

Title: Making it Work for Lone Parents	
Directory Category: Emerging Local Practice	
Type of Poverty Impact: Mitigation	
Poverty Driver <i>increase employment income</i>	
About You	
1.	Your Name Laura Millar
2.	Your Employer / Organisation Fife Gingerbread
3.	Your Position Strategic Manager
4.	Your E-Mail at Work laura.millar@fifegingerbread.org.uk
5.	Your Address at Work Flemington Rd, Queensway Industrial Estate, Glenrothes, KY7 5QF
6.	Your Telephone Number at Work 01529 725210
7.	Your Role in the Project Strategic Manager
An Introduction to the Project	
8.	Please provide a short summary of the project This project empowers lone parents on their journey towards work, education and/or training. It is grounded in tackling child poverty. It takes a holistic approach to employability, achieving this at a pace that meets the needs of the family rather than the expected outputs of the funder.
9.	Does the project have specific aims and/or objectives? If so, please add to the box below. This project aims to work holistically with lone parent families to empower the parents through the employability journey towards work, education or training. Offering a whole family approach centred around removing barriers, improving confidence and building family resilience, it strives to involve the wider community, such as businesses, other agencies and the Council. In doing so, the project recognises that lone parents require specialist employability support to address inequalities and, in particular, local jobs that accommodate their skills, commitments and household needs.
10.	Does the project have a title? If so, please add to the box below. Making it Work for Lone Parents

11.	Has it finished? Is it on-going? Does it have an end date? <i>Please add dates to the box below.</i>	
	On-going	
12.	Which groups of people, if any, are targeted by the service provided?	
	Lone parent families	
13.	How many people have been served by the project?	
	Hundreds have been served in the last decade. In 2022, 167 families were assisted and 74 positive outcomes were recorded.	
14.	Where is it delivered?	
	Mid Fife – specifically Glenrothes, Cowdenbeath, Levenmouth and Kirkaldy	
15.	When did it start?	
	2013	
The Initial Idea		
16.	Who had the initial idea?	
	Big Lottery	
17.	How did the idea for the project come about?	
	Big Lottery Fund identified the need for specialised employability support for lone parents and piloted support in five areas in Scotland.	
18.	Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans? <i>If so, please add details to the box below.</i>	
	No.	
19.	Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Fife Gingerbread, Big Lottery, and other partners who were involved with other regions that were also allocated three years' worth of funding.	
20.	Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Unknown.	
21.	What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?	
	Big Lottery funding was used to support the development of the initial idea.	
22.	What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
	Facilities	No
	Equipment	No
	Local Knowledge	Yes – as a grassroots organisation, knowledge of other services in the area, specifics of local challenges, links to schools and employers, and relationships in JCP for advocacy have been valuable.
	Food and Drink	No

23.	What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?
	None were identified. However, building relationships is something that must be navigated when moving into different areas of a region. That being said, Fife Gingerbread has been established since 1987 and has a good local reputation that can be built upon.
24.	What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?
	Established knowledge of local needs and, more generally, the understanding that lone parents require specialised employability support.
25.	What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?
	Unknown.
26.	Who made the decision to introduce the project?
	Rona Cunningham (Strategic Manager at the time)
The Early Development of the Project	
27.	Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?
	No.
Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users	
28.	Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)
	Referrals can come from other agencies and existing databases, as well as word-of-mouth amongst the community that is served by professionals and volunteers. Self-referral is made easier through social media (e.g., Facebook Messenger) or phoning Fife Gingerbread. Referrals from agencies such as the Job Centre are done by completing a referral form with the lone parent.
29.	How are potential clients made aware of the project?
	Social Media, word-of-mouth, agencies and other professionals. Fife Gingerbread staff and volunteers are very visible in the Mid Fife communities.
30.	How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?
	Predominantly WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, text and mobile phone calls. Email and letters through the post are less preferable, unless at the service user's request.
Working With People with Lived Experience of Poverty	
31.	Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project? If so, please describe below.
	<p>At a local level, Fife Gingerbread staff have the autonomy to choose how they deliver the project and therefore service users with lived experience can become involved in the design and delivery. This also creates opportunities to collaborate with other agencies to meet the needs of families. This can involve procurement of items for cooking classes (as part of participatory budgeting) or delivering a group session in place of a worker.</p> <p>Buddies with lived experience can be allocated to support particularly isolated families. These volunteer buddies provide support to families focused on reducing social isolation and building parental confidence. This plays a different role from staff</p>

	as the volunteers are involved with families who have less complicated barriers and who are progressing through their journey with Fife Gingerbread. The volunteers have also often been service users in the past and this creates a pathway towards employment with Fife Gingerbread.
32.	<p>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance? <i>If so, please describe below.</i></p> <p>There are several managers with experience of living on a low income in the past and of being a lone parent.</p>
33.	<p>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? <i>If so, please describe below.</i></p> <p>The Parents Forum consists of a group of parents who are, or have been, supported by Fife Gingerbread. The Parents Forum is the result of a move from consulting to collaboration with the service users in shaping Fife Gingerbread's decision making, organisational planning, and identification of emerging themes in systemic barriers affecting families. The group meets fortnightly on Zoom with Fife Gingerbread's Strategic Manager and Projects Manager. They have also taken part in other forums and conversations with Poverty and Inequality Commission, Poverty Alliance, JSF and Trussell Trust.</p> <p>Fife Gingerbread have also applied progressive recruitment strategies to enable more lone parents to join the team. For example Business Services Team members have been drawn from the talent pool of current service users and have been upskilled or are in the process of gaining additional qualifications.</p>
Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working	
34.	<p>Who is responsible for managing the project?</p> <p>Fife Gingerbread (lead partners) and Citizens Advice & Rights Fife. The day to day leadership of the project is facilitated by a Team Leader with support from a Senior Team. Working closely with leadership from CARF to ensure a coordinated approach to support families.</p>
35.	<p>Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i></p> <p>The Team Leader at Fife Gingerbread has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the project. She manages eleven workers and volunteers, but is dedicated solely to this project.</p>
36.	<p>Is there a Project Steering Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i></p> <p>No, not as such. There is a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Opportunities Fife Partnership, and Fife Gingerbread have an SLA with CARF.</p>
37.	<p>If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?</p> <p>The Parent's Forum (see more information in qs 42) helps to make policy decisions. Fife Gingerbread monitor KPIs, data and Outcome Star to ensure that families are progressing and that they are being offered high quality support. Fife Gingerbread provide quarterly reporting to Opportunities Fife Partnership as a part of the wider NOLB delivery.</p>
Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements	
38.	Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? <i>If so, please give details.</i>

	Yes, lone parents are a key priority group to reach the national child poverty targets. Fife Gingerbread centres good, well paid work as an important part of the solution as it has the potential to lift families out of poverty and change the trajectory for children and young people.	
39.	Is the project part of any other strategy? <i>If so, please give details.</i>	
	Yes, the work connects closely with policy commitments around Fair Work, Community Wealth Building and The Promise.	
40.	Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. <i>If so, please give details.</i>	
	No.	
Funding		
41.	Who funds the project? <i>Please give details.</i>	
	Opportunities Fife Partnership (NOLB), Fife Council	
42.	How is the project funded?	
	NOLB.	
43.	How much does the project cost?	
	Approximately £400k per annum.	
44.	Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?	
	Yes – there are pre-agreed outputs aligned with the NOLB funding (and most employability funders). These are focused primarily on the number of new registrations (parents engaged) and job outputs (parents secured work).	
Staffing and Resources		
45.	Which partners are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?	
	Funded delivery partners are Fife Gingerbread and CARF. The team also work with a number of other agencies to provide holistic family support and a ‘no wrong door’ - approach.	
46.	Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?	
	12 frontline workers and Team Leader.	
47.	Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? <i>Please describe their role and their contribution.</i>	
	43 mostly part-time Fife Gingerbread volunteers who help to run groups, Buddy families, deliver festive packages, and more.	
48.	What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?	
	Facilities	Space to run groups in local community venues
	Equipment	Group resources
	Local Knowledge	Yes – as a grassroots organisation, knowledge of other services in the area, specifics of local challenges, links to schools and employers, and relationships in JCP for advocacy have been valuable.
	Food and Drink	Sometimes

49.	For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?	
	Facilities	Fife Council
	Equipment	Fife Council
	Local Knowledge	Professionals, volunteers, service users themselves
	Food and Drink	Local businesses assist with food supplies
50.	Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? <i>Please describe below.</i>	
	No.	
51.	Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? <i>If so, please describe.</i>	
	All Fife Gingerbread staff require knowledge of Child Protection, Safeguarding and Solihull Approach. For this project they also need to understand NOLB compliance, FORT database system, Outcome Star, and the employability pathway.	
Monitoring and Evaluation		
52.	What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
	Number of users	Yes – Fife Gingerbread collects information and monitors numbers of referrals and registrations.
	Profile of users	Yes
	Experience of users	Yes – this includes distance families travel to the service.
	Anything else	Families progress. The data collected is focused on job outputs, financial gain, debt identified etc. The project also collects data on the distances families travel, as well as case studies of the families.
53.	How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
	This project is part of an annual report, and a quarterly review for Fife Council which includes case studies and monthly KPIs.	
54.	Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? <i>Please describe the type of baseline data that you have.</i>	
	No.	
55.	Do you produce an annual report? <i>Please provide details of what this includes.</i>	
	Yes, but not specifically on this project.	
56.	In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?	
	The data allows the workers to reflect upon how to improve the service. For example, as Fife Gingerbread staff get to know families 1:1 in their home visits, they can collect information on their needs and convert this into facilitating exactly the kinds of groups that meet these needs and the parents have indicated they would like to take part in.	
57.	Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? <i>If yes, please provide details.</i>	
	No.	

58.	If yes, in what ways, if at all, have you used the External Project evaluation to adapt the service that you provide.
	N/A
59.	Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future? <i>If yes, please provide details.</i>
	No.
Reach and Impact	
60.	What difference has the project made?
	It is now embedded in communities in Mid Fife. It has made a significant difference at an individual level – improving parent’s confidence and skills which, in turn, improves outcomes for their children. This has been done through following the employability pathway, that has resulted in parents progressing into volunteering, training, work, or education. Fife Gingerbread appreciates supporting parents through an employability journey where they gain confidence, skills and peer support will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of their children.
61.	How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?
	Anecdotal feedback is one of the best indicators of the difference the project is making in people’s lives. The feedback has demonstrated positive outcomes of employability journeys where parents have progressed into volunteering, training, work, or education. Journeys can also be tracked on Outcome Star.
62.	To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?
	Fife Gingerbread are engaging lone parents furthest removed from the labour market, those most at risk of being left behind, and are actively challenging the systems that are holding them stuck in place. The project is well recognised locally and has a good reputation. It will never be a ‘mission accomplished’ and will continue to be a work in progress. For example, 167 families were helped in 2022 and from those 75 positive outcomes (i.e. progression into volunteering, employment, training or education) were recorded.
63.	How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?
	<p>The pandemic had a significant impact on the mental health of the families Fife Gingerbread works with, as well as the health and wellbeing of the children in the families. In addition, the cost-of-living crisis has impacted families financially and has increased the likelihood of mental health issues.</p> <p>Families engaging with Fife Gingerbread have often adverse childhood experiences of poverty and trauma. All other experiences are exacerbated by the compounding effect of poverty. Poor mental health and isolation continue to be some of the most common barriers affecting lone parent families.</p>
64.	If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? <i>Please describe and explain below.</i>
	Funding is reviewed annually, alongside 3-yearly commissioning cycles. The capacity was increased in 2023 which led to the introduction of Family Approach and Lone Parents, Poverty & Work, initiatives connected to this project which build on and enhance the offer locally.
65.	Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? <i>If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.</i>

	A positive outcome of working through the COVID-19 pandemic was learning how to work virtually with service users. Blended working for staff was also developed during the pandemic and remains in place given that this flexibility suits some staff members. Negative aspects include families becoming isolated during lockdowns and now needing to prepare for group work. There are also developmental delays in some young children who spent crucial early learning periods in isolation. These are now additional factors that Fife Gingerbread must work with.
66.	<p>In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.</p> <p>By helping to improve the employability of parents along with their mental health and other aspects of wellness, children's life chances are improved. Parent employability can improve children's lives through increased connections to the community and improve their resilience. It can also have positive financial outcomes for the family as a whole. Tackling mental health issues is important to address feelings of isolation and other barriers to progression with the service, such as employability outcomes to improve the family's material outcomes.</p>
Learning from Experience	
67.	<p>What is working well?</p> <p>The autonomy of the staff to be creative in how they work with their families.</p>
68.	<p>What, if anything, is working less well?</p> <p>Fife Gingerbread would like to reach more working families as in work poverty is a growing concern, and in turn connect with more employers.</p>
69.	<p>What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fife Gingerbread sees they must deliver services that prioritise the needs of families. Offering a whole family approach is important to empower families, celebrate their strengths and to improve lives. - Working directly with employers can be beneficial for a service that focuses in supporting people with their employability. Fife Gingerbread seeks to inspire employers to become a part of the solution to child poverty. - In the world of employability funding the focus is often on securing jobs for the people supported. Rather than doing this, Fife Gingerbread has seen it beneficial for the service provided and for the parents engaging that the staff focuses on what is the right option for that specific family at that time, even if this does not directly translate into job outputs immediately.
70.	<p>What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?</p> <p>Fife Gingerbread plan to start working at an even more focused level. For instance, assigning a worker to neighbourhoods rather than a whole area (e.g. their Family Approach project).</p>
71.	<p>How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?</p> <p>It could be replicated with sustained funding and the right partnership who would be able to build important relationships.</p>
Social Media and Further Information	
72.	Please enter social media contact details and weblinks to supporting documents or resources below:

	Web Pages	https://www.fifegingerbread.org.uk/making-it-work-for-lone-parents
	Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/FifeGingerbread/?locale=en_GB
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/fifegingerbread/?hl=en
	Twitter	https://twitter.com/FifeGingerbread/with_replies
	Tik-Tok	N/A
GDPR Consent (Please state yes or no in the box)		
I give my permission to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.		Yes
I give permission for our organisation to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.		Yes
I give permission for me to be contacted by directory users.		Yes