

Lone Parents, Poverty and Work How-to Guide



This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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Title	Lone Parents, Poverty and Work
Organisation	Fife Gingerbread
Category	Emerging Practice
Poverty Impact	Reduction
Introduction to the Project	
<p>The Lone Parents Poverty and Work Initiative is Fife Gingerbread's response to tackling child poverty in Scotland, focusing on the Fife area. Lone parents are a priority family group who are at greater risk of poverty. The project focuses specifically on employability, upskilling and transitioning lone parents into flexible employment. This may or may not mean that certain benefits stop when the lone parent begins work, but whatever form the employment takes it must be sustainable and well paid enough to provide a route out of poverty.</p>	

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?
Laura Millar (Strategic Manager, Fife Gingerbread)
How did the idea for the project come about?
Inspired by the Poverty and Inequality Commission Report and the recommendations to the Scottish Government.
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>
Poverty and Inequality Commission reports and evidence from JRF. Also drawing on Gingerbread Fife's evidence from the 'Making it work for Lone Parents' initiative.
Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
Laura Millar, other Gingerbread Fife staff and the Gingerbread Fife Parent's Forum.
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
Fife Gingerbread has a parent's forum - they fed into the conversation that developed this project by sharing their experiences. Their main input was on the potential value of the project and on the desired profile of the project lead.
What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?
Self-funded - with the funds coming from the overall initial funding provided by the Robertson Trust.

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What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?	
Facilities	N/A
Equipment	N/A
Local Knowledge	The Gingerbread Fife Parent's Forum
Food and Drink	N/A
What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?	
None, the project was a welcome addition to the suite of Gingerbread Fife projects.	
What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?	
Various recent reports on lone parents, poverty and work. The input of the Gingerbread Parent's Forum. The fact this is an unprecedented project meant Gingerbread Fife could create the 'blueprint'.	
What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?	
Six months from initial idea to launch of project.	
Who made the decision to introduce the project?	
Laura Millar (Strategic Manager)	

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Early Development of the Project

Did you run a pilot project or carry out a feasibility study?

No

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)

The lone parent would normally already be engaged with Gingerbread Fife's 'Making it Work for Lone Parents' Team. When the parent indicates that they feel ready to go back to work, or wants to consider looking at options, they are referred to Lyndsey Thomson. Most often a support worker instigates a chat between Lyndsey and the lone parent in question. On two occasions, Fife Council's job coaches and/or welfare coaches have referred lone parents from the local job clubs.

How are potential clients made aware of the project?

Potential clients are usually already engaged with Gingerbread Fife in some way or have read about the project on the charity's social media. Occasionally clients may hear about the project from the wider community such as through local job clubs.

How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?

The service users engage with social media. Individuals tend to prefer WhatsApp, Facebook messenger or texts. Phone calls and emails are less common, unless requested by the parent.

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in delivering the project? *If so, please describe below.*

Not in the delivery as such, but there are a couple of lived experience administrative assistants who will handle admin for certain aspects of the project.

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in managing the project or project governance? *If so, please describe below.*

No

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in any other aspect of the project? *If so, please describe below.*

As mentioned, the Parent's Forum was consulted and there have been lived experience members on interview panels looking to appoint new staff to the project. Gingerbread is organising an employer's event where people with lived experience will share their experiences of employment and trying to re-enter the labour market to highlight the unique challenges they face.

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?
Lyndsey Thomson
Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? <i>If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.</i>
Yes
Is there a Project Steering Group? <i>If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.</i>
No
If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?
The project manager and strategic manager liaise with the board

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy? *If so, please give details.*

Yes, this project is in line with Tackling Child Poverty Initiative and is part of Scotland's Fair Work agenda. More locally, the project is now linked up with Fife Council and part of their Community Wealth Building initiative, which looks at tackling inequalities.

Is the project part of any other strategy? *If so, please give details.*

No

Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment. *If so, please give details.*

No

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Funding

Who funds the project? <i>Please give details.</i>
The Robertson Trust provides funding to Gingerbread Fife and funds for this project are allocated from that.
How much does the project cost?
£45,000.
Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?
No

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Staffing and Resources

Which partners are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?	
No partners as such but this project works closely with Fife Council – in particular the Facilities Management Department and the Child and Education Services. They have created lone parent friendly jobs in catering and school settings.	
Which paid staff are involved in delivering the project?	
Lyndsey Thomson – project manager	
Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? <i>Please describe their role and their contribution.</i>	
No volunteers are involved.	
What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?	
Facilities	N.A.
Equipment	N.A.
Local Knowledge	N.A.
Food and Drink	N.A.
For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?	
Facilities	N.A.
Equipment	N.A.
Local Knowledge	N.A.
Food and Drink	N.A.
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	

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Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? *If so, please describe.*

None. However, as this is a new role, hence, Lyndsey Thomson is carving out her role in response to the development of the project.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
Number of users	Yes, Fife Online Referral Tracker (FORT) captures this.
Profile of users	Yes
Experience of users	Yes, their experience of being involved with the project
Anything else	The experience of the labour market as a lone parent. Anecdotal evidence.
How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
Ongoing – use of spreadsheet tracker. Lyndsey Thomson	
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.	
Do you produce an annual report? <i>Please provide details of what this includes.</i>	
Not specifically on this project but it will be part of Gingerbread Fife’s annual report.	
In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?	
The project is in its infancy but anecdotal evidence in the form of quotes from service users and case studies are useful in guiding the way forward.	
Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project? <i>If yes, please provide details.</i>	
No	
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>	



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No.

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Reach and Impact

What difference has the project made?

Quantitative evidence shows there are now 26 lone parents in the Fife Region who have (re)entered the labour market. Qualitative evidence shows that successes include, increased confidence in lone parents, new skills learnt and children benefitting not only from the improved financial circumstances but from seeing their parents enjoy employment. The local council and some local businesses now have a greater understanding of the challenges lone parents face in the labour market. The council have adapted their application process so that lone parents who apply are automatically granted an interview, they also do not have to provide a traditional C.V.

How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?

Both quantitative and qualitative evidence as described above. Longer-term impact is yet to be assessed but for now the local people are seeing the benefits and word is spreading. Hence the referrals have picked up pace.

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?

26 lone parents who now have employment is evidence that the strategy is working. Not all the lone parents are in full-time employment, in fact many are in part-time employment, and this means that their benefits often remain unaffected or only require slight adjustment. Another benefit is the lone parent friendly roles, such as classroom assistant, created by the local council, are term time and during school hours – completely removing the need for childcare of nursery or school age children.

How, if at all, have conditions changed since the project was introduced?

Generally, there is a worsening cost of living crisis. Post-pandemic, lone parents are more inclined to want to escape the home environment and (re)engage with work that suits their circumstances

If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand? *Please describe and explain below.*

There have been more referrals since the pandemic ended but at present the project has the capacity to manage the demand.

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Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes? *If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.*

Improved mental health in lone parents is significant. They enjoy the socialisation the work environment provides. Their children witness their parent's work ethic and can enjoy many more activities (such as family holidays) they were formerly excluded from due to lack of disposable income. The project is educating local businesses on the unique challenges lone parents face when they search for or enter employment.

In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling child poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.

Yes, as above. It is putting more money into pockets of lone parents. Anecdotal evidence shows this is benefitting the children in the ways the parents say money is being spent – better Christmas presents, holidays, better quality food etc. If a parent is working 10 hours a week, that may provide just enough extra income, meaning the parent does not need to ask Gingerbread for a 'heat and eat voucher'. Gingerbread Fife also believes the parents who now have employment are less likely to need to use the local food banks.

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?
Engagement with colleagues across Gingerbread Fife and with the lone parents is effective – there is a concerted effort to raise awareness.
What, if anything, is working less well?
There is more work to be done to engage local business and industry in creating more lone parent friendly jobs. Improving communication between employers of lone parents and the project manager to provide a degree of ongoing support for the lone parents could be improved. This could include encouraging local businesses to reach out to Gingerbread Fife if an issue arises with the lone parent they are considering for employment or already employ.
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?
At present it is too early to say what we would do differently – it is evolving!
What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?
The project hopes to offer paid placements for up to six months for lone parents to trial jobs in Fife Council. These may become permanent roles. More employer engagement, networking events are planned, working with an organization called Flexibility Works. They are a Glasgow based organization, founded by two lone parents. They worked with employers, putting flexible working practices in place and defining the various different forms that can take. Forthcoming events in Fife will raise awareness of the barriers for lone parents and hopefully increase employer involvement.
How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?
It could easily be replicated. It is a matter of encouraging employers to think outside the box. For instance, asking them to consider other priority family types such as those with disabilities or someone who is technically homeless. In rural settings asking employers to consider providing transport (such as a shuttle bus) to ensure lone parents can afford to get to work in a timely fashion.

Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory

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