

Supporting Birth Parents Fund

Report Summary



The importance of supporting Birth Parents

Having a child taken into care can be an extremely traumatic experience. It has a profound impact on the child, birth parents, and their families.

Scotland is undertaking important work to 'Keep the Promise' to all of Scotland's children and young people, and to uphold children's rights through incorporation of the UNCRC into law. However, birth parents are often forgotten in policy and practice.

Care and support for birth parents often disappears when the decision to remove a child is made – as support interventions most often follow the child. The effect of having your child removed from your care is devastating, and often, birth parents are left without support, having to deal with their pain, shame and trauma alone.

This impact has been well researched, and we know that:

- Women who've had children removed from their care are 14 times more likely to die prematurely from a variety of causes including ill-health, suicide, substance overdose, and homicide ([Devaney, J. et al, 2024, Child Abuse Review](#))
- Following removal of a child, parents often disappear from the gaze of services with many children's services structured to meet the needs of the child ([Devaney, J. et al, 2024, Child Abuse Review](#))
- Following the removal of a child, parents often experience heightened vulnerability in lives often already characterised by multiple and long-standing disadvantage ([Broadhurst and Mason, 2019, Qualitative Social Work](#))
- Many parents will go on to have other children. Without support, it is very likely that the cycle of child removals continues - further traumatising parents, children and generations of families.

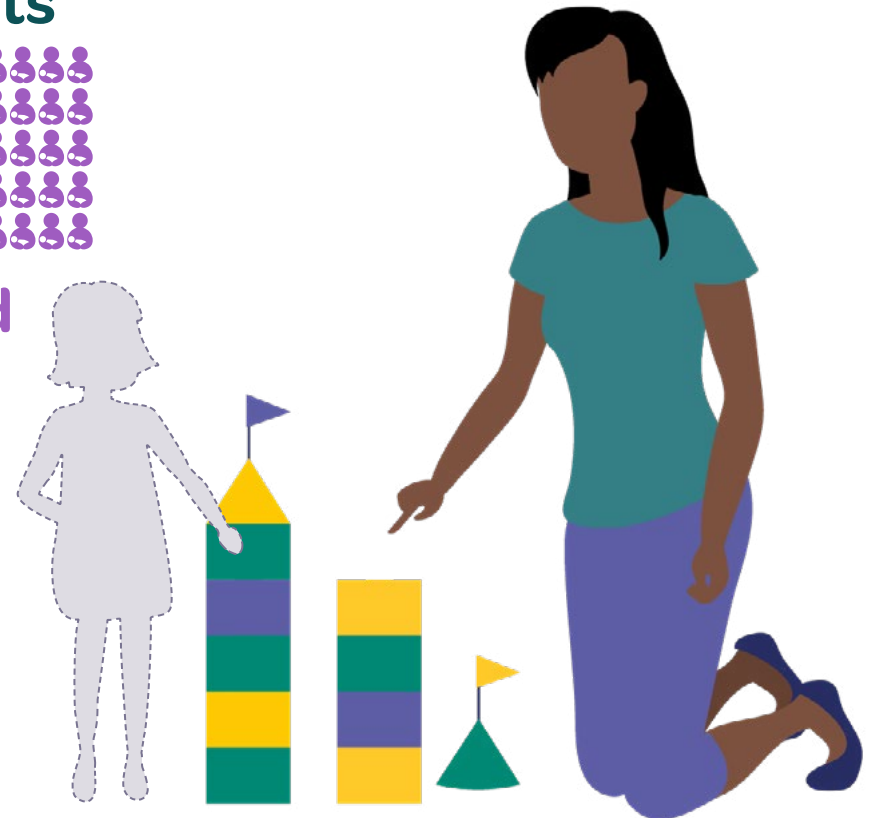
These are just some of the negative effects that birth parents are likely to experience. It is vital therefore, that Scotland recognises the importance of upholding the rights of birth parents and their children, and that organisations are supported to address gaps in legislation and services. Relational, rights-based support for birth parents must become a standard, integrated, part of the system of care. **Until then, we recommend that the Scottish Government continues support to organisations through the Birth Parents Fund.**



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The Supporting Birth Parents Fund

The Supporting Birth Parents Fund is managed by Corra Foundation on behalf of the Scottish Government. Since 2022, the fund distributed £1.924m to 13 organisations supporting birth parents who no longer have care of their children because of intervention by the state. Funding supported organisations to sustain, stabilise or increase capacity, extend or improve services and fill gaps in service provision for birth parents. In total, these services directly supported 473 birth parents with 88% of those supported identified as women.



Project Locations



Organisations provided a range of relational, compassionate and trauma-informed support, including:

- Counselling and therapy for parents, alongside peer support groups.
- Trauma-informed approaches providing tailored support and safe environments to begin to unpack the pain, shame and trauma the parents are often carrying.
- Advocacy for birth parents' rights alongside support for parents to navigate complex processes, understand their legal options, and access resources.
- Parenting skills to address challenges and potentially work towards maintaining contact and or reunification with their children in the future.
- Life story work and memory boxes to preserve birth parents' connection with their children and help children understand their birth family's stories and identities.
- Support for letterbox contact with their children assisting in writing letters and navigating the process with adoptive parents.
- Facilitating contact between birth parents and their children, and between birth parents and adoptive families, when appropriate and in the best interests of the child.
- Support for dads who often face unique challenges and may be less likely to seek help.
- Support for extended family members affected by the removal of children.
- Training and practice development with and for other organisations (e.g. social work).



Opportunities to strengthen support for birth parents

1. Offering secure, long-term funding for organisations supporting Birth Parents.

Funding for this work is precarious and short term. Short-term funding is a significant barrier to providing effective and sustainable support to birth parents. It threatens both staff retention and wellbeing, and the credibility of a service. Birth parents trust in a service is directly correlated with the service's longevity.

2. Compassionate and trauma-informed support for Birth Parents who are often failed, repeatedly, by existing systems.

Grant holders told us that birth parents' negative experience of services, often since childhood, mean that they do not always view services as a source of support. Instead, services are something to be suspicious or inherently fearful of. Time and "gentle" ways of accessing services are needed to build the trust of people who would benefit from support.

3. Deliver on Keeping the Promise alongside Human Rights in Scotland.

Investment in this area of work is vital if the Scottish Government is to Keep the Promise, and its commitment to Human Rights (including children). Grant holders told us that continued stigma, disconnected, uncompassionate services, and lack of investment for specialist services contributed to the cycle of care repeating itself through multiple births and generations. They also described how intervening at the point of children being removed permanently was far too late and that support for birth parents must be at every stage of the child protection journey.

Corra Foundation recommends that the Scottish Government continue to fund this vital work. We encourage the Scottish Government to consider how funding could enable services to be replicated across Scotland.



About Corra Foundation

Corra Foundation exists to make a difference to the lives of people and communities. It works with others to encourage positive change, opportunity, fairness and growth of aspirations which improve quality of life. Corra wants to see a society in which people create positive change and enjoy fulfilling lives.

In 2020 Corra launched a ten-year strategy. It is long term because making a difference on the big challenges will take time. At its heart is the strong belief that when people find their voice, they unlock the power to make change happen.

Our ways of working

At Corra we have a set of principles that we strive to put into practice across our roles as an employer, independent funder, charity and partner, as well as in our influencing activity. We will:

- Listen and respond to people, communities and organisations and amplify voices that are less well heard – their wisdom is at the heart of Corra's approach.
- Build relationships, always working alongside others on the basis of shared power, mutual trust and shared learning.
- Pursue diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), trying to challenge structural discrimination and contribute to radical shifts in the funding sector.
- Be an open, trusting and flexible grant maker.
- Ensure we contribute to tackling climate change, through our investments, operations and grant making and encouraging others to take action alongside us.
- Be bold, taking considered risks and supporting others to do the same.

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