



supporting families to support children



## What Scottish parents tell us

SUMMARY OF IPSOS MORI POLL  
UNDERTAKEN FOR PAS 2010



## Background

Strong, loving families are essential to ensure that all Scotland's children get the best start in life. But parenting isn't always easy – and all parents can struggle at times – which is why it's important to ensure that families are able to find the advice and support they need to bring up their children to be the healthy, confident citizens of tomorrow.

Parenting has never been an easy job but with the recession and fears of cuts looming large it has become harder than ever. On the one hand, it seems to be more difficult for families to make ends meet and jobs are in short supply. On the other hand, lone parents are being told that they must return to work when their youngest child is five, and benefits for disabled people are becoming more restrictive.

**Parenting across Scotland commissioned an Ipsos MORI poll to seek parents' experiences of a range of key parenting issues. The poll looked at:**

- how families are being affected by the recession
- childcare and pre-school education,
- advice and support in bringing up children
- attitudes to doctors
- relationships, and
- parents' future support needs.

At a time when families are stretched to their limits to provide the best for their children, it is crucial that parents receive advice and support when they need it so that Scotland's children can flourish and prosper.

Parenting across Scotland (PAS) is a partnership of children's charities and adult relationship organisations working together to provide a focus for issues and concerns affecting parents in Scotland. Together the PAS partners work with thousands of parents throughout Scotland. PAS work focuses on:

- providing information and support to families to help parents bring up their children
- Researching subjects of concern to parents
- Sharing good practice on supporting parents
- Representing the views of parents to policy-makers

PAS believes that we should value parents and celebrate the invaluable contribution that they make to future generations by bringing up their children.



## Key findings

### Childcare

Parents rely heavily on informal childcare; considerably more respondents have used informal than formal childcare in the past year (75% compared with 27%)<sup>1</sup>. Parents of a child with a disability were more likely to use informal childcare (75% compared to 61%). Grandparents, in particular, were heavily relied

on for childcare with 58% of parents we surveyed using them for childcare at some point in the last year, and 32% of parents using them as their main source of childcare.

For the majority of parents (59%), the most important consideration in choosing childcare for their child, was whether the child is familiar with the person looking after them. This was particularly so for parents of a child with a disability, where for 74% this was the most important consideration compared to 58% of all other parents. Other important considerations were quality (39%), flexibility (28%) and reliability (25%). Distance to get to childcare (18%), price (16%) and times available (15%) were also important factors.<sup>2</sup>

There was a high level of satisfaction among parents with their childcare, whether the childcare was formal or informal. Most parents were satisfied with childcare times, accessibility and affordability. Three quarters did not want to make changes to their childcare arrangements and were happy with their current arrangements.

The majority of parents would consult the internet (34%) or their local council (29%) if they needed more information about childcare options in their area.

### Families and the recession

The recession is hitting families hard. Nearly half (45%) are finding it harder to pay their bills than they were a year ago, with the figure rising to 55% of lone parents, and 64% of those who have a child with a disability.

Worryingly, around two in five (42%) have had to cut back on food shopping and over a third (37%) have had to cut back on fuel bills. Almost half (49%) have cut back on family holidays, and over a third have cut back on family day trips (37%).

If their household was struggling to pay their bills, parents said they would go to family (29%), the bank manager (21%) or the Citizens Advice Bureau (18%) for help. However, nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents didn't know where they could go for help.

It is important that the Government recognises the increasing financial strains on families and strives to protect them from the impact of the recession. In particular, it should ensure that the distinct needs of lone parents and families affected by disability are recognised and protected.

<sup>1</sup> Respondents were asked to choose two or three factors, hence the percentages add up to more than 100%.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100% as some respondents used both informal and formal childcare.



## Pre school education

In Scotland, parents of three and four year olds are entitled to free nursery education. We asked the parents in of 3 – 4 year olds in our survey about their use of pre-school education.<sup>3</sup> 61% are using their full entitlement; 54% use 10 hours or more, 5% use 6-10 hours and 2% say they use five hours or less. 11% say they don't use the free hours at all. A small number of parents were not aware of their entitlement.

## Advice and support in bringing up children

In the early years of children's lives, parents rely heavily on health professionals, such as health visitors and doctors, for parenting advice. Health visitors provide a universal service with a child specialist role which is key to early intervention, identification of need and signposting to specialist services.

As their children get older, parents tend to turn more to informal sources of support, such as friends and families for advice. Informal support is the most popular source of support once children are over two. Once children start nursery or school, schools and nurseries become an important source of advice and support for parents, though this tails off once children start secondary school.

Notably, the internet is increasingly being used as a source of support. This is particularly noticeable when children are under 2 with 30% of parents saying that they use the internet for advice and support. After this, use of the internet as a source of support stabilises at between 11–14%.

Although parenting classes have an increasingly high profile, parents did not name them as a source of support. In spite of the plethora of books being published on parenting, parents' use of books and magazines for support was very low varying from 12% when children were under two to 1% after this.

Worryingly, 72% of parents still say that they don't know where to go for advice and support in bringing up children. The figure rises to 82% among parents in the most deprived areas of the country.

## Relationships

When asked about what issues put a strain on relationships with their partner, parents identified money, work and children's behaviour as the three top sources of stress. One in five people who had experienced strains in their relationships said that they had felt depressed, stressed or anxious because of this. 85% of people who had experienced strains in their relationships felt that this had had no effect on their children. This is in marked contrast to calls to Childline where a large proportion of children's calls are about parental conflict.

<sup>3</sup> However, this is a small sub-sample of the main survey and cannot be seen as representative.

## Doctors

Parents were asked about their experience of taking their child to the doctor. Their response was overwhelmingly positive.

- 91% thought that the doctor was either very good or fairly good at listening to them
- 93% felt that the doctor was either very good or fairly good at communicating with their child
- 94% said that their doctor was either very good or fairly good at talking in a way that helps them understand their child's condition
- 94% stated that their doctor was either very good or fairly good at talking in a way that helps them understand their child's treatment.



Very few parents (5%) had asked their doctor for parenting advice. Those who had, generally found their doctor provided them with helpful advice (79%), was easy to talk to (87%) and took their problems seriously (87%).

## What parents want in their local areas

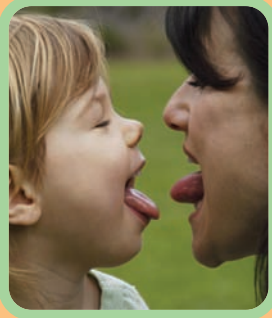
We asked parents what additional services or support they would like to see in their local area.

A very wide range of responses were given (this is typical when open ended questions are asked); indeed, no single response was mentioned by more than one in five people. However, the most common response (18%) was more activities or clubs for children outside of school hours.

After this, parents said that what they'd like to see in their areas is:

- More advice and support on parenting issues 7%
- More financial support for parents 6%
- More childcare provision 6%
- More information about childcare in their area 5%
- More facilities for children to play 4%

There were relatively few sub-group differences, although it was notable that parents in the most deprived areas were more likely than those in the least deprived areas to mention clubs and activities for children during out of school hours (25% compared with 13% respectively). Additionally parents who have a child with a disability were more likely than those who do not to mention improved advice or services for health related issues (14% compared with 2% respectively) and better school transportation services (9% compared with 4% respectively).



## PAS MORI polls

1,000 parents of children aged 0–16 were interviewed by Ipsos-MORI on behalf of PAS. The interviews were conducted by telephone between 20th May and 24th July 2010. The full report analyses the information further by gender, disability, family shape, deprivation and urban/rural split.

**Report is available at [www.parentingacrossscotland.org](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org)**

### **PAS has carried out three previous Ipsos MORI polls of parents in Scotland.**

- In 2004 the PAS MORI poll asked members of the public about parenting: whether there is enough information and support for parents, if they have ever needed support with their children, public attitudes to parents and parenting.
- The 2007 PAS MORI poll looked at support available to parents and at what they found most rewarding and most challenging about being a parent.
- The 2008 MORI poll asked parents about their advice and support needs, behaviour issues and their experiences of and attitudes to health visitors.

**Reports are available at [www.parentingacrossscotland.org.uk](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org.uk)**



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### **The PAS partners are:**

- Aberlour Childcare Trust
- Capability Scotland
- CHILDREN 1<sup>ST</sup>
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Relationships Scotland
- Scottish Adoption Association
- Scottish Marriage Care
- Stepfamily Scotland

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