



# Glasgow City Council Funding OPFS Glasgow Case for Support

---

## **Summary of key Issues for Councillors, MSP's and Stakeholders 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

### **Why have we written this briefing?**

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is the leading charity working with single parent families in Scotland. We provide support to over 7000 single parents, children and young people each year, through locally based services and our national advice and information service.

OPFS Glasgow has been funded by Glasgow City Council for 14 years however these vital services are under threat as the council has turned down our application to the new Communities Fund. On the 3rd September the City Administration Committee agreed to a £4 million transitional fund to support the advice sector, and other groups who had been rejected from Glasgow's Communities Fund.

We welcome the news of transitional funding while awaiting detail from council officials on how this will affect our lifeline services for single parents. However there have been no moves by Glasgow City Council to publish how the transitional fund will support organisations that have lost out on vital funding.

### **OPFS Glasgow**

OPFS Glasgow services are embedded in the local community. Our Glasgow service team all live in Glasgow, our local single parent hubs involve and support local single parents. Through our work we serve single parents who together form an important 'community of interest.' Single parents are not a homogenous group, but most are mothers in their mid-30's and they share the unique challenge of being sole carers and breadwinners, many living in poverty. This is what binds them together in calling for recognition that they are an important part of Glasgow and need to be central to the city's plans to tackle child poverty. OPFS in

Glasgow ensures that single parent families, with lived experience have a platform to share their voice and influence services.

We are active partners in a number of Glasgow strategic groups which shows a huge commitment to contributing to the alignment of services with the aims of Glasgow City Council and Scottish Governments' Child Poverty Strategy.

## Achievements

- For over 75 years OPFS has been supporting single parent families across Scotland to find a way forward through difficult times. But never before has our service faced a challenge like the coronavirus pandemic. OPFS Glasgow stepped in to support single parents and children with vital essentials - food, energy costs - when no-one else was there for them.
- 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. We:
  - 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 family's 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.
- Over the last 3 and a half years (up to Sept 2020) OPFS Glasgow has received £206,850 from Glasgow's 'Integrated Grant Fund' which has enabled us to bring in an extra £779,62 to work with single parents in Glasgow. **For every £1 from the Integrated Grant Fund OPFS Glasgow brought in almost £4.**

## What OPFS Glasgow can contribute.

- Single parent households make up 40% of all households with dependent children in Glasgow – the highest local authority rate in Scotland, with the Scottish figure being nearly 25%. Glasgow neighbourhoods that experience high rates of child poverty have some of the highest numbers of single parent families. In Parkhead & Dalmarnock for example nearly 60% of children live in poverty, where 6 out of 10 households are single parent families. OPFS Glasgow services, if funded, would work with local parents and partner organisations to prevent and alleviate the impact of poverty and inequalities on the wellbeing of single parent families living in the City of Glasgow.
- We achieve this through the provision of an integrated, package of holistic support. We believe that when services and policy priorities are genuinely co-produced, they work better and provide a greater impact, because they make the most of the shared

expertise of single parents who are 'experts through experience' along with our staff, many of whom, are or have been single parents.

- These specialist support services include:
  - Crisis Support,
  - Financial Inclusion,
  - Young Single Parents Employability Programme,
  - Family Health and Well-being Project,
  - Family Support
  - On-line advice and wellbeing support tailored for single parents
  - Freephone Lone Parent Helpline
- We work to release the power of parents to support each other as we know that parental involvement is the key to better services & policies. Our model of family support harnesses the skills, experiences, and knowledge of parents, carers, and partners – to better support families and ultimately reduce family poverty and improve the life chances of children.

## **Outcomes of our work in Glasgow**

We will engage with and deliver services to 1,800 disadvantaged Glasgow single parent families over 3 years and support 90 single parents to volunteer to provide a peer support role. **Through this we will achieve the following outcomes:**

1. The crisis support service will support 300 single parents a year to deal with the immediate crisis thus stabilising their situation.
2. As a result of accessing OPFS Financial Inclusion service 600 single parents a year will be more resilient through income maximisation, have improved money skills and reduced levels of debt.
3. The family support service for Young Parents will 50 support young parents a year to improve their aspirations, confidence and skills to progress along the employability pipeline.
4. The Family Support & Health and Well-being service will enable 200 single parents a year to improve the mental health and well-being and enable them to take control of their lives and well-being.
5. The Employability Services will enable 100 single parents a year to move into sustainable employment that improves their standard of living for themselves and their families.

## **Overall impact of what we do**

### **Single Parents will**

- Have improved their standard of living so reducing child poverty and contributing to GCC child poverty reduction target.
- Have increased capacity and resilience to deal with issues so reducing demand on GCC family support services.
- Be supported to build their aspirations, confidence and skills to move into training, education or employment
- Have improved mental-health and family well-being.
- Be empowered to participate in local decision-making processes and influence policies and service delivery.

## Glasgow Council Policy Input

OPFS Glasgow, if funded would continue to be 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 will continue to support 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 and the Scottish Child Payment.

## If OPFS Glasgow Services Disappear .....

As we move out of the current phase of the virus lockdown crisis, this 'recovery phase' will bring many challenges for single parents, particularly as support provided, such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, is reduced or withdrawn and as job losses increase, including in the sectors of the economy where single parents tend to work.

- There is a risk that the future for many single parents and their children is one of increased poverty, increased levels of debt and arrears, losing yet more income as they transfer to benefits or are at risk of losing their tenancy or homes.
- Poverty is not inevitable. Government, local authorities, the NHS and third sector must work together to tackle single parent family poverty and the gendered nature of that poverty. In Glasgow this could prevent yet more single parents falling into crisis and desperation but OPFS Glasgow will no longer be able to ensure that we can contribute using our expertise and the trust of parents to make that difference.

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

### **One Parent Families Scotland**

2 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EP

Tel: 0131 556 3899

[info@opfs.org.uk](mailto:info@opfs.org.uk)

### **Changing Lives, Challenging Poverty**

**[Web](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [Donate](#)**