



centre for research on  
families and relationships

**CRFR Policy Scoping Seminar**  
**Parenting**  
**Lesley Kelly**  
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**Key points**

- There is an increasing focus on support for parents, to improve outcomes for children.
- Child poverty can't be separated from parental poverty and disadvantage – a recent inquiry has called for improved access to quality, affordable childcare to enable parents to work.
- The importance of experiences during the early years is now widely accepted. The Government's Early Years Framework is recognition of this.
- However, the EYF comes with no new funding for Local Authorities and Health Boards. The actions set out in the framework have to be implemented within the context of competing priorities. For Local Authorities the competing priorities include protecting vulnerable children, implementing the Curriculum for Excellence and reducing class sizes, improving school buildings and delivering on other Government policy commitments such as the introduction of free school meals for P1-P3 from 2010 and the increase in nursery provision. For Health Boards, the competing priorities include the ageing population

## 1. **Key themes in current policy**

- Inequalities/ Child poverty
- Early years and early intervention/ prevention and support
- Early years workforce
- Child well-being / mental health for infants, children and young people (and parents)
- Childhood obesity – physical activity and play, free school meals, breastfeeding etc
- Improved outcomes for all children – integrated services – GIRFEC/ Child Protection
- Parental involvement in education

## 2. **Introduction**

*'Being a parent is the most complex and important activity on the planet'*  
(Popov 1997)

The relationship between parent and child has a profound impact on 'outcomes' for the child. Parenting becomes more difficult in stressful circumstances caused by poverty or poor health for example. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on 'parenting' in UK and Scottish policy. Parents are now much less likely to be bringing up their children within or near extended family and are more likely to draw on support from other sources. Unfortunately, the term 'parenting' sometimes has negative associations, for example, in the context of 'parenting orders'.

This paper summarises some of the key pieces of policy relating to children and parents across Scotland and the UK. It starts by providing some global and EU context.

## 3. **Global/UN**

***UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*** – 54 articles

The UNCRC is signed by every country in the world, apart from the USA and Somalia. It was ratified by the UK Government in 1991.

<http://www.tagd.org.uk/Document.ashx?ID=78>  
(easy read version)

All UK and Scottish policies affecting children should fit with the UNCRC.

## 4. **EU level**

Key piece of research:

***An index of Child Well-Being in the European Union***

Bradshaw, J et al, University of York, 2006

CPAG (Child Poverty Action Group) have produced a good summary of the UK's position in the index:

<http://www.cpag.org.uk/info/ChildWellbeingandChildPoverty.pdf>

The UK is ranked 24<sup>th</sup> out of 29<sup>th</sup> European countries, well below the position that would be expected of an affluent country. The UK scores low in a number of areas - health, subjective wellbeing, material resources and education. CPAG use this evidence to argue that children should be put front and centre of policy making.

Further research was commissioned by Barnardo's to find out where Scotland would be placed in the index:

[http://www.barnardos.org.uk/wellbeing\\_for\\_children\\_in\\_scotland](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/wellbeing_for_children_in_scotland)

The report suggests that Scotland's performance in relation to child well-being is worse than the UK as a whole.

For information about family policies across Europe see 'Family Policy Across Europe: A compendium of comparative studies' Family and Parenting Institute 2009:

<http://www.familyandparenting.org/item/document/2163>

## 5. **UK**

### ***Benefit changes for Lone Parents - changes to Income Support and JSA (UK)***

From November 2008, lone parents who are not in paid employment and previously claimed Income Support on the grounds of being a lone parent instead have to claim Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) after their youngest child turns 12. This will change to age 10 from October 2009 and age 7 from October 2010. This means that by October 2010, lone parents with children aged 7 and over will be required to look for work. Opponents of the changes have argued that the new conditions limit choices for lone parents and undervalue the work of raising children.

### ***Right to request flexible working***

Parents in England, Scotland and Wales with a child under the age of 17 now have the right to request flexible working. This can include working part time, working school hours, working flexitime, home working, job sharing, shift working, staggering hours and compressing hours (where you work your total number of agreed hours over a shorter period). Employers do not have to agree to a request but they must demonstrate that they have given it serious consideration and have a good business reason if they decide not to agree.

## 6. **England**

### ***The Children's Plan 2007 (England)***

[http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/childrensplan/downloads/Childrens\\_Plan\\_Executive\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/childrensplan/downloads/Childrens_Plan_Executive_Summary.pdf)

The Children's Plan is a 10 year plan. More support for parents is one of the key principles of the Plan.

Themes:

*Happy and healthy* (well-being and health of children and young people)

*Safe and sound* (safeguarding the young and vulnerable)

*Excellence and equity* (achieving world class standards in education and closing the gap in educational achievement for disadvantaged children)

*Leadership and collaboration* (system reform to achieve the above)

*Staying on* (ensuring that young people are participating and achieving their potential to 18 and beyond)

*On the right track* (keeping children and young people on the path to success)

*Making it happen* (a vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century children's services)

The Children's Plan takes forwards the **Every Child Matters** agenda, published as a Green Paper in 2003 alongside the Victoria Climbié report. Every Child Matters sets out the Government's approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to aged 19. The Every Child Matters agenda is underpinned by the **Children Act 2004**. Every Child Matters introduced improved information sharing, a common assessment framework, Sure Start Children's Centres, extended schools a Young People's fund and a Children's Commissioner.

**Sure Start** is the Government's programme to deliver the best start in life for every child by bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support services for families with children under 5 years old. The programme aims to tackle child poverty and social exclusion by working with parents-to-be, parents, carers and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school. Sure Start brings together service providers from the statutory sector like health, social services and early education, as well as voluntary, private and community organisations and parents themselves, to provide integrated services for young children and their families based on what local children need and parents want. The aim is that by 2010 every community in England will be served by a Sure Start Children's Centre for deliver these services.

For Every Child Matters and Sure Start, see:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/>

**Parenting Support – Guidance for Local Authorities in England 2006**  
<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00169/>

**Every Parent Matters**  
Department for Education and Skills 2007

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00169/>

This document sets out the ways that practitioners can assist parents in helping their children to learn, enjoy and achieve. It sets out what the Government is doing to promote the development of services for parents and their children. It also aims to stimulate debate among service planners, commissioners and providers as to how parents can best be supported and engaged.

For England and UK policy see also '**Parenting Policy – the last 10 years**' by the Family and Parenting Institute:

<http://www.familyandparenting.org/parentingPolicyTenYears>

## 7. Scotland

### 8.1 Overarching policy framework

#### ***National Performance Framework***

As with all current policy frameworks, government thinking in relation to parenting is underpinned by the Scottish Government's five strategic objectives and the ***National Performance Framework***:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/outcomes>

The five strategic objectives (wealthier and fairer, smarter, healthier, safer and stronger, greener) are developed further into 15 National Outcomes that describe what the Government wants to achieve over the next 10 years. Of the 15 National Outcomes, three are of particular relevance to parents and children:

- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens (Curriculum for Excellence)

### 8.2 Current policy frameworks

#### ***Early Years Framework***

A key recent policy development has been the development of the Scottish Government's ***Early Years Framework*** (December 2008):

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/257007/0076309.pdf>

The EYF is one of three frameworks developed by the Scottish Government to reduce inequalities, the other two being ***Achieving our Potential*** (anti-poverty) and ***Equally Well*** (health inequalities).

The EYF recognises the importance of the early years of a child's life in determining longer term outcomes. The 'early years' covers the period from conception to age 8 years. The framework, developed jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA, proposes increased investment in the early years, but does not offer any new funding to local authorities and other agencies for implementation.

The EYF proposes 'transformational change' across the themes of Parents, Communities, Services and the children's sector Workforce. Under 'Parents' the Framework sets out the following outcomes:

- Parents are given appropriate support to help them understand the responsibilities and sustained commitment associated with bringing up a child and to develop the skills needed to provide a nurturing and stimulating home environment free from conflict.
- Parents have access to world class antenatal, maternity and postnatal care that meets their individual needs.

- Parents are involved in their children's learning and are given learning opportunities that will help them support their child's learning and development.
- Parents are supported to access employment and training to help reduce the risk of child poverty, including through the provision of flexible, accessible and affordable childcare.
- Parents and children have integrated support from services to meet a range of needs they may have. This includes help for parents to develop relationships to their child and to address stresses which may impact on their ability to perform their parenting role.

Examples of priorities for Action:

- A social marketing campaign that supports parenting skills and promotes the value of parenting.
- More support for grandparents and other informal carers who spend significant amounts of time with care of children.
- Pilot of a Nurse Family Partnership in Lothian (to commence Jan 2010) (has been piloted in England, based on David Olds model USA)
- NHS Quality Improvement Scotland to develop integrated pathways for antenatal, maternity and postnatal care.
- Increase the capacity of nurseries and the early stages of primary.
- Implement the *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- The SG, Care Commission and the police will lead a debate on understanding and balancing the benefits of play against risk.

The implementation of the EYF will take place through the further development of Single Outcome Agreements between Local Authorities and the Scottish Government.

See also the final report from the parenting task group for the early years framework:  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/parenting-report>

### ***Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)***

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/childrenservices/girfec>

Getting it Right for Every Child is a 'transformational change programme that will result in shared understanding and common language across all services working with children which puts the child's well-being at the centre of all activity'. GIRFEC is a new approach to service delivery developed following the publication of 'For Scotland's children – better integrated children's services' in 2001 and a review of child protection in 2002, which produced the report 'It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright'. The report found that children were not receiving the help they needed when they needed it.

First introduced in 2004, GIRFEC is a programme that aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people by developing:

- a more child-centred system
- with heightened focus on the child's needs
- a greater focus on effective outcomes for children
- more effective collaboration between agencies
- a more integrated approach across agencies
- the reduction of institutional, cultural and procedural barriers to joint working

Five 'Pathfinders' piloted the new approach, which was then implemented from 2006. A practice model and guidance for practitioners was published in September 2008:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/09/22091734/0>

### 7.3 **Health**

#### **HALL 4**

<http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/files/Hall4%20Guidance.pdf>

Health for All Children (Hall4) sets out recommendations for preventive health care, health promotion and targeted support for children, families and young people who are most in need. Hall4 recommends a reduced core programme of health surveillance with some enhanced screening for all children and a more flexible programme for children and families who may require additional or in some cases intensive support. Hall4 also recommends that alongside the surveillance programme there should be an enhanced programme of health promotion work to inform and educate parents about their child's development.

Recommendations were to have been implemented by 2008.

Caroline King from CRFR is doing a PhD on 'Health for All Children: How professionals and parents experience the implementation of Hall 4'

#### ***Towards a Mentally Flourishing Scotland: Policy and Action Plan 2009-2011***

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/271822/0081031.pdf>

Published by the Scottish Government in May 2009, the first priority of this action plan is 'Mentally Healthy Infants, Children and Young People'. The importance of parenting in defining health outcomes for children is acknowledged. The Plan builds on the actions outlined in the Early Years Framework.

### 7.4 **Education**

#### ***Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006***

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone/ParentalInvolvementAct/Introduction.asp>

There is recognition that parental involvement improves educational outcomes for children. The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 makes parental involvement a priority for every local authority and every school. The main aims of the act are to:

- help parents become more involved with their child's education and learning
- welcome parents as active participants in the life of the school
- provide easier ways for parents to express their views and wishes.

90% of schools in Scotland now have a Parent Council. The role of the Parent Council is to:

- support the school in its work with pupils
- represent the views of all parents
- encourage links between the school, parents, pupils, pre-school groups and the wider community
- report back to all the parents in the school (Parent Forum)

The Scottish Government has just announced that it will support the creation of a National Parents' Forum – a national representative body for Parent Councils.

## 7.5 Other legislation

### ***Parenting Orders***

<http://www.antisocialbehaviourscotland.com/asb/559.201.219.html>

Local Authorities and the Children's Reporter can apply for Parenting Orders under the Anti-Social Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004. A Parenting Order can be used to try to change a parent's behaviour to safeguard children's welfare or to address concerns about children's behaviour. Parenting orders are designed to ensure that parents make use of the help available to them so that they are better equipped to meet their parental responsibilities, no matter what personal difficulties they might face. Parenting Orders are used only where offers of voluntary help and support have not been taken up by the parent.

(I couldn't find any stats about the number actually taken out in Scotland)

### ***Children's Hearing Systems (Scotland) Bill***

Scotland has a distinctive system of justice and care for children, the Children's Hearing System, which recognises that children who offend and those who require care and protection are equally deserving to be considered as children in need. The system provides support and assistance to vulnerable children and their families. Currently under review, the Scottish Government has already consulted on proposed changes to the system and will consult further when the Bill is introduced. The proposals recommend a more streamlined, child-focused system which reduces bureaucracy and improves outcomes for children.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/c-h-bill>

## 8.5 Other initiatives

### ***Sure Start in Scotland***

<http://www.surestart.gov.uk/aboutsurestart/help/contacts/scotland/>

First launched in 1999, Sure Start Scotland provides a range of support for families with very young children. The aim is to expand the availability of support focusing on more deprived communities and vulnerable families. £60 million was allocated to Local Authorities in 2008/09 to work in partnership with health and voluntary sector organisations to improve outcomes for vulnerable families with young children. However, from 2009/10 Sure Start funding is no longer ring-fenced as a result of the Concordat between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities.

### ***Inquiry into Child Poverty***

A Report of the Inquiry was published by the Local Government and Communities Committee of the Scottish Parliament in May 2009:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/lgc/reports-09/lgr09-10-vol1.htm>

One of the key recommendations of the report is to improve access to affordable, quality childcare provision, to enable parents living in poverty to return to work. The Committee will follow up on their recommendations and will scrutinise the Scottish Government's progress in relation to child poverty.

### ***National Parenting Development Project***

<http://www.aberlour.org.uk/npdp.aspx>

This project is managed by Aberlour on behalf of the Scottish Government. It highlights the need for a continuum of parenting services, from universal to targeted and from early years to young adulthood.

The project objectives are:

- To improve parenting skills, supervision of children and communication between parents/carers and their children, in order to assist children and young people attain their full potential.
- To improve strategic planning of parenting services by local authorities and other agencies and increase services, particularly for parents of teenagers
- To improve practitioners' skills in working with parents
- To disseminate information and research findings on best practice in working with parents.

### ***Parenting Across Scotland***

<http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/>

PAS is a partnership of adult relationship organisations and children's charities set up to work together on issues affecting parents and families in Scotland today.

## **8.7 Local Parenting Strategies**

Alongside the 'top down' approach to policy described at points 8.1 and 8.2, at the local level there has been an increasing focus on parenting, in recognition that supporting parents is crucial in achieving better outcomes for children and young people. Some Local Authorities have developed, or are developing, Parenting Strategies as a means to consolidate action and co-ordinate services to improve access to support for parents and families in need.

Example – ***Parenting Strategy for Perth and Kinross 2008-2012*** (NHS Tayside and Perth and Kinross Council):

<http://www.pkc.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/25A02D1B-1E90-4B73-9B9C-F8C1C955715A/0/parentingstrategy.pdf>

Local Authorities are supported by the National Parenting Development Project managed by Aberlour (see project objectives above). The NPDP facilitates a National Group for Parenting Co-ordinators, which includes representation from 12 Local Authorities and seeks to promote the exchange of learning and good practice.

Finally, a reading recommendation:

[http://www.mellowparenting.org/cms/articlefiles/25-Parenting\\_in\\_Social\\_and\\_Economic\\_Adversity.pdf](http://www.mellowparenting.org/cms/articlefiles/25-Parenting_in_Social_and_Economic_Adversity.pdf)

This book chapter 'Parenting in Social and Economic Adversity' by Christine Puckering, Consultant Clinical Psychologist at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children in Glasgow. This chapter provides a history of parenting and intervention from 'rescue' to prevention.

## **8. Developing Relationships**

CRFR already has links with a number of organisations working for parents and children, particularly in the voluntary sector. Organisations we might want to develop further relationships with include - Children 1<sup>st</sup>, Barnardos, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Aberlour, One Parent Families Scotland, Action for Children Scotland, Parenting Across Scotland, Play Scotland (website address below). Improved links with the organisations representing Local Authorities e.g. COSLA, ADSW might also prove useful.

### **Other useful websites**

Growing Up in Scotland

<http://www.growingupinScotland.org.uk/>

The Scottish Government

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Home>

Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

<http://www.sccyp.org.uk/>

Family and Parenting Institute

<http://www.familyandparenting.org/>

### *Voluntary Sector in Scotland*

Aberlour

<http://www.aberlour.org.uk/>

Action for Children Scotland

<http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/Default.aspx?CategoryID=1&ArticleID=59&RegionID=11>

Barnardos Scotland

<http://www.barnardos.org.uk/scotland.htm>

Children in Scotland

<http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/>

Children 1<sup>st</sup>

<http://www.children1st.org.uk/>

One Parent Families Scotland

<http://www.opfs.org.uk/>

Play Scotland

<http://www.playscotland.org/>

### *Websites for parenting practitioners*

Parenting UK

<http://www.parentinguk.org/>

National Academy for Parenting Practitioners

<http://www.parentingacademy.org/>