



Man Matters Policy Briefing Paper No 2

Understanding Fatherhood in the 21st Century October 2012

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Executive Summary

Men's role as fathers can be the most rewarding and defining part in their, and their children's, lives. This report draws on international and locally based research into fatherhood to set out how men are changing in their attitudes and practices surrounding work and family responsibilities. Although there is a distinct trend towards a new ideal of a 'nurturing' father, fathers and mothers still experience parenthood very differently.

Despite a growing expectation and willingness for men to share fully in all areas of their child's development, several obstacles still remain to a fuller involvement. Current rights and practices concerning parental leave mean that couples choosing to relax or reverse traditional roles are heavily penalised financially. This can often mean that men are not equally involved in the important early years of children's lives. Also, certain established practices in maternity and social care have not yet fully responded to men's desire to be as involved as possible in all aspect of childcare and are still predominantly focused on a woman-centred approach.

The report presents the different challenges facing a range of fathering experiences; expectant fathers, young fathers, grandfathers, fathers in prison. The report also presents evidence of on-going change in several areas of men's lives as fathers; their presence at the birth of their children, equality measures in parental leave in different countries and programmes for promoting active fatherhood here in Northern Ireland.

If fathers are changing, what changes in public policy and practices are needed? Based on our findings, the report concludes with several recommendations in the areas of paternity leave, maternity and early years services, the joint registration of birth by mothers and fathers, the further development and implementation of relationship and sex education for boys, and the assessment of parental needs for incarcerated men.

We also highlight the need for further research on the uptake of paternity leave in Northern Ireland, the assessment of programmes to promote active fatherhood and research into the importance of grandfathers as a potentially undervalued family resource.

UNDERSTANDING FATHERHOOD IN THE 21ST CENTURY

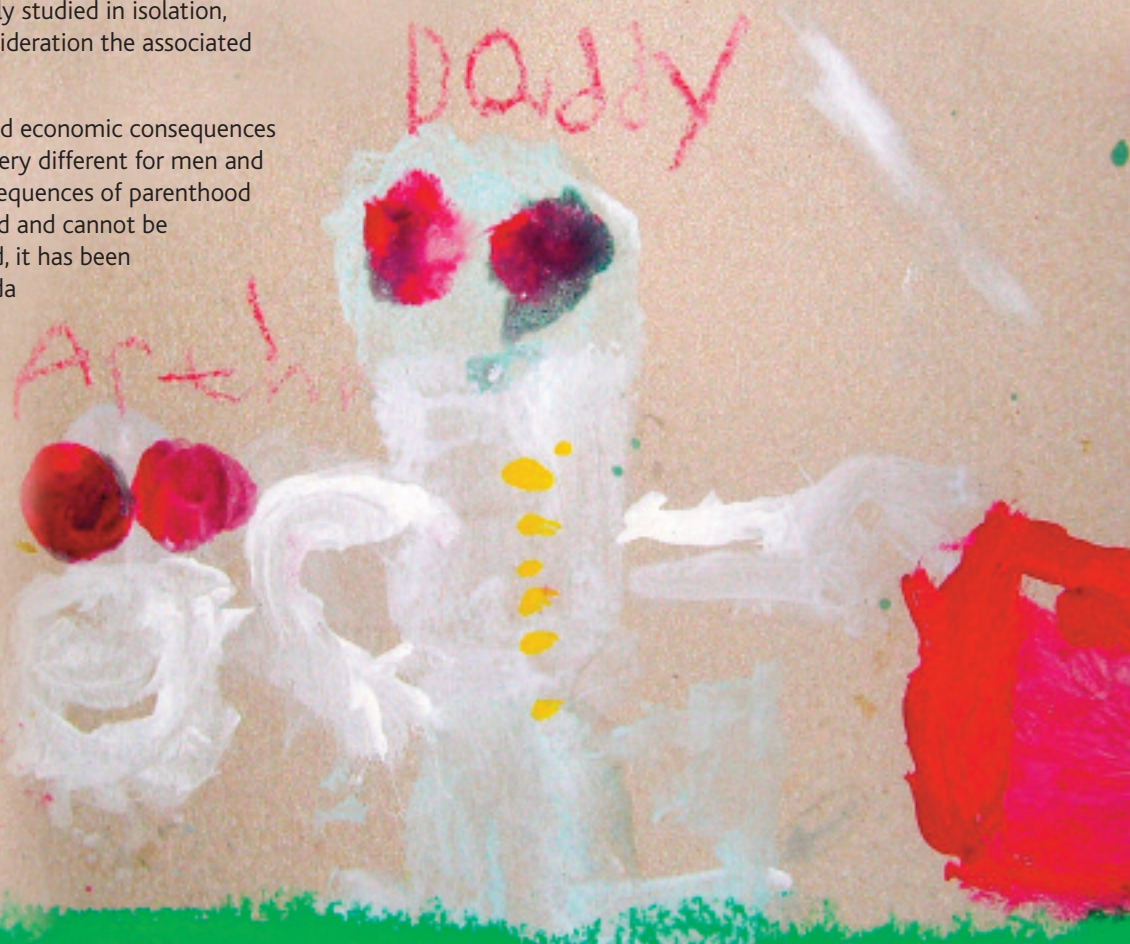
Co-parenting: We're in this together

Many societies are experiencing a transformation of fatherhood towards an ideal of the nurturing father, with the strong expectation of men's involvement in children's lives. This cultural shift is also being 'pushed' internationally through government policies based on a momentum of growing evidence of the importance of fathers' involvement in children's lives. Fatherhood's political profile has risen too, with recent American presidents and British prime ministers stressing the importance of engaged fathers and denouncing 'fathers who go AWOL'.^[2] In addition, the debate is often framed in terms of 'social justice' for fathers in societies that seem to prioritise mothers as the best carers of children. However, by comparison to that of motherhood, economic and social policies in relation to fatherhood are still in their infancy. Real changes in fatherhood will require more substantial and sustained policy changes.

One possible reason for the earlier neglect of the subject of fatherhood is that, until recently, changing patterns of women's education, employment, and childcare have been at the centre of sustained academic and policy research. This research has been conducted under the broad agenda of gender equality, the emphasis being on redressing the inequalities and discrimination experienced by women. However, these changes in women's lives have been largely studied in isolation, often without taking into consideration the associated changes in men's lives.

It is still true that the social and economic consequences of becoming a parent can be very different for men and women, nevertheless the consequences of parenthood for both are closely intertwined and cannot be understood separately.^[3] Indeed, it has been argued that the equality agenda itself has stalled because of a lack of understanding of men's relationship to education, work and family life.^[4] If motherhood is no longer to be the single greatest impediment to a woman's career, public policy must encompass both the fathers' and mothers' perspectives.

Questions of morality can be difficult to avoid in an area that lies at the centre of our public and private lives. Our intention here is to highlight some of the challenges facing fathers in the 21st century and to point to changes that could help men become the type of father they wish to be. A child's 'father' can be very many things; he can simply be the biological father, he can be an adoptive or step or foster-father, a mother's partner or boyfriend. But whatever type of father a child has, this person must be, in the words of child development expert Urie Bronfenbrenner, someone who is 'irrationally crazy' about their child, someone who can develop a strong, mutual, emotional attachment to a child and who is committed to their well-being and development, ideally for life.^[1]



The Rise of the 'New Dad' and the 'Absent Father'

Another reason for widening the scope of gender studies and initiatives to include men is the observation that men, in many key areas, are 'lagging behind' women when it comes to parenting. When men become fathers they are less likely to live with their children than their partners.^[10] Fathers are also less likely to avail of statutory parenting leave and tend to work longer hours and spend less time with their children, even if both parents work full-time.^[11-13] Although women's participation in the workplace has radically increased over the past thirty years, men's participation in housework and childcare has not kept up with this rate of change, leaving, it is argued, a 'parenting gap'.^[14] A key feature of this parenting gap is the rise of the lone-parent family (overwhelmingly single-mothers), with 78% of children in Northern Ireland living with a resident father compared to 97% living with their mother.^[10] In 1983, almost 90% of UK children grew up in a two-parent household; in 2010 that proportion had fallen to 72%. Over the same period, the proportion of families with dependent children headed by a lone parent has increased from 11% to 28%, with lone fathers only accounting for 8% of all lone parent families.^{[15]*}

Evidence of change: the role of fathers in the delivery room

An expectant father, anxiously pacing the corridor of the maternity ward, waits for news of mother and child, all the while filling an ashtray with spent cigarettes. This caricature has now gone the way of the hospital ashtray; we do things differently today.^[5] In the 1950s only 5% of fathers in Britain were present in the delivery room.^[6] Today, however, NHS figures show numbers as high as 98%. What accounts for this dramatic shift in fathers' behaviour?^[7, 8]

Two factors seemed to have worked together. Firstly, the 1960s saw a softening of gender roles and a more open, shared approach to childbirth. Not only did women wish their partners to be present, there was an untapped willingness on the part of fathers to share more fully in the arena of pregnancy and childbirth. Secondly, this transformation was fostered by a strong and well-argued case made by the professional community. The so-called 'Bradley method' of husband-coached childbirth, for example, and changing practices in midwifery promoted the father's presence on grounds of the mother's medical and emotional wellbeing. Within a generation, birthing practices were revolutionised.^[9]

A countervailing development to this trend is a strengthening in fathers' commitment to childcare. A recent poll showed 62% of fathers agreeing with the statement that 'fathers should spend more time caring for their children'.^[12] Time studies also confirm that resident fathers are spending more time with their children and are enjoying the experience.^[16] Indeed, the rise of the dual-income family tends to equalise childcare between the parents.^[17] Evidence shows that in families where both parents work, fathers spend more time with their children compared to families where the mother is not employed. The paradox is that today's fathers are less likely to live with their children than their own fathers did, but when they do they generally have a more active and supportive approach to parenting.

The rise of single parenthood has provoked a particular policy response from governments to absent fathers including the introduction of legislation to ensure fathers pay 'maintenance' to the household of the child in order to reduce child poverty and dependency on the State (e.g. the 2008 Child Maintenance Act (Northern Ireland)[†] as well as an on-going changes in family law to give children the right to a relationship with both parents after separation or divorce and to protect fathers' rights to maintain contact with their children.^{[18]‡}

Fathers-to-be

There is perhaps no single area more important to generating a fuller engagement of fathers in the lives of children than in maternity services. While the obstetric and midwifery professions have shown greater willingness to accommodate men in antenatal education, antenatal health appointments and at the birth of the baby, available research suggests further

* It is generally understood that the actual number of lone fathers is higher (perhaps one in ten lone parents) due to under-reporting; lone fathers very often have far less contact with social services than lone mothers (see, McColgan, J., Review of Key Issues in relation to Equality in the HPSS, 2003, DHSSPS: Belfast).

† Non-resident parents (both mothers and fathers) can be required to pay child maintenance. Currently, 95% of parents in receipt of payments are the child's mother (see, Child Support Agency, Quarterly Summary Statistics, 2010).

‡ The important issue of fathers' rights to custody of their children following separation and divorce will be covered in a forthcoming WEA policy briefing paper.

§ For a thorough overview of current midwifery practice concerning fathers see, Royal College of Midwifery. Reaching Out: Involving Fathers in Maternity Care, 2011.^[5]

small improvements could reduce fathers' feelings of being an 'outsider' or mere 'bystander' within the maternity services as well as in neonatal services.^[19-23] Such small improvements, identified in this research, include directly addressing fathers' questions and concerns in relation to parenthood, up-skilling fathers in infant care or addressing fathers' health needs in preparing to be a father and in the postpartum period—for example it may be the perfect time to help fathers to give up smoking, contributing to their own health and that of their children (for example it may be the perfect time to help fathers to give up smoking, contributing to their own health and that of their children)..^[24] Whilst the biological aspects of caring for women and the infant will always be foremost, if midwifery, in particular, is to remain relevant as the main conduit of health services to expectant parents, and in preparing parents for birth, assisting in the inclusion of fathers will certainly be increasingly necessary and useful to the broader aims of midwifery care.⁵

Maternity Leave: a Tender Trap?

Although current UK government family policy is shifting towards the goal of shared parenting, when it comes to parent's employment rights, the UK system has remained strongly skewed towards the assumption that the mother will be the main caregiver during the first year.^[27] This can have the unintended consequence of ensuring that it is the woman who interrupts her career for a prolonged period of time and is more likely to experience a 'parenthood wage penalty'. As the duration and conditions of maternity leave are far more favourable compared to paternity leave, meaning that parents wishing to exchange or simply relax traditional roles can be heavily penalised financially. This situation is at odds with recent evidence that men are confident in their roles as carers; 83% of men under the age of 45 in Northern Ireland agreed that staying at home to look after the children is a job that is appropriate for both

Evidence of change: Pappaledighet (Swedish paternity leave)

Government-funded parental leave is arguably more generous in Sweden than anywhere else in the world. Parents are entitled to a total of 68 months paid (at 80% of average salary) leave per child, with both mothers and fathers entitled and encouraged to share the leave. The leave can be taken at any time until the child reaches the age of seven. Unsurprisingly, take up of parental leave is high and rising. In 1990, men availed of 8.8% of all shared parental leave rights rising to 21.7% in 2007.^[6, 25] The promotion of the 'dual-earner, dual-carer family' not only has benefits for children and fathers; since the 1960s, married women's employment rate has risen from 25% to 80%.^[26]



Additional Paternity Leave and Pay (APL&P) in the UK

Since April 2011, new rights allow a child's father, or mother's partner, to take up to 26 weeks' leave to look after the child if the mother or primary adopter returns to work.

Government estimates are that the take up of APL&P will be between only four and eight percent of eligible fathers.^[31] A 2010 study in Britain shows that nearly half of eligible fathers (47%) would consider taking some or most of the six months available, and 21% saying they might take the full six months. 51% of the men said that their taking over the leave would enable their partner to go back to work earlier than she otherwise would have done.^[32]

men and women.^[28] Also, there is growing evidence suggesting that men are willing to spend more time caring for their children. A UK report (2009) found 62% of fathers thought that they should spend more time caring for their children.^[12]

Current UK legislation gives new mothers up to 52 weeks maternity leave; six weeks at 90 per cent of yearly salary, followed by thirty three weeks on statutory maternity pay of £128.73 a week with the concluding thirteen weeks unpaid. If a woman on the average salary of £25,000 were to take half of her entitlements, this would lead to a loss of income of around 45%. Current legislation allows two weeks statutory paternity leave at £128 per week for the father followed by up to 26 additional weeks (at the same rate) before the child is one year old on the condition that his partner has returned to work. If the father on £25,000 were to choose to stay at home to look after the infant for the first six months this would equate to a loss of income of around 75%.

Fathers are well aware to the potential conflicts of work and family life; when asked in the Northern Ireland Men's Life and Times survey whether they agreed with the statement 'many fathers choose to work such long hours that it damages family life', 72% of male respondents either agreed or strongly agreed (73% of women also agreed with this statement).^[29] Indeed, the majority (55%) of men in the UK do take some form of paternity leave. However, one third (34%) of new fathers said they did not take paternity leave even though they were eligible to do so and citing affordability as the main obstacle.^[30]

The Northern Ireland survey also revealed that pay and pressures at work were the key obstacles to men taking statutory paternity leave; 94% of male respondents either agreed or strongly agree that 'many families cannot afford for fathers to take paternity leave unless it is at full pay'. A further 68% agreed or strongly agreed that 'men don't ask for paternity leave because they don't want to create problems at work'.

Other studies show that although up to 60% of men have taken some form of paternity leave, 15% of men were unaware of their statutory rights and when it came to the new additional rights (ADL&P), over half (54%) said they had not heard of these rights.^[32] The affordability issues has been highlighted in recent UK-wide research that found that fathers of families with an income of less than £15,000 are much less likely (46%) to take paternity leave than those in the highest income group (59%).^[12]

Keeping Fathers Close

Changing the structural bias inherent in parents can organise work and family commitments may go some way to providing opportunities to fathers to become more fully engaged with their children, but what other factors affect men's commitment to family life? Research has shown that men are less secure in their identity as fathers than women are in their role as mothers. Put simply, men need more encouragement to become involved with their children, whereas the mother-child bond requires little outside support for it to develop.^[33] This difference may be accounted for by the greater value placed on the mother-child relationship culturally, as well as the far greater amount of time mothers spend with their new-born child. This underlines the importance of father-child attachment in early infancy. Fathers can sometimes take a back seat when it comes to a baby's first months, preferring to support the mother in her role as primary carer and nurturer.^[34] Men can more easily see their involvement as appropriate once the child can engage with physical play and activities. It is not uncommon to refer to a father 'babysitting' his own children.^[35] Data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has shown that fulltime employed fathers spend an average of 7% of their time with children alone and 74% in the company of their spouse.^[36] However, the experience of sole responsibility has been found to be very important for fathers in developing confidence and competence in childcare. It is also important for children, by altering their perception of fathers as parents in their own right rather than mothers' helpers.^[37] Although necessarily taxing, perhaps for both parties, fathers caring for their babies alone can positively affect the level of mutual



Evidence of change; Practical programmes in Northern Ireland

Kick Start is a programme funded by the Family Policy Unit within DHSSPS in association with Parenting NI. Its aim is to support fathers' input to family life by providing packages of training, reflection and practical action to organisations wishing to engage with fathers in Northern Ireland. It has been running since 2005 and has, with local organisations, targeted father-friendly practices, assessed innovative initiatives, and fostered new areas of expertise and skills. In 2011, it involved, among others, 259 fathers, 299 children, and 50 practitioners.^[43]

A number of other organizations in Northern Ireland have developed dedicated programmes to address fatherhood in the lives of young marginalized men. One such service is offered by the Family Planning Association's 'bout ye programme'. Others are the 'Lads2Dads Programme' run by Opportunity Youth and the 'Da' Young Fathers Project in Derry/Londonderry.^[8, 44]

attachment.^[38] By contrast, the impact of low or no-father involvement is seen in a range of negative outcomes in children's health and education.^[39] For example, low involvement by fathers in a child's education has a very strong negative impact on their achievement, stronger indeed than contact with the police, income levels, family make up, social class, housing and even the child's personality. This is particularly marked for father-son involvement.^[40]

The interest in father-child relationships often emphasises the benefits to the child. However, research has shown that fatherhood can present strong health benefits for the man. Naturally, simply being a father provides no insurance against ill-health, but co-habiting fathers with children, a Swedish study showed, are less likely to suffer from forms of addiction or to die from injury than childless men.^[41] Other studies describe how the early stages of childcare can be a danger zone for men's psychological well-being, with expectant and new fathers reporting higher levels of stress, feelings of isolation and higher rates of depression than childless men of the same age. Overall, men describe the advent of fatherhood as a process of maturity, an increased consciousness of the importance of relationships, new empathic abilities and better self-confidence.^[42] A possible explanation for this is that children give additional structure and meaning to their lives and provide positive mental and physical cues (talking, reading, playing) as well as increased opportunities to socialise with other adults.^[41] At the very least, becoming a father presents men with improved, if not voluntary, opportunities to connect with health and social services.

It is not all good news however, some recent fathers report that the number and quality of their social relations diminishes as does time spent in socialising.^[45] The findings are different for mothers; the same study found that a mother's close relationship to the child during infancy and early childhood often positively influences social contact with others but that the effect can weaken over time as the child becomes more independent. However, the headline message for men is that taking time off work and spending it with their infant children is very important for all concerned; a close relationship to young children increases both the child's and the parent's emotional well-being. And as every parent has been told, "they grow up too soon!".

Young Fatherhood

The UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Western Europe and although the rate is falling, recent governments have been unable to reach their targets to considerably reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy. It is increasingly apparent to researchers, practitioners, parents and others who work with youth that targeting young men is an important, yet sorely neglected part of addressing teenage pregnancy.^[46-48] Boys are currently much less likely to receive education in relation to pregnancy prevention in schools and research from Ireland and the US both suggest that parents are far more likely to have discussed sex and pregnancy with their daughters than with their sons.^[49] However, an unintended pregnancy can be an immense crisis in a young adolescent male's life leaving them unsure about how to make decisions about the pregnancy.^[47]

The single most powerful predictor of early fatherhood is being involved in a long term relationship with the mother.^[50] Research with adolescents shows that the majority of young fathers are keen to connect and to stay connected to their children.^[51-53] This willingness to connect is also demonstrated in the high number of joint birth registrations for children born to teenage mothers in the UK (78% of all adolescent births).^[54, 55] However, teenage fathers are less likely than other young fathers ever to have lived with their children. Longitudinal studies show that at age 30, 20% of men who fathered a child before age 20 had never lived with their child, compared to only 6% of men who were aged 22 when their child was born.^[54]

More concerted efforts are required to bolster teenage fathers' connections with their partner's pregnancy and fatherhood responsibilities. Teenage and young fathers can frequently become marginalized around the birth of their baby and in the post-natal period, especially in cases where they or their partners are under the legal age of sexual consent (age 17 years).^[52, 56-58] Most young mothers want their child to have a positive relationship with the father, so failing to integrate young fathers into the maternity services is usually ignoring both the young mothers' and fathers' wishes.^[59] Although teenage fathers can become isolated as a result of not residing with their partner, recent studies have shown that adolescent fathers can be 're-integrated' into fathering roles. The Millennium Cohort Study found that 21% of non-resident fathers (many of them young) who had some level of contact with their 9-10 month old infants were in more frequent (and sometimes daily contact) when their child was aged 3.^[55]

Differing Experiences of Fatherhood

Just as with the word 'family', any narrow attempt at a definition would miss out on the many and myriad relationships that fall under the idea of 'father'.

'Traditional' fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, foster and adoptive fathers, gay fathers and young fathers. They all share a unique bond with a child that is absolutely central to their lives.

Grandfathers

Research into grandfathers is an especially neglected area despite the general observation that being a grandparent of either gender can be an extremely rewarding experience. In interviews, grandfathers are overwhelmingly positive and sometimes ecstatic about their relationship with their young grandchild and how being a grandparent has changed their lives for the better.^[60] One study on grandparenthood described how it can be an absolutely vital relationship for older adults to maintain ties with family and wider society.^[61] In a 2000 survey, over half of respondents (55%) said that being a grandparent contributed 'enormously' to their quality of life and a third (31%) said it contributed 'a lot'. Only 4% said it contributed 'not at all'.^[62] However, an American study showed that the emotional benefits of grandparenting may not be matched by physical wellbeing; grandparents with the role of caregivers were significantly more likely to report lower satisfaction with health.^[63] UK family law is currently under review and proposals have been made to acknowledge the importance of grandparents and their desire to maintain contact with their grandchildren in cases of family breakdown. The Family Law Review fell short, however, of granting any new rights to grandparents who do not have a right to contact with their grandchildren.^[64]

Young Offenders and Fathers in Prison

There is no formal record of the parental status of incarcerated men. It has been estimated that at least one in four incarcerated young offenders is a father with dependent children (rising to one in three for the general male prisoner population), as the population of young offenders in Northern Ireland and elsewhere in the UK is rising, there is an urgent need to develop and rigorously evaluate parenting resources which could contribute to promising parenting interventions delivered in prisons and Young Offender Institutions.^[65 - 68] Being a parent can be a powerful catalyst for positive change amongst young men leading chaotic lives.

The little picture

A child and a father; if that unique relationship can be helped grow through the years, from dependency to mutual discovery and on to companionship and friendship, there are few goals, either personal or public, that could be so rewarding for each individual. Yes, they grow up too quickly, and there are only a few years to carry them and play with them and have them call your name a thousand times a day. They need us, we need them. They love us, we love them. Making it easier for fathers to be involved, in every way, with their children is a broad and practical goal that could enrich the lives of fathers, mothers, daughters and sons.



Recommendations for a Policy Framework for Fathers in Northern Ireland

PROPOSAL	RATIONALE
1 Fathers' entitlements to paternity and parental leave should be advertised and promoted. There should be a shift to a shared parenting model with equal or similar amounts of paid leave available to fathers and mothers and periods of reserved leave for fathers.	There is a persistent gap in parenting responsibilities between fathers and mothers, creating a wage penalty for women.
2 The uptake of and satisfaction with paternity leave by employment status (public and private sectors) needs to be assessed and analysed.	Current uptake rates for paternity leave in Northern Ireland are largely unknown.
3 There is a need for time-use surveys targeted specifically at co-resident and non-resident fathers.	Adapting family policy to the realities of 21st century parenting requires accurate information on how families function today.
4 Joint birth registration should be enacted in Northern Ireland in line with the Welfare Reform Act 2010 (UK). Maternity services should record the father's details as a matter of course.	The child's right, as far as possible to, know both its parents (UNCRC Article 7) should be upheld and expectation placed on fathers as well as mothers to identify themselves as parents, as is already the case in Australia and other countries.
5 Midwifery services from antenatal education through to postnatal care should be developed to support fathers as well as mothers through the transition to parenthood.	Fathers enter parenthood with less knowledge and support than mothers routinely receive, and can feel isolated and sidelined during both the antenatal and postnatal periods. Engaging with the couple is associated with better adjustment to parenthood for both mothers and fathers and with more stable family relationships.
6 Fathers should be specifically invited to and engaged with during antenatal classes. When there are family care needs, the father's needs should be assessed along with the mother's.	
7 The success of Early Years, Health, Education and Social Care should be assessed on their engagement with fathers as well as mothers. It should be mandatory for Sure Starts to record details of both parents when registering families.	Failure by family professionals to engage with men in children's lives is associated with child deaths, abuse and neglect. A father's involvement in his children's lives is the strongest predictor of a child's educational achievement and emotional well-being.
8 The parental status of incarcerated men should be recorded. Their parental needs and the needs of their children should be assessed. Parenting resources in prisons and young offender institutions should be developed and rigorously assessed in terms of their contribution to maintaining positive father-child.	Maintaining strong family relationships can improve inmates' mental health and well-being and reduce recidivism. Positive father-child relationships where fathers are involved with the criminal justice system are connected with less intergenerational transmission of offending behaviour.
9 Research on how to develop the role of grandfathers in Northern Ireland should be carried out.	Grandfathers may be an undervalued family resource in children's lives.
10 Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) in schools should address the potential of an unintended pregnancy in adolescent men's lives as well as adolescent women's. An RSE resource on teenage men and unintended pregnancy entitled 'If I were Jack' is currently being developed. ^[69]	Boys are far less likely than girls to receive parental guidance on sex education.

FACTS ON FATHERHOOD

- There are an estimated 250,000 fathers with dependent children in Northern Ireland.^[70]
- At median age (45), and when living with a female partner, 87% of men have dependent children.^[71]
- Marriage remains by far the most common form of relationship; census figures for Northern Ireland show that 77% of median-aged men are married and a further 4% are cohabiting. Only 8% of males reported themselves as single.^[70]
- It is estimated that 78% of Northern Ireland's children live with their father compared to 96% with their mother.^[72]
- The Millennium Cohort Study showed that most fathers (85.2%) in Northern Ireland were present at the birth of their child.^[73]
- The number of single mother households has risen from 10% in 1983 to 26% in 2010. The percentage of single-father households has remained constant at 2% as a proportion of all households.^[10]
- NI survey data for 2000 showed that 40% of secondary school pupils who live with or see their father regularly, compared to 29% who do not, think they will be going to university when they finish their education.^[74]
- The same survey showed that 73% of pupils who have an involved father, compared to 63% who do not, have felt fairly good or very good about themselves. 8% of those who have or see their father, compared to 15% who do not, have felt fairly bad or very bad about themselves.^[74]
- 55% of secondary school pupils who have an involved father, compared to 66% who do not, have taken an alcoholic drink.^[74]
- Fathers are spending more time with their children: in the late 1990s, fathers of children under 5 were spending an average of 2 hours a day on child-related activities, compared to less than a quarter of an hour per day in the mid-1970s.^[75]
- Fathers are less likely to work part-time (4%) than men without children (9%), unlike mothers, who are more likely to work part-time (60%) than women without children (32%).^[76]
- Fathers in Northern Ireland often feel discouraged by workplace practices and culture from taking time off work for family, or expressing a wish for flexible work.^[77]
- Most men feel that families cannot afford for fathers to take paternity leave unless it is at full pay.^[77]
- Under current law, a mother automatically has parental responsibility for her child. A father only has this responsibility if he is married to the mother, by jointly registering the birth with the mother or by court order.^[78]
- Although the prison authorities do not routinely collect data on the fatherhood status of inmates, it has been estimated that at least one in four incarcerated young offenders is a father.^[65]

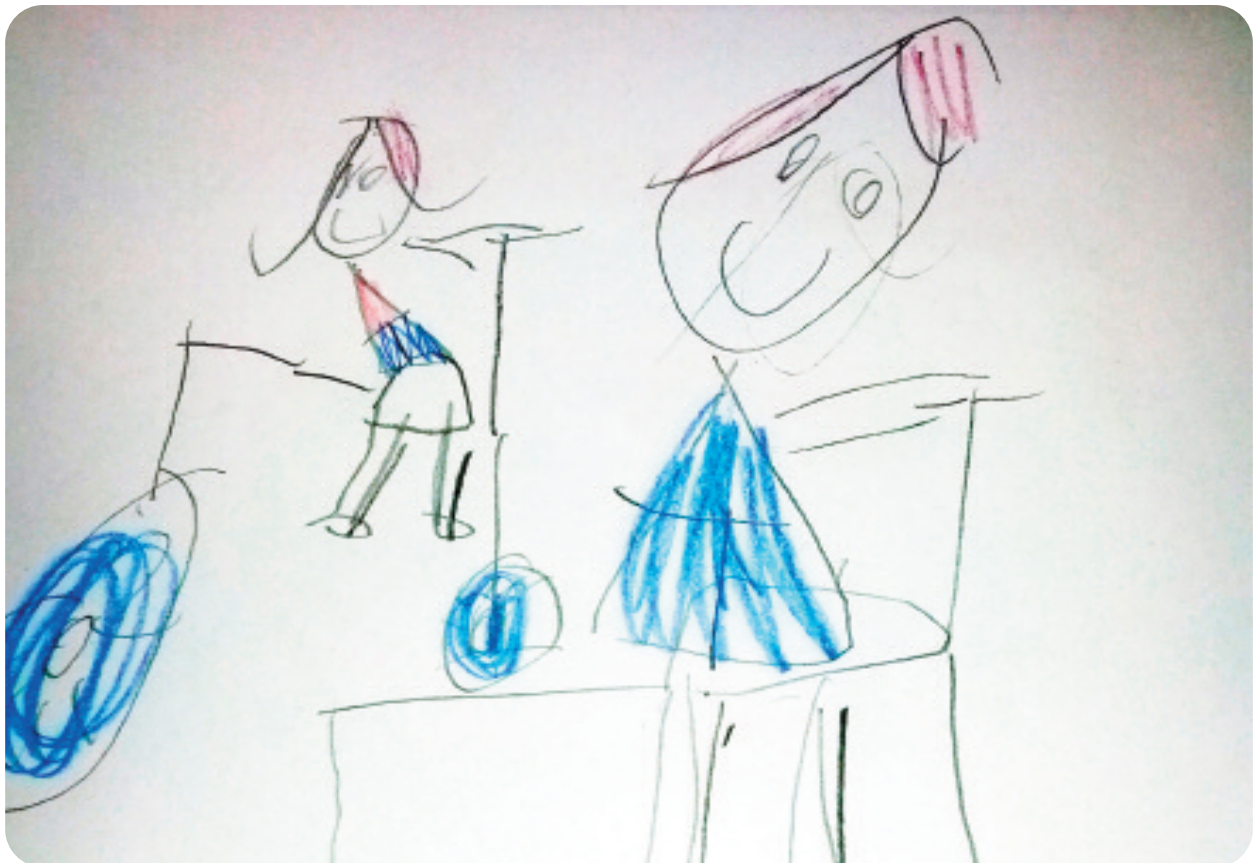
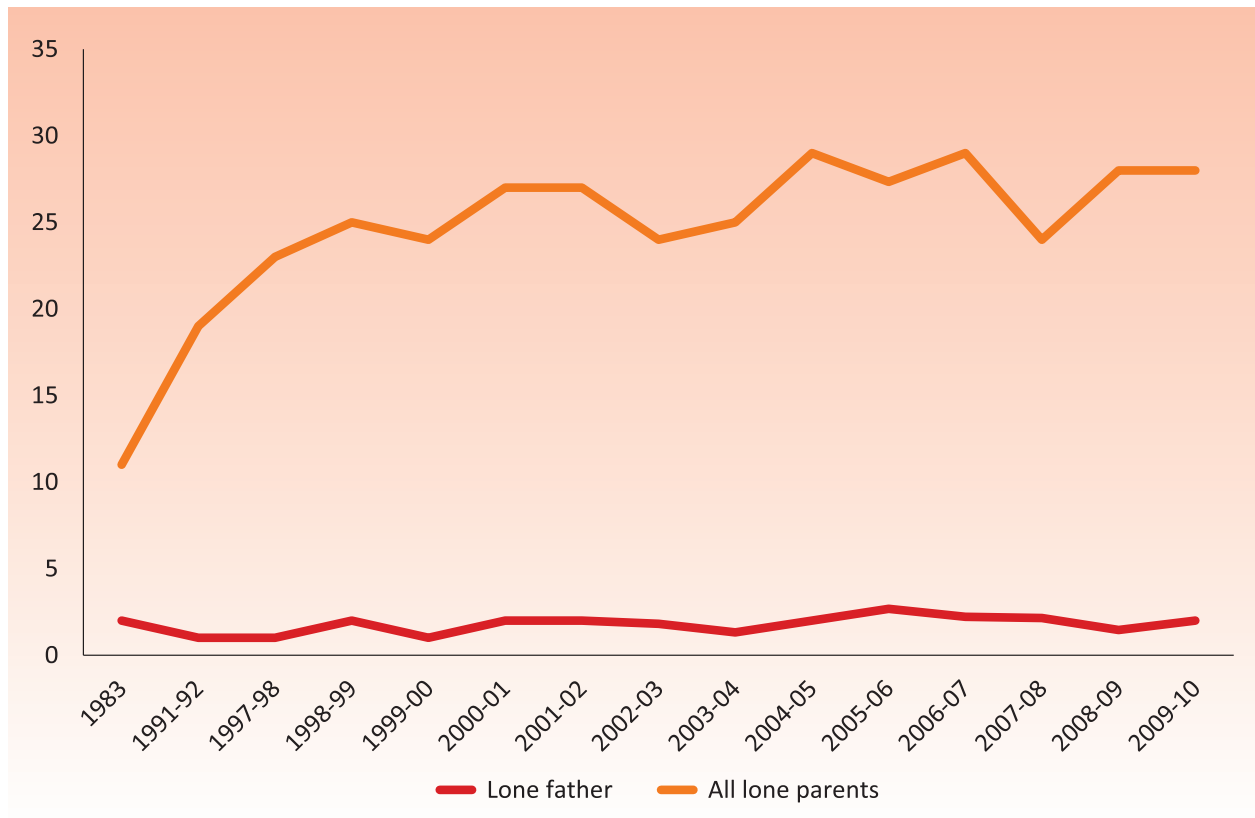
Table 1 Demography of men in Northern Ireland by marital status (NISRA: Demography: People, Family and Households 2010)

	Single	Married	Remarried	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
All men	52.4	37.8	2.2	2.3	2.6	2.5
Median aged men	13.7	67.3	5.3	5.3	7.1	1

Table 2 Household composition by marital status (NISRA: Demography: People, Family and Households 2010)

Couples	Married	Cohabiting	Lone fathers	Lone mothers
80	74	6	2	18

Figure 1 Lone fathers as a percentage of lone parents 1983-2010 (NISRA 2010)



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PUBLIC ENDORSEMENTS

'This will be an invaluable resource for policy makers in Northern Ireland who seek to reduce child poverty and to increase children's well-being and gender equality. The strong message is that fathers could be a bigger resource in children's lives and this policy briefing brings together all the research evidence to support that message. The Fatherhood Institute looks forward to seeing Northern Ireland lead the way in promoting fatherhood and the well-being of children.'

Adrienne Burgess

Joint CEO (with Katherine Jones)
THE FATHERHOOD INSTITUTE

"This is a timely report. It draws upon some major studies to show just how complex the role of the father is. Most importantly, the authors identify key issues that need to be addressed in order to support fathers and their children at critical turning points in life."

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