

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## LONE PARENT'S EXPERIENCE OF LOCKDOWN SUPPORT & HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

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- Introduction (p.1-2)
- Key Findings & Talking Points (p.3)
- Research (p. 4-18)
  - (a) Survey results (p. 4-6)
  - (b) Hopes for the Future (p. 7)
  - (c) Mapping Exercise (p. 8-10)
  - (d) The Outcome Star (p. 11)
  - (e) Case Studies (p. 12-16)
  - (f) Take a Pulse Group (p. 17-18)
- Going Forwards (p. 19-20)
- Appendix 1 (p. 21)
- Appendix 2 (p. 22)
- Appendix 3 (p. 23)
- Contact us (p. 24)



Fife  
Gingerbread



# INTRODUCTION

Since 'lockdown' Fife Gingerbread has moved quickly to adapt our support services to meet the needs of supported families. During the first six months of 'lockdown' and the COVID19 pandemic we supported families and continued to accept new referrals. Our staff and volunteers would normally be out visiting families at home, running tea-time clubs after school, facilitating baby massage sessions and taking part in local networking events. The teams have changed their approach to deliver as much support as possible virtually and we have a planned approach to the Scottish Government's Route Map as we "unlock".

It has been a challenging time for us all in lots of different ways but, despite this, the staff, volunteers and families at Fife Gingerbread have managed to create a virtual world of support for vulnerable families. We may need to physically distance, but social connections are important and it has become even more important to remember to look after our mental health and wellbeing. We have supported families with challenges and mitigated the financial impact of 'lockdown' measures.

Over recent weeks we have reflected on the experience of the pandemic and 'lockdown' - what have we done well, what have we learned and starting to shape the future of Fife Gingerbread in a "new normal". We have pulled together an infographic (**Appendix 1**) which illustrates Fife Gingerbread activity over the last 6-months and have engaged our staff teams to understand their journey and support their wellbeing (**Appendix 2**).

An important part of this thinking process is identifying talking points and learning from supported families. We hope that this brief assessment provides an insight into the impact for families. We will use this to shape our services going forwards. We hope that by sharing this document it will support partners throughout Fife to consider lone parent families and families in need, and how their services can meet their needs as we all head towards a "new normal".

In order to ensure this Assessment accurately illustrates the story so far, we have used a number of mechanisms to collect data and anecdotal evidence:



### **SURVEY RESULTS**



An online survey link was shared with all of our supported families and 78 families completed a short questionnaire. Including asked families about their hopes for the future.

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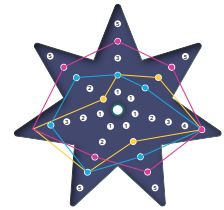


### **MAPPING EXERCISE**



Staff members contributed to a mapping exercise pulling together their reflections and observations from listening to and supporting families.

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### **THE OUTCOME STAR**



We use Outcome Star as a tool to measure distance travelled, impact and change. It allows us to adapt our services to meet the needs of families, and create action plans which are tailored to each parent.

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### **CASE STUDY**



Our case studies tell the story of 'lockdown' for supported families including the highs and lows experienced during this extraordinary time.

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### **TAKE A PULSE GROUP**



Group established to begin formalising the process of listening to and learning from families to shape services.

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# KEY FINDINGS & TALKING POINTS

- **The virtual support** offered during lockdown was successful in many ways. Going forwards this could play an important role in creating a new blended model of support where we are offering both in person and online support for lone parent families and families in need. Services need to reflect the “new normal” and take forward successes learning during ‘lockdown’ e.g. a weekly virtual coffee group hosted in the evenings for lone parents successfully facilitated peer support, reduced loneliness in the evenings and offered some fun “me time” with games such as Bingo and Quizzes.
- **Household income** has changed significantly during the pandemic for many vulnerable families, many of whom were already struggling with low income and experiencing poverty. We need to consider how we support families in areas such as income maximisation, budgeting and identifying routes out of poverty.
- **Homeschooling** was challenging for a range of reasons - including lack of resources, poor infrastructure, digital exclusion, multiple children at various stages and additional support needs. Therefore, the attainment gap for some vulnerable children and young people will have greatened, causing further inequality.
- Lone parent families and families in need often **lack the resources** such as toys, activities and outdoor space to engage their children in play activities to aide their development. This is often combined with challenges such as inadequate housing. This became more apparent during 'lockdown'.
- Staff observed a **negative impact on the health and wellbeing** of lone parents. Parents shared the impact that lockdown has had on mental health including anxiety, loneliness and low mood. How can we provide support build confidence, resilience and wellbeing post lockdown?

# RESEARCH

## SURVEY RESULTS

We asked families 22 questions - with a mixture of answer responses including checklists, free text and scaling. Fife Gingerbread staff supported with the design and content of the survey. We covered a range of topics / areas including mental health, finances, schooling, support and impact of lockdown. The survey was completed independently by families to ensure it accurately reflects their personal views, opinions and experiences.

## WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY?

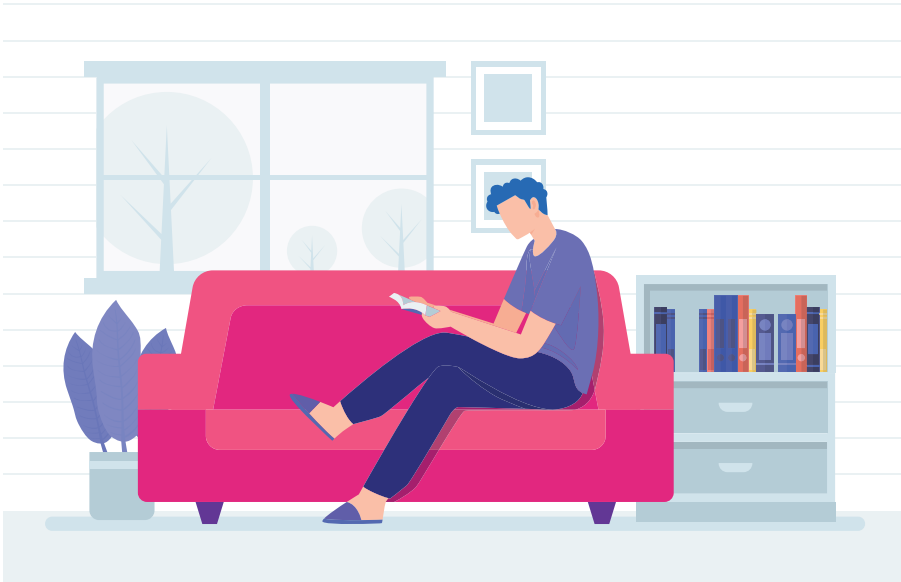
The survey was completed by 78 parents/carers - most of whom were already receiving Fife Gingerbread support before lockdown and have continued to engage with staff and volunteers throughout this time. We received responses from all Fife Gingerbread projects and across all areas of Fife. The majority of families were lone parent families with an average of 1.6 children at home (the least was 1 child and the most was 7 children) and nearly 60% of children in these households were in School (two thirds of which were Primary School age).

## WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE SURVEY?

Since lockdown the support offered by Fife Gingerbread has changed significantly from an in-person model focused on home visits and using community spaces to a virtual online world of support. The majority of respondents did not feel there were any barriers to engaging with Fife Gingerbread during lockdown. We asked families **what support they have engaged with** during this time. The top four responses included:

- 1/ SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS**
- 2/ ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR OUR FAMILY**
- 3/ MESSAGES**
- 4/ PHONE CALLS**

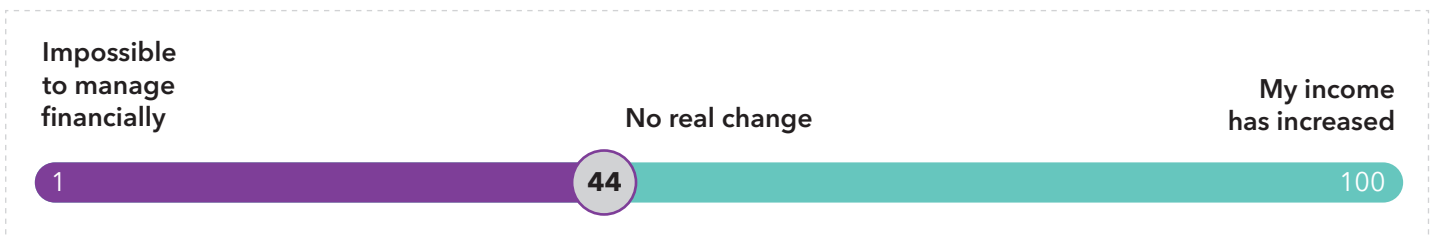
Additionally, just over half of families were referred to other agencies during lockdown for specialist support and a third of those identified this was to address food insecurity.



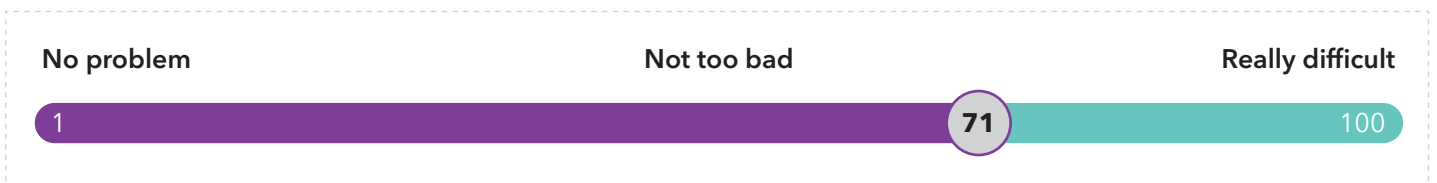
## FINANCIAL IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN



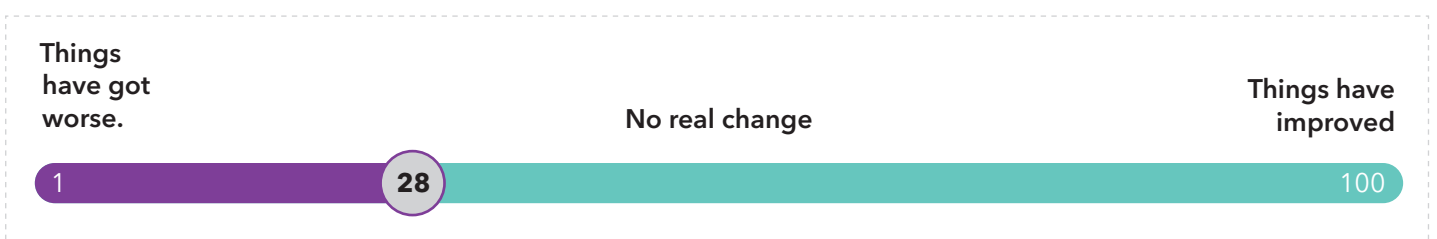
We asked families about the **financial impact of lockdown**. The scale is 1-100 and the median result was 44 - indicating that many of our families have been negatively impacted financially, and had trouble managing this.



We asked families how they have found **homeschooling**. The scale is 1-100 and the median result was 71 - indicating that many of our families found homeschooling challenging.



We asked families about their **lockdown experience** and if lockdown had changed **their circumstances**. The median result was 28 - indicating that most families who responded to the survey feel that lockdown has negatively impacted their circumstances in some way.



We went on to ask families to describe their **lockdown**  
**experience** in three words,

giving them the opportunity to use their own words to do so.

The most common phrases were:





# HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

As part of the survey we asked families what their hopes for the future were and here are a few of the thoughts families shared with us.



My kids being able to attend full school hours, for me being able to find a permanent part time job to support my family better.

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To get back to our groups and work on my mental health.

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To be less anxious and less stressed be happier and more confident.

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Need to find a bigger house due to 4 boys being stuck in the same room together and not having a garden for my youngest to play in and hopefully find a job.

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I hope people will be encouraged to work from home more, as I would love to work and this would be the best option for me. I also hope that the community spirit of helping others stays. I hope less people throw away rubbish and are kinder to the environment around them.

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I hope that COVID-19 eventually disappears and there's no more deaths. I want to get back to college and finish my course and my little boy can get back to nursery.

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To have my children back to the emotionally confident and sociable individuals they were before lockdown and to be able to interact with family members.

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I really hope my kids are not too far behind academically as they already received help from learning support before lockdown. I hope my mental health improves and my anxieties lessen. I hope my kids adjust well and don't look back on this as a negative experience.

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I hope too be able too feel myself again, and too over come my fear of going out.

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To get back to how I was prior to lockdown and engaging in groups 1:1 with support worker my mental and emotional health to get better and my daughter to be able to go back to school and have a proper education.

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I have coped well dealing with kids hide my sadness. I feel what I needed to do for the kids sake they have been put through so much... having some sort of structure will help my household.

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Been able to do stuff with Fife Gingerbread again and just getting back to normal if that's even possible.

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Starting college, getting the kids into nursery, hopefully moving house, getting out to groups.

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...just being able to give everyone a cuddle and get out and about again.

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Everyone to appreciate who and what they have a lot more.

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# MAPPING EXERCISE

Fife Gingerbread have a team of Support Workers and Volunteer Coordinators who have worked hard to maintain engagement with families, provide emotional support for vulnerable families, offer ideas of activities for families and connect families to local COVID-19 provision. We used reflective tools to understand the **impact of 'lockdown' for families** - tapping in to our teams' knowledge, observations and learning (See **Appendix 3** which shows the tool used with staff teams). We pulled together the thoughts of staff below.

## SYSTEMS

- Services such as FNP and HV still visiting (CP cases) and making referrals to Fife Gingerbread for support with other areas.
- Communication with some agencies poor during lockdown and confusing.
- Some families not going to docs when need to as worried about COVID.
- Not following up with health services as anxious. No access to services like counselling for mental health during stressful time.
- Demotivated to look at employability / their future as no jobs to apply for. And kids at home so lone parents may be unable to work.

## PROCEDURES

- Difficult to do things like college applications or nursery applications without support or the right IT.
- Emergency grants - processed quickly which was positive.
- Emergency food delivery wasn't always quick enough or not received - high volume at 'helping hands'?
- Perceptions of what services available - don't know what is out there to help them.
- Confusion around the Scottish Government guidance, and what they "can" do
- Intimidating doing things like shopping as following procedures, and worrying.
- Some lone parents not following rules, putting others in danger.
- Parents doing Open Uni struggling as no time as a lone parent to do work or meet deadlines.



# MAPPING EXERCISE

## RESOURCES

- Hard to keep connected for families as limited data on phones and don't all have access to good technology / equipment. Some not confident using IT or communication platforms, and may lack confidence to use things like Zoom or Facebook messenger / groups.
- Some parents / families have developed new skills and confidence using IT.
- Infrastructure - no landline / data / mobile phone reception poor in certain areas e.g. not enough IT resources for parents/carers doing their own college work plus homeschooling their children.
- Education - trying to be teachers and didn't have resources / skills to support kids. Very stressful time for families - especially parents with their own learning need or disability.
- If several kids at different ages/stages and different Schools then all different expectations - impossible to juggle as a lone parent.
- Lack of toys / resources to keep kids entertained at home or means to buy them. Struggle to get food - lone parents going to shop / transport / cost of local shops.
- Have to get themselves to other services / support if needed - no one to help them.

## PLACES

- Most families have garden access / outdoor space.
- Buying things to keep kids entertained - impacting on food/fuel budget as low income families.
- Housing - spending time at home but unable to get repairs or support - overcrowding / no green space / lack of physical space i.e. no private quiet space for people.
- Travel - challenging as less buses, and not wanting to use them with kids as a lone parent - even more isolated.
- Impact of inadequate housing and space on mental health and wellbeing.
- Rural areas of Fife isolated and access to services hard / expensive.



# MAPPING EXERCISE

## ENVIRONMENT

- Some families finding dealing with children all time difficult - even normal development stages - as no/limited support.
- Sharing custody hard as worried about partner following guidelines and keeping safe.
- Lack of routine at home - kids up late and sleeping in.
- Behavioural issues - especially children and young people with ASN.
- More family time - quality time to spend together without the routine - good fun. Doing crafts and activities.
- Community - getting to know neighbours better - creating more community support and more volunteering going on.

## PEOPLE

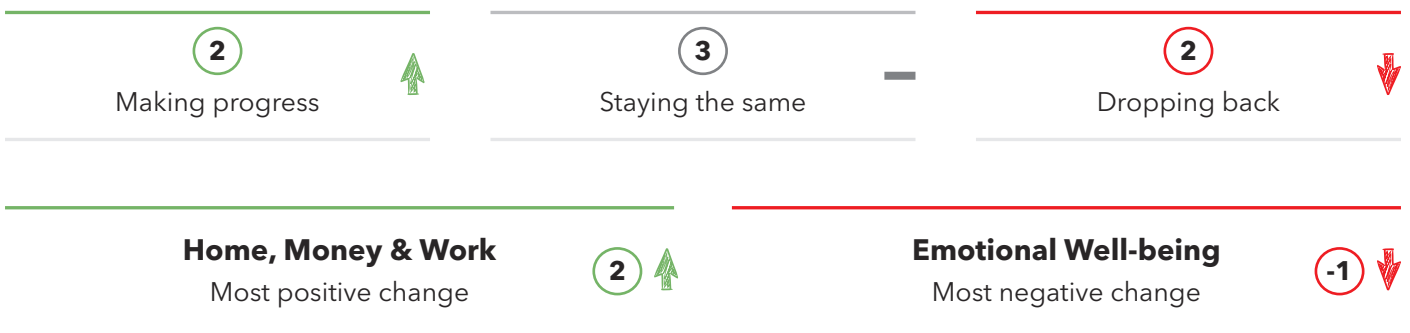
- Low mood / suicidal thoughts discussed with some parents. Feelings of isolation and no support. Loneliness a major issue for lone parents.
- Some families taking risks to see family working in care homes to support their own mental health.
- Parent reduced and stopped taking drugs due to worries about COVID19.
- Not being able to attend hobbies and missing FG groups / activities - impacting mental health and wellbeing.
- Gaming addiction with young people - online a lot more as not in School and up late at night.
- Low self esteem and confidence - many parents are "back at Square 1" and will need support to build up again - low resilience.
- Some people engaging better as all online as Fife Gingerbread not "invading" their home - felt safer to engage virtually for some.
- Increase domestic abuse / child protection / suicide.
- Negative affect on mental health of lockdown for vulnerable families.
- Some families coming together more virtually - quality time / inventive / creative / play.
- Missing face to face interaction - affect on mental health and loneliness. Impact will last a long time after lockdown eases.



# THE OUTCOME STAR

Below is an anonymised Outcome Star which is the tool we used to measure “distance travelled” with families, identify key action areas and prioritise activity. The Star below has three lines which illustrate where this parent was when they joined Fife Gingerbread (Yellow), how much they had progressed before ‘lockdown’ (Pink) and the detrimental impact of ‘lockdown’ on many areas of their family life (Blue). This example illustrates the impact felt by many lone parents, and is reflective of the experience for many families in need across Fife.

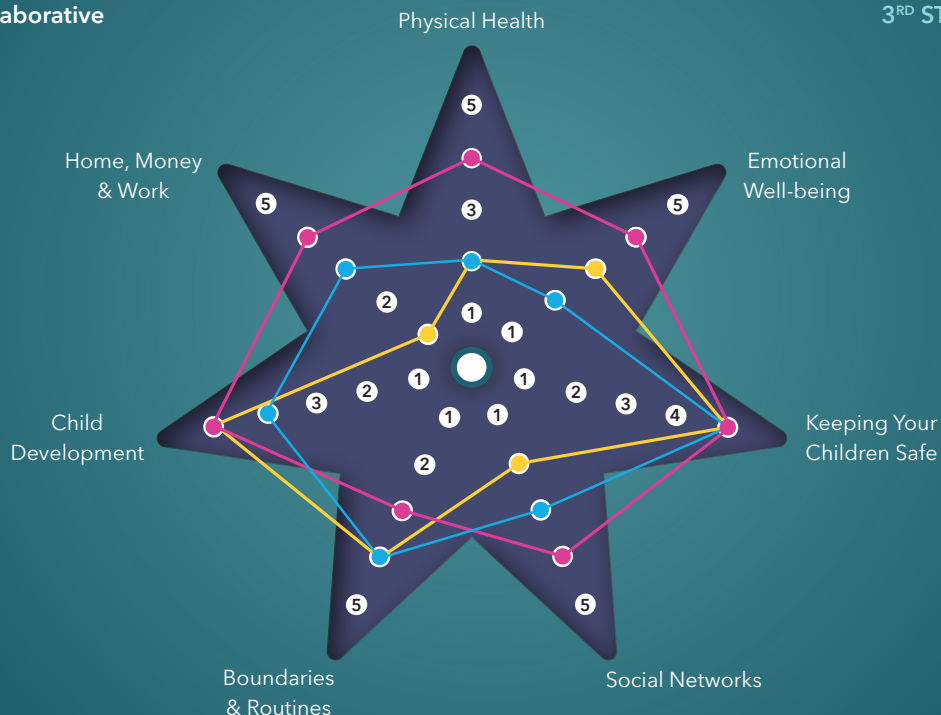
Changes shown in outcome areas between parent's first and latest Family Star (Early Years)



28 JANUARY 2020 - 18 AUGUST 2020

- 1<sup>ST</sup> STAR / Practitioner
- 2<sup>ND</sup> STAR / Collaborative
- 3<sup>RD</sup> STAR / Collaborative

- 1<sup>ST</sup> STAR / 28/01/2020-R
- 2<sup>ND</sup> STAR / 18/02/2020
- 3<sup>RD</sup> STAR / 18/08/2020





## CASE STUDIES #1



### *Marianne*

#### *Making it Work for Lone Parents*

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My name is Marianne and I'm a lone parent with a 5-year-old daughter who starts school this year. There's only me and Rebecca in the house although my parents are a great support to me and help when they can, we have a close relationship. Rebecca can be an energetic and headstrong wee girl and can wear me out talking by breakfast time at the best of times. Having her in a full time nursery place was really helpful as it provided us both with the space we needed, so lockdown came as a complete shock.

I found lockdown very hard, emotionally draining and both of us found it to be frustrating. We especially missed my parents although I faceted them most days and dad helped by doing my shopping for me. Mum is high risk so we really couldn't see her under any circumstances.

I think Rebecca enjoyed having me to herself and I did my best to keep her entertained in the house, but she loves the outdoors. The one saving grace was that we have a garden and Rebecca spent most of the day playing out there. I also managed some safe distancing chat with a neighbour when we in our gardens, but of course this was completely dependent on the weather.

I've always been a resilient person and can deal with the up's and down's of life quite well, but I have to admit that I felt my mental health deteriorating during lockdown, to the point where I felt I hated my life. I couldn't see an end to this scary and worrying time. I was lucky to still have contact with the other Fife Gingerbread mums as my Support Worker arranged a Zoom coffee evening and bingo nights, and had daily contact with my Support Worker through phone calls and social media.





However, on Easter Sunday I started to feel unwell. I had no energy and just felt generally rubbish. By Sunday evening I had lost my sense of taste, which wasn't a recognised symptom of COVID-19 at that point. I battled on through the Monday and Tuesday feeling like I'd been hit by a bus, with waves of nausea overwhelming me. I was gradually feeling worse but had to keep going as Rebecca still needed to be looked after. I managed to do what I had to do and lay on the sofa when I could. By Wednesday morning I felt like I just couldn't go on. I phoned my mum at 6.45am crying and asking for help. My dad came down with gloves and a mask on and took Rebecca out for the day. I wasn't even able to see him as it wasn't safe and I spent the day feeling guilty that my parents had been put in this position knowing that they could possibly end up ill too. I thought I might have COVID-19 but kept thinking I didn't have the recognised symptoms. However, we now know that loss of taste and smell are one of the signs, so I believe this was what I had. I phoned NHS but only got an automated service telling me to isolate and phone back if no better within seven days. However, that was the worst day for me and I began to feel steadily better, although I felt exhausted for a long time after.

I now feel better physically and mentally although I still have concerns. I'm still worried that we may end up going back into lockdown and I'm worried about Rebecca starting school next week. Instead of me being able to go into the classroom to see her settled she will be collected by her teacher from the playground and taken in... all a bit strange and far from ideal. I'm also worried about the job situation and trying to find a job that's suitable for me as a lone parent with so many other people becoming unemployed too. On the plus side I'm looking forward to having some 'me time' and getting some routine back in my life again. It'll be great to socially distance and meet with some other parents again and I know Making it Work will be there to help and support me to find suitable employment. Life's far from normal, but it's getting there.

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*Marianne*





## CASE STUDIES #2



*Amy*

*Fife Teen Parent Project*

Amy lives alone with her daughter Kyla who turned 2 at the start of lockdown - she is a single Mum and moved into her new house just a few weeks before lockdown started, after her own personal struggles and being homeless.

She has had some support with the house move with budgeting, but she is really capable of managing this and making sure Kyla gets exactly what she needs.

Amy found lockdown really stressful - Amy had support from family but she was spending a lot of time alone and being stuck in the house was a nightmare as Kyla has loads of energy. Kyla was much happier as restrictions changed and they were able to get out and about a bit more! Although she found going to the shop and wearing a mask quite stressful.

Amy was supported by Fife Gingerbread during lockdown with deliveries of wellbeing packs, activities for Kyla and she did lots of batch cooking soups with veg packs. Amy found it hard to join calls and chats as Kyla was around all day, and she wasn't getting a break. But she did try to join the group calls with other Mums - Amy was a bit anxious about joining the calls but Kyla loved seeing the other kids and Amy also spoke to her worker every week to make sure everything was going ok.

She is looking forward to Kyla starting nursery soon, and this will get them back into a routine as they had nowhere to go and no groups on that meant their normal routine got all mixed up and Kyla was unsettled. Kyla missed seeing other kids and having activities on.





Amy's hoping to go to College - she loves to cook and wants to become a chef. She also wants to come and volunteer for us at Fife Gingerbread. She has missed the groups and seeing other Mums so she is hoping she can rejoin some of these activities. Amy had support from family but spent a lot of time on her own.



*Amy*



## CASE STUDIES #3



*Lee*

*Fife Gingerbread Volunteering*

Lockdown has been a very strange time.

In the beginning I really loved lockdown... Yes, you read that right!! Why? Everyone was home together for meals, watching movies together (all unheard of in our house!) and no work. Just us. It was just so lovely to have everyone home spending time together. The weather has truly been a blessing and, to be honest, I think that's what's made us cope a lot better with the situation, BBQs in the sun and lovely walks. In the beginning our family had mostly positive vibes! I've walked more, ventured out on my bike and did workouts on Zoom!







But the novelty finally wore off!! Five people cooped up together 24/7 is never going to be easy. We have had our ups and downs - I think the lift in certain restrictions have just came at the right time as we were starting to struggle. My youngest was supposed to sit exams this year for the first time but obviously that got put off, this has been a stressful time for her too. Although I have to say she has handled the situation very well. Shopping was definitely a stressful part of COVID19 - the queues, sanitiser stations, arrows and the 2m distancing could all be quite daunting!

I am a volunteer with Fife Gingerbread and this continued during lockdown. It's almost 2yrs since I became a buddy and I love it!! I was really interested as I want to volunteer on a more 1 to 1 basis, and as a mum of 3 myself I thought if my advice and background can support and help any of these mums fabulous! I have found it rewarding, the parent I work with has come on so much and is lovely to see and know you've had a small part of it.

I am a Buddy to a parent who has four children, and she is on her own. One of the children has additional support needs and the youngest has just turned 1. So, trying to homeschool the other two children was overwhelming. We have kept in touch weekly through email - that works best for her with the kids around all the time as she is super busy! This has been better than no contact during this strange time, as she is isolated and lockdown is especially lonely for lone parents. She admitted that she feels she has gone backwards in some ways and she really needs to get out of the house for some "me time". We used to meet up in person weekly so I could support her, and we are hopeful we can start to do this again soon (socially distanced of course!)

On a personal level I am hopeful that I can get back to working out in a hall with other people, and hopefully we won't have to wear masks forever and I can stop sanitising my hands every five minutes!!!



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*Lee*



## TAKE A PULSE GROUP (TAP)

We started the process of establishing a forum - a group of parents willing to share their experiences to help Fife Gingerbread understand the emerging needs and ongoing challenges facing families. The TAP group was facilitated by Laura Millar (Employability & Progression Manager).

In the first sessions we asked participants to tell us about their 'lockdown' experience and share the greatest highs and lows over the last few months. The group discussed the **"Blob Tree"** as a useful tool to illustrate the changing emotions we have all experienced through 'lockdown'. **Where do you see yourself now in relation to the pandemic COVID19 and 'lockdown'?**

Many lone parents have a renewed focus and determination to make a "better" life for their children through education and work. There is hope for the future.

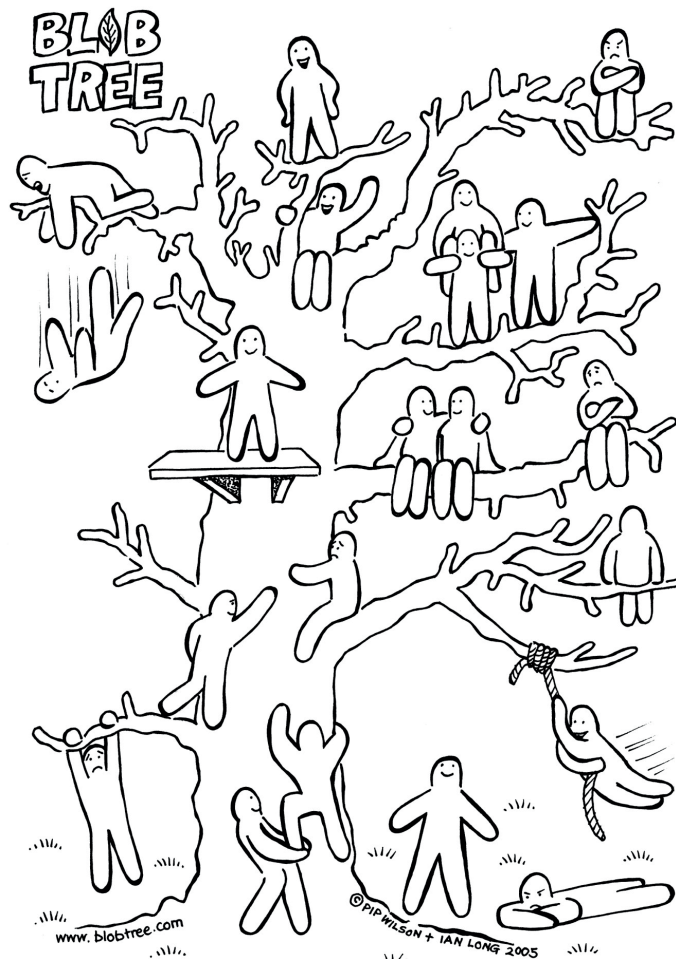
Worried about kids being "behind" when they go back to School, especially if ASN.

Routines with many children were lost completely, and families are looking forward to getting back to a more "normal" routine.

A common theme amongst lone parents about the greatest high was the quality time with their children, not missing early milestones, seeing siblings bond and making new memories through new activities.

Working during lockdown was scary, and lot of responsibility.

It has been a particularly lonely time for lone parents, and many of the parents we support have little support / connections. Therefore, the emotional support from staff and peer support from other parents was really important.



Mental health and wellbeing was negatively affected by 'lockdown' especially when dealing with loneliness, trauma and bereavement. This included suicidal thoughts, catastrophic thinking, low mood and increased anxiety.

No space to breathe or think.



## TAKE A PULSE GROUP (TAP)

An interesting discussion that arose as part of TAP was **“What if...?” scenarios** around support. Lone parents highlighted that without the communication, virtual support, online activities and peer support facilitated by Fife Gingerbread that their ‘lockdown’ experience would have been very different.

Their ability to be resilient, support their children singlehandedly, complete school work, manage financially and remain hopeful would have reduced without support.

The discussion of **“What if Fife Gingerbread wasn’t there to support me?”** illustrated the ongoing need for services like ours for families in need.

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# GOING FORWARDS...

As we develop our service provision to adapt to the ever changing “new normal” we are taking a reflective and collaborative approach. Ensuring that we reflect the voice of supported families as we continue to attempt some crystal ball gazing.

## OUR COMMITMENTS

- We will continue to listen to and learn from supported families. The information gathered in this Assessment will be used within our organisational planning to **shape Fife Gingerbread services going forwards and influence our funding strategy**. We will expand our 'Take a Pulse' group to become a Fife Gingerbread Parents' Forum involved in service design, improvement, strategy, research and PR. The forum will represent different projects, volunteers and families.
- We will **prioritise the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers**. Carefully planning and coordinating our phased return to the “new normal” with the safety of staff, volunteers and families at the heart of what we do.
- **Family Learning:** lockdown offered families the opportunity to spend more time together without the stresses and strains of daily life. We will continue to promote and provide opportunities for families to laugh, learn and play together at home and within wider community groups.
- **Mental Health:** we will work with families to identify their strengths, build resilience, improve wellbeing and increase capacity. Isolation was already a barrier affecting many lone parent families, and 'lockdown' exacerbated feelings of loneliness. We will endeavor to facilitate opportunities for lone parents to make connections, build friendships and support their peers.

- **Progression:** there is a huge amount of hope for the future in our communities, and we will support families to realise aspirations and reach potential. The attainment gap for children and young people has been greatened, and we will take a whole family approach to progression “creating better todays and brighter tomorrows” for families in need.
- **Routes out of poverty:** low income has a significant impact on household stability, participation, health and wellbeing. We will empower families, build resilience and advocate for change on their behalf.

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# A BIG THANKS

**...TO THE STAFF,  
VOLUNTEERS AND FAMILIES  
WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT.**

## OUR MAIN FUNDERS





# APPENDIX 1

## INFOGRAPHIC 2020

As a snapshot, during the months of the 'lockdown' Fife Gingerbread services provided:

> **114**  
INCOMING  
REFERRALS

> **109**  
OUTWARD  
REFERRALS

> **199**  
SUMMER  
PACKS

> **4442**  
CONTACTS WITH FAMILIES  
on telephone, social media, text & emails

> **196** WELLBEING  
PACKS

> **71** DUTY  
DESK

> **£79,328**  
DIRECT INCOME INTO FAMILIES



**200** CHILDREN BENEFITTED IN **97** FAMILIES FROM  
'CASH FOR KIDS' VOUCHERS FOR FOOD

> **329** FAMILIES  
+ **474** CHILDREN  
supported  
on projects 

> **14** FAMILIES  
+ **35** CHILDREN  
supported  
BY VOLUNTEERS

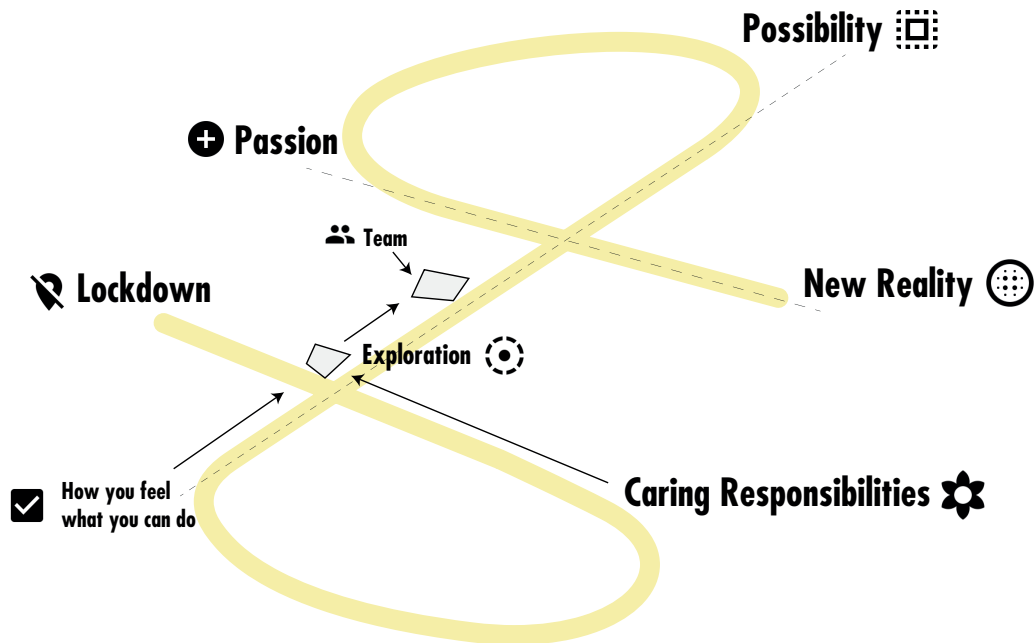
> **21**   
ACTIVE VOLUNTEERS

> **777**     
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



# APPENDIX 2

## TRANSFORMAP



The leadership team were aware of the difficulties people faced working from home while managing their children’s home schooling, the isolation of working from home and change and wanted to gather the feelings of each individual member of staff in a manner that helped everyone to understand their own needs, the needs of others, the organisation. The **transformap** was used as a tool to explore how the staff were coping and managing lockdown. It helped the staff to think through the issues affecting them as they continue working from home and their own family commitments.

It was successful in raising awareness of how others were feeling among the team as well as how they could support one and other.

Six weeks after the first session we had a second session where people were able to speak across projects in zoom breakout rooms about the impact the pandemic was having both personally and professionally. This time the session was also used to explore the good things from the new way of working could be carried forward and to identify any changes we would make in the future.

The tool gave a voice to each individual member of staff in the organisation.

## SYSTEMS

- Services such as FNP and HV still visiting (CP cases) and making referrals to FG for support with other areas.
- Communication with some agencies poor during lockdown and confusing.
- Some families not going to docs when need to as worried about COVID.
- Not following up with health services as anxious. No access to services like counselling for mental health during stressful time.
- Demotivated to look at employability / their future as no jobs to apply for. And kids at home so lone parents may be unable to work.

## RESOURCES

- Hard to keep connected for families as limited data on phones and don't all have access to good technology / equipment. Some not confident using IT or communication platforms, and may lack confidence to use things like Zoom or Facebook messenger / groups.
- Some parents / families have developed new skills and confidence using IT.
- Infrastructure - no landline / data / mobile phone reception poor in certain areas e.g. not enough IT resources for parents/carers doing their own college work plus homeschooling their children.
- Education - trying to be teachers and didn't have resources / skills to support kids. Very stressful time for families - especially parents with their own learning need or disability.
- If several kids at different ages/stages and different Schools then all different expectations - impossible to juggle as a lone parent.
- Lack of toys / resources to keep kids entertained at home or means to buy them. Struggle to get food - lone parents going to shop / transport / cost of local shops.
- Have to get themselves to other services / support if needed - no one to help them.

## PROCEDURES

- Difficult to do things like college applications or nursery applications without support or the right IT.
- Emergency grants - processed quickly which was positive.
- Emergency food delivery wasn't always quick enough or not received - high volume at 'helping hands'?
- Perceptions of what services available - don't know what is out there to help them.
- Confusion around the SG guidance, and what they 'can' do
- Intimidating doing things like shopping as following procedures, and worrying.
- Some lone parents not following rules, putting others in danger.
- Parents doing Open Uni struggling as no time as a lone parent to do work or meet deadlines.

# IMPACT OF COVID19 AND LOCKDOWN ON LONE PARENT FAMILIES

## PLACE

- Most families have garden access / outdoor space.
- Buying things to keep kids entertained - impacting on food/fuel budget as low income families.
- Housing - spending time at home but unable to get repairs or support - overcrowding / no green space / lack of physical space i.e. no private quiet space for people.
- Travel - challenging as less buses, and not wanting to use them with kids as a lone parent - even more isolated.
- Impact of inadequate housing and space on mental health and wellbeing.
- Rural areas of fire isolated and access to services hard / expensive.

## ENVIRONMENT

- Some families finding dealing with children all time difficult - even normal development stages - as no/limited support.
- Sharing custody hard as worried about partner following guidelines and keeping safe.
- Lack of routine at home - kids up late and sleeping in.
- Behavioural issues - especially children and young people with ASN.
- More family time - quality time to spend together without the routine - good fun. Doing crafts and activities.
- Community - getting to know neighbours better - creating more community support and more volunteering going on.

## PEOPLE

- Low mood / suicidal thoughts discussed with some parents. Feelings of isolation and no support. Loneliness a major issue for lone parents.
- Some families taking risks to see family working in care homes to support their own mental health.
- Parent reduced and stopped taking drugs due to worries about COVID19.
- Not being able to attend hobbies and missing FG groups / activities - impacting mental health and wellbeing.
- Gaining addiction with young people - online a lot more as not in School and up late at night.
- Low self esteem and confidence - many parents are "back at Square 1" and will need support to build up again - low resilience.
- Some people engaging better as all online as FG not "invading" their home - felt safer to engage virtually for some.
- Increase domestic abuse / child protection / suicide.
- Negative affect on mental health of lockdown for vulnerable families.
- Some families coming together more virtually - quality time / inventive / creative / play.
- Missing face to face interaction - affect on mental health and loneliness. Impact will last a long time after lockdown eases.

## APPENDIX 3



# FIFE GINGERBREAD CONTACT US

For further information, advice or any other enquiry, please contact:

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