



Glasgow's Healthier Future Forum 24

A Healthy Future for Children and Families

Event report

Tuesday 24th September 2019

200 St Vincent Street, Glasgow



This report is a summary of the presentations and discussions from the GHFF24 event and does not necessarily represent the views of the GCPH

Welcome and introduction

The Chair of the event, Pauline Craig, Head of Population Health at NHS Health Scotland opened the event and welcomed attendees. She explained that the aim of the event was to present, consider and debate the evolving policy context in relation to family support and how it can be better embedded in our systems in an equitable and sustainable way.

Throughout the morning, participants were encouraged to reflect on the progress made in Scotland in providing support for all families and to draw out promising practice, emerging ideas and proposed next steps.



A programme for the event is attached as an appendix.

Presentations

Three plenary presentations were delivered as follows:

'Re-imagining family support'

Professor John Devaney, Centenary Professor and Head of Social Work, University of Edinburgh

Prof Devaney outlined the relationship between the state and the family, encompassing universal services, family support, family preservation and alternative care. He outlined the current evidence base and explored how we understand and approach support for families: where can we find a balance in targeting the critical few and provide universal services for the many, and where is the equilibrium between crisis-driven care and asset-based approaches? He suggested a shift has occurred and that strengths-based and relational services are once again coming to the fore.

[View the presentation slides.](#)

'The care economy and childcare'

Dr Angela O'Hagan, Senior Lecturer, Glasgow School for Business and Society and Deputy Director, Wise Centre for Economic Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University

This presentation explored care and the gendered constructs of care, the structural constraints of gendered norms and how these manifest in women and men's economic status, time use, and the provision of care. These elements were discussed in the context of current policy frames and resource allocations in the context of Scottish public policy.

[View the summary of the presentation](#) or [view the presentation slides](#).

Supporting children and families to flourish: what more have we learned?

Fiona Crawford, Consultant in Public Health, NHSGGC/GCPH and Valerie McNeice, Senior Public Health Research Specialist, Glasgow Centre for Population Health

Fiona and Valerie outlined some of the key findings from the evaluation of the Stepping Stones for Families' Family Wellbeing Service and the impacts of the CHANGE (Childcare and Nurture Glasgow East) project which takes a community-based approach to creating better, more appropriate childcare for families living in the east of Glasgow. The influence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and child poverty were discussed before some reflections and implications for action were offered.

[View the presentation slides](#).

Table discussions on implications for policy and practice

Following the plenary presentations, delegates were asked to discuss the implications for policy and practice at their round tables by considering the following questions:

- 1. From what you have heard today, what are the important principles/ideas for action that have resonated most strongly for you? If not these, what others?*
- 2. Where do you see signs of these principles/ideas for action in your own practice/experience?*
- 3. What could you take forward in the future to help all children and families in Scotland flourish?*

During the table discussions and in the plenary feedback the following main themes emerged:

Gendered nature of care work, both paid and unpaid:

- Gendered norms have underpinned the 'childcare economy' which has led to undervaluing the childcare workforce, with associated low levels of pay. Childcare needs to be reconfigured as a social investment focusing on wellbeing outcomes for children and a more balanced evaluation of the significance of early childhood education and care.
- Strong agreement that childcare is a highly skilled job but underpaid and undervalued. Childcare needs more resourcing including more investment in staff.
- A 'Living Wage' should be the starting point, rather than the end point.
- Economic drivers of pay inequality perpetuate traditional gendered roles and norms.
- We need to place a greater emphasis on the value of care beyond financial value and promote the importance of further investment in it as a public good.
- Is care work becoming professionalised and sanitised? We need a society in which compassion and care are embedded in our lives and actions (i.e. the norm). A societal shift is required with kindness and love featuring in policy and discussed in political speeches.
- There is a need to challenge structural issues and traditional gender roles. Changes are required in maternity and paternity pay to help address this. As well as improving the lives of men, this is an important aspect in empowering women. This needs to consider the division of domestic labour in economic data so that its role as an underpinning base for economic activity is more accurately reflected.

Language and approach:

- It is important to be language aware – recognition that terms such as 'just coping' are common yet can be problematic. People may become framed as 'users' of services or support and find themselves on a treadmill of support. Even the term 'family support' could be framed differently.
- Talking about 'thriving' would be more beneficial than looking at deficit models.
- Normalising family support – the importance of language is crucial in addressing the feeling of failure and stigma of poverty and 'needing support'.
- If people are viewed, treated as and talked about as a problem it becomes relatively easy to administer services to them.

Importance of relationships/partnership working:

- Individual relationships open opportunities and it is important to value colleagues working in different sectors. Building strong relationships take time but they are key to making a difference.
- Holistic, wrap-around service design and engaged discussions between all relevant services within a community are required. Leveraging relationships between organisations and within communities could ensure a better spread of resources and ensure families get the right service, tailored to need.
- Relationships are fundamental to working with families – understanding your community is key.
- Even more important than language, are relationships with families – these must value people, be nurturing and build trust.
- Agreement of a continual need for a more connected and joined-up approach to addressing the issues faced by the most disadvantaged children and families.

Family support versus child support:

- Childcare should not be seen as just about children but about supporting families and communities. This has implications for how resources are directed and how professionals are trained. An example is childcare for vulnerable two-year-olds which can support the wider family, who may have health and wellbeing issues.
- Family wellbeing services should be linked to early learning and childcare provision.
- There was a suggestion that a national family wellbeing strategy for Scotland is needed.
- There should be a family-focus and family-led arrangements for childcare rather than families being required to fit in with the system.
- Importance of the role of mother's (or other primary carers') wellbeing, self-confidence, esteem, supporting parent's development e.g. education, training, widening access.
- We need to better provide support to those on the edges of care who need more than universal service provision but do not meet the threshold for social work intervention. The third sector could be better resourced to provide much of this infrastructure and support and better utilise our community assets e.g. libraries and community spaces.
- How can the system support families without the system intervening?

Funding:

- Interventions are negatively impacted by short-term and stop/start funding.
- Consequently, we need sustainable long-term funding.
- The process of third sector getting/applying for funding is restrictive.
- Need to 'lock-in' the value of proven intervention and good practice and use this evidence to build a stronger country-wide commitment to GIRFEC.

Third sector:

- Can learn from third sector services that are time-based, trust-based and relational. They know how to do it but it is not systematically funded.
- Partnership working is key but a more open-ended relationship is needed between the third sector and statutory organisations.
- There is a vulnerability of the third sector associated with austerity, especially for smaller organisations. They have a significant contribution to make but have limited capacity due to funding restrictions and time required for monitoring and reporting.
- The third sector is often trusted by families more so than statutory organisations.

Poverty:

- We must start addressing the causes rather than just treating the symptoms. More focus and more resources needed on up-stream prevention.
- Need to listen to people who are experiencing poverty – they are the experts.
- 'Cost of the school day' project should be widened to look at cost of early learning and childcare e.g. the cost of dress-up days, activities, clothing and photographs.
- Peer support is valuable – information from people in the same situation.
- The impact of poverty on families must be incorporated more into education and training so that there is a better understanding of it as people embark on their careers.
- Universal and targeted support required: recognising the vulnerability of all parents but also having the ability to take a targeted approach where needed.

Communities:

- Need to do more to link families to local community, local venues and local activities alongside the provision of universal services.
- Local and flexible are so important.
- How can communities be empowered to use their role and knowledge to resolve issues and challenges?
- A rights-based outlook across communities would make the shift from people as recipients of services to driving services that are needed and appropriate to local need. Responsibility is then on the services to respond.
- Services are a rights-based issue – responsibility of services and organisations to meet the needs of families.
- Local needs and community dialogue are essential for planning and developing services – parent's and children's voices need to be heard.
- We need a bottom-up approach of doing more *in and alongside* communities in order to build resilient families and places where children and young people are respected and nurtured to fulfil their potential.
- Open up space for connections to happen – the fundamental importance of communication between services and families, to hold conversations about what is happening in the area (community hubs).
- The importance of having someone to walk alongside you such as a peer support role which can feel like someone is 'speaking the same language' as you and minimise perceptions of being judged.

Governance and infrastructure:

- GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) can create uncertainty about sharing information but some sharing is important and necessary to provide appropriate support.
- Remove barriers for third sector getting access to academic ethics committees.
- Funding priorities need to be better aligned to statutory policies.
- Need to improve systems of information sharing between services and individuals and to be available at first presentation with a service.
- Protection of budgets can reinforce working in silos. Organisations and systems bound by their own vested interests means family at the centre is not always a reality.

Closing remarks from the Chair

Family support is often thought of as consisting of parenting programmes or childcare provision but this Forum demonstrated that it goes far beyond these interventions. Supporting families requires attention to gender inequality, community development, welfare and employment practices, and meeting universal and specific need. Good practice requires us to reflect on how we work as service providers, whether as planners or frontline practitioners and how we care for ourselves and others in domestic and in work situations. The presentations, reflections and discussions today have offered us a rich resource for considering the political and structural context for childcare provision, proposed some approaches based on current practice and ideas for further consideration. A healthier future for children and families needs a nurturing system that values and empowers us all.

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Programme

9.30 – 10.00	Registration and refreshments
10.00 – 10.10	Welcome and introduction by the Chair Pauline Craig, Head of Population Health, NHS Health Scotland
10.10 – 10.40	Re-imagining family support Professor John Devaney, Centenary Professor and Head of Social Work, University of Edinburgh
10.40 – 11.10	The care economy and childcare Dr Angela O'Hagan, Senior Lecturer Glasgow School for Business and Society, Glasgow Caledonian University
11.10 - 11.30	Questions and reflections
11.30 - 11.50	Refreshments and networking
11.50 – 12.20	Supporting children and families to flourish: what more have we learned? Fiona Crawford, Consultant in Public Health, NHS GG&C/Glasgow Centre for Population Health Valerie McNeice, Senior Research Specialist, Glasgow Centre for Population Health
12.20 – 1.00	Table discussions on implications for policy and practice
1.00 – 1.15	Feedback and closing remarks from the Chair
1.15	Lunch and close

If you would like to follow or contribute to the event on Twitter, please use the hashtag #GHFF24