



**One Parent  
Families Scotland**  
*changing lives, challenging poverty*

**Annual Report 2025**

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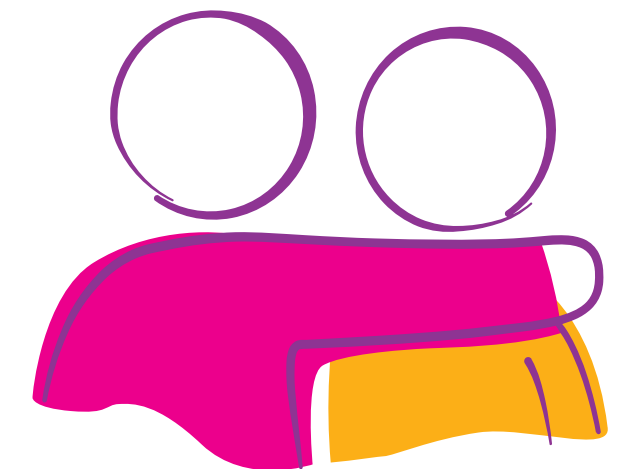
# About us

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is Scotland's national organisation for single parent families. Our vision is of a Scotland where single parent families are celebrated in all their diversity, are treated fairly and live free from discrimination and poverty. Our mission is to work with, and for, single parent families - providing support services that enable them to realise their potential and create lasting solutions to the poverty and barriers they face.



We support family wellbeing, empower single parents with the right advice and information, and enable parents to access training, employment and education. Our national advice and information service, and family hubs in six local areas, reach thousands of single parent families each year.

We campaign for improvements in the here and now and for structural and systemic change alongside single parents who are experts in their dual role of caregiving and providing for their children. We take an intersectional approach, recognising that most single parents are women - and that many Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), disabled and young single parents face multiple structural barriers affecting access to services and opportunities.



# Single parents in Scotland



**66%** of single parents are in employment.

**33%** of single parents are disabled, compared to **15%** of couple parents.

Over a third (**36%**) of children in a single parent family are in poverty, compared to less than one in four (**23%**) of children in other families.

There are  
**144,000**  
single parent families in Scotland, comprising  
**25%**  
of all families with dependent children.

**92%**  
of single parent families are headed by a single mother.

The average age of a single parent is  
**39**  
years and  
**1%**  
are teenagers

Single parents are **consistently** the family type most likely to face in-work **poverty** and are more likely to be working in a low-wage sector and on lower hours.

On average, disabled households need an additional **£975** a month to have the same standard of living as non-disabled households. Their extra costs are equivalent to **63%** of household income.







# Building a Scotland where single parent families can thrive

I want to begin by acknowledging the determination and courage of Scotland’s 144,000 single parent families, who now make up a quarter of all families with dependent children. Their realities continue to shape every aspect of our work.

This year, 36% of children in single parent families were living in poverty, despite 66% of single parents being in employment - illustrating starkly that work alone is not protecting families from hardship.

Against this backdrop, OPFS supported 4,656 families across Scotland. Our family support teams worked one-to-one with 1,885 parents, while 2,351 families received welfare rights and money advice that delivered £1.6 million in financial gain. A further 1,670 families turned to us in crisis, often for essentials such as food, fuel and emergency items - a stark reminder of the pressures parents are under.

We also continued to amplify the voices of parents directly affected by structural barriers, with 123 contributing to our Single Parent Expert Groups, ensuring services and policy work remain firmly grounded in lived experience. Their insights guided our research into conditionality, child maintenance and barriers to education, amplifying the realities faced by the 92% of single parents, ensuring policymakers hear clearly what needs to change.

As always, none of what we do would be possible without the dedication and commitment of our staff, partners, funders and, above all, the parents who trust us to walk alongside them.

As we look ahead, our commitment is unwavering: to secure systemic change, strengthen support, and build a Scotland where every single parent family can thrive.

“ Ever since I have been in touch with OPFS my life changed. I had someone to help my voice be heard, someone to support me when I’m unsure and also feeling stressed and drained. I can’t thank my support worker enough for all her kindness and help, she’s changed mine and my kids life forever!

”

Single parent

*Satwat Rehman*

**Satwat Rehman**  
Chief Executive, One Parent Families Scotland



# Activities in 2024 and 2025

**1,670** families received crisis assistance, including support with food, fuel, essential items and emergency needs.

**664** children participated in our holiday provision, offering free, low cost and fun activities during school holiday periods.

OPFS supported **4,656** single parent families, ensuring that each had access to compassionate, tailored services to help them navigate the challenges they face.

**2,351** families received welfare benefit and money advice, achieving a total of £1,616,206 in actual financial gain.

**375** families were supported with specialist debt advice. Our National Debt Service has also partnered with local authorities in rural areas of Scotland to reach isolated parents.

Family support teams provided one-to-one support to **1,885** single parent families. This tailored assistance addresses a wide range of needs, from emotional wellbeing to navigating services, ensuring parents felt supported and empowered in their day-to-day lives.

**139** parents were supported with tailored childcare advice and solutions through our Childcare Connectors in Edinburgh and Glasgow. We plan further expansion of this service in Dundee and Glasgow in 2025/2026.

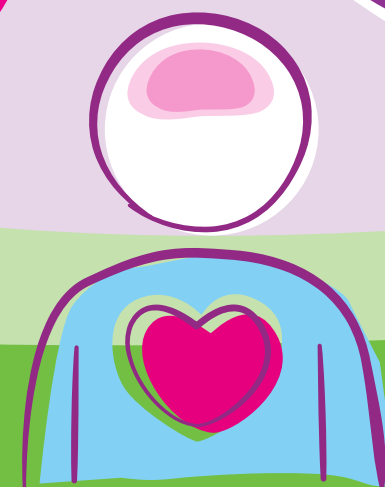
Additionally, **123** parents participated in our Single Parent Expert Groups, contributing to co-designing and shaping our services and influencing wider policy work.

Group activities remained a vital part of our service offer, helping to reduce isolation, build confidence and create peer networks among single parents and their children.

**Our Support for Families services have expanded to include Angus, Grangemouth and East Renfrewshire.**

**626** parents engaged with employability services across our local areas.

**1,379** single parents attended group sessions across local services.



# Support for families

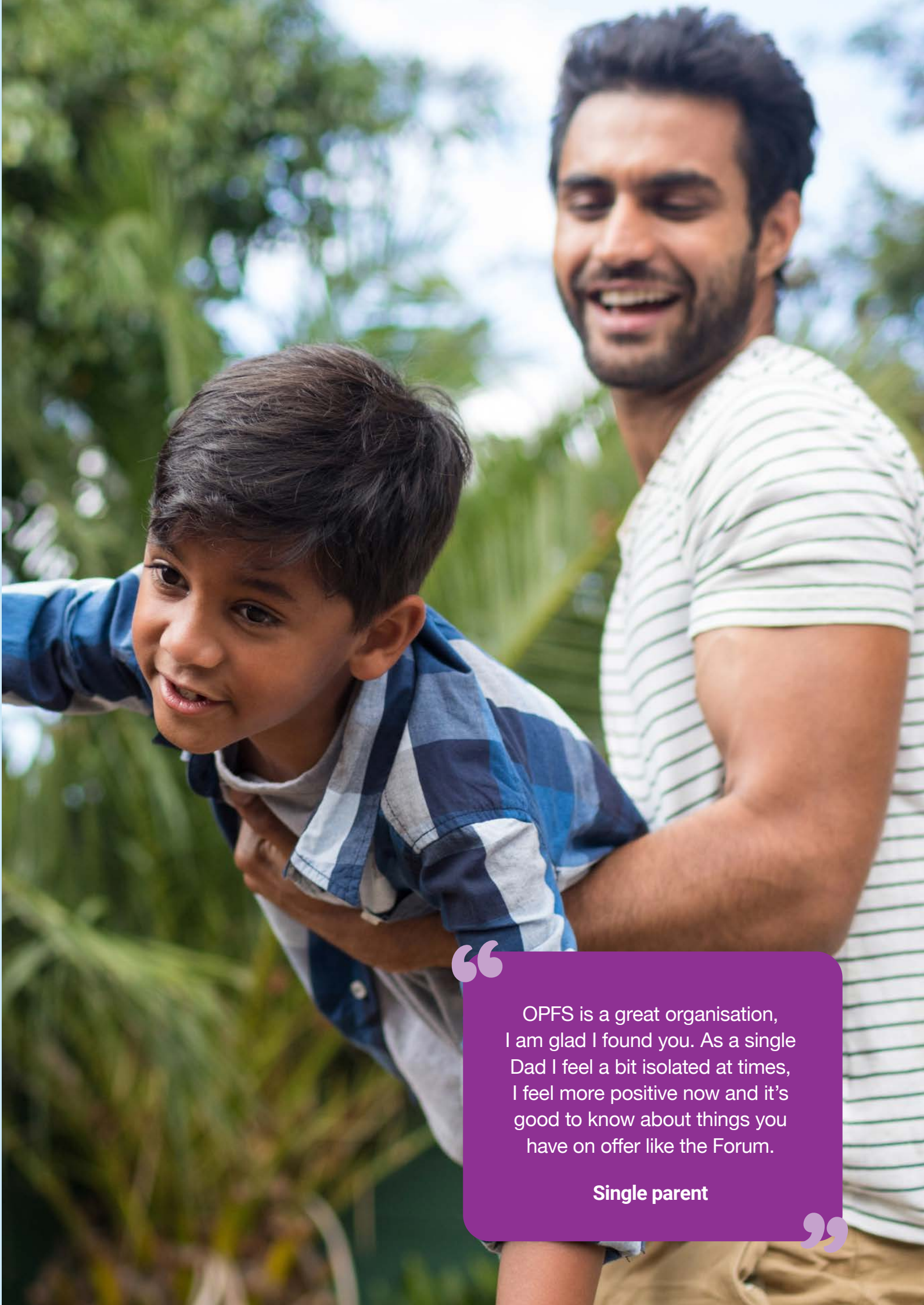
Single parent families are supported through our practical, person-centred services across Scotland. In 2024/2025, we continued to provide targeted advice, emotional support, group activities and tools to improve financial stability and wellbeing.

Our local and national services ensure families get help when and where they need it. Using a whole family approach, we help parents build resilience and improve outcomes for their children, especially critical as the cost-of-living crisis continues to impact families.

Our work is co-produced with single parents, combining their lived experience with the expertise of our practitioners. This collaborative model builds trust with families and ensures OPFS is recognised as the leading voice for single parents in Scotland. Guided by their resilience, we remain focused on amplifying their voices and addressing the challenges they face in today's economic climate.

Our support reached families with a wide range of needs:

- 50% of families accessing our direct family support services included a family member with a disability.
- 28% of families were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.
- 22% of families had three or more children, often facing higher levels of financial pressure.



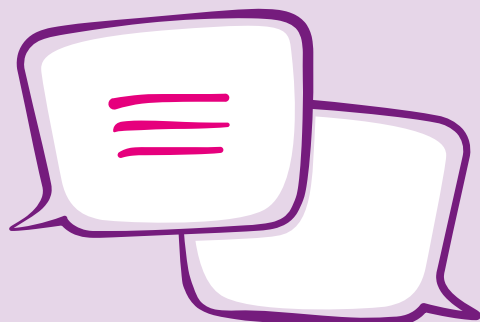
“OPFS is a great organisation, I am glad I found you. As a single Dad I feel a bit isolated at times, I feel more positive now and it's good to know about things you have on offer like the Forum.”

Single parent



## Advice and information services

The OPFS National Advice and Information (A&I) Service is designed to meet the specific needs of single-parent families, offering support through our multi-channel service. This includes our Helpline, Webchat and the self-help resources available on our website, ensuring that parents can access support in the way that best suits them. The A&I service supports single parents and practitioners across Scotland by giving tailored advice and guidance on a range of topics affecting Scottish single parents. By delivering both nationwide and in-person support within seven local authority areas, we aim to enhance the health and wellbeing of single parent families and help reduce child poverty in Scotland.



**We provide advice and support for single parents throughout Scotland via:**

- Our freephone Lone Parent Helpline.
- The OPFS Webchat / 'Ask-a-question' service.
- Information and advice content on the OPFS website, available 24/7.
- Online tools such as the Parent Forum, Debt and Budgeting tool and Single Parent FAQs.
- Our local and national social media channels.
- In-person contact with local communities throughout Scotland.



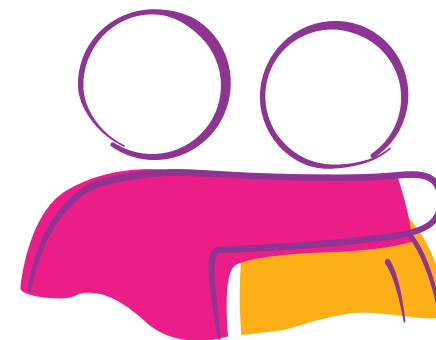
I was able to get some helpful advice online including from other single parents on the OPFS forum. By the time I met with a worker for the first time, I was feeling a bit better about myself and realised that it is ok to ask for help if I need it.

**Single parent**



## During 2024/2025 our Advice and Information services

- Provided direct advice and support to 1,947 parents and 136 professionals.
- Attended numerous events, such as local service open days, family events and community clinics, offering support and guidance to parents and professionals.
- Signposted parents to OPFS online tools, including the Support and Advice web pages,, Budgeting and Debt Planner tool, 'Single Parent FAQs' and the Single Parent Forum.
- Led 800 parents to join our Single Parent Forum, which provides a safe, supportive space for connection and shared experiences.
- Saw 84k users visiting our dedicated Support and Advice pages. This demonstrates the continued demand for reliable, accessible guidance.
- Supported 2,729 families access to our A&I Service, with 1,125 of these receiving targeted financial advice, resulting in over £3 million in predicted financial gains.
- Continue to collect and highlight parent experiences which are used to inform and enhance OPFS policy and campaign work.







# Policy and influencing

Our policy and advocacy work amplifies the voices of single parents in the fight for immediate change and at the same time contributes towards creating lasting systemic improvements that will benefit families for years to come.

Our work with parents has highlighted some key issues this year which informed our priorities:

- **Absolute poverty:** An increasing number of single parents have been contacting OPFS as they plunge into absolute poverty, driven by inadequate benefit rates and harsh policies like the two-child limit and benefit cap.
- **Child maintenance:** The complex realities of the child maintenance system continue to mean that too many children do not receive payments they are entitled to.
- **Working single parents and poverty:** 36% of children in single parent families in Scotland are living in poverty, but at the same time 66% of their parents are in either part-time or full-time employment. This is reflected in the number of employed parents who seek our advice and support.
- **Benefit conditionality and sanctions:** Since 2023, UK work requirements mandate lead carers of 3-12-year-olds to be available for up to 30 hours a week. This often leads to increased poverty, mental health decline, or even destitution for single parents.
- **Housing insecurity and eviction risk:** Single parents renting privately face a higher risk of eviction. The ongoing Local Housing Allowance freeze further prevents automatic adjustments to reflect rising rents, which worsens the housing affordability crisis and homelessness - with a significant number of families being forced into temporary accommodation as a result.
- **Debt:** The rise in the costs of fuel and essentials has resulted in single parents taking on more debt. A change in family circumstances such as a divorce, separation or bereavement often results in a debt burden for the parent with care.
- **Judgemental attitudes:** Stigma continues to be an issue for single parents. Negative stereotypes and societal judgments can impact their self-esteem and well-being.
- **Balancing work and care:** Due to their sole carer and breadwinner responsibilities, single parents face barriers in balancing paid employment with providing care for their children.

- **Childcare:** The high cost and limited availability of flexible early years and school-age childcare continue to be significant barriers, hindering parents' ability to balance paid work, training and education.
- **Mental health impacts:** The high cost of living continues to place significant strain on the wellbeing of single parents and their children. Living on a single income, while also balancing sole caring responsibilities with work, creates considerable and ongoing pressure for single parent families.
- **Education:** Single parents face several barriers to accessing Further and Higher Education. These include access to childcare and insufficient signposting to available resources – including lack of clarity in relation to financial entitlements.



“Your organisation has made a significant impact on my wellbeing, ranging from financial, career, physical and mental wellbeing. As a single mother of four kids, OPFS has helped me to navigate through very difficult times. I'm grateful to be a part of this community. Thank you for all that you do.”

Single parent

## Our work

Over the past year, single parents have grappled with economic hardships, housing instability, stigma, accessing education and juggling work and caregiving. In response, OPFS has challenged judgmental attitudes and highlighted the need to remove barriers to fair work – including by securing accessible and affordable childcare. We know that these issues have had a disproportionate impact on women in particular, who comprise 92% of all single parents in Scotland.

Overall, we need a fairer social security system that ensures single parents can pay for the essentials of life. Support needs to be put in place to help them survive high costs of essentials whilst being able to access further education, training and sustainable employment options.

### Transforming Child Maintenance project:

Working in partnership with IPPR Scotland and Fife Gingerbread, our research clearly demonstrates that the Child Maintenance Service urgently needs reform so that it puts the needs of children first. We have campaigned to influence both the UK and Scottish Governments to prioritise single parent families and reduce child poverty, and this work will continue in 2025/26.

**Single Parents and Higher Education.** Funded by the Robertson Trust, this research aimed to:

1. Identify and address real time barriers for single parent students.
2. Enhance access and engagement for potential single parent students.
3. Improve support systems and completion rates for single parent students.

This work included a survey and focus groups, both in-person and on-line, to get single parents involved and gain more in-depth insight. [The final report was published in 2025.](#)



### Universal Credit and Digitisation:

We worked with academics at the University of Edinburgh, whose research showed that the DWP's 'automation' of Universal Credit (UC) discriminates against single mothers. Nearly half of in-work UC claimants are single mothers, so are impacted by the three most common problems with UC's automated processes:

1. Mistakes caused by flawed information about earnings.
2. Hardship because of delayed childcare reimbursement.
3. A mismatch between UC calculation dates and paydays - overwhelmingly affecting working single mothers.

We aim to gain wider support for this work in 2025 for the specific changes needed in relation to UC digital processes.

**UC and Conditionality:** OPFS advisors and support staff have worked with single parents whose lives have been turned up-side down by the threat of sanctions. For some, the loss of benefits has meant having to visit a foodbank to survive.

Over 80% of single parents in receipt of UC were unable to meet the new 30-hour work requirements introduced in October 2023 for lead carers of 3-12-year-olds. And while Jobcentre Plus work coach meetings were intended to support lead carers looking for work or additional hours, research revealed that 74% of single parents did not find

The outcome of benefit conditionality on single parent families' financial circumstances and other aspects of wellbeing was a major concern. Therefore, in 2024/25 OPFS undertook research to investigate Conditionality and the impact that this had on single parents when searching for and applying for employment. A report will be published during 2025/26.

**Wellbeing Economy:** Funded by the Friends Provident Foundation, OPFS supported single parents in Dundee to imagine what a wellbeing economy would look like – through exploration of areas that they would like to see change/improve by 2050. They worked together with a graphic illustrator to create a poster depicting these changes and met over several sessions with our Single Parent Participation Officer and OPFS Dundee colleagues to complete this work.

A report will be published during 2025/26, and we hope to use the images as part of broader influencing work going forward.



# Future developments

Single parent families continue to experience higher risk of poverty than average, even when in employment. We want to increase awareness of the impact of the current economic system on single parents and their children through the lens of gender - as 92% of single parents in Scotland are women.

Ending poverty must also go hand in hand with achieving a wellbeing economy through addressing systemic wealth inequality, tackling climate change and ensuring environmental protection and a just transition to net zero.

Over the next year, we will prioritise influencing governments at both Scottish and UK level - with a focus on the 2026 Scottish Parliament Elections. We will continue to work to future proof policy and practice for single parent families, with a focus on big things that will make structural and systemic change. There are five areas that we will focus on:

1. A Minimum Income Guarantee that guarantees all citizens an income sufficient to live on and ensures a basic standard of living for those in need.
2. Universal basic infrastructure including key public services such as childcare and holistic family support. Decisions about infrastructure that are made today invest in the social fabric of the future and will help shape the Scotland of tomorrow
3. A fairer tax system which aims to distribute the burden of taxation more equitably, ensuring that everyone contributes according to their ability to pay.
4. A just transition to net zero, shifting from a carbon-intensive economy to a sustainable low-carbon economy that is fair, equitable and inclusive.
5. A wellbeing economy which gives recognition and value to caring - paid & unpaid - in which the economy is designed to serve social, health, cultural, equity and nature outcomes.

# Our digital services

OPFS offers a wide range of digital services to enhance our nationwide offering to single parent families and other related audiences. These include:

- [Our main website](#) - just over 119,000 users.
- Our health and wellbeing website - [My Life and Me](#)
- Communications across a variety of social media channels, with a focus on supporting single parent families.
- Instagram - 2k followers.
- Bluesky - 2k followers.
- Facebook - 4.7k followers.
- LinkedIn - 1.5k followers
- Digital engagement tools like web chat on our main website, which have provided another means of single parents accessing support and advice.
- Our e-newsletters. Over 3.2k subscribers receive relevant and engaging content direct to their inbox.
- Digital services embedded into the website to increase our engagement with single parents. These include:
  - a peer-to-peer online forum.
  - a debt budget planner.
  - a benefits calculator.
  - The OPFS podcast.
  - Webinars.

We continually monitor the content we publish online to ensure that it meets the needs of single parent families.





# Thanks to all our funders, supporters and donors including:

- Agnes Watt Trust Fund
- Alexander Moncur Trust
- Angus Council - Support for Unemployed Lone Parents
- BBC Children in Need - Small Grants Programme
- Capital City Partnership/City of Edinburgh Council - Childcare Connector
- Charles Gordon Foundation
- Clyde Gateway - Access to Childcare Project
- Community Solutions
- Cruden Foundation
- CVS Falkirk - Falkirk Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Round 3
- Dundee Bairns
- Dundee City Council
- Dundee Volunteer and Voluntary Action - Welcoming Women Fund
- Edinburgh Airport Community Fund
- Falkirk Council
- Foundation Scotland -Regenerative Futures Fund - Early Decision Group
- Friends Provident Foundation - Small Grants Programme
- Gannochy Trust
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- George McLean Trust
- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector
- Glasspool Charity Trust - The Flexible Frontline Fund
- Grace and George Thomson Trust
- Harapan Trust
- Hugh Fraser Foundation
- James T Howat Charitable Trust
- Leng Charitable Trust
- Link Group - Link Community Wellbeing Fund
- Nancie Massey Charitable Trust
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Public Health Scotland - Employability Partnership - ILM Model
- Tesco Community Grants - Tesco Stronger Starts
- The Aberbrothock Skea Trust
- The Bairdwatson Charitable Trust
- The Clothworkers' Foundation
- The David Family Foundation
- The Incorporation of Weavers of Glasgow
- The Lady Marian Gibson Trust
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Northwood Charitable Trust
- The Robertson Trust
- The Scottish Government
- The WM Mann Foundation
- The Wood Foundation
- Turn2Us - Thriving Futures Fund
- Warburton Community Grants
- Ward Family Charitable Trust
- William Grant Foundation

## Board of Directors

The following were directors during the year to 31 March 2025:

### Chair:

- Halena Gauntlett - Senior Safeguarding Advisor, University of Strathclyde

### Vice Chair:

- Keir Mitchelmore - Retired Solicitor (Stepped Down Jun 25)

### Treasurer:

- Fiona Duncanson - Business Director, St Georges School

### Company Secretary:

- Rosalind Paterson - Finance Manager

### Board members:

- Halena Gauntlett - Senior Safeguarding Advisor, University of Strathclyde
- Keir Mitchelmore - Retired Solicitor (Stepped Down Jun 25)
- Fiona Duncanson - Business Director, St Georges School
- Clare Simpson - Retired Charity Leader
- Susan Smith - Campaigns Manager, Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland
- Addie Dinsmore - Head of Communications & Fundraising (Scotland) at WWF UK
- Alison Livesey - Managing Director JP Morgan Chase Payments Business
- Dr Andrew Sharman - Managing Partner, RMS Switzerland
- Mhairi Ross - Academic (Appointed Apr 25)
- Pinky Ghadiali - Entrepreneur (Appointed Dec 25)
- Rhys Nealon - Digital Leader (Appointed Dec 25)
- Emma Marley - Operations & Governance Leader (Appointed Dec 25)
- Lizzy Barbour - Learning & Development Advisor (Appointed Dec 25)

### Finance & Business Development Committee:

- Fiona Duncanson (Chair), Alison Livesey, Susan Smith
- Satwat Rehman, Morag Boyter, Rosalind Paterson

### People & Compliance Committee:

- Clare Simpson (Chair), Halena Gauntlett, Dr Andrew Sharman, Addie Dinsmore
- Satwat Rehman, Morag Boyter, Brook Marshall

# Financial statement

Statement of Financial Activities (incorporating Income and Expenditure Account)  
Year ended 31 March 2022

## Incoming resources:

Income from:	Notes	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	2025 Total	2024 Total
Donations		£9720	£21,931	£31,651	£28,907
Investments:					
Bank interest		-	£9813	£9813	£7997
Charitable activities:					
Awareness of need, training & policy research		£465,481	£389,200	£854,681	£798,174
National information & support services		£388,261	-	£388,261	£391,944
Family support services		£1,599,461	£95,087	£1,694,548	£1,621,211
Investment income		-	£15,590	£15,590	£14,761
Total income					
		£2,462,923	£531,621	£2,994,544	£2,862,994

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

The accounts have been prepared under Financial Reporting Standard 102 and the Statement of Recommended Practice for Charities.

## Expenditure on:

Charitable activities:	Notes	Restricted Funds	Unrestricted Funds	2025 Total	2024 Total
Awareness of need, training & policy research		£426,491	£390,329	£816,820	£939,573
National information & support services		£428,568	-	£428,568	£394,091
Family support services		£1,616,261	£49,898	£1,666,159	£1,554,741
Investment Management costs		-	£5,752	£5,752	£5,461
Total expenditure		£2,471,320	£445,979	£2,917,299	£2,893,866
Net income/(expenditure)		(£8,397)	£85,642	£77,245	(£30,872)
Transfer between funds		(£2000)	(£2000)	£77,245	(£30,872)
(Losses) Gains on investment valuation		-	(£3,898)	(£3,898)	(£24,608)
Actuarial gains on pension scheme		-	(£11,965)	(£11,965)	(£437)
Net movement in funds		(£10,397)	£71,779	£61,382	(£6,701)
Total funds brought forward					
		£587,563	£443,401	£1,030,964	£1,037,665
Total funds carried forward at 31 March 2025					
		£577,166	£515,180	£1,092,346	£1,030,964

Full accounts available on request from OPFS, 2 York Place, Edinburgh, EH1 3EP.





## OPFS offices

### Edinburgh Headquarters

One Parent Families Scotland,  
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**Helpline:** 0808 801 0323  
**Helpline email:** [helpline@opfs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@opfs.org.uk)  
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**Email:** [opfsedinburgh@opfs.org.uk](mailto:opfsedinburgh@opfs.org.uk)

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### OPFS Falkirk

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**One Parent  
Families Scotland**  
*changing lives, challenging poverty*

**Together we can make a difference to children's lives.  
Support the work we do by donating.**

**[www.opfs.org.uk](http://www.opfs.org.uk)**

**Lone parent helpline: 0808 801 0323 Helpline email: [helpline@opfs.org.uk](mailto:helpline@opfs.org.uk)**

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