

working for families in edinburgh



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Review of WFF: April 2006 – June 2007

Jim Galloway

Interim Service Manager, Access to Work Projects
Team

Economic Development, City of Edinburgh Council

Working for Families: Background

- WFF is a Scottish Government fund which aims to improve the employability of parents, who have difficulties in participating in the labour market through helping them find sustainable childcare solutions and through providing or accessing other relevant employability related services.

Working for Families: Context

- WFF contributes to the Scottish Government's "Closing the Opportunity Gap" approach to tackling poverty and disadvantage, by improving rates of employment and economic activity and to its commitment to eradicating child poverty within a generation. This in the context of "nearly one in four children being officially recognised as poor".*
- Childcare is known to be the single biggest barrier to improving parents' employability, especially that of lone parents.

* Poverty in Scotland, 2007 – Child Poverty Action Group

Working for Families: Target Groups

WFF aims to support parents with childcare responsibilities and in particular:

- Lone parents pre New-Deal;
- Parents in low income households;
- Disadvantaged parents with other stresses in the household that makes it difficult to access and sustain employment, education or training, including disability, mental health and substance abuse problems.

Working for Families: Edinburgh Projects

- Adviser Service – Childcare, Transition & Training Funds
- Child Provision Support Fund - grants
- Make it work for families – public sector training programme
- Employer Engagement – accessing current employees, awareness raising and support for family friendly work placements

Achievements 06/07

- Fully developed 1:1 frontline adviser service – needed by the clients and valued by stakeholder agencies and organisations.
- Links being developed between sectors and areas of support – childcare and employability.
- Extensive network of contacts and support developed through strong community links, outreach and client working with parents/carers

Working for Families: Adviser Service

Parents/carers are helped to improve their employability by producing a personal action plan with the support of a WFF Adviser. The support is focused on 3 key stages:

- **Pre-employment** – supporting parents to improve their basic employability skills, confidence and attitudes.
- **At transition points** – helping parents to make the transition into employment, education, training or volunteering.
- **Post-employment** – support to sustain employment, for example through a period of crisis such as a childcare problem.

Working for Families: Registered Clients

- 750 parents registered with the service since April 2006.
- 54% of these parents are from the four wards which have the highest numbers of unemployed – Forth, Sighthill/Gorgie, Liberton/Gilmerton and Portobello/Craigmillar.
- 24% are in the 16-24 age range and 40% have qualifications at SVQ level 1 and below.

Working for Families: Outcomes

Aim to engage with 1200 parents over 2 Years
ie produce a WFF Action Plan and achieve 750 transition
outcomes

Progress so far:

- 38% transition rate – for both limited and sustained contact parents
- 40% into employment – 25% of these into part-time
- 12% of parents have sustained or improved their employment
- 20% of parents have enrolled in further or higher education

WFF Projects and Activities

07/08

- Childminder challenge
- Money and Benefits Advice Service
- Children and Families partnerships
- JUFJ Agencies
 - project with Action Group to focus on parents who have children attending special schools.
 - Childcare costs and aftercare support for Women onto Work Clients.

Challenges

- Meeting the levels of expectation, re delivery of a quality service.
- Developing links and further promoting intermediate steps – volunteering, work placements/trials.
- Working with more parents already in employment to help them improve hours/income/job prospects.
- Working in partnership in the case management of parents to support clients within different remits/frameworks.

Future Options for WFF

Subject to the decision of the Scottish Government following the current “spending review”, potential options could be:

- Developing models of good practice and guidance for key workers in childcare and other relevant roles for families
- Embedding the “holistic” approach and focusing on the needs of the family in terms of timescale, demands in core employability frameworks
- Working in partnership with neighbourhood colleagues to deliver a “focused” and “targeted” service



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Vivienne Robinson

Project Manager, Working for Families, Projects Team
Economic Development, City of Edinburgh Council

Barriers to progression

What are the key barriers?

- Cost of childcare?
- Finding suitable childcare?
- Can I get support when I'm in work?

Some issues faced by registered parents

- Money, particularly to maintain continuity of childcare between jobs or training. Avoiding debts running up.
- Skills and experience of parents seeking work in relation to opportunities.
- Available jobs in retail, hospitality and care sectors being shift based and involving evening/weekend work.

Childcare, Can I afford it?

- Will I actually be better off in a job after paying for childcare?
- How do I apply for “working tax credits”?
- What if I fall behind with payments if “in-work” benefits change?
- How do I pay deposits for childcare in advance of my first salary?
- If I work 10-2, will my nursery charge by the hour or for 2 half-day sessions?

Childcare

Can I find suitable childcare?

- How do I find affordable childcare in the area where I live?
- There is a waiting list at my child's "afterschool club" - if places become available on certain days, will I be able to negotiate changing days of work with my new employer?
- There are only a few childminders in my area and they have a long waiting list.
- What if available childcare doesn't suit my work hours or my child's needs or is far from my public transport route to work?

Can I get support in work?

- What if my child doesn't settle into the new childcare arrangements?
- How do I cope when child or childminder is ill and/or during school holidays?
- Can I negotiate flexible working hours with my employer if these don't currently exist in the company?
- Can I start work later for the first 2 weeks in a new job to adjust to the complex schedule of dropping off children in more than one location?
- Will my employer support time off for important school/nursery events or meetings? Can I do this without compromising the quality of my work?

WFF – how we have helped

- Childcare funding of £94,000, supporting 300 transitions – paying deposits, childcare costs to access employability services and on point of transition
- Advice and mentoring at points of crisis when childcare arrangements change, sustaining household income
- Grants funding of £175,000 to 25 groups and services to pilot and develop childcare to support the target group – including breakfast clubs, creches, family centres, young parents groups, offering up to 270 childcare places.

WFF – how we have helped

- Young teenage parent to twins supported through creche funding to Muirhouse Youth Development Group, has developed confidence, volunteering experience and skills.
- Parent coping with multiple barriers after separation from a violent partner is starting to explore options following counselling.
- Parent needed more in-work training during a placement and worried about childcare costs which had finished.
- Parent in work anxious about the local “afterschool club” closing and the transport problems of children being “bussed” to different clubs

WFF – referrals and contact details

- Parents can phone up for advice and to register with the service directly
- Use the referral form and fax it back to 529 6210
- Call in to the Freephone for further information and to register – 0800 432 0044



Workshops

- What key messages should the Scottish Government be aware of when considering future help for families?
- How does childcare impact on helping your clients access training or employment?
- What are your thoughts on the DWP Green Paper proposal to reduce the age at which lone parents should be expected to seek work?