

WHY WORK WITH FATHERS?

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Changing times: two-parent families – aspirations

In the US:

‘sharing responsibilities, decision-making and physical and emotional care of infants and young children’

1981: rated 11th out of 15

1997: rated 2nd out of 15

(Pleck, 1997).



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Changing times: two-parent families – behaviour

In the US married fathers more than doubled their time spent *exclusively* on child care activities from 2.6 hours per week in 1965 to 6.5 hours in 2000.

(Bianchi et al, 2006)

Married US fathers also undertake far more *housework* than ever before - an average of 9.7 hours a week in 2000, up from 4.4 hours in 1965.

(Bianchi et al, 2006)

Between 2002 and 2005 the percentage of new fathers in the UK working flexitime to spend more time with their infants rose from 11% to 31%.

(Smeaton & Marsh, 2006).



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Changing times: two-parent families – satisfaction

Fathers are more satisfied when they spent more time at home; and mothers more satisfied with housework share as they moved into doing more paid work.

(Craig & Sawriker, 2006)

Fathers and mothers in low-income families are the most likely to endorse traditional gender roles. However, they are also the couples who are the most dis-satisfied with the division of labour in their families.

(Thompson et al, 2005)



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Changing times: separated families

- In the UK, Australia and the US, more non-resident fathers are seeing more of their children than ever before
(Dunn, 2005)

However, only 10-18% are yet in the 'high involvement' category' (Carlson, 2006)

- BUT in Sweden, 35% of children EITHER live equally with both parents OR see their non-resident parent almost daily
(Oberg & Oberg, 2006)



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*transforming fatherhood:
transforming children's lives*



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- **Child wellbeing**
- **Gender equity (women)**
- **Men's development**



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Men's development?



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Family service workers: attitudes to fathers

unexamined negative
generalisations (prejudices) about
men/fathers widespread

(Hawkins and Dollahite 1997)



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Health and social care practitioners:

men consistently regarded as problematic
.....**when absent** – irresponsible
.....**when present** – demanding
and potentially violent

(Edwards 1998)



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Social care professionals:

- unsure about fathers' capacity to understand children's changing needs

(Russell et al 1999)



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Social care professionals:

- unsure about fathers' capacity to provide children with care and emotional support
(Russell et al 1999)



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Social care professionals:

- wildly exaggerated notions concerning prevalence of father-daughter sexual abuse
(Russell et al 1999)



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Actions speak louder than words:

Health and social care practitioners:

Say: 'Engaging with men important'

Do: Regularly miss opportunities to engage with men
(Edwards 1998)

Sure Start managers and staff:

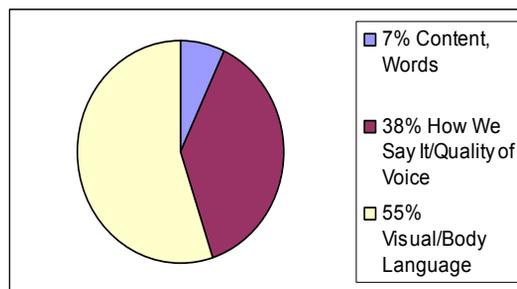
Say: Positive things about male involvement

Do: Nothing - 'male involvement rarely actioned'
(Lloyd et al 2003)



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Impact of spoken message



Non-verbal communication:

- Facial Expressions
- Body language
- Feelings
- Attitudes
- Beliefs
- Hidden Messages



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- **Child wellbeing**
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Gender equity (women)

**Key partnership:
Equal Opportunities Commission**



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Child wellbeing

Put the child at the centre



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BAD DADS

'My dad ... make me feel bad, (is) strict, not happy, frightens me, don't care about me' (12 year old)
(Russell et al., 1999)

'I love my dad: loveable, fun, mean, unkind ... I hate it when my dad comes home drunk that's when he starts fighting with my mum' (11 year-old)
(Russell et al., 1999)



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BAD DADS

Studies show

- Range of negative developmental outcomes associated with fathers' (and father-figures') poor parenting or psychopathology – **as is also the case with mothers.**
 - Conflict with fathers, fathers' negativity and fathers' harsh or neglectful parenting strongly associated with children's externalising behaviour
 - Fathers' harsh parenting has a stronger effect than mothers' on children's aggression
 - Father's own bullying behaviour at school a risk factor for child becoming a bully
 - Fathers' antisocial personality behaviour and/or substance abuse correlate with conduct problems and aggression in children and adolescents

(studies cited by Phares 1999; Flouri 2005)



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BAD DADS

Over and above negative developmental outcomes, is the pain and suffering experienced by children **whose fathers neglect or abuse them, or who neglect or abuse their mothers**

(Russell *et al.*, 199

Over and above negative developmental outcomes, is the pain and suffering experienced by children **whose fathers are not in contact with them, or who are rarely contact with them**

(Laumann-Billings and Emery 1998)



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SEPARATED DADS

Dear Dad, I only see you once a week ... Some small things I ask of you: please come to my school plays and come to parents' evening to see how I'm getting on. (12 year-old)

(DfES/Fathers Direct, 2003)

Dear Father, I don't say dear dad, because you have not been a dad to me, have you? My name is Daniel I am Rebecca Buck's son. You might not remember my mother, but I think about you all the time. (11 year-old)

(DfES/Fathers Direct, 2003)



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What fathers do MATTERS TO CHILDREN

- In all families, a positive, substantial father-child relationship is of enormous value to children and is a significant protective factor in the face of other disadvantage
- this is most particularly the case in vulnerable families – e.g. when the mother is young or father is unemployed
- this is true, whether or not parents live together



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What fathers do MATTERS TO MOTHERS

- virtually all mothers want their child to have a positive and close relationship with its father
- child-*mother* attachment more secure when child-*father* attachment is secure
- positive mother-child relationships linked with positive father-child relationships
- this is true, whether or not parents live together



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FATHER – AS – ‘BUFFER’

- Positive impact of strong, positive relationship with father most marked in vulnerable families (Dunn et al 2004)
- Fathers' active care of 'difficult-to-raise' pre-schoolers related to fewer problems in these children later (Aldous & Mulligan, 2002)
- Where mothers of very young children are employed full-time, substantial care by fathers moderates any negative effects (Gregg & Washbrook, 2003)
- A secure attachment with the father is an important protective factor against disturbance in children whose mother suffers from a mental illness (Hall, 2004)
- Good paternal care/support in adolescence is protects **STRONGLY** against the serious problems found in 80% of the young adults who have been sexually abused (Lynskey & Ferguson, 1997)



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ENGAGING WITH FATHERS IN FAMILY SERVICES CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO CHILDREN – and parents

- Parent education can be delivered equally effectively to mother or father (i.e. fathers can be as effective change agents within families as mothers)
(Firestone, Kelly & Fike, 1980; Adesso & Lipson, 1981)
- Delivering a parent education programme to both parents is “significantly more effective” than delivering it to just one
(Bakernans-Kranenburg et al, 2003)
- Each individual parent’s sensitivity towards their child (and their child’s attachment to them) is enhanced when both parents are included in the intervention
(Bakernans-Kranenburg et al, 2003)

N.B. Delivering parenting support to mothers only may be risky to women and children, where the parents’ relationship is volatile



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Policy

Capacity Building



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POLICY

1. Paternity Leave
2. National Services Framework
3. Common Assessment Framework
4. Children's Centre Guidance
5. Midwife Competencies
6. Childcare Act
7. Gender Equality Duty
8. Review of all DfES policies for father-inclusiveness



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RESEARCH

Research Review: 'The Costs & Benefits of Active Fatherhood'



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FATHERS AND SMOKING

- Smoking by FATHERS associated with
 - sperm damage, reduced semen quality, reduced responsiveness to fertility treatment
 - increased risk of early pregnancy loss
 - early cessation of breastfeeding (correlation independent of maternal smoking)
 - childhood leukaemia
 - SIDS (eight times more likely when both parents smoke)
 - respiratory disease in infants
 - low birth weight
 - ear infections
 - fussiness in babies (fathers smoking 15+ cigarettes per day – link with Shaken Baby syndrome)



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SMOKING – fathers' knowledge / impact on mothers

- Fathers' knowledge of impacts of smoking on babies is very low e.g. in a 2005 survey only 33% aware of link with SIDS
- 1992-1999 UK survey: father's smoking "by far the biggest predictor of woman's current smoking status"
- Mothers' ceasing smoking is consistently associated with father's provision of support.



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SMOKING – factors effecting change

- Expectant and new fathers experience discomfort with their smoking and changes in their lives provide opportunities to establish new routines.
- There is a strong association in expectant fathers between their attempts to stop smoking and “feeling close to unborn baby” + “high level of knowledge about the effects of passive smoking on baby”
- 2003 UK survey: “the majority of fathers are not asked by a health professional, during their partner’s pregnancy or after their baby’s birth, whether they smoke or about their smoking habits”

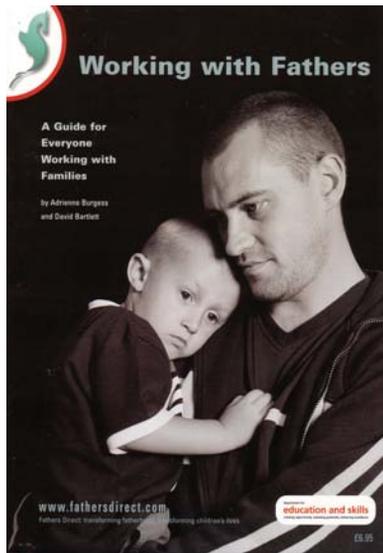


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CAPACITY BUILDING



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1. Values Base
2. Evidence Base including consultation
3. Workers and volunteers
4. Settings
5. Recruiting fathers
6. Services
7. Partnerships
8. Sustainability & dissemination including funding



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