

News release

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One parent proofing launched in parliament

A new report *Proofed for Parents by Parents* to be launched in parliament today by Single Parent Action Network shows that one parent proofing of employment initiatives is essential if lone parents are to accept social contracts with Government when reforming welfare.

Parents from across the UK are presenting the report's fresh insights into the impact of current policies, and their own recommendations for helping more lone parents into jobs that could lift them and their children out of poverty. Key note speaker Caroline Flint, Minister of State for Welfare Reform, will be joined by a diverse audience of cross-party MPs, civil servants, think tanks and welfare to work providers to hear first hand from parents what it means to have single-handed responsibility for providing and caring for their children alone. Panel debates follow each presentation.

Director of Single Parent Action Network, Sue Cohen said:

"The latest green paper *In work better off* expects single parents to take paid work when their children are young. Government's arguments for new rights and responsibilities means that offering quality, sustainable employment support and the safety of family-friendly welfare rights should be part of that equation. As a historically stigmatised group and current policy target, single parents should have a genuine right to influence the policies that impact on their everyday lives. A fair and just contract is one that recognises the competence of single parents to assess its worth and value before signing up to it.

Becoming a working single parent is no easy task. Having single-handed responsibility to provide and care for their children entails a very high risk of financial and time poverty. Many single parents who are employed experience a constant and exhausting juggling act, which negatively impacts on their ability to sustain a job, reduces their choices of employment and renders career aspirations obsolete. Not having enough time to care is a common experience for single parents who work, many of whom feel guilty that they cannot spend quality time with their children.

Single parents want to work, but need to know that the jobs they take will provide a secure income with time to care. While Single Parent Action Network welcomes current proposals to extend flexible working rights, managing childcare breakdown, sickness and school holidays is a frequent problem for parents. Parents suggest that work-life balance policies are not helpful in this respect.

Proofed for Parents by Parents will enable Government and organisations across all sectors to meet single parents' career aspirations and individual needs, rather than forcing parents to make ends meet. The Proofed for Parents by Parents toolkit produced alongside the report is a practical guide for analysis that not only benefits one parent families in poverty but can be a blueprint for all parents balancing work and childcare. Proofed for Parents by Parents envisages a worker of the 21st century supported by employment and child poverty strategies that are informed by a universal notion of a single worker/carer”.

Notes to editors:

Parliamentary Launch of the Participatory One Parent Proofing programme:

Thursday 15 November 2007, 1.30pm-4.30pm, Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House

1.30-1.40 Welcome – Sue Cohen and Kerry McCarthy MP

1.40-1.55 Overview of current policies and POPP – Professor Jane Millar, University of Bath

1.55-2.10 Key note speech – Caroline Flint, Minister of State for Employment and Welfare Reform

2.10-2.25 Discussion and Q & A

2.25-2.40 Break

2.40-4.30 Parent presentations, supported by One Parent Families, One Parent Families Scotland, Working Families and Daycare Trust

The launch has been kindly sponsored by Kerry McCarthy MP and Shahid Malik MP. Funded by the Big Lottery and Barrow Cadbury Trust

Download SPAN's Proofed for Parents by Parents research report and toolkit at www.singleparents.org.uk/span/resources

Proofed for Parents by Parents report and toolkit have been produced from SPAN's Participatory One Parent Proofing (POPP) project. One Parent Proofing is the process by which the views of parents are used to inform the development, implementation and

evaluation of policy and practice so that they respond effectively to the needs of one parent families.

The project's main objective is to influence the development of innovative programmes and policies that can engage single parents in intermediate steps to employment, and enable them to sustain good quality jobs.

68 single parents have been involved in analytical group work across 5 cities of the UK: Bristol, Birmingham, Swansea, Sheffield and Glasgow. Partners involved in delivery of the POPP programme respectively are: Single Parent Action Network, Women Acting in Today's Society, Swansea Women's Centre, SCOOP Aid Ltd and Four Plus One.

SPAN is a uniquely diverse membership organisation empowering one-parent families throughout the UK. SPAN aims to support single parents to empower themselves and take control of their lives, and to give a voice to one-parent families from diverse cultures and backgrounds living in poverty and isolation. SPAN also supports the development of one parent family support groups, and aims to improve policies that affect the lives of one-parent families.

Contact: Sorrel Parsons, Policy PR Worker

Single Parent Action Network 0117 9514231 or 07768 747963 Sue Cohen, Director/out of hours

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