
Date: 27 November 2014

Agenda item number: 4

Title: Development work - lone parents

Content: The attached paper sets out a proposal to improve services for lone parents in Glasgow.

In October, a group of managers from GCC, GCPH, OPFS, NHS, Jobs and Business Glasgow met to discuss how agencies in Glasgow could better support lone parents. At this meeting it was agreed that while there are some clear areas where individual organisations could take forward actions, it is evident that dedicated capacity is required to support work in partnership across agencies. Their recommendation was to recruit someone specifically for this work, with the overall aim would be to improve how the city's mainstream services work for lone parents.

Subsequent to this meeting, GCC, NHSGGC and Wheatley Housing have agreed to work in partnership to develop this proposal.

This report is for: Decision.

Recommendation:

1. The Panel agrees that GCC, NHSGGC and Wheatley scope out the parameters of this project, define the person specification and if agreed, to proceed with recruiting for the post.
2. Other Panel members indicate what support they can commit to, either financially or in kind, to progress this work.

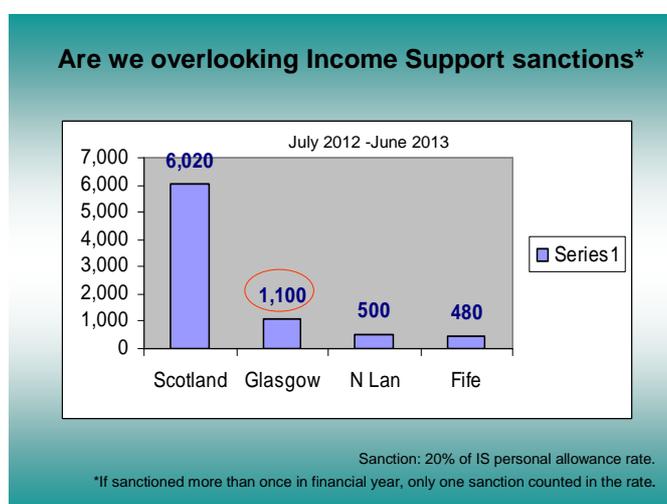
Lone parents – developing a PLP response

Background

3. During 2014, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) has been working with One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS), NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and researchers from Edinburgh Napier University to explore the impacts of the welfare reforms on lone parents.
4. The primary focus of this work has been on welfare benefit changes to Income Support (IS) eligibility, which lies behind a sizeable number of lone parents moving from IS on to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) when their youngest child reaches five years old. Once on JSA, lone parents must meet job search requirements or face much tougher penalties under a new sanctions regime. The report highlighted a range of challenges facing lone parents with children of all ages and barriers to entering or returning to employment that included childcare and transport costs.
5. On 30 October, a group of managers from GCC, GCPH, OPFS, NHS, Jobs and Business Glasgow met to discuss how agencies in Glasgow could better support lone parents. This proposal is a result of that discussion.

Lone parents in Glasgow

6. In Glasgow, four in 10 families with children are lone parent families, which is equivalent to 26,454 households. The city has the highest rate/numbers of any local authority in Scotland, with rates predicted to rise by 42% over 25 years.
7. [Recent research](#) in the UK states that lone parents, in comparison to any other social group are 'losing more through cuts in benefits and tax credits and higher (net) Council Tax than they gained through things like higher income tax allowances'.
8. The research also predicts that by 2019/2020, lone parents will continue to suffer the greatest if reforms continue, losing 5% of their disposable income, the highest of any social group.
9. The GCPH work identified a nine-fold increase in Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions among lone parents in Scotland over five years, which led to 4,546 sanctions in 2013. However, a recent Freedom of Information request by One Parent Families Scotland revealed that during the same period more than 6,000 lone parents faced Income Support sanctions in Scotland, of which 1,100 were in Glasgow.



10. Other key messages about lone parents include:

- Statistics from the DWP show an almost 16-fold increase in the numbers of lone parents claiming Jobs Seekers Allowance in Scotland. In 2013 there was a high of 13,000 claimants.
- Lone parents are a varied group in terms of income, employment and routes into lone parenthood, although more than 90% are women.
- Lone parent families are six times more likely to contain no earner compared with couple families and are more likely to experience higher child poverty rates even when in paid work.
- Lone parents' average earnings are the equivalent of one-third of couples' earnings.
- In Glasgow, less than half of all lone parents are in paid work with two in three working part-time.

Proposal

11. GCC, NHS and Wheatley Housing have agreed to work in partnership to develop this proposal.
12. Although only at an early stage of development, it is envisaged that a post may be created for a 12 month fixed term contract, hosted within the Financial Inclusion Team in GCC.
13. The principal partners would have an equal role in determining the shape and scope of the post, as well as providing support around governance and monitoring.
14. The post would be advertised externally, as well as offered on a secondment basis.
15. The PLP has experience developing and overseeing joint projects of this kind, namely through the Cost of the School Day Project which is being directly managed by Education Services and Child Poverty Action Group, with other partners like GCPH and CHP. The Long Term Conditions service is another exemplar in partnership working which can also provide strong in-house expertise.

The role

16. The person would be given a strategic mandate to work with partners to improve services for lone parents. Their role would be to co-ordinate partners' efforts in a way that produces tangible and identifiable improvements for lone parents.
17. Their focus would be on the mechanisms to reduce barriers for lone parents, which are neither straightforward nor within any single organisation's gift. The project would start by making sure that Glasgow makes the best of what it already has: there is a lot of excellent practice underway in the city.
18. The key goals of their work would include identifying:
 - What more can partners do to minimise the challenges created by welfare reforms for children and lone parents, and operationalising these.
 - What more can each organisation do in the short, medium and long term to minimise the identified barriers within the lone parents 'employability' journey.
 - What we can do more of, or do better to help lone parents across the PLP's remit to reduce living costs and to improve the family disposable income.
19. More specifically the person would be required to, among other things:
 - Assess the extent to which job creation and opportunities, such as apprenticeships, take account of likely suitability for lone parents in terms of entry requirements, flexibility, progression and geographic location. Consideration should be given to how to encourage employers to support lone parents.

- Liaise with Department of Work and Pensions about lone parents' interaction with the benefits system and to engage with DWP about solutions to barriers. For instance, the time lag in Scotland between a child turning five and starting school that creates problems for child care. This is not an issue in England.
- Synthesise local information and data on lone parents in Glasgow with information about their use of services.
- Investigate the extent to which lone parents need tailored support to address issues of lack of qualifications and confidence and how this can best be adequately delivered.
- Developing new partnerships (e.g. with credit unions and Glasgow Life) to address inter-related exclusions, e.g. financial (banking, savings, budgeting advice) and social e.g. impact of domestic violence.
- Map gender based violence service provision and link with funders to discuss what more could be done.
- Review the levers and opportunities to change childcare provision to address specific challenges for lone parents.
- Work alongside community planning priorities, and in particular the SOA priority of in-work poverty, as well as the wider GAIN network, Glasgow Life and Strathclyde Passenger Transport.
- Assess sustainable routes of funding for ongoing work.

Recommendation

20. The Panel agrees that GCC, NHSGGC and Wheatley scope out the parameters of this project, define the person specification and if agreed, proceed with recruiting for the post.
21. Other Panel members indicate what support they can commit to, either financially or in kind, to progress this work.