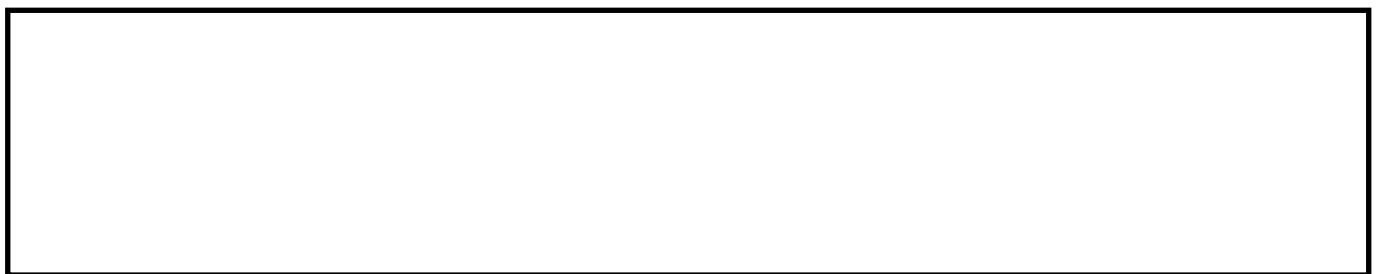


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Parents' perspectives and experiences of parenting and caring for young children on a low income in the North East Scotland.

DOUGLAS, F., MACIVER, E. and DAVIS, T.

2021



Parents' perspectives and experiences of parenting and caring for young children on a low income in the north east Scotland

Background Families with young children, and lone parent families in particular, are at greater risk of poverty and food insecurity, compared to other UK population groups.

Tackling child poverty has been a key Scottish Government policy since the introduction of the **Child Poverty Act (2016)** in which local authorities and health boards are required to report on their Local Child Poverty Action Plans, and their progress on addressing this issue in their local areas.

In north east Scotland **little formal research had focussed on the lived experiences of parents of infants and young children in relation to the experiences of parenting on very low incomes.** This paper focuses on the emergent themes arising from a qualitative interview study undertaken to address this knowledge gap, in 2020.

Setting Parents with young children supported by an Aberdeen City-based poverty alleviation social enterprise were invited to take part in an interview study.

Method One-to-one semi-structured telephone interviews lasting between 30-40 minutes took place during July and August 2020. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed.

Results 10 women participated; 2 lived with partners, 8 were unemployed and two worked part-time. All had one child under school-age. Family size ranged for 1-5 children.

Food coping strategies

Acquisition methods: Food charities - taking only what they needed - budgeting and careful, conscious shopping - passing on surplus

Management methods

Maximising food resources - limiting snacks and treats - doing without themselves - cooking from scratch - batch cooking

Impact on living

- limited participation in paid employment
- insufficient income from social security
- household food insecurity experiences
- practical challenges and anxiety associated with their children's development and social well being
- anxiety about providing treats and special occasions

General coping strategies Budgeting and bill prioritisation - self-sacrifice - relying on others - keeping up appearances.

Discussion /Conclusion Parents with young children **experience significant barriers accessing paid employment** due to caring responsibilities - **insufficient household income** from alternate income sources, such social security.

Parents invest huge emotional and physical energy to raising children in poverty and **employ sophisticated coping strategies and skill** to make ends meet and maximise food resources with very little money.

Budgeting education initiatives seem to have little to offer low income parents already well-versed on the issue. **Income maximisation policies and strategies** could more effectively alleviate their related anxieties.