



**Lone Parents and Employment
Glasgow**

**Recommendations:
Research on One Plus Mentoring & Sustainable Employment Service
Lone Parent Focus Groups
Practitioners Focus Groups**

Nov 2008

1. Pre-Employment- Mentoring & Tailored Support

Impact & Recommendations

Mentoring Evaluation report SPIU 2006

The provision of one-to-one, relatively open-ended support for disadvantaged groups moving towards employment is increasingly identified as a key factor in helping individuals make informed and confident choices that allow them to maintain positive progress towards sustained employment.

A holistic approach is valuable where it allows lone parents to identify and address a number of issues that act as barriers to their movement into, or return to, training or employment. The varied skill levels as well as varied barriers can be more effectively responded to if lone parents particular challenges as sole carers are central to service provision. The factors which would contribute to such a programme's effectiveness are:

- For lone parents at a distance from the labour market, an informal method of support has proved to be effective at increasing engagement with employment issues.
- There is a need to recognise the longer term resource commitment this entails if the concepts of welfare to work and lifelong learning are to be effectively connected.
- The links between different employability services and projects are important in providing tailored support for lone parents moving towards the labour market. There is a need for transparency & recognition of the chain of support services for lone parents and how these support and add value into the wider employability landscape.
- Peer mentoring has proved to be an important asset in developing routes to work.
- Recognition of transferable skills is an important element of a return to work plan. Many lone parents have gained relevant skills in their day to day family & community activities.
- A well resourced process to appropriately accredit and enhance existing skills, in conjunction with training in softer skills such as confidence building would contribute to sustainable employment outcomes.
- However the constraints of inadequate childcare and financial issues continue to be significant structural barriers to employability for lone parents.

2. Supporting Sustained Entry into Work

Impact & Recommendations

BMG Research for Scottish Government 2007

Lone parents face a complex interrelated set of barriers - debt, low skills, isolation, poor health and low confidence. There are also a number of infrastructural barriers inherent within our benefits, taxation and services systems that make labour market entry difficult for lone parents- childcare being the main one.

Dedicated in-work support to lone parents, and linked to this for employers, would support those lone parents with barriers to work to take up employment opportunities and also improve sustainable employment. The factors which would contribute to such a programme's effectiveness are:

- Operating a personal caseworker/adviser model
- Working with 'engaged' lone parents
- The salience of 'sustainable employment' to clients
- Increased access to 'soft' skills training
- Clearer employment plans and aspirations
- Better job search and job application strategy
- Working with realistic goals/plans -developing scenario planning for job retention issues
- Access to a wide range of support/signposting - more peer support/mentoring
- Ability to resolve practical issues – finance, debt, childcare, transport
- Access to post-employment financial assistance
- More peer support/mentoring
- Strategies to deal with hardest to help

3. Lone Parent Feedback:

All engagement with lone parents throughout the project involved collection of systematic feedback on the extent to which services are addressing their needs. Sixty –two lone parents from Glasgow were involved in various feedback and consultation events: Dundee University Research on Sustainable Employment; Focus Group on Employment issues and Lone Parents; SG Consultation on lone parents and poverty Key Issues raised were:

1. The majority of lone parents do wish to work, when the time is right for their child. However they also wish recognition of their lone parenting role (sole care/sole breadwinner);
2. The chance to build confidence & self esteem is often a precondition to moving into paid work
3. The need for flexible, affordable quality childcare is a priority
4. Benefits trap- loss of key financial support in the early into work phase
5. Income Maximisation – recognise Yr 2 drop in income.
6. In-work costs –travel ,school meals, clothes, pre existing debts
7. Recognise LP's at different stages along employability pathway
8. Employment & Skills (employers are important)
9. Housing Issues including loss of HB in work & therefore increased costs
10. Family Support. Information & advice on lone parent specific matters are important and contribute to a parents capacity to take up and stay in employment
11. Affordable credit
12. Money advice & Financial Planning
13. Take account of different ways life events impact on women & men – wellbeing not just income
14. One parent families predominate in areas of deprivation– authorities need to recognise and invest in capacity building for LP's
15. Glasgow Works should ensure services support lone parent inclusion.

4. Practioner Feedback

Choices delivered two seminars/ consultations on welfare reform to front-line workers and other staff.(92 workers) The seminars were also used as an opportunity to gain feedback from front line staff on what they saw as being the key issues affecting lone parents journey into sustainable employment This has resulted in a wealth of information from those working closely on the employability agenda. Issues raised at both seminars were very similar.The Question posed was:

What do Lone Parents need to support access to and movement along the employability pathway to reach sustainable employment ?:

1 .Good quality careers guidance

The right job for the individual (not the agency) – not the first available job
Consistency of information

2. Money advice / welfare rights advice

Make coming off of benefits seamless e.g. no gap between benefit stopping and time it takes for job grant, tax credits etc to start.

Welfare Rights access for all

Better off calculation needs to take everything into account

Debt issues –advice and advocacy- council tax arrears/fuel bills

Financial planning (preventative)

Private let issues

3. Incentives

Incentives currently need to be more flexible (better use of work trials) eg clothing, bus pass, benefit run ons, back to work credits

More flexibility re: 26 weeks available

Back to work credits more generous

More information for lone parents on incentives

4. Childcare & Youth Activities

Flexible, affordable, sustainable childcare to meet both parents and children's' needs for under 11yr olds
More activities/programmes available for youth afterschool – use English model for children's' centres - especially after school care in all areas of Glasgow
Pay grandparents to provide childcare

5. Employment

Aftercare with employers/ Retention support 4 and 6 months
Employers should provide flexibility in employment to support lone parents needs
13 weeks is not long enough to monitor retention rates. After 13 weeks what % of L.P's fall out of work – 6mths / 12mths etc.
Employment Retention Advancement ERA provided by DWP should be available for all – successful in Inverclyde.
Mentoring, Childcare, Confidence, Skills, and Financial Support are all needed

6. Family Support /Health Issues

Condition Management for Lone Parents
Outreach provision on a constant basis
Emotional issues – Anxiety – Depression – how this will impact on the child – how this will be taken care of ?– How important is this seen as being by different levels of government.

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