



**Glasgow City Council Communities Fund  
OPFS Glasgow refused council grant.**

**Briefing  
September 2020**

“ The pandemic is creating a unique challenge for single parents and their children. To weather the worst and rebuild, we need a community-minded approach, tailored to single parents' needs. We, and the parents we work with, are dismayed that now, when families need it most, our vital services face drastic cuts. ”

**Satwat Rehman**



**Director, One Parent  
Families Scotland**

## **Future of Vital Service for Glasgow Single Parents in Jeopardy**

One Parent Families Scotland Glasgow Service has not been recommended for the Glasgow City Council Communities Fund which may mean that vital services may be reduced or even closed.

Glasgow Communities Fund <sup>1</sup>is a new communities fund that that is informed by the Glasgow City Council Strategic Plan, Glasgow Community Planning Partnership's Community Plan and the principles behind the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/glasgowcommunitiesfund>



## Glasgow City Council Communities Fund Aim

The aim for the fund is to tackle poverty and inequality through:

- building the skills, capacity and resilience of individuals and communities;
- supporting activities and services that will enable and empower communities to become involved in the social, economic and cultural life of the city.

These principles are further underpinned by a focus on:

- early intervention and prevention;
- equalities;
- innovation and initiatives that respond to emerging areas

***OPFS Glasgow services meets all of these aims as is explained below.***

“ I had no idea about the system, like where to go for help – no information. At One Parent Families you get the help you need. It made me feel relevant in a society where I was invisible. I was pushing through just to get the right to stay and thinking “what next?”. OPFS made me start thinking there’s hope for how to move forward. ”



**Sadatu**  
Single mum of 3  
in Glasgow

## Background – OPFS Glasgow Funding

**One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS)** is the leading charity working with single parent families in Scotland. We provide expert advice, practical support and campaign with parents to make their voices heard. OPFS gives support to over 7000 parents, children and young



people each year through our national advice and information service, online information and resources, training for practitioners and local services in Glasgow Edinburgh, Dundee, Falkirk, Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire.

For over 75 years we've been supporting single parent families find a way forward through difficult times. But never before has our service faced a challenge like the coronavirus pandemic. At a time when our service is more important than ever, we've had to make dramatic changes to ensure we can still be there for single parents and their children who need us.

OPFS Glasgow has received funding from GCC in one form or another for 14 years which has helped us fund core costs for services in Glasgow. This has formed the bedrock of the work we do and enabled us to draw in additional funds through our own fundraising, from trusts, ESF, Scottish Government funds and to develop a comprehensive set of services for Single Parents. This GCC funding has enabled us and the parents we work with to participate in many GCC policy and strategy groups and has helped GCC to better understand and reach Single Parents. This is why it is critical and core to OPFS Glasgow services. Losing this funding could potentially put other funding in jeopardy.

Core funding is about enabling a charity to do its work in the way it knows best. It means helping the charity to meet the costs related to their day-to-day running, such as rent or the costs of staff. Crucially it enables the charity to be more than a selection of projects but to have some central capacity to have strategic direction that aligns with the needs of their beneficiaries - in our case single parents.

The main funding, we received until now from Glasgow Council (£41,900) was for the core elements of the Glasgow service (management, admin, general running costs and financial inclusion work) and additional pots were for project based initiatives focused on young single mothers (£17,200) and Universal Credit advice (£59,995).

We can argue over definitions and language but that does not change the fact that if we do not get the funding, we will not be able to continue all our work with single parent families in Glasgow.

Glasgow Council is not a grant making trust but a local authority with statutory duties and responsibilities which they recognise they can best deliver in partnership with third sector like OPFS who are on the frontline working with families. For example, OPFS stepped in to support single parents and children with vital essentials – food, energy costs – when no-one else was there for them.

Single Parents across Glasgow have received the devastating news that One Parent Families Scotland's (OPFS) flagship local service may no longer receive Glasgow Council funding. Distressed parents, who rely on support from the service to keep their head above water, have been in touch with OPFS asking if the services will be cut.



“ One Parent Families Scotland support me a lot with things like filling in forms, or if I have some letters I don't understand, they will help me sort it. They are the first people I go to. They understand where you are coming from, they understand your condition, they understand everything about you. ”



**Mary**

**Single mum of 4  
in Glasgow**

## **OPFS Glasgow's contribution to tackling child poverty**

OPFS have been supporting single parent families in communities across Glasgow for 14 years. Single Parents and their children in the local areas of Maryhill, Canal, Pollok, Cranhill, Tollcross, Govan, Shettleston, Knightswood, Possil Park, Easterhouse, Bridgeton and Denniston have received vital essentials and support during the virus lockdown. Supporting parents to move into training, education or employment, maximise their income and reduce their living costs has been central to OPFS Glasgow's aim to reduce child poverty.

Four in ten families in Glasgow are single parent families, the highest rate in Scotland. Children living in a single parent family are twice as likely to be living in poverty and OPFS say the impact of the virus pandemic and lockdown has increased poverty, anxiety and distress. Over the last 6 months, OPFS Glasgow have extended a range of support to 1,423 single parent families and made financial gains for those families in excess of £582K. The service:

- **Delivered 4,949 lunch packs and food parcels, food vouchers & essentials to 1,260 children and babies during lockdown crisis worth £40,000.**
- **Gave benefits & debt advice to 372 single parent families putting almost £500,000 into families income.**
- **Assisted 837 families with energy costs amounting to £41,614 for families who couldn't afford the cost of heating their home or cooking.**



- Provided crisis support to ensure the health and wellbeing of 833 parents and 1,333 children.
- Gave 590 single parents free helpline and on-line advice on issues such as child maintenance, separating from your partner and child contact & residence issues.



## OPFS Glasgow Strategic & Policy Input

OPFS has been a partner in developing policies and services to tackle poverty in single parent families in Glasgow and is a member of council strategic groups such as the Child Poverty Group and the Poverty Leadership Panel. OPFS Glasgow has also supported single parents to be involved in various council services: improving the delivery of the council's Scottish Welfare Fund; take up of school clothing grants; improving the application process for free school meals; ensuring single parents apply for Best Start Grant and foods – to name only a few.



Recent publications by Public Health Scotland<sup>2</sup> and the Scottish Government<sup>3</sup> highlight the challenging circumstances single parents are living in as we emerge from lockdown and head into a deepening economic crisis.

Public Health Scotland have highlighted that the challenge for Local Authorities in Scotland to support low-income and vulnerable local populations during this crisis will have been very significant.<sup>4</sup>

**“The local actions that we know can support low-income lone-parent families to maximise their income from benefits and reduce the cost of living include: increasing awareness and take-up of the Scottish Welfare Fund (Crisis Grants) including as a source of support to help applicants access food; Discretionary Housing Payments, and the Council Tax Reduction scheme; Increasing awareness and take-up of the Best Start Foods card and grants, increasing awareness and take-up of the Education Maintenance Allowance, School Clothing Grant and Free School Meals; Poverty-proofing policies and practices to avoid inadvertently penalising lone-parent families by using, for example One Parent Families Scotland’s Participatory One Parent Proofing toolkit.<sup>5</sup>”**

Now more than ever we need expert specialist support for single parents City Council funding supports the core of a vital single parent specialist service which is preventative and empowering. It saves council money as further interventions are avoided through holistic family support and advice.

## **OPFS Response to 100% cut to funding**

Satwat Rehman CEO of OPFS explains why this funding cut is so devastating:

**“The COVID-19 virus pandemic is still creating a unique challenge for single parents and their children, as they depend on one income and don’t have the support of another adult in the home to share childcare & parenting responsibilities. Our service in Glasgow has always responded quickly to new challenges and involved parents in all our work. We believe the expertise and experience of our community-based services will be vital in the recovery effort that lies ahead. In the hardest of times, we have risen to the challenges thrown at us.**

**“To weather the worst and rebuild, we need this kind of community-minded approach which is tailored to single parents particular needs. We, and the parents we work with,**

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.healthscotland.scot/child-poverty/child-poverty-overview/lone-parents>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/ISBN/978-1-83960-783-7>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/3131/covid-19-and-lone-parents-with-dependent-children.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [https://opfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Participatory\\_Single\\_Parent\\_Proofing\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://opfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Participatory_Single_Parent_Proofing_Toolkit.pdf)



are dismayed that now, when families need it most our vital Glasgow services face drastic cuts”

OPFS is asking single parents and supporters to back our call to have the recommendation for OPFS to have its funding withdrawn to be rejected at the City Administration Committee this week. As one parent described it:

**“This service has been supporting me and my children during a time of crisis which has helped me to better manage my family’s current circumstances, improve our family well-being and reduce my levels of anxiety, stress, and isolation.**

**“We are living in difficult times and trying our best to reassure our children, this is hard to do when money is tight, daily living is restricted and the pressure of paying bills, feeding, clothing and entertaining children is high.**

**“Glasgow City Administration has put a vital lifeline under threat which sends a message to us, loud and clear that they don’t care about single parents or our children and have no understanding of the daily challenges that we, as single parent families face.”**

We feel the major contribution OPFS can made to the city’s endeavours to reduce child poverty should be based on an equal partnership with secure funding in place. Have these recommendations been child poverty proofed? All of the work that the council, statutory services and the third sector have done to alleviate the poverty that vulnerable members of our communities face is being unravelled in front of our eyes. If it is confirmed funding is withdrawn from specialist services for single parent we will need to review what we can do and how we carry on supporting families in Glasgow. We will always do the best we can for the families we work with and who contribute so richly to Glasgow’s life .

We know single parents in Glasgow will answer the call to support this important single parent dedicated service and we are asking them to contact their local councillor to express their concern to make sure people know how much our service is relied upon by families and the impact of this 100% cut in funding.

**Marion Davis, Head of Policy & Strategy**

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