



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

Stirling Management School

Challenges and opportunities facing lone parents entering work in Glasgow

Professor Ronald McQuaid* and Dr Helen Graham**

*Stirling Management School, University of Stirling: r.w.mcquaid@stir.ac.uk

** Employment Research Institute, Edinburgh Napier University: h.graham@napier.ac.uk

*Glasgow Centre for Population Health Seminar: From welfare to work
a snapshot of the reform challenges and opportunities facing lone
parents*

Glasgow, 18 October 2013



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

Stirling Management School

Presentation Outline

- Introduction
- Quantitative context
- Qualitative findings
- Conclusions



Aims and context

- Research explored the experiences of lone parents seeking work in the context of a tightening policy regime
- 2001 mandatory 'Work Focussed Interviews'
- Move from Income Support to Job Seeker's Allowance when:
youngest child 16 years old;
2008: reduced to 12 ... 2012: 5 years old
- Sanctions if you do not adhere to conditions of JSA



Methodology

- Mixed methods approach; combining large scale social survey datasets with small number of qualitative interviews and a focus group.
- **Literature Review**
- **Quantitative analysis**
- Annual Population Survey, the Family Resources Survey and the Scottish Household Survey - predominantly descriptive analysis (some basic regressions)
- **Qualitative data collection and analysis**
- 17 interviews; focus group of 8 lone parents (exploratory and not generalizable)



Employment rate for those 16-64 years old, by parental status, April-June 2013, UK

Parental status	Employment rate (%)
<i>Without dependent children</i>	
Men	70.0
Women	65.7
<i>With dependent children</i>	
Lone parents	60.2
Married or cohabiting men	90.7
Married or cohabiting women	72.2

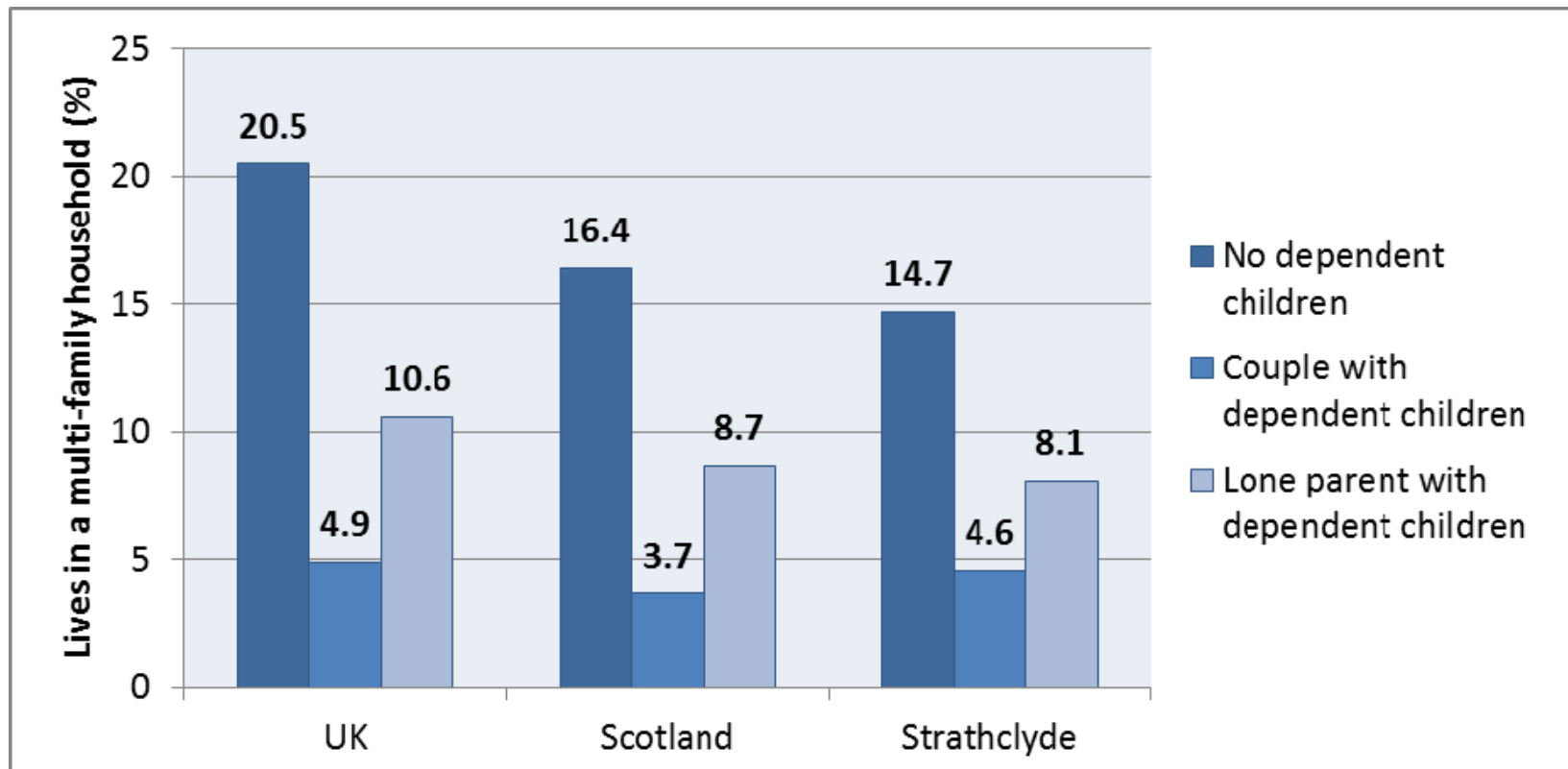
Source: Office for National Statistics, 2013a

Note: Many of those without dependent children are retired or not in the labour market.

Dependent children are children under 16 and those aged 16 to 18 who are never-married and in full-time education.



Proportion of families living in multi-family households, by family type



Source: Annual Population Survey Household Dataset, 2011

Proportion of working-age families who are lone parent families, by local authority - but LA boundaries etc.



UNIVERSITY OF
STIRLING

Stirling Management School

North Lanarkshire	9.7
Lothian	8.2
Fife	8.0
Tayside	7.9
Glasgow	7.6
Dunbartonshire	7.5
South Lanarkshire	7.3
Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	7.0
Ayrshire	7.0
Central	7.0
Highlands and Islands	6.7
Border	6.1
Edinburgh	4.7
Grampian	4.6

Source: Scottish Household Survey, 2007-08



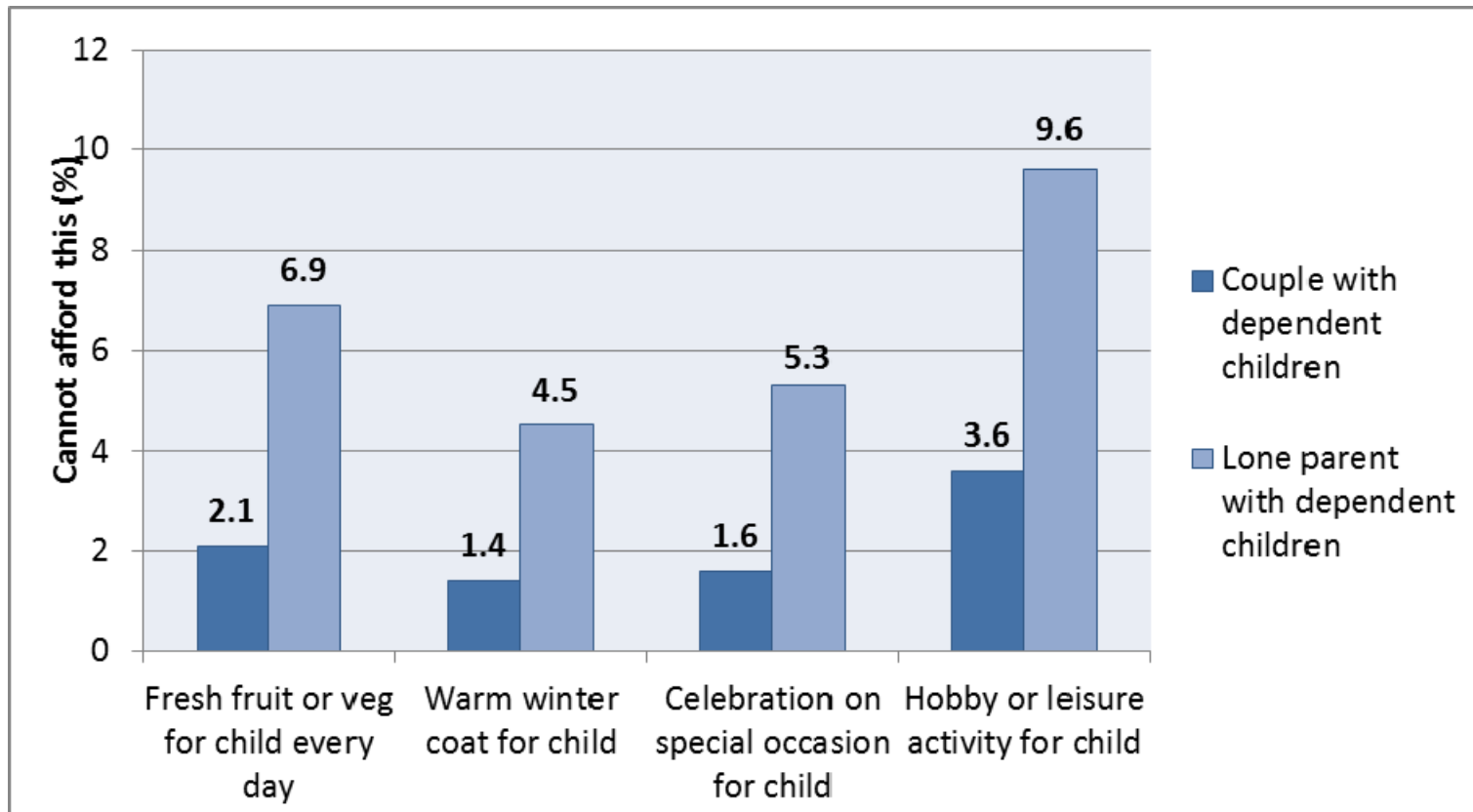
Mean family income, by family type

	UK	Scotland
<i>Total income from all sources</i>		
No dependent children	£517.69	£486.23
Couple with dependent children	£962.26	£937.80
Lone parent with dependent children	£422.72	£390.00
<i>Income from earnings (employees only)</i>		
No dependent children	£592.08	£550.13
Couple with dependent children	£906.31	£875.33
Lone parent with dependent children	£306.72	£390.00
<i>Income from means tested benefits and tax credits</i>		
No dependent children	£16.85	£17.17
Couple with dependent children	£49.61	£40.13
Lone parent with dependent children	£158.59	£147.76

Source: Family Resources Survey, 2010-2011



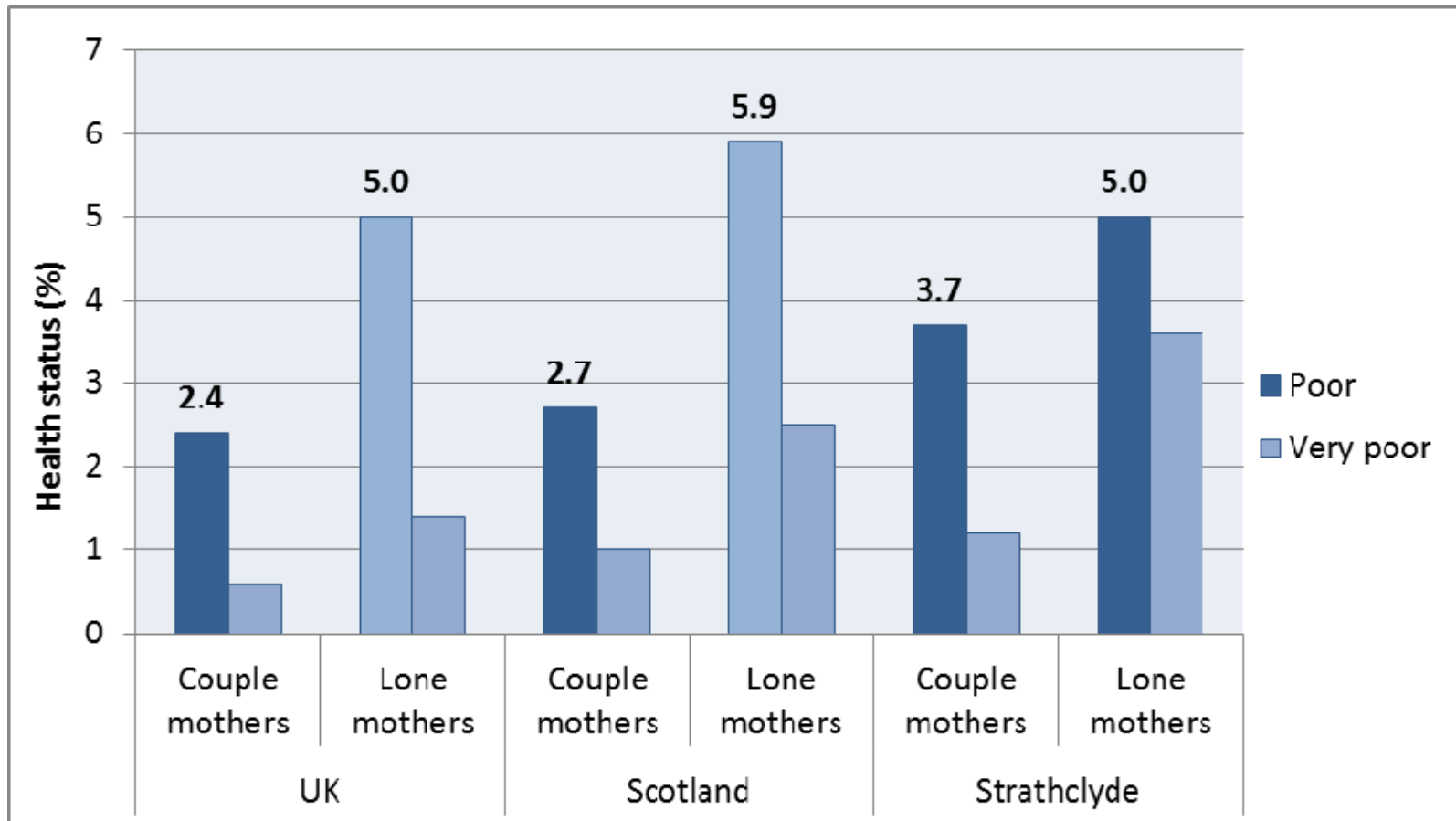
Indicators of child financial and material deprivation in UK working age families, by family type



Source: Family Resources Survey, 2010-2011 (All significantly diff. 5%)



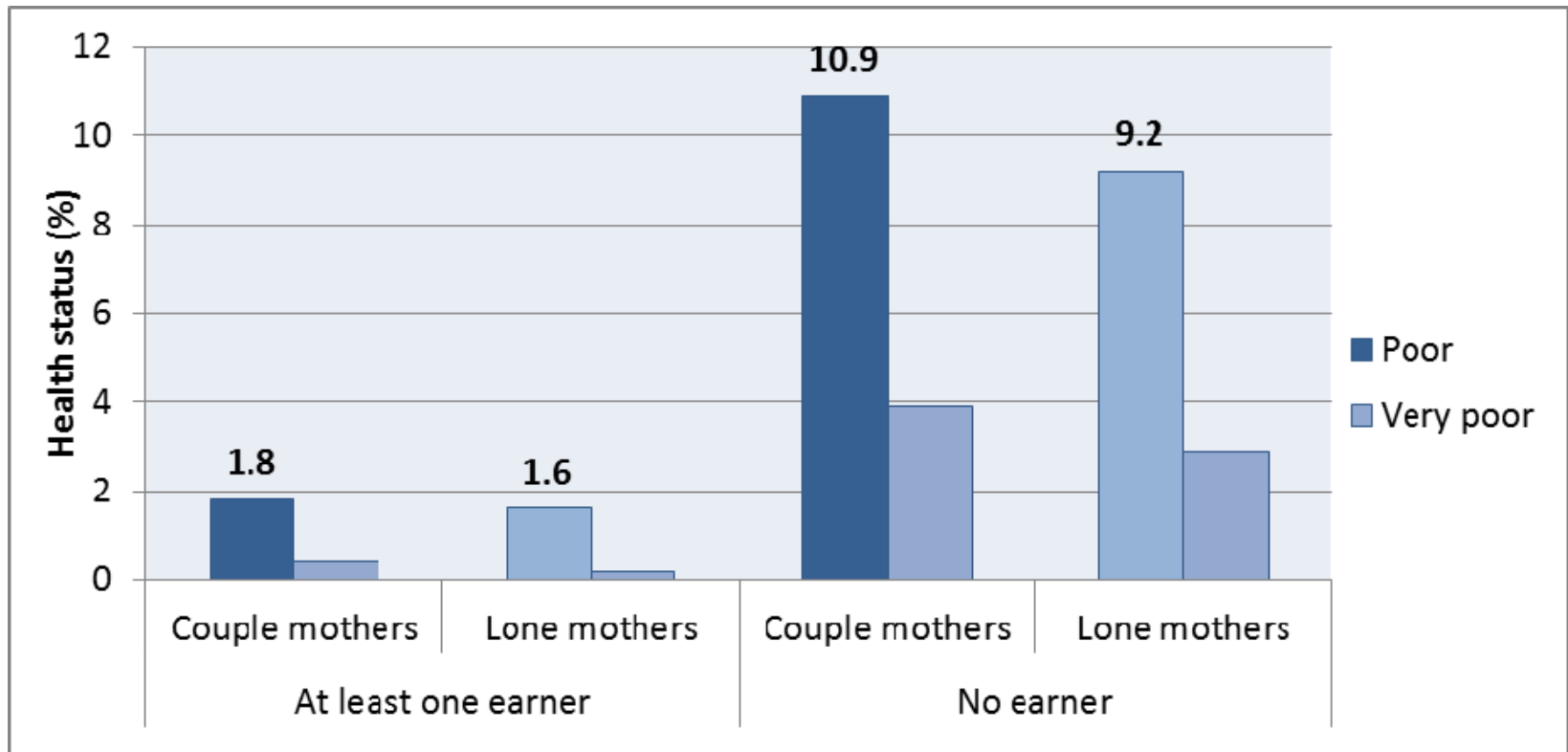
Mothers' self-reported general health, by family type



Source: Annual Population Survey Household Dataset, 2011



Mothers' self-reported general health, by family type and earning status in UK



Source: Annual Population Survey Household Dataset, 2011 (Also note: lone parents more likely to have no earner)



Lone parents obviously not homogenous

- How they became a lone parent (separation, never a stable relationship etc.), age when they became a lone parent etc.
- Children (number, age, disability etc.)
- Employability individual factors (skills/ work experience, attitudes etc.)
- Personal circumstances (social networks, informal childcare)
- External circumstances (transport, local area, labour demand, employer flexibility etc.)



QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

- 17 lone parents, face-to-face (c. 30+ minutes usually)
- focus group consisting of 8 lone parents
- Interviewees ranged in age from 21 to 44 (average 30)
- Their children ranged from 1 to 19 years old (average two children)
- The age at which they had their first child -15 to 32 years
- Focus group participants age 26 to 43 (average age of 33)
- Their children were all at least 4 years (average two children)



Income

- “It just gets you there and no more. There’s nothing to play about with, you can’t treat yourself.” Age 29, 2 children aged 4 and 3.
- “You just scrape by on your benefits really. By the time you pay your bills and get the shopping...I manage. I’ve got to manage!” Age 26, 3 children aged 6, 2 and 1.

BUT:

- “You can’t really ask for any more, can you? You get what you get, you don’t work, so you can’t”, Age 29, 3 children aged 11, 5 and 1.



Family and social networks

- “They do have contact with him but it’s on his terms.” Age 37, 2 children aged 19 and 5.
- “He probably would [help if the mother found a job], but I wouldn’t like to depend on it because he’d probably let me down, but I could ask and he probably would.” Age 33, 2 children aged 16 and 5.
- “It’s maybe ok for the first week or two, but other people have a life too.” Age 26, 2 children aged 7 and 4.



Health

- “Sometimes I can’t get up and get the weans [children] to nursery and school in the morning. Sometimes I just can’t get out of the house at all because I’ve got anxiety as well....sometimes I just can’t do it. I lost one of my jobs because of it, and it’s getting in a job and staying in a job, because I’ve got a very short fuse.” Age 24, 2 children aged 5 and 2



Looking for and being in work

- “I fell pregnant so I couldn’t go to do the Highers. You can’t have more than four weeks off and you can’t get the wean into nursery until it’s 6 weeks old.” Age 26, 3 children aged 6, 2 and 1.
- “I think it’s probably just being out of work for quite a while, and you feel a bit rusty, I suppose, and a wee bit ‘will I be able to do it?’ ...cause some of them [jobs] I’ve done a long time ago...and I don’t know if that maybe puts people off, if you’ve not worked in a certain industry for a long time.” Age 32, 1 child aged 5.
- “I don’t feel confident and don’t really know what to put on them [CVs], because obviously there’s a few gaps as well.” Age 25, 2 children aged 5 and 3.



Attitudes to work

- “I want my weans to have good things in life. Be able to take my daughter out and when she says can she go to the shop I don’t have to say I’ve nae money.” Age 26, 3 children aged 6, 2 and 1.
- “I was better off financially [in work]. I’d rather work than be on the benefits system. I want to have money for my weans and be able to give them stuff if they want stuff and go places. I feel better about myself when I’ve got a job because I’m working for my children.” Age 24, 2 children aged 6 and 5.
- However, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission highlights the issue of low pay



Attitudes to work - more than the money

- “Meeting folk, getting back out there.” Age 31, 1 child aged 4.
- “Sanity! [laughs]...it’s being out there during the day, having conversations with other people...it’s having a routine of every single day, I’m working, the weans are in education...it makes it a lot easier, a lot happier.” Age 21, 2 children aged 5 and 2.
- “I’d like her [daughter] to see me working, I think it would just instil a good work ethic in her when she’s older as well, looking back, that her mum did work and not just stayed on the social.” Age 32, 1 child aged 5.
- “They don’t see you working but they know that you’re going and getting money, so they think, if I can just sit about...and this hole in the wall will give me money.” Age 30, 3 children aged 10, 6 and 5.



Attitudes to work cont.

- “I’d like to go to work, to do better for the kids...I’d like a job, and get off the burro, and signing on every fortnight”...
- “It’s scary...I’m not an outgoing person, I find it hard to look for work. I would love to have a job to work in, but I can’t work computers or anything like that. I don’t even know what work I could do.” Age 32, 2 children aged 12 and 6.



Types of work

- “The job would need to be between half nine and half two.” Age 37, 1 children aged 19 and 5.
- “I’m just looking for sixteen hours, I’m not looking for anything else...The hours will need to fit around [daughter].” Age 31, 1 child aged 4.



Types of work etc.

- “I was working in [a bank], running the staff canteen, and it was great – started at 7 in the morning, took 5 minutes to get to work, finished at half 2, it was a great job.” Age 43, 2 children aged 13 and 9.

Travel to work time:

- “I don’t want to travel that far because of my wee girl’s situation having asthma.” Age 24, 2 children aged 6 and 5.

Mental maps:

- “I’d need to get to know an area first.” Age 30, 2 children aged 9 and 5.



Job Opportunities – and competition for jobs

- “There’s not a lot of jobs out there that are 10 till 2.” Age 34, 3 children aged 14, 10 and 5.
- “Everybody wants that 10 till 2, that’s why there’s no shifts at that time....if a job comes up, how many parents are going to go for that job.” Age 40, 2 children aged 7 and 6.
- “I’ve not come across anything that sits around school hours...that’s the big barrier... starting work, it would have to be after 9, so I could get [the younger child] into school.” Age 43, 2 children aged 13 and 9.



Childcare!

- “It’s hard sometimes, there is jobs out there – people just go ‘there’s nothing there’, but there is jobs there for people – but it’s the childcare, trying to get childcare, you can’t, it’s really, really hard to get childcare... and if you’ve only got a morning placement or an afternoon, you can only work for an hour, because by the time you’ve put them in and then travelled to work and travelled back...” Age 24, 2 children aged 5 and 2.



Challenges of reconciling work and childcare

- “I actually was working, but I had to give up my job because they changed my shift to six in the morning... when I first started they gave me the school hours, and then because I wasn’t contracted to that they basically said I had to leave the job, but they found me a night shift, so I was starting work at 10 at night and not getting in till 5 in the morning, then I had to sit up till 8, get the weans ready, take them out, then they were at school and nursery, sleep, so that was the night shift. And then I had to change back to my contracted hours which was legally six in the morning, and I couldn’t do that so I had to leave.” Age 33, 2 children aged 7 and 5.



Welfare and Jobcentre plus

- “It’s like the woman who sanctioned me the other day, because she made the assumption that I wasn’t looking for work. She also said ‘I’ve got a child in nursery and I don’t have a problem with childcare, so why don’t you think about changing nurseries?’ It’s alright for them – you need to have a job to get your child in full-time nursery. If I had a full-time job I could get tax credits and fund a full-time place, but I’m only eligible for part-time. But she says if she can manage it... she looked at me like I was a piece of...” Age 43, 1 child aged 5.
- “I explained that I had two kids, I needed within school hours, and the guy replied, ‘I think you’re asking a bit much’.” Age 30, 2 children aged 10 and 6.



Welfare and Jobcentre plus cont.

- “Degrading. When the kids were off in the summer holidays I got put on to another advisor, he’s really, really hard...he nearly had me in tears...I find it really hard to talk to him...he’s not interested in listening, he’s just pushing you on to get a job.” Age 44, 2 children aged 12 and 6
- “When you go into the Jobcentre, a lot of them have an attitude on them more than they want to help you.” Age 25, 2 children aged 5 and 3
- “Every time I come out of there I feel suicidal!” Age 30, 2 children aged 10 and 6



Other support

- “I think it’s just the great unknown and you think you’re really alone, and then when you do come to a group like this you realise, wait a minute there are six and seven other people that are having the same sort of feelings, and even that in itself is enough to think, well, you’re not alone, there are other people going through the same.” Age 32, 1 child aged 5.
- “Now I feel like I can go out there and get a job. And I’m just as good as anyone else applying for that job to get it. But before I came here, I didn’t think that.” Age 26, 3 children aged 6,2 and 1.



Future changes to welfare

- “This new thing coming in where they give you all your month’s money at once – I couldn’t cope with that, I’d have a panic attack. If I got my month’s money in one go I’d get put out of my house. I’m just not good with money.” Age 33, 2 children aged 7 and 5.



Conclusions

- Lone parents appear to want to **work** & for various reasons
- The **move onto JSA** comes slightly too early for some. Most of the lone parents considered their youngest child reaching primary school age as a good age to go back to work. However, some children turn five several months before starting school, and it is difficult to fulfil job seeking requirements whilst still having to look after children full-time
- **Childcare** remains a major issue
- **Jobcentre Plus** was felt to offer insufficient help, non-supportive environment and can erode confidence
- The welfare system and **welfare reform** – not generous but changes may lead to problems for some (Financial Capability issues)



Thank you for listening

- recent ERI reports that may be of interest:

- McQuaid, R., Shapira, M., Graham, H. and Raeside, R. (2013) *Economic Inactivity Research Project (those with family commitments and the long-term sick and disabled) - Literature Review* (Project-11040), Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland
<http://www.delni.gov.uk/economic-inactivity-literature-review-project>
- McQuaid, R., Graham, H. and Shapira, M. (2013) *An expert paper on the type, extent and delivery of childcare provision necessary to maximise the economic participation of women within Northern Ireland*, report for Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ISBN 978 1 906414 31 3)
http://www.equalityni.org/sections/default.asp?cms=Research_Research%20projects&cmsid=90_92&id=92&secid=7
- McQuaid R.W., Bond, S. and V. Fuertes (2009) *Working for Families Fund Evaluation (2004-08)*, Scottish Government, Edinburgh (ISBN 978 0 7559 7298 2)
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/20092521/0>



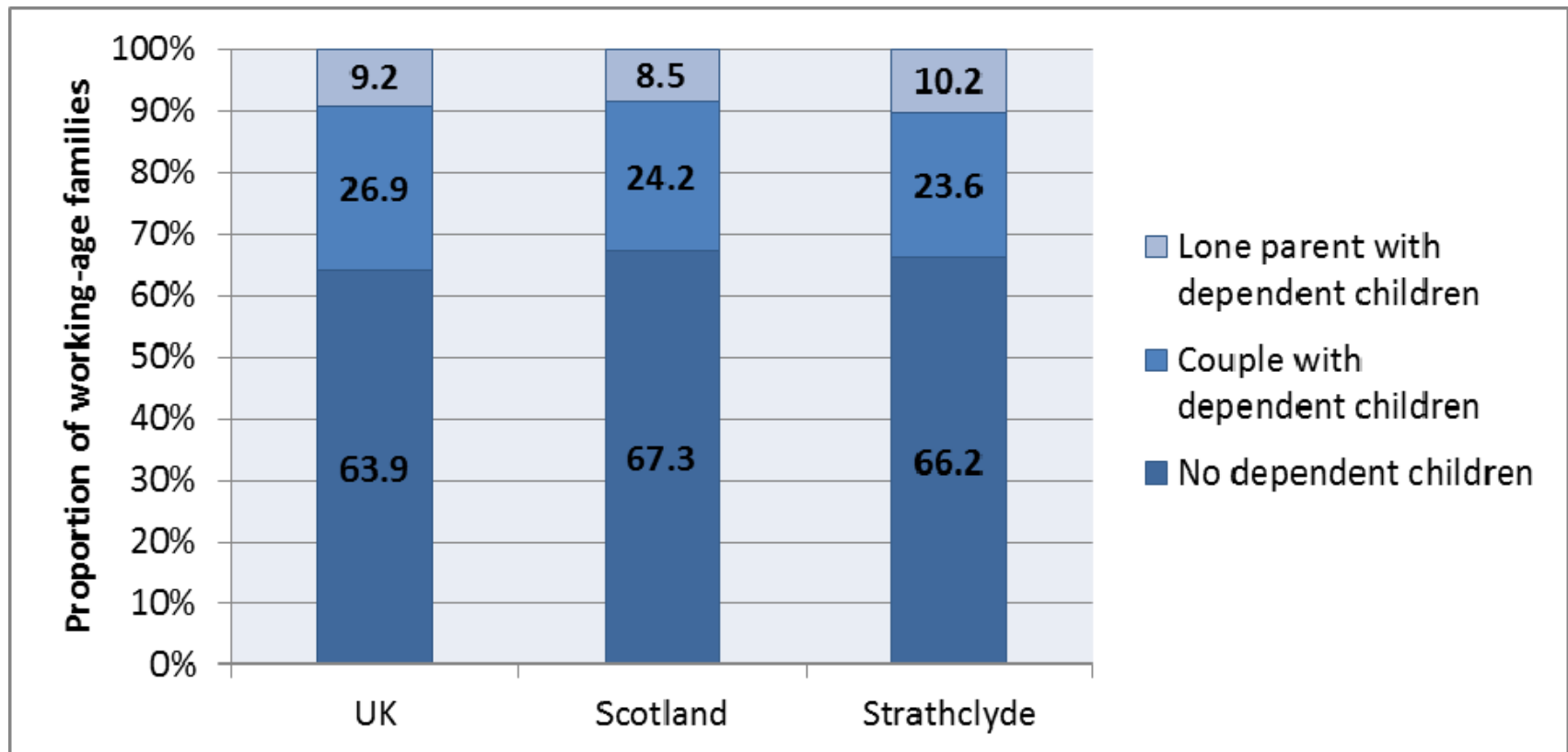
Glasgow Lone parents

- July 2011: **2,075** lone parents in Glasgow City claiming JSA
- Feb 2013: **6,930** lone parents claiming Income Support in Glasgow City

- (UK - around half of lone mothers and 70% of lone fathers were previously married)



Working age families, by *family type*



Source: Annual Population Survey Household Dataset, 2011