** *OPFS is a resilient and responsive organisation, delivering quality-assured services, embracing a culture of learning and development, supported by a sustainable financial strategy.*

- 1.** The Board of Trustees and staff of OPFS will share a clear and comprehensive understanding of the over-arching aims and objectives of the organisation and its various activities.
- 2.** All staff will maximise opportunities for sharing and learning across the organisation, and will participate in an ongoing programme of learning and development.
- 3.** Central to our ongoing strategy will be the continued development of innovative and sustainable models of childcare for single parents, in recognition of the fact that the lack of flexible, low-cost, high quality childcare represents one of the most significant barriers facing one parent families.
- 4.** We will ensure that all of our work is quality assured by using effective monitoring and evaluation systems.
- 5.** We will design and implement a comprehensive communications strategy, which involves single parents at every level, and identifies key partners and stakeholders.
- 6.** Our work will be supported by a sustainable, robust financial strategy, to include a variety of funding streams.

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