

Examples of suggested research projects –

Macqueen Scholarship

Lone parents who are refugees and asylum-seekers

Factors including the dangers and expense of migration mean that families of forced migrants are often separated, sometimes permanently. Research on this topic could assess the challenges faced by lone parents in navigating the asylum system, accessing rights, and securing long-term integration in Scotland or elsewhere. The focus of the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme on resettling women and children may, for example, provide a case study through which to explore these questions, and to assess the role that social work practitioners and refugee service provider organisations have played in facilitating this transition. Research may also, however, explore how lone parents with long-distance partners and family members respond to the various stresses this creates, not least financially and psychologically or how lone parents who are reunited with a partner, spouse or children after long-term separation adjust to this experience.

Lone parents, friendship and social support

Lone parents with strong social networks, trusted friends and links to community support usually find lone parenthood less stressful. This project would work with lone parents to explore the importance of friendship and social support in the lives of lone parents on limited incomes. It would also explore how local community services might better support lone parents to develop their social supports and trusted friendships.

Lone motherhood, mental health and social work

The additional pressures that can arise from being a lone mother and the interrelationship between this and lone mothers' mental health is an area in need of further exploration. In addition, there are questions about the mental health of lone mothers who are in contact with social work services and how these experiences interact.

This project will employ a participatory action research approach to investigate these areas of interest. It will engage with lone mothers who are in contact with social work services and support them to articulate their experiences of mental health, how these relate to and intersect with the lone mother role, and how they are impacted by the experience of social work. It will also engage social workers to explore their understanding of the interrelationship between lone motherhood and mental health, and the skills they need to support lone mothers in this area. The project will co-produce knowledge with research participants to enhance their awareness of the issues at play and to identify potential supports and better ways of working. It will also develop knowledge exchange activity to disseminate the findings more widely.

Lone parents, social security and social work

This topic would involve research on social security as it applies to lone parents. The particular focus could concern the specific effects of social security policies on social work

practices or users of social work services or it could be more concerned with the role of poverty and social security as the background environment in which social work operates.

Research could focus on recent changes to social security support including, but not restricted to, the introduction of Universal Credit, the 'two-child policy', the 'bedroom tax', increasing work-related conditionality in benefits for lone parents, or new developments in devolved Scottish social security benefits. Research would be concerned specifically with the effects of these or other recent changes on lone parents. Historical approaches to the development of social security for lone parents would also be welcomed. Research involving lone-parent organisations would be particularly welcomed.