LONE PARENT ADVANCEMENT - A GREATER MERSEYSIDE PROFILE: a contextual report supporting further, local action research

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Peter Campbell
1.00: Commissioners of the Report

The report was commissioned by the Learning Skills Council (LSC) funded Greater Merseyside Advancement Network Prototype (GMANP), led by VOLA, the Greater Merseyside Voluntary organisation Learning Association with accountable body – Blackburne House Group. The GMANP is one of 10 LSC funded prototypes, working as forerunners for the Adult Advancement and Careers service which comes into being in 2010/11. All 10 prototypes are capacity-building existing local networks of support organisation and are piloting innovative methods of improving inter-referral practice between a diverse range of partner agencies. Appendix I of this report outlines the detailed aims, objectives and outputs and Appendix II the methods used.
2.00: Executive Summary

- **Welfare Policy Context**: The welfare reforms in the UK are designed to reduce the high rates of child poverty by ensuring lone parents access employment. These reforms are similar to those developed in comparable countries.

- **UK Legislative Framework**: Welfare reforms are now enshrined in legislation but the timetable for the implementation of statute will be determined by relevant government departments. All lone parents with children aged seven years or over will be required to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) from October 2010. Income Support is to be phased out entirely although there are no plans requiring lone parents of children under seven years to seek employment. According to government estimates an additional 130,000 lone parents will be either in work or claiming JSA by May 2011.

- **Findings as to the Impact of Welfare Reform Policies**: The impact of welfare reforms is complex and multi-faceted. Although there is evidence to suggest that welfare-to-work policies, especially financial incentives aimed at individuals, have increased the number of lone parents in employment there is some evidence to suggest that the benefits to lone parents and their children are not clear-cut. Lack of suitable childcare, or unsuitable or limited provision are not only barriers to employment and education but adversely affect employment sustainability, maternal health and child well-being. Lack of flexibility in the workplace also affects maternal health, employment sustainability, promotion and income enhancement prospects. Complex benefits and tax systems are identified as barriers to employment as are educational deficits primarily related to non-cognitive skills (social and emotional) and formal qualifications.

- **The Merseyside Context**: It is not possible to secure, nationally, regionally or locally, accurate and current numbers of lone parents and their children by age for reasons explained in Appendix II. This places extra difficulties on those responsible for implementing policies and programmes at local level. Nevertheless the best guess estimates show that the numbers of lone parents in all areas in Greater Merseyside have been fairly stable during the last five years. In all areas well over 90% of lone parents are female. These trends are reflected nationally. The proportion of lone
parents in the general population, however, is higher in all areas than the national average of just over 15% and varies from nearly 20% in St Helens to over 30% in Liverpool. Estimates of the numbers of children by age in each locality subject to the new regulations suggests the highest number are in Liverpool with over 9,000 children aged 5 to 9 years in 2008 and the Wirral with over 5,000. No area had less than 2,000 children in this age range. Merseyside as a whole is ranked within the lowest 25% in the country for relative deprivation with Liverpool being ranked lowest. Whilst the national and North West populations have grown by about 4% over the last decade Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton have seen consistently declining populations over the same period. Lone parents are more likely to be economically inactive than the rest of the population and are more likely to be in part-time than full-time employment. Similar to national trends female employment is largely in the services (retail) or human services (health, education, welfare, public) sectors.

- **Teenage Parents:** The UK has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy amongst comparable countries. More than half of young mothers had not been attending school when conception occurred. Teenage parenthood, however, does not appear to have inevitably negative consequences for young mothers and there is evidence to suggest educational and career aspiration increase following pregnancy. Unavailable childcare and the attitudes of the public and some professionals undermine these goals. The children of teenage parents, however, are likely to suffer disadvantage in adulthood possibly linked to the poverty most young parents experience when rearing their children.

- **Implications:** Welfare to work reforms in the UK are intended to bring lone parents into employment and reduce child poverty. There is substantial evidence to show that the reasons why parents enter or leave the labour market are many and multi-faceted. There are common issues emerging from most studies, however, that act as triggers for parents choosing to not enter the labour market or ceasing employment. These are:
  * the impact of key transitions (such as changes in income or social status, childcare arrangements, workplaces practices etc.).
- the necessity of appropriate, available, accessible, affordable childcare of a quality acceptable to parents and their children.
- Barriers caused by the lack of formal qualifications and non-cognitive education (social and emotional) of lone parents.
- the poor physical and mental health of lone parents and their children.
- a lack of flexibility in the workplace and the disadvantages faced by lone parents in relation to promotion and income enhancement.

**Recommendations**

These cover the following issues:

- Planning at Local Level and Resource Allocation
- Education and Employment Opportunities
- Financial Advice and Information
- Flexibility in the Workplace
3.00: The Welfare Policy Context for Lone Parents

3.01 It is generally agreed that during the last decade there has been a degree of international convergence in countries such as the USA, Canada and the UK in relation to aspects of public policy concerned with welfare. In all of these countries lone parents have become a key target group for policies aimed at increasing participation in the labour market (Blundell, 2002; Banks, et al., 2005; Shannon, 2009).

3.02 Policies can be divided into two broad categories: ‘welfare to work’ programmes and ‘making work pay’ incentives. In the UK these are policies such as New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). Until now UK welfare reforms have been described as ‘less aggressive’ than those in the US and parts of Canada (Shannon, 2009: 2479) as they have not involved compulsion or penalty.

3.03 Policies are designed to tackle what has been termed the ‘iron triangle’ of welfare (Blundell, 2002: 2). These are the often contradictory aims of raising the living standards of those on low incomes; encouraging work and self-sufficiency whilst keeping government costs low:

It is common to frame welfare policy debates in terms of three overriding objectives –

(i) tackling child poverty;

(ii) supporting low incomes, and

(iii) promoting employment or increasing human capital (Banks, et al., 2005:4)”.

All of the above objectives are contained within the current welfare reform policies in the UK.

3.04 From 1999 ending child poverty has been a major goal of UK social policy as child poverty doubled between the mid 1970s and 1990s (HM Treasury, 2008). Policies aimed at bringing lone parents into the labour market are a key element in the strategy to end child poverty:
Children in lone parent families where the lone parent works part-time have a lower than average risk of poverty, at 17 per cent. Children in workless lone parent households have a much higher risk of poverty, at 56 per cent. The age of the youngest child is likely to be a critical factor: of the children in poverty in lone parent families where the parent works part-time, around a tenth had a child under the age of five. In contrast, of those children in poverty in workless lone parent households around half had a child under five (HM Treasury, DWP, DCSF, 2008: 19).

3.05 The two main aims of the national childcare strategy (HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI, 2004) are to improve outcomes for children and support parents into work. The latter objective is designed to reduce child poverty and consequently improve outcomes for children and this is further supported by the Every Child Matters policy agenda (DfES, 2005).

Summary
The welfare reforms in the UK are designed to reduce the high rates of child poverty by ensuring lone parents access employment. These reforms are similar to those developed in comparable countries.
4.00 The UK Legislative Framework

4.01 The latest reforms to the welfare systems in the UK, outlined in the White Paper, *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* (DWP, 2008) were taken through both Houses of Parliament in the 2008-9 session. The Welfare Reform Bill received Royal Assent on the 12th Nov 2009 and is now law. The timetable for implementation will be set by the relevant departments.

4.02 [The Act] contains measures to increase personal responsibility within the welfare system. It also proposes to encourage parental responsibility by introducing a requirement for joint birth registration and by amending the law relating to child support.

Key areas:

- reforms the benefits system by abolishing Income Support and moving all claimants on to either Jobseekers’ Allowance if they are well or Employment and Support Allowance if they are sick
- aligns the contribution conditions between Employment and Support Allowance and Jobseeker’s Allowance
- introduces a regime of benefit sanctions for non-attendance at Jobcentres
- requires job search by partners of benefit claimants
- abolishes Adult Dependency Increases in the Carer’s Allowance and Maternity Allowance
- introduces work-focused interviews for over-60s
- requires work-related activity in return for receipt of Employment and Support Allowance
- introduces a requirement for births to be registered jointly by both parents
- provides additional powers for the enforcement of child maintenance arrears.

(Welfare Reform Bill 2008-9)
For lone parents with children of school-age welfare reforms now involve elements of both compulsion and penalty. From November 2008 new and repeat claimants with children aged 12 years or over, if able to work, had to apply for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and make themselves available for work. From October 2009 those with children aged 10 years or over have been affected. In October 2010 lone parents with children aged 7 years or over will be included. There are benefit sanctions for non-attendance at Jobcentres.

In answer to a question raised in the House of Commons the Under Secretary for the Department of Works and Pensions gave the following information about the number of lone parents:

There are currently around 460,000 lone parents on income support with a youngest child aged less than seven, around 230,000 with a youngest child aged nought to two, and around 230,000 with a youngest child aged three to six. We are unable to predict accurately how many lone parents may move from income support to jobseeker's allowance when income support is abolished. Even in the case when income support is abolished there are no plans to require single parents with children under 7 to take up employment, even if they are receiving jobseeker's allowance. As a result of the provisions of the Social Security (Lone Parents and Miscellaneous) Regulations 2008, lone parents with a child aged seven or over will no longer be able to claim income support solely on the grounds of being a lone parent. Based on internal analysis carried out for departmental planning purposes, it has been estimated that around 45 per cent of lone parents with older children moved off income support as part of these changes will make a claim for jobseeker's allowance. Others may apply for appropriate benefits such as employment and support allowance.

The following table shows the number of lone parents with older children on income support, who we expect to apply for jobseeker's allowance in each quarter to May 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter ending</th>
<th>Number of lone parents moving from income support to jobseeker’s allowance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2009</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>23,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>9,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>16,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2010</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>11,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>14,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>18,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>6,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2011</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>35,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>17,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Usser, Parliamentary Under Secretary, DWP, 2009)

4.05 Government targets are to move 100,000 lone parents into work by 2010 (HM Treasury, DWP, DCSF, 2008). In September 2009, 45,425 lone parents were receiving JSA, an increase of 36,510 since September 2008 (DWP, 2009).

**Summary**

Welfare reforms are now enshrined in legislation but the timetable for the implementation of statute will be determined by relevant government departments. All lone parents with children aged seven years or over will be required to claim JSA from October 2010. Income Support is to be phased out entirely although there are no plans requiring lone parents of children under seven years to seek employment. According to government estimates an additional 130,000 lone parents will be either in work or claiming JSA by May 2011.
5.00 Findings as to the Impact of Welfare Reform Policies

5.01 Most commentators agree that there has been an increased participation by lone parents in the labour market during the 1990s in all countries that have implemented ‘welfare-to-work’ and ‘making-work-pay’ type policies (Glass, 2004; Banks, et al., 2005; Hanson, et al., 2006, Miller, 2006; Ciabattari; 2007; Shannon, 2009; Gregg, et al., 2009).

5.02 ‘Making Work Pay’ policies were found to be particularly effective especially when financial incentives were aimed at the individual rather than the employer (Blundell, 2002). Some have suggested, however, that there may be other factors involved to account for the greater participation of lone parents in the labour market such as increased male unemployment (as discussed in detail below most lone parents in all countries are female) or changing social attitudes to working mothers (Shannon, 2009).

5.03 It has been suggested that ‘subsidising low wages via tax credits …draws families into an inherently complex tax system which simply adds to income instability (CPAG, 2009a: 33)’ for example one in five families entitled to child tax credit do not receive it (HM Revenue and Customs, 2008 cited in CPAG 2009a). In addition the interaction between tax credits and other parts of the tax and benefits systems influence the effectiveness of ‘welfare-to-work’ policies (Blundell, 2005) as entry into work for some lone parents reduces their overall income because of the loss of all or part of other pass-ported benefits such as housing benefit (Blundell, 2002; CPAG, 2009a).

5.04 Findings in relation to Welfare-to-Work programmes are less clear because these are more varied between countries and indeed from state to state in the USA. It has been suggested that the compulsion and penalty measures now in UK legislation and policies may be less effective than the previous approach which increased lone parent employment by 12.5% (CPAG, 2009a). New Deal for Lone Parents relied on support and encouragement rather than prescribing activities and the Department of Work and Pensions evaluation of NDLP found clear
evidence that the quality of relationship with the Advisor was a significant contributor to effectiveness: ‘Losing contact with the Personal Adviser was associated with lower employment (Knight, et al., 2006:167)’.

5.05 Low educational attainment has been identified as another major barrier to employment. Evidence suggests that educational and learning needs necessary to enhance employability relate more to non-cognitive (social and emotional) skills and formal qualifications, including academic qualifications, than any particular skills set (HM Treasury, DWP, DCSF, 2008).

5.06 Unsuitable or unavailable childcare provision is an important factor preventing the participation of lone parents in training, education, or employment or which causes them to leave employment (Press, et al., 2006; Miller, 2006; Henson, et al., 2006; Ciabattari, 2007; Kelley, et al., 2009). There are indications that the amount, quality, distribution and availability of childcare especially for older children and those working atypical hours are insufficient (Moss, 2007; Day Care Trust, 2007; Millar and Ridge, 2008; CPAG, 2009a). Inadequate childcare is strongly associated with poor outcomes for children. It is argued that outcomes for children will only improve if good quality childcare is available for working parents (Moss, 2006; Neblett, 2007).

5.07 ‘Informal’ childcare, (friends and relatives) remains a significant part of care for children whilst parents work (Hanson, et al., 2006) however informal care, although preferred by many parents, is not eligible for subsidy and may be regarded as illegal. Quality childcare for younger children requires provision that is consistent and stable and for older children ‘free-time’ leisure programmes they wish to attend (Moss; 2007; Day Care Trust; 2007, Millar and Ridge, 2008). Concern has been expressed that childcare in the UK, unlike our EU and Scandinavian neighbours, is seen primarily as a service to enable parents to work rather than a service for children (Moss, 2007; Millar and Ridge, 2008, CPAG, 2009a).
Evidence suggests that the benefits to children from increased income as a result of lone parents entering work may be outweighed by the consequences of unstable childcare for younger children and inadequate ‘free-time’ leisure programmes for older children (Miller, 2006; Moss, 2007, Neblett, 2007, Millar and Ridge, 2008). Recent major international comparative studies have shown that the well-being of children and young people in the UK in many key areas is worse than their peers in most other countries surveyed (UNICEF, 2007; CPAG b, 2009; OECD, 2009). For example the UK, together with the USA is ranked in the bottom third of the 21 affluent countries for five of the six dimensions surveyed (UNICEF, 2007). In a more recent study the UK is ranked 24th out of 29th countries surveyed for child health and 24th out of 26th for material resources (CPAG b, 2009). Underage drinking is ranked as the highest in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries (OECD, 2009). Full-time parental employment correlates with increased risky behaviour by boys and maternal depression, associated with work/family stress, correlates with poor outcomes for boys and girls (Gregg, et al., 2009).

There is evidence to suggest that childcare problems are significantly related to the emotional well-being of low-income mothers (Press, et al., 2006). Lack of flexibility in the workplace and associated stress links to increased mental ill-health in mothers of young children (Goodman, et al., 2009) and high-levels of work/family conflict is associated with maternal poor health of all kinds (Ciabattari, 2007). Work/family conflict means that stability of employment is difficult to maintain (ibid). Cycling in and out of employment is a common pattern for lone parents and is associated with ‘transitions’ such as changes income status, changes in childcare arrangement and health issues for mothers and their children.

Flexibility in the workplace is an important factor in sustaining employment for lone parents (Goodman. et al., 2009, Millar and Ridge, 2008) yet the dual demands of family responsibilities and working life disadvantage lone parents in terms of promotion and income enhancement (Glass, 2004).
Summary
The impact of welfare reforms is complex and multi-faceted. Although there is evidence to suggest that welfare-to-work policies, especially financial incentives aimed at individuals, have increased the number of lone parents in employment there is some evidence to suggest that the benefits to lone parents and their children are not clear-cut. Lack of suitable childcare or limited provision is not only a barrier to parental employment and education but adversely affects employment sustainability, maternal health and child well-being. Lack of flexibility in the workplace also affects employment sustainability, promotion and income enhancement. Complex benefits and tax systems and educational deficits, primarily related to non-cognitive skills (social and emotional) and formal qualifications are also identified as barriers to employment.
6.00 The Merseyside Context - Lone Parents, Children, Merseyside & the job market.

6.01 Lone Parents.

Although the proportion of Lone Parent families in Great Britain has increased dramatically over the last 40 years, this change largely stabilised by the early to mid 1990s:

% of Lone Parent households in Great Britain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The relative size of each population appears relatively stable in all Merseyside areas:

Size of Lone Parent Population:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006/7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>27,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Helens</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>14,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 Source: Census, ONS – data rounded to nearest thousand
3 Source: HM Revenue & Customs – data rounded to nearest thousand
These populations are likely to be overwhelmingly female:

*Percentage of Lone Parents who are female*:%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Halton</strong></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowsley</strong></td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Liverpool</strong></td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sefton</strong></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>St Helens</strong></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wirral</strong></td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North West</strong></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At all geographical levels women account for over 90% of lone parents, and given the apparent permanence of this trend, and the relatively stable lone parent population, we can reasonably expect this trend to continue today. Whilst the relative proportion of female lone parents is fairly similar across the board, however, the relative proportion of lone parent households varies within the region:

*Lone parent families as % of all families*:

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4 Source: Census, ONS
5 Source: Census (2001), ONS
6.02 Children

As well as identifying the number of lone parents it is also important to estimate the number of children residing in lone parent households.

Number of Children Aged 1 or under\(^6\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>5300</td>
<td>5400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>2700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>3800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assuming, therefore, that the percentage of lone parent families within each age band is not likely to have deviated significantly from 2001 levels, we can apply this percentage to the 2008 child population in each area to estimate the number of children living in lone parent families.

Number of children in lone parent households by age\(^7\):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Under 1</th>
<th>Age 1-4</th>
<th>Age 5 - 9</th>
<th>Total Under 10</th>
<th>Total Under 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>2041</td>
<td>2342</td>
<td>4894</td>
<td>8575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>2862</td>
<td>3337</td>
<td>6951</td>
<td>13205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>2228</td>
<td>8278</td>
<td>9354</td>
<td>19861</td>
<td>36110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>2861</td>
<td>3874</td>
<td>7391</td>
<td>14989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>557</td>
<td>2216</td>
<td>2684</td>
<td>5458</td>
<td>10334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>1113</td>
<td>4374</td>
<td>5468</td>
<td>10955</td>
<td>20771</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^6\) Source: Mid-year Population Estimates, Nomis  
\(^7\) Source: Mid-year Population Estimates (2008), Nomis; Census (2001), ONS
These numbers broadly reflect the following variation in the percentage of all children in lone parent households across the boroughs:

Proportion of Dependent Children in Lone Parent Families$^8$:

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$^8$ Source: Census (2001), ONS
6.03 Merseyside

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the pattern above is closely mirrored in each areas’ IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) score. This represents the proportion of children aged 0–15 living in income deprived households as a proportion of all children aged 0–15:

Proportion of Children in Income Deprived Households:

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9 Defined as “either households receiving IS/JSA-IB/PC or those not in receipt of these benefits but in receipt of WTC/CTC with an equivalised income below 60 per cent of the national median before housing costs.”

10 Source: Child Wellbeing Index (2009), DCLG
When considering the overall profile of these areas, the pattern above is also echoed in each area’s relative ranking on the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation:

*Overall Deprivation Ranking*\(^{11}\)

Each area in Merseyside is ranked within the lowest 25% in the country for relative deprivation – Liverpool receiving the lowest ranking in England. In terms of the development of each area, it should be noted that, although the percentage point changes are small, taking 2001 as a benchmark of 100%, we can see that whilst the national population has grown by about 4% over the last decade, and the region as a whole has also grown, in most parts of Merseyside this

\(^{11}\) Source: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2007), DCLG
trend is reversed: Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton have seen *consistently* declining populations over this period.

*Total Population Size*\(^{12}\)

\(^{12}\) Source: Mid-Year Population Estimates, Nomis
6.04 The job market

As well as the consistency highlighted above in the demographic breakdown of lone parents, there appears to be a similar consistency in their engagement with the job market; Lone Parents being around 1.5 to 2 times as likely as the rest of the population to be economically inactive\(^\text{13}\). Similarly, Lone Parents who do work are as likely to have a part time as a full time job, whereas in the general population around twice as many people have full-time rather than part-time jobs. For some context, the 2001 figures are presented below:

*Employment of Lone Parents\(^\text{14}\):*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>England</th>
<th>N. West</th>
<th>Halton</th>
<th>Knowsley</th>
<th>Liverpool</th>
<th>Sefton</th>
<th>St Helens</th>
<th>Wirral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents - Part Time Work</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents - Full Time Work</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents - Unemployed</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Parents - Economically Inactive</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unsurprisingly, the higher levels of deprivation in Knowsley and Liverpool are reflected in higher levels of economic inactivity. The latest data for the general population in terms of unemployment and economic inactivity is presented below:

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\(^{13}\) “This...group consists of those people who are out of work but who do not satisfy all of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) criteria for unemployment. This is because they are either not seeking work or are unavailable to start work.” (ONS: 2009)

\(^{14}\) Source: Census, ONS
Unemployment and Economic Inactivity Rates (total working age population) - 2008:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Unemployment</th>
<th>Economic Inactivity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halton</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowsley</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sefton</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Helens</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wirral</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current data for the region suggests that, following national trends, a high proportion of job vacancies are in the service sector (hotels, retail etc.) and human service sector (health, childcare, public sector), and so reliant on interpersonal rather than more technical skills. This follows more general employment trends:

Focusing on female workers within the subregion, of the 225 3-digit Standard Industrial Classification codes used to classify occupations, 6 account for between 40% and 55% of total female employment at a national, regional or local level.

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15 Source: Annual Population Survey (April 2008-Mar 2009), ONS
### Total Female Employment in the highest-employing sub-sectors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-sector</th>
<th>Halton</th>
<th>Knowsley</th>
<th>Lpool</th>
<th>Sefton</th>
<th>St Helens</th>
<th>Wirral</th>
<th>N. West</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>521: Retail sale in non-specialised stores</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>524: Other retail sale of new goods in specialised stores</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>751: Administration of the State and the economic and social policy of the community</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>801: Primary education</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>851: Human health activities</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>853: Social work activities</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary

It is not possible to secure, nationally, regionally or locally accurate and current numbers of lone parents and their children by age for reasons explained in Appendix II. This places extra difficulties on those responsible for implementing policies and programmes at local level. Nevertheless the best guess estimates show that the numbers of lone parents in all areas in Greater Merseyside have been fairly stable during the last five years. In all areas well over 90% of lone parents are female. These trends are reflected nationally. The proportion of lone parents to the general population, however, is higher in all areas than the national average of just over 15% and varies from nearly 20% in St Helens to over 30% in Liverpool. Estimates of the numbers of children by age in each locality subject to the new regulations suggests the highest number are in Liverpool with over 9,000 children aged 5 to 9 years in 2008 and the Wirral with over 5,000. No area had less than 2,000 children in this age range. Merseyside as a whole is ranked within the lowest 25% in the country for relative deprivation with Liverpool being ranked lowest. Whilst the national and North West populations have grown by about 4% over

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16 Source: Annual Business Inquiry (2007)
the last decade, Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton have seen consistently declining populations over the same period. Lone parents are more likely to be economically inactive than the rest of the population and are more likely to be in part-time than full-time employment. Similar to national trends female employment is largely in the services (retail) or human services (health, education, welfare, public) sectors.
7.00 Teenage Parents

7.01 Teenage pregnancy rates in the UK are among the highest in the world. According to a recent international comparative study only in the USA, Mexico and Turkey are rates higher (OECD, 2009).

7.02 Apart from Sefton all areas in the Greater Merseyside Area have rates higher than the national average.

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
 & 1997-2007 average U18 conception rate per 10,000$^{17}$ \\
\hline
Halton UA & 51.2 \\
Knowsley MCD & 47.1 \\
Liverpool MCD & 48.8 \\
Sefton MCD & 35.3 \\
St Helens MCD & 51.0 \\
Wirral MCD & 46.4 \\
North West & 46.8 \\
England & 43.0 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

$^{17}$ Taken from Every Child Matters Teenage Pregnancy Statistics
The Teenage Pregnancy Unit, located in the Department for Education and Skills, commissioned a significant programme of research studies from 2004 to 2007 and the findings are summarized below.

7.03 A major longitudinal study revealed that the negative consequences for mothers of having a teen-birth are not as wide-ranging as earlier research has suggested although there are risks of poorer mental health within two years of the birth. Children of teen parents, however, suffer as young adults from lower educational attainment, a higher risk of being economically inactive and becoming teen parents themselves possibly correlated with the poverty experienced by many lone parents as they raise their children (Berthaud, et al., 2004).

7.04 Less than half of young mothers were attending school prior to conception although motivation for continuing education increased following pregnancy but lack of affordable, accessible childcare was a major barrier to education. Onsite childcare was especially helpful (Hosie, et al., 2005). Other studies confirmed many young parents had positive feelings about parenthood and as a result increased their aspirations for educational achievement and career goals. These were undermined by lack of appropriate educational or work opportunities or childcare services and negative public and professional attitudes (Bell, et al., 2004; Fiorelli and O’Donnell, 2004).
Amongst black and minority ethnic young people in England a high value was placed on parenting (Higgenbottom, et al., 2006). Young parents had clear career or educational goals and young parenthood was not seen as obstructing these aspirations. Many had experience of ‘successful’ lone parenting in earlier generations.

Government has stated the benefits system for young lone parents will be simplified and funding will be increased for the Care2Learn scheme of support for childcare costs to encourage parents under 20 to continue education (DfCSF, 2009).

Summary
The UK has one of the highest rates of Teenage Pregnancy amongst comparable countries. More than half of young mothers had not been attending school when conception occurred. Teenage parenthood, however, does not appear to have inevitably negative consequences for young mothers and there is evidence to suggest educational and career aspiration are increased following pregnancy. Unavailable childcare and the attitudes of the public and some professionals undermine these goals. The children of teenage parents are likely to suffer disadvantage in adulthood possibly linked to the poverty most young parents experience when rearing their children.
8.00 Implications

8.01 Welfare to work reforms in the UK are intended to bring lone parents into employment and reduce child poverty. There is substantial evidence to show that the reasons why parents enter or leave the labour market are many and multi-faceted. Most studies identified common issues that act as triggers for parents choosing to not enter the labour market or ceasing employment. These are:

- the impact of key transitions (such changes in income or social status, childcare arrangements, workplaces practices etc.).
- the necessity of appropriate, available, accessible, affordable childcare of a quality acceptable to parents and their children.
- barriers caused by the lack of formal qualifications and non-cognitive education (social and emotional) of lone parents.
- the poor physical and mental health of lone parents and their children.
- a lack of flexibility in the workplace and the disadvantages faced by lone parents in relation to promotion and income enhancement.
9.00 Recommendations

9.01 Planning at Local Level and Resource Allocation

All areas in the Greater Merseyside Area face levels of lone parenting and economic disadvantage greater than the national average. This has implications for the providers of services such as employment advisors, education and childcare providers and benefits administrators. Local joint planning, permeable to lone parents themselves, is critical. It is pointless providing education/ training or employment opportunities if suitable childcare is not available for example. Similarly health promotion and prevention of ill-health is a critical factor in employment sustainability. The entry into employment by lone parents is aimed at reducing child poverty yet accurate and current local statistics about populations and profiles are not readily available. Cross agency monitoring of the well-being of lone parents and their children could usefully be established to identify the impact of the new welfare reforms policies and inform the development of all services in the goal to end child poverty.

The resources made available to meet legislative requirements are critical. Research has shown that a consistent relationship with an employment advisor correlates positively with entry into employment and employment sustainability. If these key relationships are lost during a time of change because of staffing deficits (numbers or skills), organizational change or through the imposition of new sanctions this may well be counter-productive. Although accurate current figures are not available it is possible to make estimates of the increased demands made on services as legislation is implemented. Sufficient numbers of staff with the appropriate skills must be in place to meet these new demands. Front-line employees should to be fully briefed and aware that the primary goal of welfare reform policies is to reduce child poverty. Management solely by performance indicators may not achieve the desired outcomes. Social and emotional education may also support staff in ensuring good quality and effective services continue during a challenging time of legislative and policy change and economic recession.
9.02 **Education and Employment Opportunities**

It is not clear whether lone parents claiming JSA can undertake part-time further or higher education qualifying courses. Given the current recession it is unlikely sufficient employment opportunities will be available for all lone parents who will be claiming JSA by October 2010. It would be more productive, both in the short and longer-term, if their time could be spent acquiring formal qualifications. Student Loans, of course, support full-time Higher Education undergraduate studies for lone parents and their dependants. An audit of suitable educational programmes leading to formal qualifications, if not already available, could be undertaken. As part of local planning education providers could review their provision alongside childcare services to enhance accessibility. Online programmes and distance learning could also be considered.

In relation to employment it may be that there are lone parents suitable for recruitment into any vacancies occurring in the employment, support and administrative services linked to JSA. As well as proactive recruitment drives schemes such as paid internships of two years duration could also be considered.

Childcare is not only a service but an industry and has been described as being at ‘a shifting interface between the economy and the family (Hanson, *et al.*, 2006: 84). According to Moss (2006) England has the highest percentage of commercial nurseries in Europe with 85% now run as businesses. Childcare workers are amongst the most poorly paid and poorly qualified workers in human services and policies aim to improve standards (HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI, 2004). This has implications for lone parents both as service users and potential employees and education and training providers. There is an opportunity to simultaneously increase workforce skills, extend employment opportunities, reduce work/family conflict and improve the well-being of children with a multi-agency strategy for the development and improvement of childcare services in Merseyside.
9.03  **Financial Advice and Information**

Changing status from welfare to work often upsets finely balanced family budgets as the timing and type of income alters and/or families do not receive the ‘in-work’ benefits to which they are entitled. It is crucial that delays and gaps in income are eliminated and proactive financial information and advice programmes are aimed at lone parents now required to move to JSA or who enter employment.

9.04  **Flexibility in the Workplace**

Flexibility in the workplace for lone parents is associated with employment sustainability yet disadvantages lone parents in terms of career and income progression. Work must be undertaken with employers to find ways of securing employment and advancement for lone parents and minimizing work family/ conflict whilst ensuring employers benefit from motivated and competent employees. More imaginative use of job-sharing; home-working; workplace childcare arrangements could be explored in ways that do not exploit workers or undermine the economic efficiency of employing organizations.
Appendix I: Report Aims and Objectives

Aim

To undertake research that respects the human rights of those involved in order to identify the learning, employment and advancement needs and experiences of lone parents within the Greater Merseyside Area

Objectives and Outputs

- Liverpool University to review recent and relevant research, locally and nationally, relating to lone parents and identify common themes relating to learning and employment - end Oct 09
- Liverpool University to compile a statistical profile of lone parents and their children in the 6 boroughs of Greater Merseyside and map these profiles within the socio-economic profiles of their geographic locations. To identify the current and projected employment vacancies, and their skills requirements in Greater Merseyside – end Oct 09
- Liverpool University to produce a written report comprising their findings with regard to the literature review and statistical profiling activity – end November 09
Appendix II: Methods –

Although the UK is referred to throughout there are variations in legislative and policy detail and timing in the different countries that form the UK. These will become clearer as policies and legislation are implemented.

Literature Review

First tranche

A cross data base search of academic literature via the University of Liverpool Metalib search engine was undertaken using the following key words in combination:

Mothers/ work/ lone parents/ employment

61 journal articles were ultimately selected for the following reasons:

- The articles focussed on an analysis of the effectiveness of welfare to work policies for lone parents in the UK, USA or Canada (on the basis of similar policies and socio-economic characteristics).
- They were published within the last 10 years.
- The methodology was robust as it was longitudinal, quantitative, mixed methodological or involved re analysis of large national or regional data-sets.

These were then reduced to 14 studies with findings of greatest relevance to the research question.

Second tranche:

In addition searches were undertaken of studies by research/ policy/ lobby organisations concerned with lone parents/ teenage parents and/ or child poverty e.g. Gingerbread; Child Poverty Action Group; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Children’s Commissioners, Daycare Trust etc. The criterion employed in this tranche was the identification of recent research focused on the impact of welfare-to-work policies from the perspective of lone parents and children and young people and the anticipated implications for these groups
Third tranche:
Searches of government web-sites and publications focused on the new ‘welfare reform’ policies and legislation and intended outputs and outcomes.

Fourth tranche:
General searches via Google were undertaken to identify any key debates and issues currently in the public domain.
All sources are listed in alphabetical order in the references

Statistical review and analysis
This report uses historical statistics to estimate the likely current size and make-up of the lone parent population in the 6 boroughs of Merseyside, the likely size and age breakdown of the children in lone parent families, and presents indicative information on the relative status of the region and employment opportunities. Despite their age, because of the relatively stable numbers of the populations in question over time, the in-depth data from the last 2 census (1991 & 2001) are of use in order to estimate the number of lone parents in each of the Merseyside boroughs. Two main data sources have been used: 2001 census data, and the 2006/7 figures on families claiming Child Tax Credit, which can be considered a reasonable proxy for the total number of lone parents. Considered together these provide a good estimate of the size of the lone parent population in each area.

In order to estimate the number of children living in lone parent households the most recent data available is for 2008, and this is compared with the figure for 10 years earlier to estimate any likely changes in age populations. Population estimates are correlated with information from the 2007 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Information about employment patterns of Lone Parents come from the Annual Survey conducted by the Office of National Statistics and the 2007 Annual Business Survey. Sources are indicated in footnotes in section 6 and websites listed in the references.
References


Accessed 25.2.07.


Accessed 16.11.09.


HM Treasury, (2008), Budget 2008

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/bud_bud08_child.htm

Accessed 11.11.09


Ussher, K., Parliamentary Under Secretary DWP.,Written Answers and Statements HC Deb, 9 March 2009, c38W

Welfare Reform Bill (2008-9)

[http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/welfarereform.html](http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/welfarereform.html)

Accessed 12.11.09.

**Websites**

Statistical sources are indicated in footnotes in section 6 and web-sites are listed below:

[www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social_Trends38/02_03.xls](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_social/Social_Trends38/02_03.xls)

www.nomisweb.co.uk/
http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/ctc-small-areas.htm
http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/neighbourhoodrenewal/deprivation/deprivation07/
http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/user-guidance/lmguide/concepts/inactivity/about/index.html

Other websites of interest

Centre for the Study of the Child, the Family and the Law
http://www.liv.ac.uk/law/cscfl/

Child Poverty Action Group
http://www.cpag.org.uk/

Children’s Commissioner in Wales
http://www.childcomwales.org.uk/

Day Care Trust
http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/

Disability Alliance
http://www.disabilityalliance.org/welfare5.htm

11 million- Children’s Commissioner for England
http://www.11million.org.uk/

Gingerbread – single parents, equal families
http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/portal/page/portal/Website

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

http://www.jrf.org.uk/

National Children’s Bureau

http://www.ncb.org.uk/

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People

http://www.niccy.org/

Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People

http://www.sccyp.org.uk/

Teenage Pregnancy Unit Research Studies

http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/teenagepregnancy/research/strategyresearch/

University of Liverpool

http://www.liv.ac.uk/