



parenting

across scotland

supporting families to support children



**REPORT ON WORK
UNDERTAKEN
2004/2005**

This report was written by Evelyn Gillan
with input from Jo Field (secondary research)
Alison Clancy (data collection)
and members of the PAS steering group.
Thanks to Jean and Jordan for the drawings.



Contents

Introduction	page 4
Background	page 7
Summary of Findings	page 8
What Do We Know About Families in Scotland?	page 10
What Did Parents and Families Tell Us?	page 14
What Did Professionals Working With Families Tell Us?	page 19
Recommendations	page 22
References	page 27



Introduction

Parenting Across Scotland (PAS) is a multi-agency partnership funded by the Scottish Executive to research the issues and concerns affecting parents and the support available. PAS does this by bringing together organisations and knowledge to share good practice; increase collaborative working; provide information directly to families; and represent the views of parents in policy. This report summarises the findings of the PAS programme of activity for 2004/05, builds on the knowledge, expertise and practice of nine partner organisations and offers recommendations for action to ensure that families in Scotland receive the best possible information and support.

During the course of the first phase of the work, PAS spoke to over 1,000 adults in Scotland of whom two thirds had a parenting role. In addition, PAS worked intensively with twenty parents on the production of a video which highlighted the issues of concern to them. The parents involved represented a diverse range of Scottish families including married parents; lone parents; minority ethnic parents; parents with disabilities; parents of children with disabilities and grandparents with parental responsibility for their grandchildren.

PAS also organised meetings across Scotland involving over 250 professionals and academics from a diverse range of disciplines including health; education; social services; family support; faith groups; relationship counselling agencies and national and local government. In-depth interviews were conducted with approximately 10 professionals from the voluntary sector as part of the telephone helpline survey. Finally, to ensure that the work undertaken by PAS was informed by evidence, the findings of approximately 25 academic studies on parenting and family life were considered to facilitate the production of research briefings and to inform the primary research undertaken by PAS. In summary, outputs produced by PAS during the course of the first phase of the work included the following:-

- * Audit of Electronic Information for Parents (commissioned desk research)
- * MORI Poll on Family Life in Scotland (commissioned survey)
- * Launch Event for National Parents Week
- * Telephone Helpline Survey (conducted in-house)
- * Three Regional Events.



www.capability-scotland.org.uk 0131 337 9876



www.children1st.org.uk 0131 446 2300



www.scottishmarriagecare.org 0141 222 2166



www.aberlour.org.uk 01786 450335



www.familymediationscotland.org.uk 0131 558 9898



www.couplecounselling.org 0845 119 6088



www.stepfamilyscotland.org.uk 0131 514 9981



www.scottishadoption.org 0131 553 5060



www.opfs.org.uk 0131 556 3899



Background

The PAS steering group is made up of representatives from the following agencies – CHILDREN 1ST (lead partner); One Parent Families Scotland; Stepfamily Scotland; Capability Scotland; Scottish Adoption; Couple Counselling Scotland; Family Mediation Scotland; Scottish Marriage Care and Aberlour Childcare Trust. CHILDREN 1ST is legally accountable for the governance of the project including finance, day-to-day management, and all HR functions. The steering group agrees the overall work programme, oversees the strategic direction of the project and is involved in the delivery of PAS initiatives.

The following vision statement was agreed by the steering group and has guided the first phase of the work:-

PAS believes that we need to value parenting and caring more and that families deserve the best possible information and support in recognition of the skills required in bringing up children to reach their potential. Children are raised in all sorts of 'families' and PAS recognise that it is the activity of parenting that counts rather than a biological relationship. Families are important to children, by supporting families we support children.



Summary of Findings

These findings are a summary of all the work undertaken by PAS in 2004/05 which includes the MORI survey on family life; the Audit of Electronic Information; the Telephone Helpline Survey; secondary research and meetings with professionals and academics.

- * Family Life in Scotland is diverse and it will become increasingly difficult to talk of a 'typical' family
- * Parents in Scotland worry about how good a parent they are and most adults think it is harder to bring up children now than it was when they were young
- * People in Scotland think there is too much emphasis on punishing parents and not enough on supporting families

- * Over two thirds of adults in Scotland are not aware of any organisations that provide advice and support to parents
- * Over two thirds of adults think that balancing work and home life puts too much pressure on parents
- * Many people who call family support telephone helpline services in Scotland don't get through to someone who can help them the first time they call
- * There is a need for more universal support for parents and families in addition to targeted support for those in greatest need and more support for parents at key transitional stages i.e. parents of teenagers
- * There is a significant evidence base which indicates that the quality of the relationships in families matter most to the health, well-being and achievement of adults and children; family breakdown is linked to a wide range of social problems and leads to problems for children at home, at school and in adult life
- * Parenting and Family Support Services are more effective if links are made between positive outcomes for children and support for the adult relationships in families; relationship counselling should be more widely available to ensure people get help before problems arise
- * Many professionals working with families are not confident in dealing with the adult relationship; relationship skills training is a crucial element of parenting programmes
- * The lack of a national strategic approach to parenting and family support make it difficult to deliver 'joined-up' policy - public policy should resist the temptation to separate parenting and childcare from adult and family relationship support
- * There is a need to promote collaborative working among service providers and to make links at both national and local level between different policy areas with a strong partnership between national and local government to ensure that policy priorities for children, young people and families are implemented effectively



What Do We Know About Families in Scotland?

Families are Diverse

Family change in Scotland mirrors the changes happening in the rest of the UK and Europe. People today experience a number of different family formations and family transitions throughout their adult lives with a growth in divorce, cohabitation and re-marriage, delayed parenting, lone parenthood and living alone¹. It is likely that these trends will continue and the consensus is that by 2020 it will be very hard to talk of a 'typical family' (Hantrais 2004, Williams 2004). The PAS MORI survey found that 1 in 5 households in Scotland currently contain children under the age of 16 years, and that including children of all ages, over two-thirds of adults have a parenting role. One in 10 households contain step-children, adopted children or other children. PAS works with an inclusive definition of families to reflect the practice of the partner agencies who support a range of different families including married and unmarried couples, loan parents, same sex couples, families with children and families without children. The MORI survey also found that over half of the adults said there was someone other than their parents who had an important influence on their upbringing with half mentioning a family member such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle. The demographic evidence is important as it informs our understanding of what we mean when we talk about 'families' and helps us to develop an inclusive definition which recognises and celebrates the diversity of family life today.

Families are Valued

It is important to remember that everyone has been parented, and that many people in Scotland contribute to the parenting effort even although they themselves may not be the biological parents. In short, everyone in Scotland has a stake in ensuring that our children are brought up to fulfil their potential and parents and families receive the best possible support and information. Despite the changes in family formation, evidence from successive social attitude surveys indicates that families are valued and will continue to be so.

Families Matter

There is a significant evidence base which confirms that the quality of the relationships in families matter most to the health, well-being and achievements of adults and children. In short, how parents get on - or don't get on - impacts significantly on children's lives. Even if parents are no longer together, the relationship between them still counts. The quality of the parents' relationships is associated with how children adapt academically - it is not only what parents do with or to the child that matters, but how the parents behave with each other (Cowan and Cowan 1997). Parenting programmes are much more likely to have long term benefits if relationship support is available (Mansfield 2004, Rodgers and Pryor 1998). However, many professional working with families are not confident in dealing with the adult relationship (Featherstone 2004). Highlighting the link between the quality of the adult relationships and positive outcomes for children is a key aspect of PAS's approach to supporting families. A key strength of the PAS steering group is that it involves a unique collaboration between children's charities, family support organisations and relationship agencies to bring together knowledge and experience and perform a co-ordinating role in providing parents and families with the best possible information and support. PAS believes we should resist the temptation to separate parenting and childcare from adult and family relationship support. By supporting families we support children.

Family Life can be Stressful

Families are valued, but there is also significant evidence to suggest that the process of becoming a family creates major changes in all areas of life which can create stress for families. Couples become less satisfied with their relationship after having children (Belsky and Pensky 1988) and parents have significantly lower marital satisfaction than non-parents (Twenge et al 2003). Social and economic changes also impact on family life. Greater participation in the labour market and increased labour mobility has led to a loss of extended family networks for many. The number of long-hour workers in the UK has doubled in the last five years to 26% of the workforce (Bunting 2004). Both men and women are being asked to spend more hours in paid employment and this transfer of labour from the family to the economy has resulted in a 'care deficit' (Williams 2004). All of these factors combine to put many families under stress. Stress can lead to family breakdown and family breakdown is implicated in a range of social problems including homelessness, alcohol and drug misuse and youth offending. The most common reason for children and young people running away in Scotland is due to conflict and arguments with parents and stepparents² and family breakdown can lead to problems for children at home, at school and in adult life (West and Sweeting 2002, Pagani et al 1998, Rodgers and Pryor 1998, Sweeting et al 1998).

In Summary

We know that family life in Scotland is diverse; we also know that positive adult relationships lead to positive outcomes for children and that family breakdown is implicated in a range of social problems and negative outcomes for children. PAS uses this evidence to develop and promote innovative practice which brings together adult relationship support with parenting and family support.

¹ Research Findings on Family Formation and Dissolution, CRFR/Scottish Executive, No.43/2004.

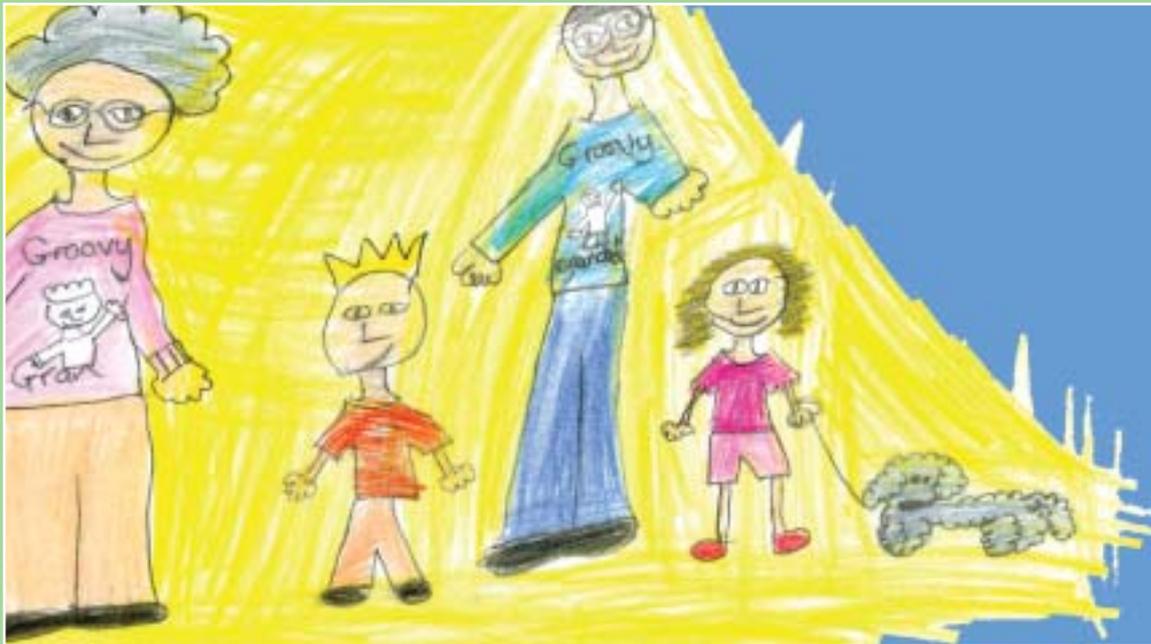
² Vulnerable Children, Scottish Executive, 2002.

Family Policy in Scotland

The Scottish Executive has developed a range of policies to support families to ensure that children have the best possible start in life. These include Sure Start Scotland; Childcare Strategy; Integrated Early Years Strategy; Review of Child Protection; Pupil Support and Inclusion; Additional Support for Learning; Family Health Plans; Nutritional Guidance for Early Years; Improving Parent's Involvement in Schools; Youth Strategy and Healthy Living Centres.

The Executive has also introduced the Anti-Social Behaviour Legislation which includes Parenting Orders which contain a compulsory element to parents accessing support. The policy map prepared by PAS for discussion at the meeting of professionals and academics in Edinburgh indicated that there were over fifty different policy initiatives and legislative proposals which impact on families in Scotland. This inevitably raises the question where does family policy begin and end?

Clearly, there are a wide range of initiatives and different government departments involved in supporting parents and families. PAS believes that by supporting families we support children. However, there is a concern that many family policy initiatives are introduced by individual government departments with little reference to other departmental initiatives which impact on family life in Scotland. This can make it difficult to deliver 'joined-up' government and can create difficulties for parents and families trying to access support and information. The lack of an overall strategic approach to parenting and family support was recognised in the Executive's policy document 'For Scotland's Children' (2001). More recent initiatives like the Integrated Early Years Strategy will help to deliver more 'joined-up' service provision but PAS would recommend a strengthened commitment to parenting and family support with a clear strategic framework at national level which emphasises universal provision which parents and families can access voluntarily.



What Did Parents and Families Tell Us?

The changes in family formation have led to a growth in the literature on families and intimate relationships and the effect that changing patterns will have on society. One thing that most commentators agree on is that parenting and family life in modern society is complex and hard to do (Quinton 2004). This is reflected in what parents and families told PAS throughout the first phase of the work. Over two-thirds of the adults that we spoke to said they think it is harder to bring up children now than it was when they were young.

“I don’t think the politicians have a clue about how hard it is to bring up a family these days, particularly if like me, you’re on your own. We get the blame if anything goes wrong with the kids but they’re telling us we should be out working all the hours. We can’t do everything”

TRACY

People who were young during and in the period after the Second World War were most likely to think it was harder to bring up children now than it was then. Older people were more likely to explain this in terms of children not respecting adults' authority, being opinionated and argumentative. Younger people explained it in terms of parents being under more pressure to buy things now than they were when they were young. Broadly, four identifiable themes of materialism and financial pressure, discipline, children's safety and work-life balance represent the main reasons why people think it has become more difficult to bring up children.

“I mean I just can't get them the trainers and things they see their friends with. It's a struggle to make ends meet. Their dad used to give me some money but I haven't had any money for a while. They lose out on things like that”

JEAN

A majority of people also agreed that there was too much emphasis on punishing parents rather than supporting families with two-thirds of people agreeing that 'balancing work and home life puts too much pressure on people'. This suggests that despite the wide range of policy initiatives which aim to support parents and families, many families perceive a policy focus which is punitive and coercive of parents rather than supportive of families.

“People couldn't understand why I gave up work. But I thought that if I was going to be looking after him then I needed to be with him. I couldn't look after him and work at the same time”

NEIL

Bringing up children is a major source of anxiety for parents. While it might be expected that parents will worry at some time about how good a parent they are, in the PAS Mori Poll, almost 1 in 4 said they worry 'all the time' or 'quite a lot' about how good a parent they are. Over half of parents of children under the age of 16 years worry 'all the time', 'quite a lot' or 'sometimes' about how good a parent they are. The PAS findings are echoed in other surveys that have been carried out across the UK by organisations like the National Family and Parenting Institute (NFPI). We also asked people with

parental responsibilities if they had ever experienced problems with their children when they (or their partner) felt that they needed help. The teenage years emerged as a particularly difficult time for many parents and again, this finding is supported by other national surveys and research studies.

“I had two already through the teenage years with no problems. And then suddenly with my daughter, I don’t know what happened but it was a nightmare. And it affected all of us, my husband, me, and her brothers and sisters. She says now she doesn’t know what happened to her. She finds it difficult to believe now”

PAULINE

The difficulties of the teenage years also came to the fore in the PAS survey of four telephone helpline services. For two of the helplines (Parentline and Stepfamily Scotland), the most common issue that people call about is children’s behaviour with Stepfamily Scotland also citing difficulties in the adult relationships. Data from Parentline indicates that the majority of calls about children’s behaviour concern children aged 11-15 years. The four helplines (which by no means represent all the helplines that families in Scotland might call) receive over thirteen hundred calls every month with mothers representing the single biggest category of caller.

The PAS findings support other evidence which identifies the teenage years as a particularly difficult time for parents and families yet there appears to be a lack of services for this age group as many initiatives are targeted at parents and families with pre-school children. The mapping exercise commissioned by the Scottish Executive in 1998 found a wide range of service provision but that most provision was concentrated at birth/pregnancy with a lack of provision for parents of teenagers, disabled parents and black and minority ethnic parents (Henderson 1998). This issue has also been raised in the Framework for the Implementation of Parenting Orders - Best Practice Guidance (2005) which states:-

“What is apparent is that the challenges of effective parenting change as children develop and the teenage years are often the most difficult. What is evident is that services for parents of older children are in short supply.” (7:2005)

Supporting Families

One of the most disturbing findings of the MORI Poll was that over two-thirds of the adults were not aware of any organisations that provide advice and support to parents. This is particularly worrying when you consider that of the thirteen hundred calls made to the four helplines studied by PAS, more than half the callers do not get the opportunity to speak to someone that can help them when they first make the call. They either get through to an answering machine or speak to a switchboard operator. Current services clearly meet a need but demand outstrips provision. The PAS MORI Poll found widespread support for a range of services for parents and families.

When presented with options for different ways in which support could be provided to parents, there was widespread agreement that each of the following would be of benefit:- organised activities to occupy children and young people; specialist services for children and young people in need; face-to-face advice services for parents; counselling services for parents; telephone helplines and website and printed material.

“It’s great being able to come to the family centre. I can meet other mums and she gets to play with other children. It really cheers me up because the weekends can be very lonely, so it’s great to know you have somewhere to go during the week”

GAIL

In the desk research PAS conducted which collated the electronic information on parenting and identified gaps in the information available; we found that seeking information on parenting in Scotland yields over 500,000 hits. There is no generic site for parents and families to access and although local and community-based websites offered excellent information, they were not instantly accessible. There was also a lack of overall support for visually-impaired or physically-disabled web users and a lack of parental information targeted at ethnic communities in Scotland and parents of children with disabilities.

“If we want a family day out, we need to plan weeks in advance to ensure that we get the help we need. This is to help the service providers to plan their services but it doesn’t help us in trying to hold on to some spontaneity in our family life. For one

daughter, a trip to the brownies involves a ten minute walk. For my other daughter, who deserves the same opportunity to attend brownies, the same process takes about forty-five minute by the time I have got her in and out of the car. And then I have to stay with her the whole time which is not much fun for her, particularly now that she is entering the teenage years. She doesn't want her mum hanging around with her all the time but I don't know if the service-providers understand just how difficult it can be'

FIONA

Overall, our findings suggest that many parents find family life difficult with some stages e.g teenage years, particularly difficult and that many parents worry about how good a parent they are. There is a general lack of awareness of parental support organisations and a demand for accessible services appropriate to the needs, ages and location of families. This would suggest that there should be greater emphasis and more resources directed at universal provision for parents and families which is accessed voluntarily and offers a range of support and information. This approach would be more cost-effective in the long term as it would offer support and information to parents and families at an earlier stage which may prevent a crisis developing.

"It's very difficult for me to take him to the park because I can't see where he is going. It really helps me and him when I get help for things like that. And if I get a letter from the school, I need someone to read it for me. These things sound simple but they are really important to me"

ARIFA

PAS welcomes the underlying principle highlighted in the Framework for Implementing Parenting Orders that "emphasises the need to set the implementation of Parenting Orders within the broader context of comprehensive parenting support services for parents and children of all ages" (4:2005) but is disappointed that this principle is not apparent in the Parenting Order Guidance.



What Did Professionals Working With Families Tell Us?

PAS organised four events held across Scotland which were attended by over 250 professionals. Two events were held in Edinburgh. The first event brought together professionals working with parents and families to share the findings of the MORI Poll and to celebrate National Parents Week. The second event was organised jointly with the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (CRFR) and brought together key people from the voluntary and statutory sectors, government and academia to consider how we might build on research on family relationships and parenting to better inform policy and to identify areas where further research is needed.

The event in Glasgow was organised jointly by two of the PAS partner agencies - CHILDREN 1ST and Scottish Marriage Care and highlighted innovative practice by both organisations which reflects the PAS approach to supporting families. CHILDREN 1ST empowers families through Family Group Conferencing whilst Scottish Marriage Care makes the link between adult relationship support and positive parenting. The central event was held in Grangemouth and was organised by another PAS partner agency - One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS). This event brought together statutory and voluntary sector providers to consider different perspectives on working with children and to promote collaborative working between the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Each of the four events had a different focus but they were all concerned with identifying knowledge and good practice to enable more effective support for families in Scotland. The common themes to emerge from all four events included the following:-

- * There is a need for greater collaborative working between the different departments of the Scottish Executive to facilitate the development of 'joined-up' policy and for a strong partnership between national and local government to ensure that Scottish Executive policy priorities on children, young people and families are implemented effectively.
- * There is a need for the voluntary and statutory sectors to work together more effectively at local level to raise awareness of the different approaches taken to supporting families, to share good practice and engage in collaborative partnerships to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of parents and families resulting in a more effective use of resources.
- * There is a need for greater collaboration within the voluntary sector to share good practice; promote collaborative working; avoid duplication of services and identify gaps in provision to make it easier for parents and families to access information and support.

- * There is a case for extending universal support for families through schools and the NHS to prevent crises and family breakdown but there will always be a need for targeted support for those in greatest need.
- * One bad family breakdown can cost a local authority up to 50K. More resources should go into relationship counselling and family support to ensure that people get help before problems escalate as this will be more cost-effective in the long term.
- * Parenting and family life needs to be valued as much as paid employment and due attention should be paid to the context for parenting. For example, poverty can impact significantly on the ability to parent positively.

Further Research

In addition to looking at the issues around partnership between national and local government and the planning and development of service provision, the professionals and academics that were involved in the events discussed a number of areas where further research would be useful. It was generally felt that having access to research and information to enable the development of evidence-based service provision was extremely important for policy-makers and practitioners. It was also felt that parenting and family support initiatives should, as far as possible, be formally evaluated and the results widely disseminated to facilitate the sharing of good practice. Many statutory and voluntary sector providers have access to significant data covering different aspects of the service provision. However, there is very little analysis of the data held by many service-providers and it is suggested that undertaking secondary research utilising existing datasets would be useful. Other areas which were identified for further research included – informal support for families; families and relationships across the life course; inequalities, families and relationships and risk and resilience.



Recommendations

There are clearly a wide range of national policy initiatives being developed and implemented and PAS welcomes the commitment that the Scottish Executive has shown to developing a more explicit focus on supporting parents and families to give children the best possible start in life. However, both For Scotland's Children (2001) and the Mapping of Parenting Services Across Scotland (1998) identified the lack of an overall national strategic framework for parenting as a significant impediment to supporting parents and families in Scotland. PAS suggests that the Executive strengthens its commitment to parenting and family support and that:-

- * **Ministers should establish an inter-departmental family policy group to provide a national framework to develop, monitor and promote the Executive's policies on parenting and family life in keeping with the Executive's commitment to approaching family support in a more holistic manner.**

In addition to promoting more joined-up policy at national level, it is suggested that further work is needed to strengthen the partnership between national and local government and between local authorities, health boards and the voluntary sector. PAS supports the recommendations contained in the Framework for Implementing Parenting Orders to establish multi-agency strategic planning groups and notes that the Scottish Executive has asked local authorities to undertake a mapping exercise of existing parenting services. PAS also welcomes the Executive guidance that information on couple counselling and family mediation should be included in Children's Service Plans, but notes the need for these services to be supported financially. This supports national guidelines on community planning and partnership working, an approach that is supported by the findings outlined in this report. To assist this process:-

- * **PAS will liaise with COSLA, NHS Health Scotland and SCVO to promote collaborative working across the sectors and will produce briefings which highlight good practice.**

It is recognised that delivering the best possible support for parents and families will require action from both the statutory and voluntary sectors to critically examine their own practice and service provision to identify both overlaps and gaps in provision. It is suggested that voluntary sector agencies working in parenting and family support should explore creative ways in which they can engage in collaborative working with other statutory and voluntary sector providers and should avoid duplication of services. Their aim should be to jointly plan and deliver services to make it easier for parents and families to access the support and information they need. This will require a considerable amount of goodwill on the part of both the statutory and voluntary sector; a willingness to look beyond individual organisational interests and consider the wider needs of parents and families in Scotland:-

- * **Voluntary sector agencies working in parenting and family support should ensure that they, along with other agencies, participate in local mapping exercises which audit parenting services and should also scope their own services at both national and local level to identify areas where they might jointly plan and deliver services with other providers.**

It should be noted that this process will be made more difficult if there is no overall strategic framework for parenting and family support at both national and local level; if there is no commitment to adequately fund service provision; and the funding process sets voluntary sector organisations up in competition with each other. PAS would also support the recommendations in the Framework for Implementing Parenting Orders calling for clear written policies at local level from Youth Justice, Education and Children's Services outlining how parents can access parenting services. However, PAS would reinforce the need for policy-makers and service-providers to recognise the link between the quality of the adult relationships and positive outcomes for children and resist the temptation to separate parenting and childcare from adult and family relationship support:-

- * National and local government should work with voluntary sector providers to ensure adequate funding and provision of relationship counselling and family support services throughout Scotland.**

The Executive rightly views families as the building blocks for stable communities and Ministers have said that they want 'family' to be regarded as a treasured word in Scotland³. PAS has recognised from the outset that families show considerable commitment in bringing up our children and deserve the best possible information and support. However, the findings from the first phase of the work suggests that despite the implementation of a wide range of policy initiatives designed to support families, many people in Scotland perceive a coercive and punitive policy focus which is more concerned with punishing parents rather than supporting families. In light of this:-

- * PAS will develop a pilot public awareness campaign which aims to foster a positive climate which is supportive of parents and families, acknowledges the commitment that families show in raising our children, and makes it easier for them to seek information and support.**

³Official Report, Scottish Parliament, 16th June, 2004

The secondary research undertaken by PAS highlighted the considerable body of evidence which found that the process of becoming a family in itself creates stress. The findings from the MORI Poll and the Audit of Electronic Information show that the majority of people do not know of any organisations that provide advice and support to parents and that electronic information is not immediately accessible. These findings would suggest that there should be a greater emphasis and more resources directed at providing universal provision for parents and families which engage parents and families on a voluntary basis and are not identified with initiatives which are perceived to be punitive or coercive. However, universal provision should complement targeted support for those families who are in crisis or experiencing significant difficulties:-

- * PAS will pilot new ways of getting information directly to parents and families in liaison with partner agencies and local authorities using the Parent Information Point (PIP) model and will liaise with the Executive and other relevant organisations to promote a greater emphasis on universal provision to enable parents and families to access support and information at an early stage.**

The telephone helpline survey conducted by PAS indicated that there was a case for greater collaboration and support of existing services to support signposting and referral and to make it easier for parents and families to access support. Telephone support may offer a further opportunity to expand universal provision for parents and families by offering support at an early stage before families get into serious difficulties:-

- * PAS will liaise with partner agencies, the Executive and other relevant organisations to further investigate the advantages and disadvantages of developing a 'gateway' approach to telephone help for parents and families in Scotland and ways of supporting existing services.**

A key aspect of PAS's remit is to make it easier for parents and families to have a voice in public policy. PAS will pilot new ways of getting information directly to parents and families and ensuring that parents have a voice in the policy process:-

- * **PAS will develop a volunteer programme with parents to develop their policy influencing skills and to give parents a voice in the policy process culminating in a policy summit in the Scottish Parliament which is led by parents with politicians and policy-makers in attendance to mark National Parents Week.**

Ensuring that PAS work is informed by evidence has been central to the first phase of work. PAS is committed to maintaining a strong evidence-base for all its activities and will work with the NFPI, CRFR and other relevant organisations to ensure that there is a clear research agenda for the second phase of work:-

- * **PAS will develop a clear research agenda for the second phase of the work exploring collaborative research partnerships with relevant organisations and producing research briefings in conjunction with partner agencies to inform the ongoing work of PAS and family policy generally.**

In Conclusion

PAS will continue to research the issues and concerns affecting parents and families and the support available; promote collaborative working between government, the statutory and voluntary sectors to identify good practice; provide information directly to parents and families and ensure that parents have a voice in public policy. In particular, PAS will promote a greater emphasis on universal provision which parents and families can access voluntarily at an early stage to avoid parents and families getting into a crisis situation. PAS does not promote a single organisation's view point and is therefore ideally placed to develop and promote an overview which highlights best practice with regards to meeting the information and support needs of parents and families. This requires organisations to put aside individual interests, to critically assess existing provision to identify overlaps and gaps and finally to ensure that we develop support and information systems based on what is best for families rather than what might be easier for service-providers.

References

- Bunting, M (2004) *Willing Slaves, How the Overwork Culture is Ruining Our Lives*. London. Harper Collins
- Belsky, J & Pensky, E (1988) "Marital Change Across the Transition to Parenthood". *Marriage and Family Review*, 12 133-156
- Cowan, C.P. & Cowan, P.A. (1997) "Working With Couples During Stressful Life Transitions" in Dreman, S (ed) *The Family on the Threshold of the 21st Century*. New Jersey. Hillsdale
- Featherstone, B (2004) *Family Life and Family Support: A Feminist Analysis*. Basingstoke. Palgrave Macmillan
- Hantrais, L (2004) *Family Policy Matters: responding to family change in Europe*. Bristol. The Policy Press
- Mansfield, P (2004) "The Missing Link in Parenting Education and Support". *The Bulletin*, May Vol. 8 (2)
- Pagani et al (1998) "The impact of family transition on the development of delinquency in adolescent boys: a 9 year longitudinal study". *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry and Allied Disciplines* 39 (4). 489-499
- Quinton, D (2004) *Supporting Parents - Messages from Research*. London. Kingsley
- Rodgers and Pryor (1998) *Divorce and Separation: the outcomes for children*. York. Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Sweeting et al (1998) "Teenage Family Life, Lifestyles and Life Chances: Associations with Family Structure, Conflict with Parents and Joint Family Activity". *International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family*
- Twenge et al (2003) "Parenthood and Marital Satisfaction: a meta-analytical review". *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 65 (3): 574-583
- West and Sweeting (2002) *The Health of Young People in Scotland: Quantitative Dimensions*. Glasgow: MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, University of Glasgow.
- Williams, F (2004) *Rethinking Families*. London. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation



supporting families to support children

Contact:

Parenting Across Scotland

c/o CHILDREN 1ST

83 Whitehouse Loan

Edinburgh

EH9 1AT

Email: alisonclancy@children1st.org.uk