

# THE BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING LONE PARENTS MOVING INTO PAID WORK

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### SUMMARY

Welfare policy changes to Income Support (IS) eligibility in October 2012 have resulted in lone parents on IS moving to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) when their youngest child is five years old. Once on JSA, they must seek work, or face tougher penalties under a new sanctions regime. Within this context, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) commissioned a literature review and research study on the wider impacts of the welfare changes on lone

parents with young children moving into work, with a focus on three areas:

1. Lone parents' lived experiences.
2. Lone parents looking for and being in work.
3. The current welfare regime and reforms.

This briefing paper summarises the key evidence and findings from that research.

### KEY POINTS

The overwhelming majority of lone parents are female. In Glasgow, four out of ten families with children are lone parent families. This is the highest local authority rate in Scotland, equivalent to 26,454 households, and this figure is expected to rise over the next 25 years.

Among the lone parents on JSA who took part in the GCPH study, four important challenges were identified:

1. Most lone parents are looking for a job, but need to balance employment with looking after their children.
2. The current benefits system 'pushes' people into work, without recognition of the implications for children's wellbeing, and the ability of the job to be sustained in light of childcare responsibilities.

3. Adults are required to search for, and take on, work as soon as the youngest child reaches the age of five. Where the child turns five in the months before starting school, availability of sufficient hours of childcare is a challenge, particularly during the summer holidays when free nursery provision ceases.

4. Jobcentre staff provided less support and understanding of the situation than the participants felt they needed. Many found 'signing on' an unpleasant experience with negative consequences for their wellbeing and involving a range of practical challenges. Consequently, some parents were searching for alternative employment support services.

To conclude there is a need to consider developing further planning and service delivery responses across a range of areas that include childcare, employment support, in-work poverty, transport, future welfare reform and partnership work.

## CONTEXT

Lone parent households are six times more likely than couple households to contain no earner. In Glasgow, 49.5% of all lone parents are in paid work, of which 63.2% are in part-time work.

Lone parents are more likely to experience underemployment and in-work poverty, and their median earnings are one-third of the earnings of couples with children. Other data on household income reveal that only 36% of those entitled to child maintenance payments are receiving them; almost two-thirds of lone parents on benefits receive no child maintenance payments.

In 2013, Minimum Income Standards (MIS) research estimated that a lone parent with one child would need a weekly minimum income, before housing costs, of £269.13. Benefit levels only cover 57% of this amount.

Lone mothers tend to have worse health than couple mothers and are much more likely to report domestic violence. Growing Up in Scotland data showed that almost half of lone parents reported experiencing some type of domestic violence with just over a quarter reporting physical violence. In contrast, only 7.4% of couple parents reported any type of domestic violence, with 3.4% reporting physical violence.

Significant barriers to entering and maintaining employment included:

- accessibility and affordability of childcare
- lack of qualifications, experience and confidence to enter the workplace
- accessibility and availability of work compatible with caring responsibilities.

Since 2005, in Scotland there has been an almost 16-fold increase in the numbers of lone parents claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), reaching 9,320 claimants in August 2014. There was also a nine-fold increase in the numbers facing sanctions: rising from 533 in 2009 to 4,546 sanctions in 2013.

## BACKGROUND

In Scotland, nearly three in ten families with children involve households with only one parent. The proportion increases to four in ten within Glasgow, which is the highest rate of any Scottish local authority. Lone parent rates in Scotland and Glasgow are predicted to increase over the next 25 years. Lone parents are a varied group in terms of income, employment and routes into lone parenthood, but compared with couple families they are more likely to experience poverty, including in-work poverty, and work in low-status occupations.

Various UK welfare policy changes will have a significant impact on lone parents with young children. This is particularly true for the changes to Income Support eligibility. Lone parents caring for their children and entitled to Income Support are expected to move onto Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) when the youngest child reaches five years old, unless entitled to another benefit due to disability or illness. Once on JSA, they must seek, and be available for, work – or face much tougher penalties under a new sanctions regime.

Within this changing context, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH), working with One Parent Families Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, commissioned a literature review<sup>1</sup> and research study<sup>2</sup> on the impacts of the welfare reforms on lone parents with young children moving into work. The study included views from lone parents in Glasgow (re)entering paid work.

This briefing paper summarises important findings to emerge across the following three areas of this work, and serves as a stimulus for wider discussion about action to support lone parents:

1. Lone parents' lived experiences.
2. Lone parents looking for and being in work.
3. The current welfare regime and reforms.

Author's note: The data and results presented in this briefing paper are from the GCPH-commissioned literature review<sup>1</sup> and research study<sup>2</sup>, both published in May 2014. Any additional or new data is referenced separately.

## AIMS AND PURPOSE

The primary aim of the literature review was to undertake a structured and wide-ranging review (but not a systematic review) of material about lone parents with a particular focus on demographic trends, including changing household structures; inequalities, such as economic and health; current discourse (e.g. as reported in the media) and policy responses.

The primary aim of the research study was to undertake an in-depth mixed-methods study that explored the challenges and opportunities facing lone parents moving into paid work, and 'captured' their lived experiences in relation to employment and job-seeking, income, childcare, access to social networks, transport, and health. An important part of the study involved recruiting lone parents from across Glasgow to increase understanding of the following:

- What was it like being a lone parent seeking work?
- What was it like being a lone parent on Jobseeker's Allowance?
- How do the expectations placed upon claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance relate to the realities of seeking, entering into and sustaining paid work as a lone parent?

## APPROACHES AND METHODS

The search strategy for the literature review had three areas of focus:

1. Population data on lone parents, comparing family types and the wider implications.
2. Geographical coverage at a UK, national or sub-national context, which also included comparisons with other countries, such as within the European Union.
3. Lone parent outcomes across a range of areas, which included employment, job characteristics, income, housing and health.

The mixed-methods study involved quantitative and qualitative analyses. The former explored lone parents' demographic characteristics, employment, income, housing, education and health using the Annual Population Survey, the Family Resources Survey, the Scottish Household Survey, and the Growing Up in Scotland study. The qualitative research involved 17 individual interviews with lone parents and one focus group with eight lone parent participants. In both cases, participants were drawn from different areas of Glasgow.

- The lone parent age range was 21-44 years old, with an average age of 31.
- Their children's age range was from one to 19 years old.
- Around two-thirds of the lone parents had a youngest child who had turned five, or was about to.
- On average, participants had two children; the age at which they had their first child ranged from 15-32.
- Most of the sample were lone mothers but one lone father and a kinship carer were also included.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Lone parents' lived experiences

#### *Demographics and household trends*

Within the UK, 24.9% of all families with dependent children are lone parent households, according to 2011 Census data (equivalent to almost 1.9 million families). In Scotland, the rate is higher at 27.6% (equivalent to almost 170,000 lone parent households), and Glasgow has the highest rate (40.4%) of any Scottish local authority, representing 26,454 lone parent households in the city. The proportion of all households that are lone parent family households is predicted to rise between 2010 and 2035, by 51% across Scotland and by 42% in Glasgow.



The majority of lone parents are female: 2011 Census data shows that the UK male lone parent rate was only 9.5%, the Scottish rate 7.8%, and the Glasgow figure even lower at 6.0%. Divorce is the most common route into lone parenthood for men with being 'single or never married' the most common among women. The latter definition includes co-habiting but subsequently separating and those not co-habiting. A breakdown of annual household data from 2011 showed the following statistics for Scotland:

- The average age of lone parents varies from 32 years among never married mothers to 50 among widowed lone fathers.
- Lone parents have fewer children (1.53) compared with co-habiting (1.58) or married couples (1.77).
- The mean age of the oldest dependent child was about ten years old for female lone parents; for male lone parents the child's mean age was just over 12. For couples, the mean age of the oldest dependent child was virtually the same, at just under ten when reported by either mothers or fathers.
- Compared with couple families, lone parents are more likely to live in 'multi-family' households with relative(s) or other adults. In Scotland, nearly one in 11 lone parents lives in this arrangement.

There is an absence of robust lone parent data on other important characteristics such as ethnicity, religion or disability.

*Lone parents and employment*

Although one-third of lone mothers and two-fifths of lone fathers are in professional or managerial jobs, most lone parents are more likely to be in low-skilled or routine work. The UK lone parent employment rates (59.1%) are similar to Scotland (58.1%), according to data from the 2011 Census. In Glasgow, a different picture emerges with only 49.5% (13,108) of lone parents in paid work, of which 63.2% (8,285) are in part-time work.

Lone parent employment rate of  
**58%** in Scotland  
but only **49.5%** in Glasgow.

At a wider population level, there are substantial gender differences in working patterns with 21.5% of lone fathers working part-time, compared with 60.9% of lone mothers. Lone parents are also likely to experience underemployment (being in paid work but wanting to work more hours), and this has increased since the economic downturn in 2008. Underemployment is particularly common among low-skilled occupations of which 23% are thought to be underemployed.

The interaction between lone parents experiencing job segregation (i.e. having a greater likelihood of occupying lower skilled and lower status jobs), and current patterns of gendered job segregation, leaves lone mothers worst off.

*Lone parents and poverty*

Lone parent families are more likely to experience child poverty than are couple families, regardless of whether they are in or out of work. For example, 22% of all children in lone parent families live in poverty before housing costs, almost doubling to 43% after housing costs. In contrast, 16% of children in couple families live in poverty, rising to 22% after housing costs.

Lone parent households are six times more likely to contain no earner. However, important in-work poverty differences also exist. Poverty among children with both parents working full time is 5% after housing costs, rising to 10% where one parent works full-time and the other works part-time. Among children with a lone parent working full-time, almost one in five (17%) are in poverty, rising to 31% among those with a lone parent working part-time. Furthermore, lone parents' median earnings are the equivalent of one-third of couples' earnings, suggesting that their earning ability is constrained in some way.

Commonly-used poverty measurements are a low bar for estimating the extent of deprivation. Research on Minimum Income Standards (MIS) established that a lone parent with one child would need a weekly minimum income, before housing and childcare costs, of £269.13, in 2013. The 2013 welfare benefit levels (£154.72) for a lone parent with one child would only cover 57% of this MIS amount.

A lone parent, with one child, working 37 hours per week on the minimum wage will meet 86% of the MIS standard in 2013. This reflects the much greater help they get in the form of tax credits. However, when a lone parent’s income rises, this support falls away quickly, thus explaining why they need to earn around double the National Minimum Wage to meet this proposed Minimum Income Standard – see Table 1.

**Table 1. Minimum Income Standard for a lone parent with one child (April 2013).**

Minimum Income Standard (MIS) annual earnings required	<b>£25,586</b>
MIS hourly rate	<b>£13.09</b>
National Minimum Wage (NMW) hourly rate	<b>£6.19</b>
Required increase in NMW hourly rate to meet MIS rate	<b>£6.90</b>

*Lone parents and finances*

Separating from a partner can have a poverty-triggering effect with the most vulnerable people feeling the effects more strongly. Paid work can be a route out of poverty, but low pay and job insecurity can limit the extent to which lone parents feel financially secure and better off. The tax credit system can be confusing and if overpayment and subsequent debts occur, it can severely affect family finances. Although paid work can increase access to credit, this can create financial difficulties when used to smooth the transition between work and unemployment, and changes in housing and partnership status.

Lone parents are less likely to have a bank account, savings or life insurance, than are couple families. Despite this lack of access, they generally manage tight household budgets well. However, they do face considerable material difficulties. The proportion failing to keep up with bills and regular debt payment is double that of families without children. They are over three times less likely than couple parents to afford a hobby or leisure activity, or have money to spend on themselves. In absolute terms one in five lone parents struggle to keep up with bills and debt payments, one in three are unable to afford to keep their house in a decent decorative condition or have a hobby, and over half say that they do not have money to spend on



themselves. A parent taking part in the GCPH study expressed the daily reality of coping with these difficulties:

***“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!”***

*Lone parent, 26 years old, with three children (six, two and one).*

Child maintenance systems are important poverty-reduction levers. In Finland and Germany, the maintenance systems have achieved 77% coverage of all families entitled to a child maintenance payment, with Sweden reaching 100%, as it is guaranteed by the state. In the UK, changes in 2008 led to maintenance rates increasing to 36%. However, difficulties exist within the private arrangements that the new UK system is trying to encourage, as well as continuing challenges within the statutory system. Twenty-two per cent of people using the Child Support Agency were receiving no money. Additionally, with almost two-thirds of lone parents on benefits receiving no maintenance, and average payments low (£23.01 per week for a lone parent on benefits), the child maintenance system’s poverty-reducing role is lessened.

#### *Housing and area deprivation*

In Scotland, almost half (48.9%) of all lone parents live in social housing with around 20% living in the private rented sector. The remaining 30% of lone parents have a mortgage/own a house, compared with almost four-fifths of couples with children. Using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, when comparing those living in the lowest 15% of deprived areas, 29.4% of all lone parents are likely to live in these areas, compared with 16.3% of people with no children and 12.6% of couples with children.

### *Health and wellbeing*

On average, lone mothers have worse health and more mental distress than couple mothers. Their poor health is associated with, and intensified by, non-employment. However, the association is found across occupational classes. Lone parents are also much more likely to report domestic violence, according to the Growing Up in Scotland study. The study showed that almost half (46.1%) of lone parents reported experiencing some type of domestic violence with just over a quarter (25.6%) reporting physical violence. In contrast, 7.4% of couple parents reported any type of domestic violence, with 3.4% reporting physical violence. Most lone parents (84%) identified an ex-partner as the perpetrator of this behaviour, but it is important to emphasise that the ex-partner may not necessarily be the father of their child(ren).



**Almost half of lone parents (46%)  
reported experiencing some type of  
domestic violence compared with  
7.4% of couple parents.**

## 2. Looking for and being in work

### *Entering or re-entering paid work*

Lone parents wanting to enter or re-enter paid work can face a range of important barriers that include:

- a lack of affordable childcare
- a large family and/or looking after young children
- poor health
- a lack of qualifications
- a lack of experience and confidence to enter the workplace
- a low expectation of wanting or being able to move into work.

More specifically, lone parents are less likely to be in work if they are under 25 years old, have no qualifications, children under five years old, or more than two children.

Many of the above barriers can affect couple families, but they are amplified for lone parents, who carry responsibilities as the sole carer and earner.

Among the lone parents interviewed as part of this study in Glasgow, only two out of 25 participants were in work and all reported varied work histories – from never having had a paid job to having one before leaving work to care for children. They identified barriers such as a lack of confidence, few qualifications and a patchy work history. The demands for a curriculum vitae (CV) and online applications, even for basic positions, were challenging for those with a limited work history, poor IT skills, or difficulties accessing a computer. Most complained about a lack of local jobs that fitted around childcare, and this need for flexibility was a major issue even if jobs were available. Existing childcare funding arrangements (i.e. through in-work tax credits) were viewed as being difficult for those not working, as well as making it difficult to accept a job without first securing childcare. A study participant expressed the challenges of addressing these work and childcare challenges:

***“I’ve not come across anything that sits around school hours... that’s the big barrier... starting work, it would have to be after nine, so I could get [the younger child] into school.”***

*Lone parent, 43 years old, with two children aged 13 and nine.*

Transport was another distinct barrier to employment. Most lone parents in the study were reliant on public transport and respondents commented that using public transport can be complex, time consuming, and expensive if it involves travelling

between home, nursery, school and work. This limited the range of jobs that people could look for or take up. Those with support, such as someone picking up children from school, had more flexibility, whereas those without support struggled to find the time and resources required to manage travel, work and caring responsibilities.

Despite the reported barriers and challenges, study participants identified a number of advantages to being in work: the benefits of having more money, an ability to buy items that their children wanted, greater personal independence, an opportunity to interact with others, and to set a family example that work was important. Those with positive past experiences were keen to return to work and those with less positive experiences reported enjoying the income and independence and wanted to experience it again. Past negative experiences involved employers not understanding their childcare responsibilities or the stress of balancing work and care. However, with none of the study participants discouraged, and all wanting to (re)enter paid work, instilling a work ethic within the family was viewed as being important:

***“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.”***

*Lone parent, 32 years old, with a child aged five.*

### **3. Welfare regime and welfare reforms**

#### *The UK welfare policy*

It is difficult to obtain contemporary data on the numbers of lone parents on different types of welfare benefits. However, new statistics from the Department of Work and Pensions show an almost 16-fold increase in the numbers of lone parents claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) in Scotland<sup>3</sup>. In April 2005, there were 595 claimants, rising to 9,320 in August 2014, with a high of 13,000 claimants in February 2013.

A series of changes to Income Support (IS) eligibility lie behind the significant rise in lone parents moving onto JSA. Between 2008 and 2012, IS eligibility changed: parents used to be eligible until their youngest child was 16 years old; eligibility now stops when the youngest child is five. In other words, when the child turns five, lone parents on Income Support must now move on to Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), unless they are eligible to claim other benefits, such as Employment Support Allowance due to an illness or disability. Once on JSA, they must comply with a set of conditions to actively seek and be available for work, or face the risk of sanctions.

*Jobseeker's Allowance – sanctions regime*

In Scotland, the number of JSA sanction decisions has almost doubled over the past five years – from 43,141 in 2009 up to 83,299 in 2013 – with men accounting for three-quarters of all decisions<sup>4</sup>. During the same period, the sanctioning of lone parents in Scotland increased nine-fold from 533 to 4,546.

Within this context, a new JSA sanctions regime introduced in October 2012 included three new sanction levels with tougher penalties for repeat sanctions. The penalties range from having benefit payments stopped for four weeks (lower level sanctions) up to a potential maximum loss for 156 weeks (higher level sanctions).

Sanctions tend to affect the most vulnerable in society, including lone parents, who often face difficulties in complying with the required conditions, for reasons that include a lack of awareness and understanding of the process and personal and practical barriers. In the short term, sanctions may lead to people entering work, however long-term negative impacts on adult and child health and subsequent debt and hardship can occur<sup>4</sup>.

*Other welfare changes*

Lone parents are also being affected by other welfare changes. They constitute 43% of all households affected by the introduction of the so-called 'benefits cap' and are affected by the spare room subsidy, also known as the 'bedroom tax'. Those living in private sector tenancies face changes to the Local Housing Allowance with rates now based on the 30th percentile of local market rents instead of the median (50th percentile).

Those lone parents in work and receiving tax credits will experience the 'up-rating freeze' with amounts paid below inflation, thus representing a decrease in real terms. It has been estimated that tax credit changes will lead to a lone parent with two children working full-time on the minimum wage losing 13% income (£1,630 per year) with a lone parent on the average wage losing 7% income (£1,890 per year). Moreover, working parent(s) face reduced childcare support with entitlement to reclaim costs reduced from 80% to 70%.

### *Lone parents' experiences of the current welfare regime*

Most lone parents taking part in the GCPH study were claiming, or about to move onto JSA. Those on IS were obliged to attend a work-focused interview every six months, while those on JSA had to attend the Jobcentre fortnightly and complete a number of tasks in the intervening period. Requirements varied between participants but included applying for a certain number of jobs per fortnight, usually around six; showing evidence of using more than one search method, such as the Internet and newspapers; and an extreme example of one parent having to demonstrate a 'full-time' (35 hours per week) job search, for instance by being active on job-seeking websites.

Participants who had moved on to JSA identified three important issues within the current welfare regime:

- 1. It acts as the wrong kind of 'push'** as most are looking for work anyway, and it is potentially pushing them into applying for unsuitable jobs and accepting the first offer without considering whether it is sustainable or reconcilable with caring responsibilities. Flexibilities are in place about the type of jobs lone parents are obliged to apply for or accept, however this was not being applied consistently.
- 2. The move on to JSA may be too early for lone parents**, if the youngest child reaches the age of five several months before schools start, thus making it difficult to fulfil job-seeking requirements while having to look after their children full-time.
- 3. There was a lack of Jobcentre staff support** with CVs and completing applications, including online application processes, with assumptions that lone parents are capable of doing this. Some staff failed to appreciate parents' caring responsibilities and its impact on their ability to work. Most attending fortnightly signing-on sessions found it an unpleasant experience within a suspicious and punitive atmosphere that eroded confidence and prevented them from seeking support. In response, some sought alternative help elsewhere from specialist or dedicated employment support services.

The GCPH study findings confirm other evidence on the JSA regime with lone parents feeling pushed into applying for, or accepting, jobs they did not want; those distant from the labour market not finding the regime helpful in getting them into work; and, flexible approaches being inconsistently and inadequately applied by Jobcentre staff.

*Lone parents' views on future change*

Childcare and employment support were the two most important concerns to emerge from the GCPH study. Access to affordable childcare is paramount, not just when in work, but to ensure engagement in job searching and being able to accept a job offer with the confidence that suitable childcare arrangements are in place. Greater employment support should be available to all lone parents and not just those who happen to hear about external organisations providing these services.

In terms of the forthcoming welfare changes, there was a lack of awareness among the lone parents about Universal Credit and its implications. There were concerns expressed about the requirement to apply online, a challenge for those with poor IT skills, and about managing household budgets when receiving a monthly payment.

*Welfare and mitigation activities*

In Scotland, mitigation activities to the welfare reforms include the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments, Passport Benefits, such as free school meals and dental treatment, and the recently introduced Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF). The SWF data for the 2013-2014 financial year shows that:

- in Scotland, there were a total of 35,900 Community Care Grant awards and 81,900 Crisis Grant awards.
- twenty-eight per cent of all Community Care Grant awards and 19% of all Crisis Grant awards in Scotland were to lone parents, according to available SWF household data.
- the Scottish local authority average Community Care Grant payment was £644.
- the Scottish local authority average Crisis Grant payment was £71.
- Glasgow awarded the highest average Crisis Grant payment (£107) of any Scottish local authority and the second highest average Community Care Grant payment of £847, after Shetland<sup>5</sup>.

The welfare reforms were identified as a partial factor (i.e. benefit delays, sanctions and falling incomes) in explaining the five-fold increase in the numbers using food banks in Scotland. The Trussell Trust, the largest UK provider of food aid, saw an increase from 14,332 (2012/13) to 71,428 people (2013/14) in Scotland. Although there is no available lone parent data, 22,387 people with children accessed these food banks in 2013/14<sup>4</sup>.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lone parent families represent a significant number and proportion of families, with projected estimates that the rates will increase over the next 25 years, in Glasgow and across Scotland. Children and adults within lone parent families are more vulnerable to poverty (out-of-work and in-work poverty) and face a number of consequential practical and emotional challenges and limitations to the opportunities they are able to take up. Within this context, there is a need to consider responses that recognise the needs and the capabilities of this group, across a range of important areas that include childcare, employment support (including in-work poverty), transport, future welfare reform, local partnership responses and existing data sources.

### *Childcare*

Childcare is a central concern for many lone parents, particularly for those without wider family support. Availability, cost and funding remain critical issues, as well as the flexibility to fit in care around changing work arrangements. There is a specific need to review access to childcare around important points of transition for lone parents. These include:

- In advance of moving towards or taking up paid work i.e. studying or spending time on job-seeking activities, attending interviews, and so on.
- After-school and during summer holidays.

Local partners should continue to develop childcare services that are accessible, affordable and flexible enough to allow lone parents to take up employment. Equally, there is a role for the Scottish Government in funding sufficient provision of childcare. Jobcentre Plus, with other partners, should take account of circumstances when the youngest child turns five before schools start in August. At a UK level, lone parents should be able to defer moving on to JSA until the youngest child is in school full-time.



*Employment support*

Significant employment support implications include the need to review the types and nature of jobs available and their accessibility for lone parents, taking account of skills, working hours and location.

- Jobcentre Plus staff should recognise the lack of local job opportunities for lone parents, as well as the need to ensure that existing flexibilities are consistently offered.
- Jobcentre Plus should provide more specialised support, in conjunction with third sector organisations and others, and learn from successful programmes, such as the former Working for Families Fund.
- There is a role for the Scottish and Local Government to fund employability and other support services for lone parents, beyond existing provision as JSA claimants.
- At a UK level, the allocation of a dedicated lone parent advisor to lone parents on Income Support could be extended to those on JSA.
- On a broader level, labour market policies should aim to help lone parents into employment that is suitable and sustainable and avoids movement from out-of-work to in-work poverty.

*Transport*

Public transport costs can be a significant barrier for job-seekers and for a period after starting work. The reduced availability of public transport outside of peak hours may influence whether people accept or remain in a job.

- There is scope to consider co-operation between local councils, transport providers, and Jobcentre Plus to address high transport costs as a barrier for some job-seekers.
- There is a role for transport providers to consider the needs of job-seekers and the recently employed in their concessionary travel schemes.

### *Future welfare reform*

With the planned move to Universal Credit (UC) and the switch to monthly payments, there is a need to consider a range of actions to support lone parents that include:

- provision of financial and budgeting advice through local financial inclusion and/or advice services before the move to monthly payments.
- ensuring there is IT support for those with a lack of skills or access to computing facilities when the move to an online application system occurs.
- the continuation of flexibilities available to lone parents on JSA.

### *Local partnership work*

With lone parents experiencing both poor health and economic disadvantage (including a very low uptake rate of child maintenance payments), there is a need to promote integrated partnership work to simultaneously tackle these challenges. The Healthier, Wealthier Children (HWC) project is an illustrative example that involves referral links between money/welfare advice services and healthcare staff across NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde<sup>6</sup>. To date, there have been more than 8,000 referrals to advice services of pregnant women and families experiencing, or at risk of, poverty. This led to a total of £8 million in gains with lone parents the main beneficiary group.

- Approaches like the HWC project have demonstrated that co-ordinated partnership work can lead to impressive financial outcomes for lone parents. There is scope to explore how HWC lessons can enable Community Planning Partnerships and employment support services improve a range of inter-related outcomes for lone parents with young children moving into work.

### *Existing data sources*

There are limitations in what existing data sources are able to tell us about the characteristics and circumstances of lone parents in relation to ethnicity and a wider understanding of their experiences of domestic violence.

- Small adjustments to surveys, such as the British Crime Survey, could provide useful information to better inform policy and provide a fuller picture of lone parents' experience of domestic violence.
- The census could provide sufficient ethnic minority lone parent data to draw robust conclusions. Moreover, local authorities should seek out the data required to plan services that meet the needs of all ethnic groups, and consider commissioning this data if it does not exist.

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## CONTACT

James Egan  
Public Health Programme Manager  
Glasgow Centre for Population Health  
1st Floor, House 6  
94 Elmbank Street  
Glasgow G2 4NE

Tel: 0141 287 6875

Email: [James.Egan2@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:James.Egan2@glasgow.gov.uk)

Web: [www.gcph.co.uk](http://www.gcph.co.uk)

