

Gingerbread

Single parents, equal families

Our Strategy 2022–30



Foreword



There are currently nearly 2 million single parents with over 3 million dependent children in the UK.

Even before the pandemic, life was extremely tough for these families; they were by far the poorest amongst all households, no matter how you measure poverty (income, spending power or wealth).¹

Sadly, single parents face significant disadvantage in our society. They are twice as likely as couple parents to be in poverty. They need flexible employment and affordable, accessible childcare to juggle lone parenting, which is hard to find. They struggle with isolation and loneliness and the stresses of everyday single parenthood. The unrelenting burden of parenting alone impacts on a family's ability to thrive in life. We know the pandemic pushed single parents further into poverty and the current cost of living crisis is making things even worse.

While Gingerbread has been supporting single parents and fighting for their rights for over 100 years, there is still so much more we need to do. Too many single parents are still struggling to feed their families, to pay their bills. Too many single parents are struggling to find flexible jobs that allow them to support themselves and their children. And too many single parents are struggling with the strain of parenting alone.

Over the last 18 months we have engaged with over 1,000 single parents from all backgrounds and from across England and Wales through polling, focus groups and workshops to find out what support they need and what they would like from Gingerbread, now and in the future. This research identified ten areas that single parents feel that they struggle with and need additional support in. These ten areas broadly fall within either their finances and their mental health and wellbeing and form the basis of our new strategy.

Our research reinforced the fact that single parenting is not a linear experience; needs fluctuate over time and can be significantly increased by incidents of life shock – such as illness, loss of job or domestic abuse.

In order to address these issues we will need to make shifts in the way we work as well as invest in infrastructure and change processes. We will need to take a systems-change approach to discrimination and attitudes and a programmatic approach to delivering services and campaigns. We know that this is a longer-term vision that won't happen in just a few years.

We can't do this alone – we need the help of our supporters, our campaigners, of policy makers and of businesses to help us achieve our new vision of a world where all single parents and their children thrive.

Join us so that no single parent faces disadvantage, inequality and injustice.

Victoria Benson

Victoria Benson
CEO, Gingerbread

¹ ONS (2022), Families and households. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/articles/>

Why we exist

We support people on their single parent journey



Our vision:

All single parents and their children thrive.

Our mission:

We stand with and support single parents to overcome disadvantage, inequality and injustice.



Our values:

To be brave, to be inclusive, to be trustworthy, to be supportive, to be ambitious.

"I don't feel that any other body or organisation represents the interests of single parents like Gingerbread does.

Knowing that this service is available makes me feel less anxious, as I know that I have a forum I can refer to, a wealth of resources and someone fighting for my rights on my behalf."

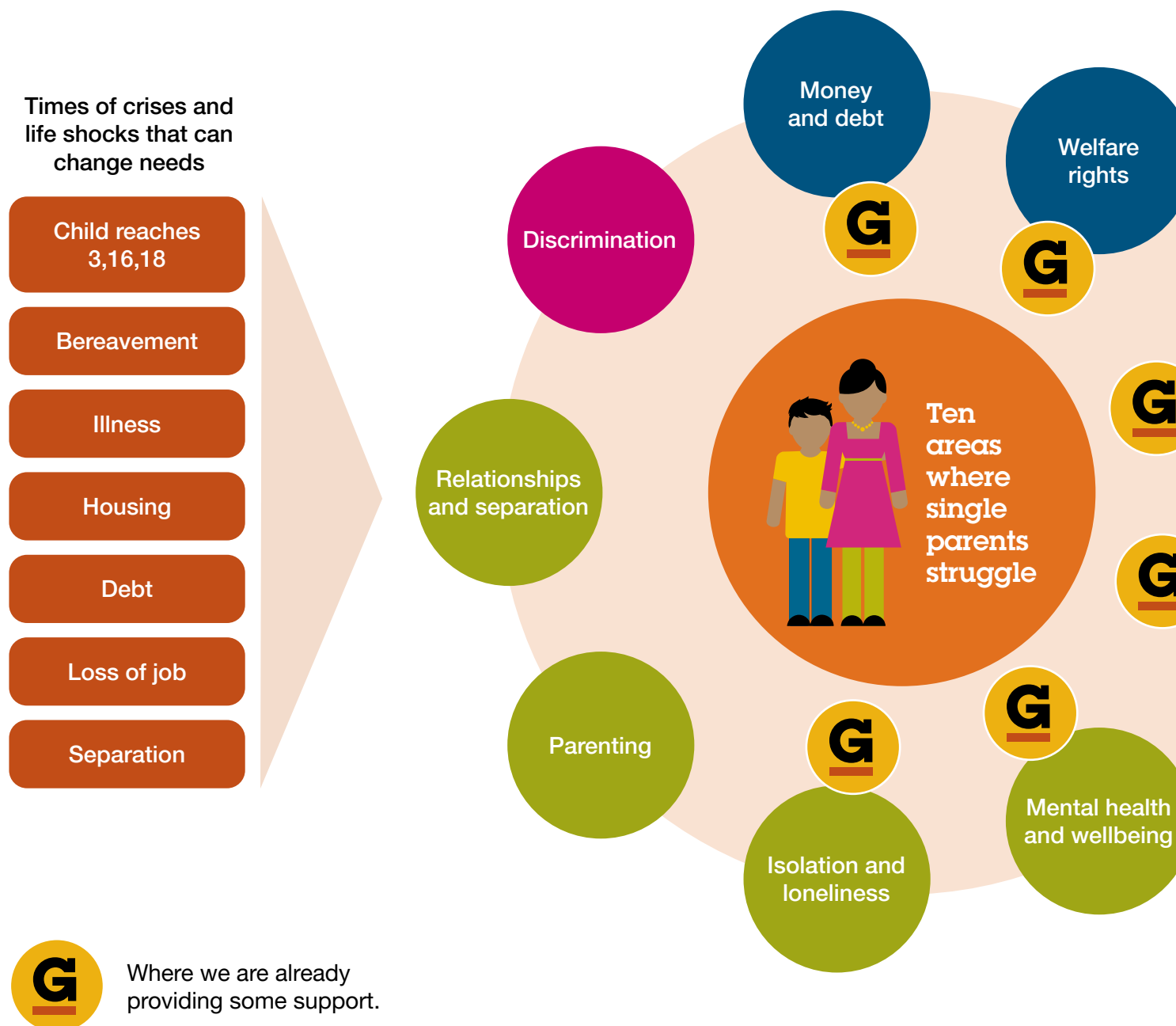


Single parents' common needs

In April 2021, we carried out research to establish the key needs of single parents through independent polling of 1,016 single parents living across England and Wales. We also facilitated focus groups and workshops to get a richer understanding of single parents' needs.

This graph illustrates the ten areas that parents feel they struggle with and need additional support – these ten areas broadly fall within their finances or their mental health and wellbeing. We were able to find out which audiences were in greatest need of support, but also, we

discovered that support needs fluctuate over time and can be significantly increased by incidents of life shock – such as illness, loss of job or domestic abuse. We also know from the research that single parents view their single parent status as the key issue affecting them.



Those who know about Gingerbread, contact Gingerbread because they identify as a single parent first and foremost and trust in Gingerbread to understand their needs and either provide support or direct them to an organisation that can help.

Our ambition is to be the first port of call for all single parents. And our ambition is to provide support in all of these areas, whether alone or in partnership.

This strategy sets out how we will achieve that ambition. But we recognise that we can't do this immediately, so we will focus on the areas where need is greatest and on the audiences that need us the most.

Audiences that need us the most

Women under 36 with lower income

Families with a disability

Black, Asian and single parents from other ethnic groups

Younger parents

North East / South West England

Work

Childcare

Children's mental health and wellbeing

Top poll findings (April 2021):

83%

of single parents **experienced problems in the 12 months during the pandemic** but 39% sought no help or support



44%

of single parents had **experienced loneliness or isolation**

43%

of single parents had **problems with their mental health and wellbeing**

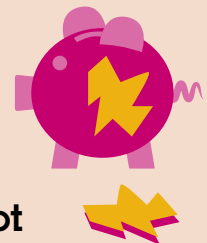


29%

of single parents **hadn't enough money to cover for food and bills**

28%

of single parents had **experienced problems with debt**

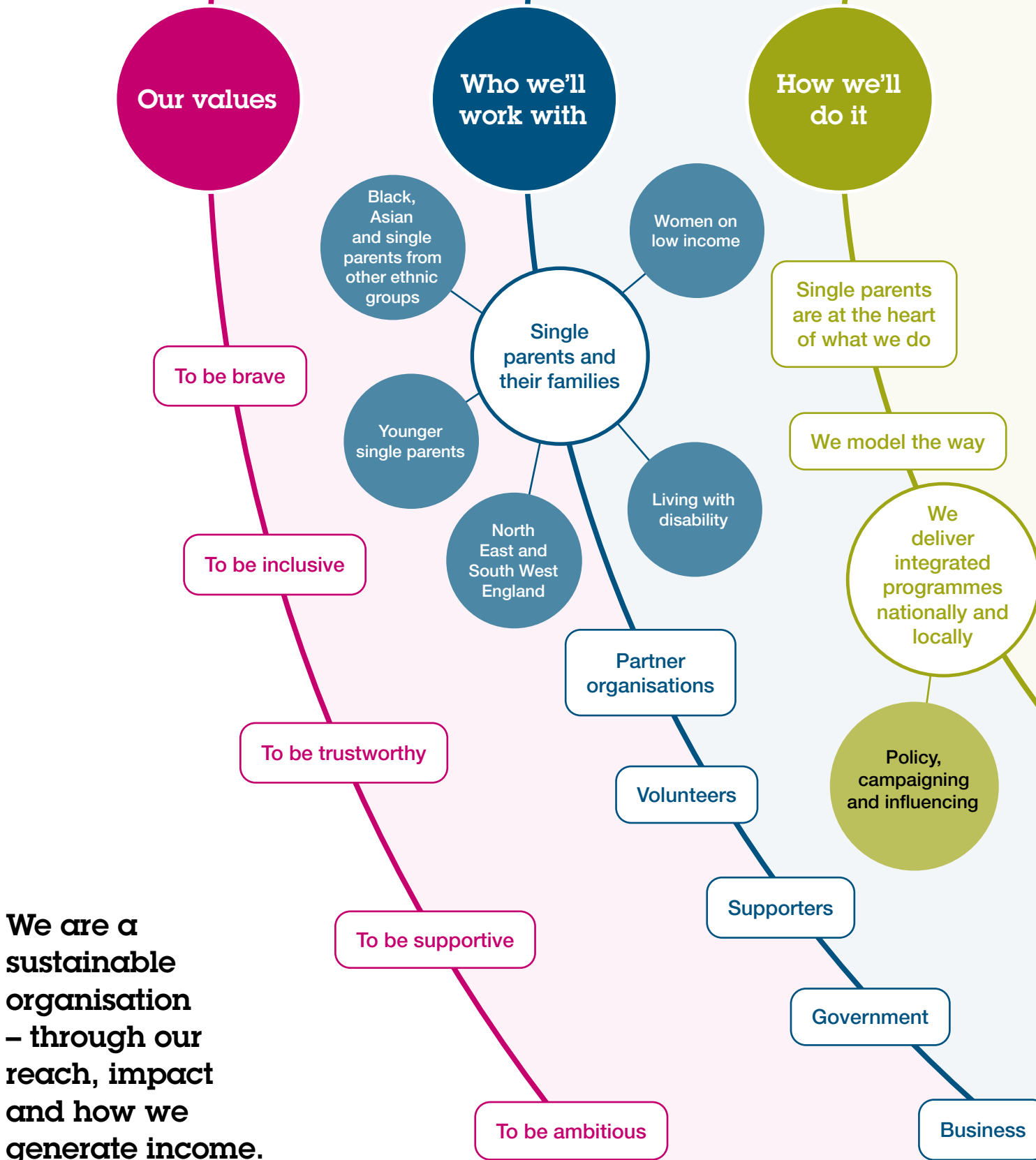


14%

of single parents had **problems with employment**

Our strategy at a glance

Our mission: We stand with and support single parents to overcome disadvantage, inequality and injustice.



Our vision: All single parents and their children thrive

We are the “go-to” organisation for all single parents

The changes we want to see

Improved financial situation for single parents

Improved wellbeing for single parents

Change for tomorrow
We change the system by challenging discrimination and negative attitudes to single parents

What we'll do

...mental health and wellbeing support

Support for today
We provide direct and emotional support for single parents and campaign for access to...

...money, debt and welfare rights

...affordable and accessible family law

Services

We work in partnership

We create a movement

We demonstrate evidence and impact


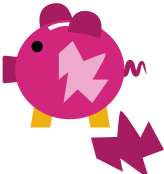

We build relevant and compelling customer journeys

We have a strong brand that resonates with single parents

Improving the financial situation of single parents

There are three key areas that we will seek to address: the **cost of living**, having **enough income**, and **rights and advice**.

The diagram below outlines the barriers single parents face in these areas and the outcomes we will aim to achieve through our work.

Area	Barriers	Outcomes
 <p>Cost of living</p>	<p>Cost of living e.g. housing costs, fuel, food, is relatively higher for single parents (especially those on low incomes) and is getting increasingly unaffordable</p> <p>Single parents are particularly reliant on childcare to be able to get into and progress at work, but costs are a barrier and raise risk of debt</p>	<p>I feel in control of my finances and have the support I need to handle changes in my financial circumstances</p> <p>I have affordable and flexible childcare I can provide for my family and/or pursue education and training</p>
 <p>Enough income</p>	<p>Single parents struggle to have enough income through work and/or benefits to cover costs of living</p> <p>Single parents find it difficult to access jobs which are flexible and pay well enough to support a decent standard of living</p>	<p>I have enough money to provide a decent life for me and my child/ren</p> <p>I have work which is flexible and pays enough for me and my family to have a decent standard of living</p>
 <p>Rights and advice</p>	<p>DWP systems are hard for single parents to navigate and there is a lack of accurate advice for single parents</p> <p>It is hard to for many single parents to navigate the legal aspects of becoming a single parent which can particularly affect finances e.g. bereavement, divorce, surviving abuse</p>	<p>I understand what benefits / maintenance support I am entitled to</p> <p>I receive the benefits / maintenance I'm entitled to in full each month</p> <p>I have access to the information I need when I need it to help me cope and make informed decisions</p>

“My children don’t go without, but I will.

I don’t eat regularly, I use free sites for clothes/shoes/to replace furniture, don’t use heating in my bedroom, don’t smoke or drink, don’t have a social life but this way, my kids have everything that they need, and they don’t go without.”




“I’m worried about being able to afford to keep my child warm, fed and clothed. It’s a daily struggle”

“The advisor I spoke to was amazing.

They were so compassionate and understanding when I was upset and listened to everything I needed to talk about. I now feel I have the confidence to do what is needed to help my situation and the helpline is just wonderful!!

Improving the mental health and wellbeing of single parents

There are three key areas that we will seek to support single parents with the **stress of being a single parent**, dealing with **loneliness**, and building **emotional and financial strength**.

Area	Barriers	Outcomes
 Stress of being a single parent	Single parents experience high levels of stress, exhaustion and poor wellbeing	I have access to timely and tailored support for my wellbeing that takes into account my needs as single parent
	Single parents struggle to access specialist and tailored support	I have access to the information I need when I need it to help me cope and make informed decisions
 Loneliness	Single parents experience loneliness because of the stresses of being a single parent	I feel less lonely and isolated
	Routes into single parenthood increase risk of loneliness	I am able to connect to people who understand my situation and I can make new social connections
 Emotional and financial strength	Financial, emotional and social pressures on single parents make it harder for them to cope with everyday life and life shocks	I am able to cope with the demands of everyday life
		I am emotionally resilient and can recover quickly from setbacks

“Calling Gingerbread and speaking with a super-friendly adviser has been a calming and enabling experience.

I feel like there are steps I can take to better my short term and long term situation. Lots to take in but very clear explanations. Brilliant !!”

“I didn’t think I could cope as a single parent. I now wouldn’t want it any other way.

Have made lifelong friends and feel confident about bringing up my son and making life choices with him. Gingerbread has saved my life!”

“Really have met some amazing friends through Gingerbread, it is a brilliant way to get support and friendship.”

Our direction of travel

In the first year of our strategy 2022-23 we will:

- Provide advice, information, and support on welfare rights, the cost of living crisis, money and family law for single parents
- Provide information, support and advice on improving the mental health and wellbeing for single parents
- Influence government, stakeholders and public opinion to change the financial and welfare systems for single parents
- Build the infrastructure and skills to become a data- and evidence-driven organisation
- Raise over £2m through diverse income streams
- Increase reach, engagement and impact with single parents by implementing a new brand strategy.

"In 2022-23, we will provide advice, information, and support on welfare rights, the cost of living crisis, money & family law for single parents."



By 2030, we will ensure that:

- There is a single parents' movement, with over one million people supporting Gingerbread in some way
- Every single parent knows that Gingerbread is there to help
- Single parents will be recognised as a distinct community
- Employers will provide more support to single parents at work
- Businesses will provide a range of affordable products and services for single parents and their families
- We will raise £5m income a year through a diverse portfolio of funders.

"By 2030, every single parent will know that Gingerbread is there to help."





Gingerbread's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

Our strategy research showed that although all single parents struggle in some way, there are particular groups of single parents who are in greatest need of support, including:

- Women on low incomes
- Single parents with a disability in the family (either the parent or child/ren)
- Black, Asian and single parents from other ethnic groups
- Single parents in the North East and South West England.

We will prioritise working with single parents from these groups to make sure our services and campaigning reflect their particular needs.

Gingerbread

Single parents, equal families



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