

# Parenting across Scotland

10th anniversary report



# Starter for ten

## Why did PAS come about?

In 2004, a partnership of nine organisations formed Parenting across Scotland (PAS) to work jointly on the main concerns of families in Scotland.

## So what was happening in 2004?

1	Jack McConnell was First Minister of the Scottish Parliament, representing Labour (in coalition with the Liberal Democrats).
2	Tony Blair, Labour, was Prime Minister of the UK Government.
3	The new Scottish Parliament building opened.
4	The Scottish Government was called the Scottish Executive (it changed in 2007).
5	Scotland's first Commissioner for Children and Young People, Kathleen Marshall, assumed her position in April.
6	The Children's Hearing System was under review.
7	The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey indicated strong support for unmarried fathers having the same parental rights as married fathers; growing visibility of same sex partnerships; and step-parenthood increasingly common because of higher levels of separation, divorce and second partnerships.
8	The Scottish Parliament passed the Civil Partnership Act.
9	The Scottish Parliament passed the Anti-Social Behaviour (Scotland) Act introducing Parenting Orders to sanction parents who refused to engage in voluntary support to prevent crime or antisocial behaviour involving their child. Breach of a parenting order is a criminal offence.
10	The Scottish Parliament passed the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act which, amongst other things, intended to make it easier for parents and carers to get support.

# All in a decade

## What's been happening since 2004?

<b>2005</b>	<p>The Breastfeeding (Scotland) Act promotes breastfeeding and makes it an offence to prevent a child from being breastfed in public places.</p> <p><b>PAS</b> brings parents and politicians together at the Scottish Parliament to share experiences of bringing up children.</p>
<b>2006</b>	<p>The Family Law (Scotland) Act extends parental rights and responsibilities for unmarried fathers; reduces separation periods for divorce; and introduces legal rights for cohabiting couples.</p> <p><b>PAS</b> publishes an evaluation of helplines for parents.</p>
<b>2007</b>	<p>The first report from the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) longitudinal study of children covers childcare, early parenting and sources of support.</p> <p><b>PAS</b> publishes 'Parenting Teenagers', the first in its 'top tips' series for parents.</p> <p><b>PAS</b> pilots Parent Information Points in schools in Edinburgh and Glasgow. These provide information to parents in a 'marketplace' format.</p>
<b>2008</b>	<p>The Scottish Government launches the Early Years Framework to help children get the best start in life and do more for children whose lives are limited by poverty, poor health and low attainment.</p> <p>The UK experiences the biggest (global) financial crash for generations, leading to instability and poverty for many families.</p> <p>200 people attend the <b>PAS</b> conference, Parents as Partners.</p>
<b>2009</b>	<p>The Play, Talk, Read campaign starts; it encourages parents to engage with their children from birth.</p> <p><b>PAS</b> launches a new website for parents and practitioners.</p>
<b>2010</b>	<p>For the first time since records began in Scotland, more children are born to unmarried than married parents.</p> <p><b>PAS</b>, in partnership with the Centre for Research and Relationships and Capability Scotland, sets up About Families. This project produces evidence reviews about important issues for families.</p>

<p><b>2011</b></p>	<p><b>PAS</b> produces an election manifesto of policies for families (including child-care, family-friendly working, relationship support), and holds a 'Question Time' event at the parliament for parents to put their views to the politicians.</p> <p>The 2011 Scottish Parliament election returns a majority Scottish National Party government.</p>
<p><b>2012</b></p>	<p><b>PAS</b> launches its essay collection, 'Scotland: the best place in the world to bring up children?' to inform the National Parenting Strategy.</p> <p>The Scottish Government launches the National Parenting Strategy at the <b>PAS</b> conference.</p> <p>The Early Years Collaborative forms - the world's first national multi-agency quality improvement programme.</p> <p>The UK Government launches a programme of welfare reform. While it aims to simplify the benefit system, it also cuts benefits and imposes the so-called 'bedroom tax'. Non-resident parents on housing benefit can no longer afford to have a separate bedroom for their children coming to stay.</p>
<p><b>2013</b></p>	<p>The General Register Office for Scotland reports that Scotland's population has reached an all-time high of 5,313,600 'mostly because more people are coming into Scotland than leaving it, and also because we are seeing more births than deaths'. The population is continuing to age, life expectancy is increasing and the number of households is continuing to rise.</p> <p><b>PAS</b> gives evidence to the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill.</p>
<p><b>2014</b></p>	<p>The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act provides parents with 600 free hours of childcare a year.</p> <p>David Cameron is Prime Minister of the UK Government, representing the Conservatives in coalition with the Liberal Democrats.</p> <p>Nicola Sturgeon is First Minister of the Scottish Parliament, representing the Scottish National Party, and the first woman to hold this office.</p> <p><b>PAS is 10!</b></p>

## **The best thing about being a parent**

'Yes, I think you'd better leave off,' said the Gryphon: and Alice was only too glad to do so. 'Shall we try another figure of the Lobster Quadrille?' the Gryphon went on. 'Or would you like the Mock Turtle to sing you a song?'

Aileen Campbell, MSP, Minister for Children and Young People

This report describes some of the highlights from the last ten years under our main work themes: policy, information and research.

## The best thing about being a parent

'When me and my daughter catch each other's eye...and we just know how lucky we both are. Simple moment'



# So what's changed?

The picture is one of ups and downs – a bit like family life.

Scotland's policy on families has moved from the punitive approach exemplified by Parenting Orders towards the supportive National Parenting Strategy, published in 2012 after considerable consultation with parents and carers. There is much more focus on trying to get things right in children's earliest years in order to prevent intractable problems occurring later on. In other words, it is much more positive.

There is more understanding of the family as a whole unit; that families are about children and adults and all the inter-connecting relationships.

PAS has contributed significantly to this new understanding and has been involved in notable developments such as the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006, the Early Years Framework, the National Parenting Strategy and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, all of which have benefited, and should continue to benefit, families.

Our campaign with the Royal College of Nursing and Children in Scotland in 2011/12 resulted in more health checks for children, and 500 more health visitors to be appointed over the next four years. We continue to campaign for better childcare and family-friendly working, and for a more positive view of families. This is important because what happens to children, especially in their earliest years, influences their opportunities, relationships and wellbeing as adults.

As we come to the end of our first decade, we can see clearly the impact of the financial crisis and UK government policy. Cutting welfare benefits, increasing child poverty and in-work poverty mean that families are finding it harder to manage. Vital public services are being cut despite increasing demand. The arguments for early intervention and early years work are generally accepted. But it is difficult to provide the necessary early intervention in this context.

## **What next?**

There is still much to be done. While the present attention on early years is welcome, families who are struggling need support whatever the age of their children. Families of all kinds need support so that children can flourish. That is what PAS aims to do for the next decade.

# Policy

Looking back over the decade, we've been involved in many of the policy developments fundamental to the wellbeing of children and families; whether making sure families' voices are heard by government; lobbying for change; or trying to prevent or mitigate some of the worst policy decisions, including the UK government's welfare reform programme. We have also contributed to the legislative programme including the Family Law (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and government working groups including the Early Years Framework.

We are in a good position to influence because we ask and listen to parents/carers. But also, the PAS partners work directly with many thousands of parents/carers all over Scotland, and so we know what they are saying and experiencing.

## **National Parenting Strategy**

In 2012, the Scottish Government produced its first National Parenting Strategy. This took several years of hard work and our contribution included regular meetings with civil servants, consultation with parents and events for professionals. We helped to convene parents groups, an academic seminar, and a reference group of voluntary organisations. All this effort shaped the content of the strategy and meant that all groups of parents were represented, especially the most vulnerable and those who are often left out.

We considered some of the main issues for parents in our 2012 essay collection, 'Scotland: the best place in the world to bring up children?' The aspirational title reflected the Scottish Government's intention to improve children's lives. The essays - written by practitioners and parents - concluded that we are still a long way off the aspiration, and contributed to the content of the National Parenting Strategy published later that year.

Now in 2014, we are working with the Scottish Government to put the strategy into practice, for example, by providing information for parents, including fathers and parents of teenagers.

## **Campaigning for families**

Over the past ten years, the three most significant campaigns have been to preserve health visiting; improve childcare; and encourage family-friendly working.

Our Ipsos MORI 2008 poll of parents showed that health visitors are the most vital source of support in a child's early years – for both children and parents/carers. A universal and trusted service, health visitors are in an ideal position to see what is happening in a family and to provide support. And yet, in 2008, health visitors were seeing fewer families and there was a huge shortfall, both in the existing workforce but also those entering the

profession. We worked with others, notably the Royal College of Nursing and Children in Scotland, to demand a change in policy. We are delighted that the Scottish Government agreed to our policy demands and recently announced that there would be 500 new health visitors over the next four years and a new training programme. This means more support for parents and carers and more likelihood of picking up and resolving problems early on.

## **Childcare**

Parents and carers who use childcare so they can work or train need to know that their children are well looked after. Evidence shows that high-quality childcare improves what happens to children and narrows the inequality gap. Childcare also needs to be affordable. But the cost of childcare in Scotland is among the highest in Europe. It is also very inflexible, particularly for those who work outwith school hours (most people). More families in adequately paid work means fewer families finding it difficult to put food on the table or having to choose between eating and heating.

So, we have continuously campaigned, with others, for childcare which is both high-quality and affordable. We contributed to the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and are now sitting on the Children in Scotland Childcare Commission to find solutions and a childcare system that works for families.

## **Family-friendly working**

Childcare is one element, but employer attitudes and workplace expectations are also important to enable people with family commitments to work. Increasing in-work poverty means that, for too many families, having a job does not mean having enough money to live on and this has to change. The Scottish Government is now funding Family Friendly Working Scotland, a partnership of PAS, along with Fathers Network Scotland and Working Families, to promote family-friendly workplaces. Our programme includes working with employers on shared parental leave and new flexible working regulations; research into family-friendly working; and in 2015, launching an award for top family-friendly employers in Scotland.

See more about PAS and policy at:

[www.parentingacrossscotland.org/policy--research/policy.aspx](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/policy--research/policy.aspx)

**The best thing about being a parent**  
'My children who constantly surprise  
and inspire me'



# Information

Over the past ten years, PAS information has helped to reassure and inform parents about all sorts of aspects of bringing up children. The topics are always changing - in 2014, parents and carers are asking us about how to keep children safe online and about how to organise childcare and make ends meet on zero-hours contracts. But some things stay the same, including anxieties about children starting school or babies not sleeping or teenagers testing the boundaries.

Professionals also need information so they can pass this onto the families they work with.

***'As an educational psychologist I am in contact with many parents who have difficulty with their child's erratic sleep pattern. Your booklet provides an excellent resource for parents who have a child with sleep difficulties'***

So, through our website, email newsletter, printed publications, DVDs, events, conferences, partner helplines and contributing to other organisations' publications we try to reach as many people as possible. How we go about this has changed. We're much more likely to use Twitter and Facebook now; we've had to adapt our newsletter because people tend to use their mobiles rather than PCs to find information online; and we rely far less heavily on the printed word. But we know that there is still a 'digital divide'. So we try to make sure that parents and carers who do not have internet access can get the information they need.

We've had huge success with our 'ten top tips' for parents series. The small format and down-to-earth advice has really appealed to parents and carers. We've distributed these to tens of thousands of parents through nurseries, schools, health visitors and others.

***'I like this because it has no big words. It is simple. It starts by acknowledging the parent. It isn't easy being a parent and [coping with] every single thing that happens'***

Our quarterly email bulletin, which we started in 2010, goes to over 1,000 professionals working with parents and also to politicians. It highlights latest research and practice on parenting and links directly to our website for comment and articles. The most popular piece so far was about the state of health visiting, with a whole profession under threat. But we've also covered neuroscience; supporting prisoners' families; working with lone fathers; the Solihull approach and much more.

See more about PAS information at:

[www.parentingacrossscotland.org/info-for-families.aspx](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/info-for-families.aspx)

# Research

The children who are Birth Cohort 1 of the Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) study were born around the time PAS formed and they are now coming up for ten, in primary 6 and taking part in the eighth sweep of data collection. PAS has taken a great interest in this study, with the latest findings regularly featured in our practice newsletter.

## What parents think

We've commissioned our own research in the form of regular polls asking parents for their views. For example, we have asked parents how and whether they get the information and support they need to bring up their children, and about children's behaviour, health visitors, how family-friendly their neighbourhoods are, and their experiences of parenting. We then tell the Scottish Government and others what we have found. Ipsos MORI conducted surveys for us in 2004, 2007, 2008 and 2010. And in 2014, because research indicated a shortage of information for parents of teenagers and young adults, we consulted with parents and carers of young people (11-19-year-olds) about their information needs, culminating in a well-received report and event for professionals.

In 2004 we found that:

- 39% of parents worried 'all the time' or 'quite a lot' about how good a parent they are
- 1 in 5 parents of teenagers had experienced problems that they needed help with

In 2007 we found that:

- Almost half of parents thought that the most rewarding thing about being a parent was watching their children grow and develop
- Parents' top worries were about their children's education or school; choice of friends; and possible involvement in substance abuse

In 2008 we found that:

- 7 out of 10 parents were finding it more difficult to afford their household bills than they were a year previously
- 9 out of 10 parents found the advice of their health visitor reassuring

In 2010 we found out what parents thought about:

- The effects of the recession
- Childcare and pre-school education

And in 2014 we found that parents want information about teenagers – and that the place they go first to find it is Google!

## About Families: research partners

Working with the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at Edinburgh University and Capability Scotland, our About Families action research collaboration has helped those working with families to learn more about what works. Regular About Families evidence reviews have summarised the latest research evidence on parenting teenagers; relationships (whether couples are together or apart); parenting on a low income; and support for parents. About Families has used the findings to help parenting organisations develop plans and projects. The project ended in 2013.

## Changing family households

With the results of the 2011 Census published, we wanted to find out how family households had changed since the 2001 Census. Many services for families were predicated on old data, so in 2014, we commissioned an Evidence Review from the Evidence Request Bank so that we had information which could help families and children receive the services and support they need.

The findings cover four themes:

- Households and families
- Family formation and dissolution
- Children in need of care
- Families affected by disability

They show both stability and change over the ten years from 2001 including:

- Significant changes in household composition and form with one-person households becoming the most common
- Fertility levels increased and then decreased
- Marriages decreased and cohabitation increased
- The number of children in care went up substantially, with a rise in the numbers in formal kinship care
- The amount of time spent on providing care for disabled family members increased significantly
- Men and women of working age were working more hours by 2011; with women more likely to work part-time than men
- In 2011 women were almost six times more likely than men to be economically inactive because of looking after the home or family

See more on PAS research at:

[www.parentingacrossscotland.org/policy--research/research.aspx](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/policy--research/research.aspx)

**The best thing about being a parent**

'Singing and dancing to All About That Bass yesterday had my foster son redder than a beetroot'



# Looking ahead: the next ten

Families, family life and the pressures on families are changing.

Parents used to think the biggest threats to family life were outside the home. 'Stranger danger', cars claiming the streets where children used to play, and pressures of work meant that children were discouraged from playing outside in favour of staying inside in front of screens. Play, particularly outside play, are now known as vital for healthy development. And the 'outside' dangers have moved inside. While there are many positives in children using digital media, it has encouraged needless consumerism, sexualised children from an early age, and exposed children to cyber-bullying.

Childcare and family-friendly working are the two most essential elements of the PAS work programme for the immediate future. High-quality, affordable, flexible childcare improves children's outcomes while also allowing parents to work. Family-friendly working is the other part of the jigsaw for work-life balance. Getting these elements right, will help families flourish.

We are living in one of the richest countries in the world and yet have one of the highest levels of income inequality in the developed world. With the number of children living in poverty in Scotland predicted to rise from 80,000 to 100,000 over the next few years, and people increasingly forced to rely on food banks, many families are struggling to survive, never mind help their children to thrive. Lack of money puts enormous stress on parents. Ignoring this makes a nonsense of sending parents who are living in poverty to parenting classes. The main problem people living in poverty have is not having enough money. This has to be a priority for all of those working with families over the next ten years.

While it is hard to predict what the next ten years will bring, we do know that PAS will continue to listen to families, and we will go on telling policymakers and politicians what parents are telling us.



Parenting across Scotland is a partnership of charities which offers support to children and families in Scotland. We work together to focus on parenting issues and to help realise our vision: 'a Scotland where all parents and families are valued and supported to give children the best possible start in life'

PAS provides support for parents and families through our information service and partners' helplines. We find out what matters to parents and families and what they need, and get this across to politicians. We also share research, policy and good practice with people who work with families.

Our partners are children's charities and organisations which support thousands of parents and families in Scotland. PAS partners are:

Aberlour Childcare Trust  
Capability Scotland  
CHILDREN 1<sup>st</sup>  
Children in Scotland  
Families Outside  
One Parent Families Scotland  
Relationships Scotland  
The Spark  
Scottish Adoption

**Parenting across Scotland**  
**1 Boroughloch Square**  
**Edinburgh EH8 9NJ**

0131 319 8071  
pas@children1st.org.uk

**[www.parentingacrossscotland.org](http://www.parentingacrossscotland.org)**  
**Twitter: @scotparents**  
**Facebook: Parenting-across-Scotland**

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