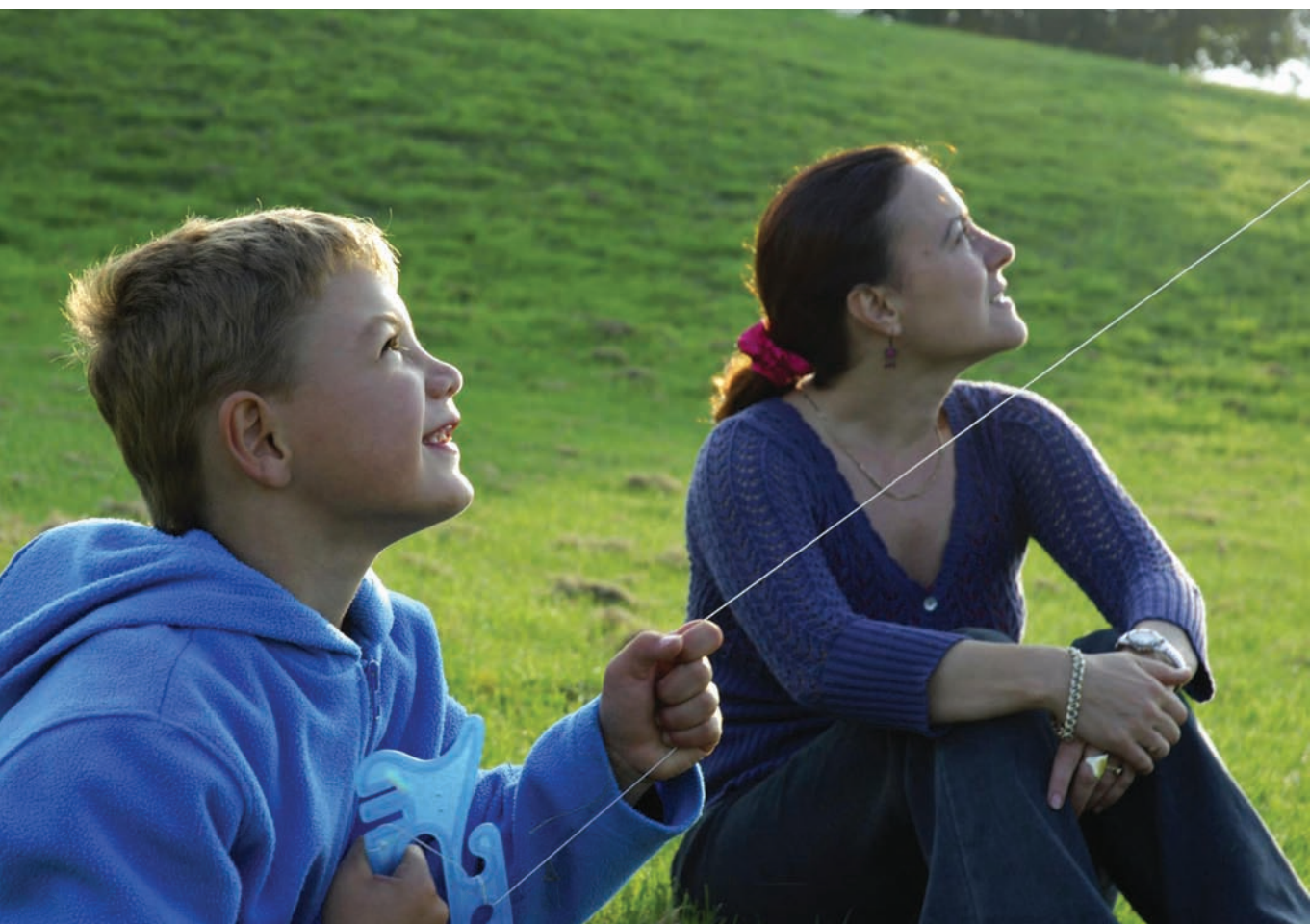




supporting families to support children



Parenting across Scotland
Work report 2007 to 2010



“Positive parenting can have a lasting impact on the lives of Scotland’s children. By providing children with a stable, safe and stimulating home environment, parents can help them to flourish and give them the confidence to succeed in life.

The Scottish Government values the work which Parenting across Scotland is undertaking as a partnership of children’s charities and adult relationship organisations to ensure that parents are provided with the right support and information to give their children the best possible start, and I am delighted that we have been able to provide financial support to assist them in this crucial work.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Adam Ingram'.

Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Young People

Introducing Parenting across Scotland

Families, in all their shapes and sizes, are the foundation of our society. Parents and other family members mostly do a great job in bringing up children, but it can be tough at times. Sometimes they need help. This is important because what happens to children, especially in their earliest years, influences their opportunities, relationships and wellbeing as adults.

Through our website, publications and the partnership helplines, Parenting across Scotland (PAS) provides information and support to parents and families as well as the people who work with them. By speaking directly to parents and families, we find out what matters to them. We then pass this vital information on to politicians and other decision makers so they can make sure people get the services, advice and support they need.

This report sets out some of the highlights of the past three years. Find out more about our work for parents at www.parentingacrossscotland.org

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- Parents are increasingly using the internet as a source of advice
- Health visitors are the most used source of advice for parents with very young children
- Once children start their education, nurseries and schools become important sources of advice and support

Ipsos MORI poll for PAS 2010

Informing families and professionals

Whether it's information about childcare, money, relationships or advice about the many other concerns which parents struggle with, we help parents find out what they need to know quickly and easily.

High quality online information

Parents repeatedly tell us that they find it hard to get reliable, Scotland-relevant information. An audit of internet websites for parents revealed that a search for parenting terms came up with more than 500,000 'hits'. Through surveys and focus groups, we asked parents what they would like to see on a website for parents. Using their feedback, we developed our website to provide information and support which is reliable and up to date for parents in Scotland. The site includes news and resources for parents; events listings; and policy and research updates for practitioners. See more at www.parentingacrossscotland.org

Top Ten Tips

Our series of Top Ten Tips booklets provides short, simple advice in an easy-to-read, popular format. They cover some of the aspects which parents find hardest such as transition times and living with teenagers. We have distributed 55,000 copies of the booklets (starting primary school; starting high school; parenting teenagers; and sex, relationships and teenagers) to parents through teachers, health visitors, nursery nurses and others.

Child's play

Although play is crucial to a child's early life and development, children nowadays have fewer opportunities to play unsupervised or outside – or even just to play. Jointly with Play Scotland and the Scottish Government's Play, Talk, Read public awareness campaign, we published a booklet *Child's Play* to encourage parents and others to let children take sensible risks and play more. Launched in spring 2010, over 5,000 parents have now received copies from health visitors, play specialists and nurseries.

Telephone support for parents

Four of our partners run telephone helplines which give general parenting advice and specialist support. They collaborate closely to ensure that parents receive a coordinated and effective response. Jointly, they have developed quality standards, transfer protocols and monitoring systems as well as sharing training on some of the issues which concern parents most: family breakdown, drink and drugs, and debt. We produce a regular newsletter for helpline workers to keep them in touch with one another and up to date with parenting issues.

You just don't understand

Peer pressure, bullying, sex and relationships are just some of the concerns which teenagers express – much the same as their parents! So, with pupils from Drumchapel High School, we produced a DVD in which teenagers act out their concerns. It has been used to encourage discussion with both young people and parents by a wide range of professionals.

Visible information

No matter how good our information is, it is no use if parents can't find it. We raised the profile of PAS partners' helplines through bus and train advertising. This campaign encouraged parents to see asking for help as a sign of strength and part of the job of any parent. We also distributed accompanying booklets which health visitors gave to parents.

We marketed the PAS website and partners' helplines by handing out over 20,000 leaflets at shopping centres in the five main cities.

We have maintained a high media profile through feature articles, news stories and radio.

“I thought my daughter was going backwards when she started primary! She started sucking her thumb again, and wanted me to do everything for her. Thanks to the TIPS now I know that’s normal.”



Last year, over 30,000 parents throughout Scotland received PAS Top Ten Tips booklets



When asked about what they wanted, parents said:

- **More clubs and activities out of school hours**
- **Better play facilities**
- **More flexible and less expensive childcare**

Ipsos MORI poll for PAS 2010

Finding out what parents need

PAS research provides the evidence base for our work in championing families. We have both commissioned our own research and collaborated with others to inform their research. By commissioning research, we learn from parents about their needs and use this to put an informed case to encourage policy change.

About Families: gathering evidence, informing action

In December 2009 we won funding for an exciting new partnership project, About Families. This project is looking at what research can tell us about parenting, including parenting in families affected by disability, and how services can use this information to support parents.

About Families connects research to the experiences of parents, practitioners and disabled people to highlight the key challenges facing parenting and disability services and the families they work with. The information is used to find out what parents need and how services could be developed.

Funded over three years to March 2013 by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund, the project is a collaboration involving PAS, the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (based at Edinburgh University) and Capability Scotland.

The About Families website www.aboutfamilies.org.uk, launched in October 2010, holds all the resources and information produced by the project. The first report, *'Parenting Teenagers: relationships and behaviour'*, was published in November 2010.

Asking parents about their experiences

Instilling discipline, steering children and time pressures are parents' main challenges. Watching children grow and develop, learn and be successful are the best things about being a parent. These are just some of the findings from our

regular Ipsos-MORI polls which seek parents' views. Whether they are describing the family friendliness of neighbourhoods, how valuable health visitors are or pre-school education, the polls give a fascinating insight into parents' concerns and provide vital information for politicians and policy makers. To find out more see www.parentingacrossscotland.org

In 2007...

The majority (88%) of parents thought that their neighbourhood was very or quite family friendly. A slightly smaller proportion (62%) thought their employer was family friendly, while (17%) thought that their employer was not very or not at all family friendly.

Almost half of respondents (45%) thought that the most rewarding thing about being a parent was watching their child/ren grow and develop.

In 2008...

Most parents told us they experienced no major problems managing their child's behaviour. Almost all (97%) found it easy to praise good behaviour, and 64% were confident in their ability to deal with difficult behaviour.

When asked what they thought about how the media portrays parents about a third of parents felt "frustrated and angry" by media coverage; and 23% said it made them feel "worried about whether they are doing the right thing as a parent".

In 2010...

The recession is hitting families hard. Nearly half (45%) are finding it harder to pay their bills, with the figure rising to 55% of lone parents, and to 64% of parents of a child with a disability. Worryingly, around two in five have cut back on food shopping and over a third have cut back on fuel bills. Parents rely heavily on informal childcare. Grandparents, in particular, are heavily relied on for childcare with 32% of parents using them as their main childcare arrangement.

“I’d like to thank you for listening and saving my sanity and for giving me confidence to stick up for myself when I was finding it really difficult. What an excellent service.”



In 2010 nearly 11,000 parents phoned our partners' helplines for parenting support



When we asked parents about health visitors:

- **Nine out of ten had found their advice reassuring**
- **Three in four would have missed the help if they had not had it**
- **Nine out of ten thought that health visiting should be available to all parents rather than only those experiencing problems**

Ipsos MORI poll for PAS 2008

Giving parents a voice

Government policy affects families directly, whether it's about health, housing, education, welfare benefits or the economy. We use our combined knowledge of parents' views to influence the Government through consultation responses, representation on working groups and talking to MSPs to ensure that the voices of families are represented.

How the recession is affecting families

Three in five (60%) of families have had to make cut backs because of the recession, with 55% cutting back on fuel and food and 38% saying that the recession has had an adverse effect on their child's quality of life. These are some of the findings from a survey of parents calling our partner helplines in September and October 2009. Using the findings, we published a briefing *Families in the Recession*, calling on MSPs to ensure that services for families are protected. The report was presented to MSPs at a Parliamentary event where parents told MSPs about how the recession was affecting them.

Highlighting the parental perspective

Between 2007 and 2010, we contributed to working groups on early years, runaways, school uniform grants, play and parental involvement in children's learning. We were closely involved in developing the Government's Early Intervention and Early Years Framework which aims to ensure that all children in Scotland get the best start in life.

Representing parents' interests

We have actively promoted parents' interests in working groups including:

- Early Years Framework Parenting Taskforce
- Parental Stakeholders in Curriculum for Excellence
- School Uniforms Grants working group
- Scottish Prison Service review of its child protection guidance
- Scottish Network for Parental Involvement in Children's Learning

Discussing the issues

Our conferences, Parents as Partners (2008) and, Parenting on the Breadline (2010), brought together parents and practitioners to discuss issues of concern to parents. The 2010 conference, addressed by Adam Ingram, Minister for Children and Young People, examined how efforts to improve parenting and eradicate poverty have to work together to ensure all Scotland's children have the same life chances.

Our e-mail newsletter keeps parenting professionals informed about news, events and projects supporting parents and families.

Support for families and children in the early years

Parents regard health visitors as a trusted source of support for themselves and their children's health. Despite this, the *Review of Nursing in the Community* proposed to eliminate child specialist nurses in the community. These proposals were coupled with a reduction in routine health checks of children. PAS used the findings from an Ipsos MORI poll of parents and Freedom of Information requests to make a strong case for maintaining child health specialists and reinstating universal child surveillance checks. We are delighted that the representations we made on behalf of parents were heard and acted upon.

Engaging parents and health professionals

We undertake vital work in influencing early years work in the health sector. For example, we facilitate a group on parenting and health involving representatives from the voluntary sector, NHS and the Scottish Government. As part of this, we have piloted using the NHS Health Scotland *Ready Steady Baby* publication as a resource for parenting groups. We are working with NHS Health Scotland to look at how practitioners engage with 'hard to reach' families.

“PAS website is great for finding the advice you need as a parent when you need it – having all the information accessible at the click of a mouse.”



In 2010 our website received nearly 10,000 visits
www.parentingacrossscotland.org



- Both birth families and adoptive parents can benefit from helping children to retain links with their origins
- It is estimated that one in three children will experience parental separation before the age of 16
- Maternity rates for teenage girls are approximately ten times higher in the most deprived groups
- The percentage of children living in a couple relationship fell from 92% in 1972 to 77% in 2008

Working together

The children's charities and adult relationships organisations which are partners in PAS work, collectively, with thousands of parents and families throughout Scotland. Individual partners also collaborate on projects to improve practice. Here are a few examples of our partners working together under the PAS banner.

Contact with birth parents

New adoption law requires that children who have been adopted have contact with their birth parents where possible. Scottish Adoption and Family Mediation Lothian are piloting a mediation approach with birth and adoptive parents to explore whether child-centred voluntary contact agreements can be reached outwith a formal court process.

Supporting parental relationships

Positive parental relationships – whether parents are together or apart – are important for children's life chances. Over 100 delegates attended a seminar, organised by Relationships Scotland and Aberlour Childcare Trust, to learn how supporting adult relationships can improve outcomes for children.

Improving life for young parents

Young parents can be particularly vulnerable and hard to reach. A seminar, run by Aberlour and One Parent Families Scotland, shared information from projects across Scotland about what works in supporting young parents.

Parenting apart

Many families are parenting apart which can be challenging. CHILDREN^{1ST} and Relationships Scotland have produced easy-to-read booklets and posters for parents based on research about what works for children in these circumstances.

Planning ahead

We will continue with our vital information, policy and research programmes to ensure that parents and families receive the best possible assistance. Over the next year, we plan to:

- Through the *About Families* project, gather evidence and influence change to improve support, especially for families affected by disability
- Work with partner helplines to ensure that parents receive quality advice and support
- Continue to ensure that policy makers take the views of parents into account
- Organise events for parents to meet politicians and air their views
- Provide comprehensive information to parents through our website www.parentingacrossscotland.org
- Keep professionals working with parents up to date through our e-mail newsletter
- Distribute our Top Ten Tips booklets to parents throughout Scotland
- Continue to work with a wide range of organisations to ensure that parents are well supported, especially in this time of financial cuts and threats to public services

Parenting across Scotland (PAS) pools the efforts of eight major charities which support children and families to ensure that children have the best possible start in life.

Aberlour Childcare Trust www.aberlour.org.uk

Capability Scotland www.capability-scotland.org.uk

Children 1ST www.children1st.org.uk

One Parent Families Scotland www.opfs.org.uk

Relationships Scotland www.relationships-scotland.org.uk

Scottish Marriage Care www.scottishmarriagecare.org

Scottish Adoption www.scottishadoption.org

Stepfamily Scotland www.stepfamilyscotland.org.uk

**Together, we support parents
to support children.**



supporting families to support children

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Parenting across Scotland is a partnership funded by the Scottish Government to provide a focus for issues and concerns affecting parents

Published 2011

