

We asked parents 'what would help them in the recession?'

'Improving people's job prospects.'

'More, better paid jobs for women.'

'More help with childcare costs.'

'Free family activities.'

'Financial support for teenagers.'

'Fuel benefits/heating allowance for families who have a disabled child.'

'Keep interest rates low - financial help.'



Conclusion

Undoubtedly the recession is having an adverse affect on families. Bailing out the banks and deepening recession have left a gaping hole in the public purse and made spending cuts inevitable. It is essential that children and families are protected as much as possible from the worst of these cuts. Cutting essential services to children and families now would be an ill-considered short term solution which would store up problems for the future by widening existing inequalities. We need to invest in our children and families now, both to protect them from the affects of the recession now and to build a recovery where all Scotland's future citizens are assured of an equal chance of health, well-being and economic prosperity.

We should - and must - continue to invest in services for families. Parents and families are not soft targets. We call on the Scottish parliament and its MSPs to ensure that services for families in their areas are protected and that families have the chance to build and participate in Scotland's recovery.

Survey methods

Parenting across Scotland partner organisations run four telephone helplines. In 2009 our partners answered 9089 calls from parents needing help, advice and support. The helplines are ParentLine Scotland (provided by CHILDREN 1ST), Stepfamily Scotland (provided by Stepfamily Scotland), Lone Parent Helpline (provided by One Parent Families Scotland) and Advice Service Capability Scotland (provided by Capability Scotland). During September and October 2009, the helplines asked callers if they would be willing to complete a short questionnaire about how the recession was affecting their family life. 232 parents and families agreed to participate.

Parenting across Scotland

Parenting across Scotland (PAS) is a partnership of children's charities and adult relationship organisations' working together to provide a focus on parenting issues in Scotland.

PAS' vision is:

A Scotland where all parents and families are valued and supported to give children the best possible start in life.

Our aims are to:

- promote a positive view of parenting and the importance of family relationships;
- ensure that parents and families have access to information and support;
- be an effective public voice for parents and families to influence public opinion and policy;
- encourage PAS partners and others to work in partnership for the benefit of families in Scotland.

¹PAS Partners are

CHILDREN 1ST

Capability Scotland

SMC (formerly Scottish

Marriage Care)

Aberlour Childcare Trust

Relationships Scotland

Stepfamily Scotland

One Parent Families Scotland

Scottish Adoption Association

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Briefing

Families in the recession

Key findings

- 66% of families have had to make cut backs because of the recession
- 55% of families who had made cutbacks had reduced expenditure on fuel and food
- 38% of families reported that the recession had had an adverse effect on their child's quality of life
- 37% of respondents felt that the recession had put a strain on their relationships

Banks in crisis, rising unemployment, homes being repossessed, household costs increasing. How are families in Scotland affected? Parenting across Scotland is committed to consulting with parents and families about issues that matter to them to inform policy makers and public debate. Parenting across Scotland partners carried out a survey to find out what impact the recession is having on families.



Summary of findings

Many families are cutting back on spending

The results of this survey show that many families are struggling with rising prices of food and heating costs.

66% of the families have had to make cut backs because of the recession. Families told us how they found a range of ways to reduce their expenditure:

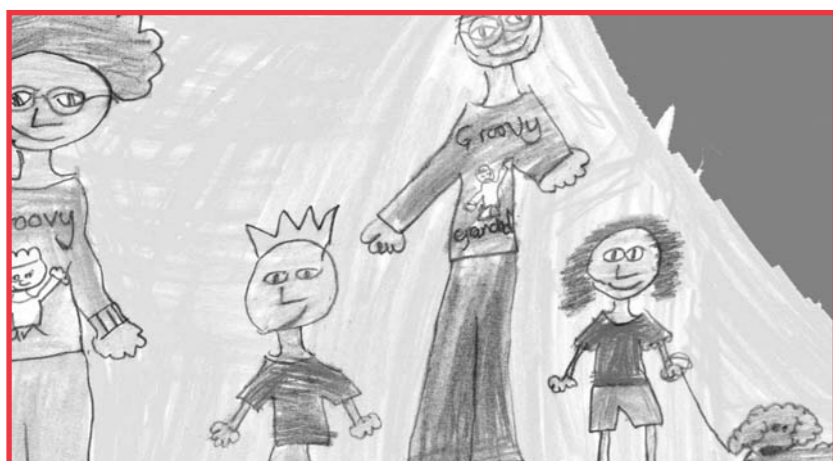
'Buying less shopping and looking for economy versions. Thinking twice about driving long distances (to save petrol) – not visiting relatives as a result.'

'Have had to sell my car due to money problems, cutting down on shopping and less days out with my family.'

'Income reduced by 20%-25% as overtime is no longer available.'

'Very strict over fuel and food bills. Very little shop choice in village and therefore have to pay inflated prices.'

Of the 66% of families that had made cutbacks, 55% had reduced expenditure on food and heating costs.



Some respondents stated they were not affected

34% of respondents stated that they had not been adversely affected by the recession. However within this group there was a stark financial divide.

52% of those unaffected quoted 'good job' or 'job security' as the reason that the recession had not affected them.

'My family are surviving the recession because my husband has a good job and we are using savings that we had put aside.'

'We have investments and shares. Generally financially stable.'

'Both of us are lucky as we have good jobs.'

21% stated that they had not been affected as they were receiving benefits. For these families, struggling on a low income was nothing new.

'Haven't known anything else.'

'Living on benefits so it doesn't affect me.'



Parents think that the recession is having an adverse affect on their child's quality of life

38% of parents who responded had cut down on spending on their child.

'Not going to soft play as much as it costs too much. Not buying as many books or toys.'

'I cut back on everything else first, so that my son can continue his sports activities.'

'I no longer take my children swimming or to the cinema.'

'I get things that they need, for example, shoes rather than what they want.'

'My son had great difficulty getting a job.'



Impact on family life and relationships

The survey findings make the emotional impact of financial difficulties clear. 'Money worries and financial stress can have a negative impact on family relationships. Studies on couples and on whole families show clearly that economic pressure is linked to psychological distress (for example, depressed mood or irritability) for both men and women, and that this then has a negative effect on couple interaction.' (Family and Parenting Institute 2009: The impact of recessions on family relationships).

37% of respondents felt that the recession had put a strain on their relationships.

'In times of recession we need better access to couple counselling.'

'My ex partner lives in Ireland. His work has been cut so he is unable to come and visit so frequently.'

'I found it harder to meet my child support payments.'

'Our financial difficulties were the main cause of our separation.'

'I have received no money from my ex partner. Strain on family relationships as I am asking my sister and mother for financial help.'

