



supporting families to support children



**WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT
FAMILIES IN SCOTLAND
SUMMARY OF MORI SURVEY
UNDERTAKEN FOR PAS MARCH 2007**



Background

The welfare of children, and therefore of future generations, is heavily dependent on the contribution of parents. However, while parenting is rewarding, it can also be very challenging. Recent research suggests that parents face many difficulties when bringing up children and that this can have a negative impact, both on parents themselves and their children.

Recent research by UNICEF¹ has placed the United Kingdom at the bottom of a league table for child well-being across 21 industrialised countries. This poor rating is generally thought to be due to long-term under-investment and a lack of support for children and families. This has added to a growing recognition that parents would benefit from more family friendly policies and support.

Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) is a multi-agency partnership funded by the Scottish Executive to provide a focus for issues and concerns affecting parents in Scotland. PAS brings together a group of voluntary sector organisations who between them have knowledge and experience of working with thousands of parents. PAS work focuses on:

- Sharing good practice on supporting parents
- Researching the issues and concerns of parents
- Sharing information on supportive services and developing ways they can work together
- Providing information to families to help parents bring up children
- Representing the views of parents to policy-makers

Families are important to children.

By supporting families we support children.

PAS believes that we need to value parenting and caring more, we also believe that families deserve the best possible information and support in recognition of the skills required in bringing up children to reach their potential. Family relationships are the most important factor affecting the health, wellbeing and achievement of adults and children. Children are raised in all sorts of 'families' and PAS recognises that it is the activity of parenting that counts rather than a biological relationship.

In 2004 PAS commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct a survey², the survey suggested that parenting was a cause of anxiety for some parents - almost 40% of parents worried about how good a parent they are. Further, both parents and non-parents thought it was harder to bring up children now than it was when they were young, mainly because of financial pressures, problems with discipline and difficulties achieving a work-life balance.

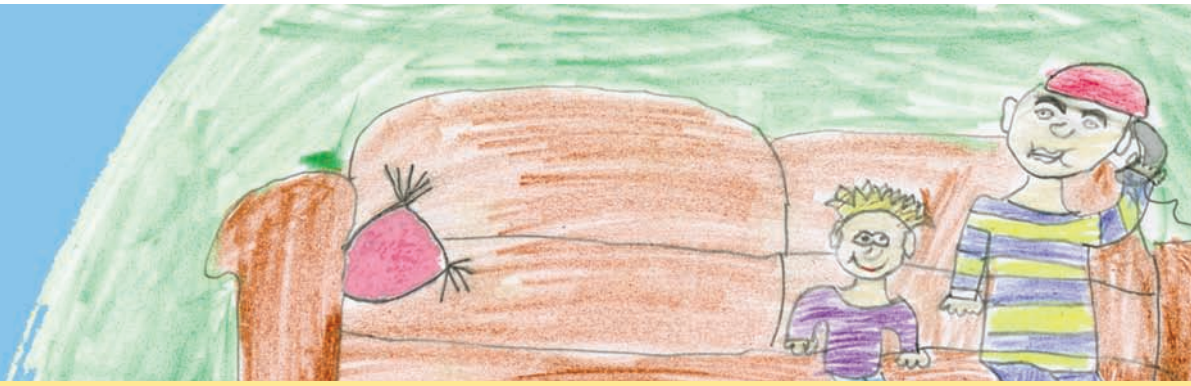
In 2007 PAS commissioned a second survey of parents in Scotland to seek their views on a key range of parenting issues, 1,250 parents of children aged between 0 -16 years were interviewed by Ipsos MORI on behalf of PAS. All the interviews were conducted by telephone between 19th January and 15th February 2007. The full report is available to download from the PAS website at www.parentingacrossscotland.org

¹ UNICEF Research Centre (2007)

An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries

² MORI Scotland (2004)

Family Life in Scotland Report for Parenting Across Scotland



Key Findings

Experiences of parenting

Almost half of respondents (45%) think that the most rewarding thing about being a parent is watching their child/ren grow and develop, while just over a quarter mention watching their children learn/be successful (27%). The main perceived challenges of parenthood, meanwhile, include instilling discipline (25%), steering children in the right direction (21%) and time pressures (16%).

The top worries that parents have for their children at the moment relate mainly to their education or school work (14%), their choice of friends (8%) and the possibility that they may become involved in drug or alcohol abuse (9%). Worries parents have for their child for the future include employment prospects/getting a good job (29%), education (17%) and, again, drug and alcohol abuse (20%).

Support in bring up children

Views are mixed with regard to how much help or support is available to parents. Whereas half (52%) of respondents say there is a great deal/some support, 41% say there is not a lot/none. Depending on the problems they are experiencing, most parents appear to rely on health visitors/doctors, schools, the internet or their own parents for support.

Of those who live with a partner, around a third (32%) say they and their partner play an equal role in bringing up their child, while a similar proportion say *'I do most of the looking after'*, 19% say *'I do a little more than him/her'*, 13% say *'He/she does a little more than me'* and 9% say *'He/she does most of the looking after'*. The majority of parents who live with a partner say they agree on issues relating to bringing up their child.

Two thirds of parents who are separated but whose child still has contact with his/her biological parent say they make most of the decisions relating to bringing up their child. Around half of this group say they would like more financial support from their child's other parent and a third say they would like more support in looking after their child.

Less than one in ten (8%) respondents have ever had professional counselling or mediation for their relationship with their child's parent, while 5% have done so for issues relating to bringing up their child. Of those who have not had counselling or mediation, a majority say they would consider it - 77% for difficulties relating to bringing up their child and 68% for their relationship with their child's other parent.

Discipline

Asked about methods they have used to discipline their child in the past year, the majority of respondents say they have discussed an issue calmly (89% had done this at least "sometimes"), shouted or yelled (69%), and stopped their child going out/taken away something they value (51%). All respondents (100%) have praised their children when they have done something good.

A fifth of parents have smacked or hit their child at least once or twice in the past year, while over a third (36%) have threatened to do so. When asked about their attitudes towards smacking, two thirds (63%) say that smacking is not a good thing but sometimes parents need to do it, while 29% say parents should not smack their children in any circumstances. Seven percent say there is nothing wrong with smacking to teach children right from wrong.

Family friendliness

The majority (88%) of respondents say their neighbourhood is very or quite family friendly and a similar proportion (85%) say the same about their nearest town or city.

A slightly smaller proportion (62%) feel that their employer is family friendly, while 12% feel their employer is not very friendly and a further 5% say they are not at all family friendly.

Around half (53%) think the Government understands the challenges and problems faced by people bringing up children well but only slightly less (46%) think it has a poor understanding.



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PAS partners:

- Aberlour Childcare Trust
- Capability Scotland
- CHILDREN 1ST
- Relate Scotland
- Family Mediation Scotland
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Scottish Adoption
- Scottish Marriage Care
- Stepfamily Scotland