

Focus Report on Mothers with a Child aged under One: Visual Summary

The Scottish Government is committed to tackling child poverty. There are six types of households where there is a higher risk of children being in poverty.

Disabled



Mother under 25



3+ Children



Minority Ethnic



Baby under 1



Lone Parents



Scottish Government research helps to understand the experiences of these groups and the issues they face. This report focuses on households where there is a baby aged under one.



Families with a child under 1 are more likely to ...



be in poverty than other households



belong to other groups at risk of poverty



be in poverty despite having paid work

Research

We talked to mothers on low incomes with babies to understand more about their experiences of:

- Childcare
- Work
- Housing
- Their financial situation
- Different types of support



What We Found Out ...



Work and Education

It can be challenging to work, and maintain a sufficient income, both during and after pregnancy.

Working while pregnant

Some mothers said they found it hard to continue working, or studying, when they were expecting their baby.



“It was hard because of morning sickness and stress and I couldn’t manage. I took maternity leave early and haven’t gone back to work.”

Parental Leave and Pay

Statutory maternity pay usually represents a drop in earnings and is only payable for 39 weeks of the 52 that can be taken as maternity leave.



Being in insecure employment can affect people’s entitlement to maternity pay or Maternity Allowance.

Returning to Work or Study Depends on...



... The ability to find suitable **childcare** arrangements



Funded childcare places don’t start until a child is at least 2 years old. Parents returning to work before then need to make alternative arrangements.

...The **flexibility** employers are able to offer

“I’d prefer to know which days I was going to work in advance. I’d just be told the day before what hours I had. I’d like to go back. But I couldn’t go back with hours like that cos of childcare.”



... The individual circumstances and **wellbeing** of families

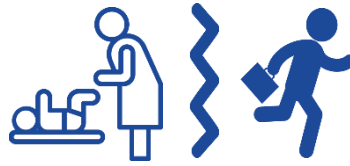


“We decided it was more important to spend the time with the family and try to be there for the girls. Once they are both in school we will both be working full time. But for now, we will both continue in part time roles.”

Family support (i.e. in providing childcare) and an understanding employer, are important factors in enabling the transition back to work.

Gender Discrimination

Parental leave arrangements presume that mothers will take the majority of responsibility for caring for a young baby.



Statutory paternity leave is just 2 weeks, compared to 52 weeks maternity.

Shared parental leave involves transferring some of a mother's allowance to their partner.

For the most part, it is mothers, not fathers, who change their hours, or shift patterns, to accommodate childcare.



Women's career prospects can be obstructed and this accounts, in part, for the gender-pay-gap.

Living Costs

People on low incomes can struggle to pay for necessities such as food and fuel, especially as costs continue to rise. Having a new baby increases the cost of living.

Energy

When a baby is less than 1 year old, families spend more time at home, meaning greater use of energy.

Keeping a warm home is particularly important for babies so turning the heating down, or off, is not a viable money-saving option.



Baby Items



New-borns need a lot of equipment, like a pushchair, steriliser and cot. This can amount to a lot of extra expenditure.

Mothers told us that they cut back on some items and prioritised spending on essentials.

For some, this meant getting into debt on other payments.





Social Security

Some parents with a child under 1 are accessing social security payments for the first time.

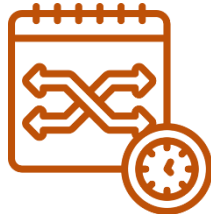
Navigating the benefits system can be stressful, and potentially confusing, especially when looking after a new baby.



Social security entitlements can be affected by the hours someone works. A particular challenge for families caring for a young baby is balancing employment with social security to achieve a sufficient income.

Supporting Families with a child under 1

The **labour market** can support family life by offering work that is well paid, secure and flexible.



Having affordable **childcare** options from the time that parental leave ends could support parents returning to work.



Advice should be easily accessible so that families get the benefits and financial assistance they may be entitled to.