



## **CRFR RESPONSE TO NATIONAL EQUALITY PANEL**

### **Introduction**

1. The Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the National Equality Panel.
2. CRFR produces, stimulates and disseminates high quality social research and commentary on families and relationships. We are a consortium research centre whose main office is at the University of Edinburgh, with partners at the University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, UHI Millennium Institute and the University of Stirling.
3. CRFR undertakes social research on families and relationships across the lifecourse using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Our research programmes encompass diverse themes and inform policy, practice and debate in Scotland, the UK and internationally.
4. We build research capacity through supporting new researchers, offering research training and through our PhD and Post Doctoral programme. We provide a stimulating research environment through a programme of seminars, conferences, visiting fellow, associated researchers and our Register of Research Interests.
5. Drawing on our collaborative and inclusive approach, we generate and build on partnerships across and within the statutory, voluntary, and academic sectors, through our collaborative research, knowledge exchange activities and a programme of CPD, events and research dissemination.
6. CRFR was established in 2001 and attracts funding from a variety of sources including the ESRC, the Scottish Government, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Leverhulme Trust, Health Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland, the European Union, the Big Lottery, Care Commission and Scottish Local Authorities.
7. The combination of our research experience, the range of issues covered and our work across sectors makes CRFR well qualified to submit evidence to the National Equality Panel. This submission will discuss the importance of examining people's lived experiences when evaluating inequality and will highlight relevant CRFR research.

## Beyond economic outcomes

8. We welcome the focus of this review on understanding the complexity of the interrelationships between equality dimensions and other indicators of inequality and the recognition of the need for both qualitative and quantitative research to investigate these issues. At CRFR, we are acutely aware of the lifecourse dimensions to people's experience and that inequalities may recede or become exacerbated at different stages of the lifecourse for a range of reasons (family change or external factors such as recession). We are also interested in the ways people confront disadvantage and embed such strategies into their everyday lives. However, we think that limiting a focus to economic outcomes would be misplaced; some areas of our research demonstrate how important a range of other inequalities and disadvantages are to people's quality of life – for example, inequalities in relationships, concerns about local areas, stigma associated with different social groups.
9. Economic status is, of course, an important indicator of both cause or outcome of inequality, but it is only one element of this complex picture. CRFR would urge the Panel to consider high quality research into people's lived experiences. For example, CRFR research projects like Life In Low Income Families In Scotland: Research Report [FN] and the publication 'Families in Society – boundaries and relationships' explore people's lived experiences and provide a rich picture of how dimensions of inequality can interact.

## Research on inequality

10. Below is a list of relevant research, publications and research briefings from across the CRFR network.

### Current projects

#### **Growing up in Scotland (GUS)**

Carried out by the Scottish Centre for Social Research in collaboration with CRFR for the Scottish Government

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/gus/index.html>

GUS will follow the lives of a national sample of 8000 of Scotland's children from infancy through to their teens and is one of the largest longitudinal studies ever done in Scotland. This study is wide ranging and provides the opportunity for analysis that will offer insights into children's experiences and outcomes in relation to their experiences. Recent analysis<sup>2</sup> of GUS data clearly shows the interrelationship between a number of factors and measures of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

While the study is only in its first few years, it is already providing a valuable snapshot of the experiences of children and their families in Scotland and the significance of disadvantage and inequality between social groups. Also, the longitudinal nature of GUS will enable the longer-term effect of disadvantage and changes in socio economic circumstance to be tracked, as well as the improving effect of different services.

## **Timescapes**

Kathryn Backett-Milburn, Sarah Cunningham-Burley, Lynn Jamieson, Jeni Harden and Alice MacLean.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Research/timescapes.html>

<http://www.timescapes.leeds.ac.uk/>

Timescapes is an ESRC-funded qualitative longitudinal research initiative which involves a consortium of 5 universities based across the UK. Timescapes aims to explore the ways in which personal relationships and identities unfold over the life course by focusing on the ways that people's relationships with significant others – parents, siblings, wider family, children, partners, friends and lovers – develop and change over time.

The CRFR-based study, entitled 'Work and Family Lives; The Changing Experiences of 'Young' Families', began in February 2007. This three-year qualitative study will compare the experiences of low income and affluent families, the study aims to deepen our understanding of how work and family issues are constructed and 'worked out' by parents and children living under different socio-economic and labour market conditions.

## **Supporting Research**

### **Caring and providing – Lone and partnered working mothers in Scotland**

Kathryn Backett-Milburn, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Debbie Kemmer (2001)  
Family Policy Studies Centre for The Policy Press in association with Joseph Rowntree Foundation

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/details.asp?pubID=350>

The authors set the women's accounts of the complex balancing acts they perform to manage their daily lives against the wider backdrop of changes in society.

### **The impact of poverty on children's experiences of services**

Fiona Wager, Nick Bailey, Rosie Day, Douglas Hamilton, Malcolm Hill, Caroline King (2007)

Glasgow Centre for the Child and Society (Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde); Save the Children UK – Scotland Programme; and Scottish Centre for Research on Social Justice (University of Glasgow).

[http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/media\\_62005\\_en.pdf](http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/media_62005_en.pdf)

This study arose from the identification of a gap in knowledge and corresponding need for the development of a better contemporary understanding of children's experiences of poverty. The study sought to build on the few studies that had explored children's own experiences of poverty, with a specific focus on children's perspectives in relation to services, and an emphasis on the effect of poverty on children's access to, perceptions of and use of services.

### **Life in low income families in Scotland: A review of the literature**

Scottish Poverty Information Unit & Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR), Gill Scott, John H. McKendrick, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Kathryn Backett-Milburn (2003)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/09/18064/25742>

This review was the first stage of a research project which explores the views and experiences of poverty amongst individuals and groups living within low income households with at least one child under the age of eighteen.

The reviewed aimed to identify and discuss the key themes and issues to emerge from relevant literature.

### **Life in low income families in Scotland: Research report**

Centre for Research on Families and Relationships John H. McKendrick, Sarah Cunningham-Burley and Kathryn Backett-Milburn (2003)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/09/18143/26158>

This report is the second stage of a research project which explores the views and experiences of poverty amongst individuals and groups living within low income households with at least one child under the age of 18. It uses qualitative focus groups to explore and include the experiences of those living in poverty, including children. It will provide a useful resource for the Framework.

### **Gender equality in Scotland**

Commissioned by The Scottish Parliament Equal Opportunities Committee  
Sue Innes (2002)

report now available from The Scottish Parliament

The aim of the research was to identify gaps in research on gender inequality in Scotland with the following objectives:

- to identify policy areas which currently lack research on gender inequality;
- to identify the type and scope of research currently conducted in these areas -
- whether it is quantitative, qualitative, small or large scale;
- to identify research conducted in a range of contexts including academic but
- paying particular attention to research conducted by voluntary sector and
- community groups; and
- to inform subsequent committee work on gender inequality.

### **Cool with Change – Young people and family change**

Scotland's Families/CRFR

Gill Highet and Lynn Jamieson (2007)

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/CWC%20final%20report%202007.pdf>

Cool with change was a three year research project funded by the Community Fund with support from the Scottish Executive. It is the result of a collaboration between Scotland's Families (Family Mediation Scotland, One Parent Families Scotland, Relate Scotland, Scottish Marriage Care and Stepfamily Scotland), a consortium of organisations with a long and impressive track record of providing support to families, and the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR).

Cool with Change breaks new ground by combining in-depth research of young people's experience of family change in Scotland, reflection by service providers on the implications for their services and consultation with young people about possible future development of support services.

### **Family, Care and women's transitions to paid work**

Sue Innes and Gill Scott (2002)

Rosemont Lifelong Learning Centre

A previous Rosemount Lifelong Learning study suggested that women using the centre do not experience the move from full-time motherhood into training or

employment as easy. This study looked at the nature of family commitments that constrain women's choices, the cost of transition and the 'poverty trap', and the health of family members and the women themselves.

### **Research Briefings**

#### **CRFR Briefing 1: Solo-living in Scotland: Trends and issues** (June 2001)

This first Research Briefing focuses on solo-living - that is the increasing trend towards one person households, and the personal and social implications of this trend for those at different stages of the lifecourse.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/sololiving.pdf>

#### **CRFR Briefing 2: Gender care and transitions, in association with the Scottish Poverty Information Unit** (January 2002)

This briefing considers how women with dependent children move into training or employment and the role of both formal and informal care in supporting them.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/Gender%20care%20and%20transitions.pdf>

#### **CRFR Briefing 3: Family policy in Scotland** (February 2002)

This briefing looks at the development of family policy in Scotland, considers the interplay between devolved and reserved matters, outlines the Departments of the Scottish Executive responsible for family policy, and considers the relationship between children's and family policy. It is a summary of a document produced with funding from Joseph Rowntree Foundation, looking at the feasibility of a Family Policy Forum in Scotland.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/Fam%20Pol%20Briefing%203.pdf>

#### **CRFR Briefing 4: Understanding children's lives: How children and parents experience and understand social and health inequalities** (March 2002)

Children's differing social circumstances and experiences are part of the pathways implicated in health and illness in adulthood. However, children's own perspectives tend to be absent from adult-defined data about health and illness. Little is known about social and cultural processes in childhood; even less is known about children's own agency in making sense of and recreating the health cultures in which they grow up. This research into children's lives was developed to address such gaps in research, interviewing children and parents in two contrasting localities.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/Children%20&%20inequality.pdf>

#### **CRFR Briefing 9: Feeding families and influences on healthy eating in Scotland: findings from a qualitative study** (May 2003)

Joint briefing with the Research Unit for Health, Behaviour and Change (RUHBC)

A series of policy documents in the 1990's highlighted the contribution of dietary factors to morbidity and mortality in Scotland. Primary care was identified as one setting where advice about diet and healthy eating may be effective. Less is known, however, about attitudes and practices relating to food and feeding in families. This qualitative study explored these issues with couples who had primary school children.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/ResbriefingRUHBC.pdf>

#### **CRFR Briefing 13: Caringscapes: experiences of caring and working** (February 2004)

There is growing interest in ways in which people combine working with caring, and

what can be done to make the balance of work and care more manageable. In this paper, Linda McKie, Susan Gregory and Sophia Bowlby explore experiences of caring and working, arguing that new ways of thinking need to be developed.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb13caringscapes.pdf>

**CRFR Briefing 19: Supporting vulnerable young people** (January 2005)

This study looked at young people who took part in programmes of planned mentoring. In this briefing we focus on what young people thought about the relationship with their mentors.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb19.pdf>

**CRFR Briefing 20: Solo living across the adult lifecourse** (February 2005)

This study has created snapshots of solo living in contemporary society and developed an understanding of the social and economic factors involved in transitions in and out of solo living.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb20.pdf>

**CRFR Briefing 21: Work-life balance across the lifecourse** (March 2005)

In Summer 2004, CRFR held an international conference to explore work-life balance across the lifecourse. This briefing outlines some of the main issues from the conference, explores what we might learn from international comparisons, and makes recommendations for policy and for further research.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb21.pdf>

**CRFR Briefing 27: Home and School** (February 2006)

This briefing reports findings from a Scottish study of the links between mental health and behaviour in schools.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb27.pdf>

**CRFR Briefing 32: Fertility variations in Scotland: actual, expected and ideal fertility** (April 2007)

This briefing reports some key findings of a research project that investigated the attitudes to fertility of men and women of child-bearing age in Scotland. This study found that there are links between deprivation and fertility.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb32.pdf>

**CRFR Briefing 37: Understanding cohabitation: A critical study of the living together as husband and wife rule in UK social security law** (March 2008)

Drawing on research with men and women who have had relevant personal experience of 'the cohabitation rule', this briefing identifies problems with its underlying assumptions about unmarried couples' relationships and their financial support obligations to each other.

<http://www.cfr.ac.uk/Reports/rb%2037.pdf>

**Publications**

**Families in society - boundaries and relationships**

Edited by Linda McKie and Sarah Cunningham-Burley (2005)

Policy Press: Bristol

The changing nature of families, their enduring and multi-faceted significance in society, and their value as a focus for the exploration of social change have ensured

that families have remained a prominent focus of academic enquiry. Acknowledging the increasing diversity and complexity of families, this innovative book proposes a new conceptual framework for understanding families and other relationships that both challenges and attempts to reconcile traditional and contemporary approaches.

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