

PEN PICTURE: One Parent Families Scotland

One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is Scotland's national organisation working with and on behalf of one-parent families. We are acutely aware of the needs of one parent families in an everchanging environment, both in terms of practical services and, importantly, in terms of being able to access those services. The principles of GIRFEC and Curriculum for Excellence are embedded in all our activities.

Engagement is with families – parents and children. A strong emphasis is placed upon child development and family relationships. At a structural level, we continue to work closely with partner organisations, locally and nationally, influencing policy, contributing to service design, and ensuring that the voices of single parents are heard by policy makers and planners alike.

As our work is recognised through education services and funders we were awarded a Pupil Equity Contract with a local Primary School and receive other funding to support children with nurture, transition, friendships and life skills. However, we also support families with issues that can affect their child's ability to thrive in a school environment.

To illustrate our work one of our Braes Project Family Support Workers has provided an example of his work.

"We were asked to support a single mother with three children as she was struggling to maintain boundaries and routines, and this was having a negative effect on the children behaviour at school. As there was no solid bedtime routine and the children struggled to get up in the morning, morning routines were difficult to maintain. The house often ended with everyone shouting and getting annoyed before the children left for school. This resulted in the children attending school feeling tired and agitated. As they were not in a positive frame of mind, they were not ready to learn and were often disruptive.

We supported the mother to implement a bedtime routine. As two of the children have additional support needs this was carried out slowly and in stages. We encouraged the mother to explain what was going to happen before she started the process. The next stage was to comfort the children while they fell asleep until gradually the children knew that when they went to bed that meant it was bedtime.

The children are now sleeping well, the morning routine is much calmer and the children have time to prepare for their school day. They attend school calm and relaxed and ready for the day ahead. The mother has described her home as a much more positive place, with a better atmosphere. She also stated that she felt better about herself and how she now communicated with her children.

The children's school has acknowledged that interventions which tackle issues out with the school which affect the children's ability to develop and learn in class is invaluable. They have stated that they would like to have enough funding to have a Family Support Worker available full time".

More about our work here: <https://opfs.org.uk/>