



One Parent Families: Policy Framework

Aug. 2009

UK Policies:

- **"Raising expectations and increasing support"** This White Paper issued at the end of 08 proposed allowing lone parents to keep the full amount of child maintenance paid from 2010, but also the abolition of Income Support and a requirement for all lone parents to claim a modified JSA with an expectation of preparing for work when their youngest child is 3. It also proposed a wider devolution of powers down to the local city level, based on co-ordinated agency budgets and action plans and a stronger sanctions regime. Legislation to implement this is currently going through the UK Parliament.
- **Ready for Work: Full employment in our generation:** lone parents required to move from Income Support to Job Seekers Allowance when their youngest child is 12 in November 2008, 10 in October 2009 and 7 in October 2010. Receipt of benefit will then be conditional on engagement in return to work activities and active job -seeking. This will affect 25,000 lone parents in Scotland by 2010 (Working for Families in 20 authorities were targeted to reach 15,000 families over four years for comparison) and a further 10,000 lone parents will be affected by changes in Incapacity Benefit.
- **Child Poverty Target:** Cross party commitment to tackling child poverty and lone parents are a key group whose children are disproportionately in poverty. Despite that fact, statistics produced in Scotland on child poverty levels do not show a breakdown by household type. This is being challenged by OPFS.
- **Child Support:** Child Support Agency replacement by C-Mec from July 08 and from October 08 a lifting of the requirement for lone parent benefit claimants to use the CSA. A national call centre, the Options Service, gives separating couples general information, linked to web based resources. This can be supplemented by face-to-face services when needed. Couples unable to agree maintenance can continue to use the enforcement service offered by C-Mec. Existing cases dealt with by the CSA will continue meantime.
- **Tax Credits:** Early problems with administration have been addressed but recent information is that there are still many difficulties with money being clawed back.
- **Gender equality duty:** public sector duty of gender equality which came into effect in April 2007 should lead to greater attention being paid to the needs of both female and male lone parents by public bodies. All public authorities required to report on implementation.

Scottish Policies

COSLA/ Scottish Government concordat: includes the following relevant indicators and targets:

- *Decrease the proportion of individuals living in poverty and increase the social economy turnover.*

There is also a commitment to Solidarity and to improving the income of the bottom 30%, many of whom are lone parents.

Scottish Government Economic Strategy: This includes 5 strategic priorities, two of which are Learning, Skills and Well Being and Equity. Under **Learning Skills and Well Being** it commits to

- *"reduce financial barriers to people across Scotland accessing higher education"*
- *"Facilitate local design and delivery of learning for those furthest away from the labour market"*
- *"promote the provision of high quality accessible, affordable, flexible childcare in order to enable parents to access training and employment opportunities"*

Under **Equity** it commits to:

- *"focus Government's policy on reducing inequality in Scotland and influence the UK Government to ensure welfare reform addresses Scotland's social equity issues."*
- *"provide high quality, reliable childcare that can give those furthest from employment confidence to take initial steps to employability".*
- *"ensure that support is provided to improve the life chances of those most at risk"*

All local authorities have prepared outcome agreements setting out what they hope to achieve.

Key National Outcomes we can address

In addressing the following outcomes with lone parent, and in some cases two parent families, we also help their children to achieve similar outcomes by example.

- **Employment:** More and better employment opportunities
- **Education:** Better educated, more skilled and successful
- **Children and Young people:** Have the best start in life and are successful learners
- **Health:** Live longer healthier lives
- **Inequality:** Tackle inequalities and improved life chances of children and families at risk. Decrease the proportion of individuals in poverty.
- **Communities:** Strong, resilient and supportive communities.

Employability framework

The UK government has a target of getting 70% of LP's into work by 2010

The Scottish Government has a shared target with Westminster to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

DWP Cities Strategy: This is a programme to encourage agencies in cities to work together more effectively to get people into employment. Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee had bids accepted for the programme. Other areas are also joining up their employability services.

Skills Development Scotland: This new Agency brings together Careers Scotland, Learn Direct Scotland and training programmes such as Modern Apprenticeships.

Achieving Our Potential: Scottish Government Poverty Framework now published and has attached budget of £7.5 million from 1st April 09. Key action points in the Framework of relevance to OPFS include:

- **In work learning:** more through ILA's for this
- **Awareness of statutory rights:** A campaign in 09-10 to increase awareness of statutory rights- minimum wage, sick pay, holiday pay, maternity and paternity leave.
- **Employability:** Continue to roll out Workforce Plus, early 09 launch an Employability and Learning Network for CPP's (Community Planning Partnerships) and develop initiatives with the Third Sector for fast track entry to work with transitional placements in the third sector and in work support, work with third Sector to improve money management in transition to work, develop a public sector recruitment approach for people on benefits
- **Income Maximisation:** Significant new investment in 09-10 and 10-11 in income maximisation work, focussing on benefits take up for key groups, linked to income maximisation and fuel poverty.
- **Promoting Equality:** building on the public equality duties, challenging stereotypes for particular groups and developing guidance for CPP's on equality.
- **Regeneration:** Support 6 Urban Regeneration Companies, support social enterprise to start up and provide supported employment, developing a community regeneration and learning network in 09.
- **Improved Financial Inclusion:** Will increase availability and use of money advice services, consider recommendations of short life working group on school clothing grants, hold seminar on rural poverty.
- **Support for Community Planning Partnerships:** Developing an online Tackling Poverty toolkit in 2009, including policy papers on what works and best practice examples, providing training and funding to support third sector in their contribution to tackling poverty and income inequality, invest in Scottish Investment Fund and Third Sector Social Enterprise Fund, work with COSLA to ensure the structured engagement of the community and voluntary sector with local authorities and the Government and publish a Community Empowerment Action Plan by April 2009

Early Years Framework: This was published in December 2008. It highlights the importance of investment in the early years and the need to co-ordinate all agencies involved but no additional resources are available for its implementation and it includes a commitment to free school meals for P1 to 3 and to increased hours of free nursery education for 3-5 year olds from 12.5 weekly to 15 by August 2010. The Action Plan also includes a medium term commitment (3-5 years) for local authorities to review childcare availability and to begin to assess ways of addressing gaps. The Scottish Government are planning a marketing campaign linked to the framework in September 09(Play, Talk and Read)

Equally Well: Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities: This document, published in June 08, sets out a series of recommendations on reducing health inequalities.