



# Fathers Matter: Resources for Social Work Educators

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**Note regarding Terminology:**

The term ‘social services’ was previously used to describe children’s social care departments and was the term in use during the early stages of the Fathers Matter research project.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is referred to throughout this report. Following the change of Government in May 2010, this department has now been re-named the Department for Education.

## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

The production of this resource pack is primarily the result of work undertaken with social work educators during the course of completing Fathers Matter 2 (see Chapter 5). Educators noted the lack of learning materials to assist them in engaging with students around working with fathers in situations where their children were subject to child protection and welfare concerns. Since then a DVD has been produced as a training resource. It features accounts from fathers as well as inputs from research and practice and has proved a very useful training and teaching tool.

This publication is designed to offer more detailed accounts from the literature. Moreover, whilst it is clear that there has been a considerable increase in the amount of literature (research based and otherwise) devoted to the issues involved in working with fathers, there still appear to be some gaps. In particular there appears to be a lack of up-to-date legal material on the issues concerning fathers in public law and Chapter 4 of this publication, therefore, is designed to fill a very specific gap.

Overall, the publication draws out some of the key messages from the research projects (Fathers Matter 1 and 2) funded by the Parenting Fund since 2004 which have sought to explore the issues faced by fathers whose children are involved with social care services. It also presents an updated international literature review which explores the research, policy and practice literature.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Fathers Matter I and 2 – Key Messages from the Research findings**

This chapter provides an overview of the Fathers Matter projects funded by the Parenting Fund since 2004. It includes a summary of the key messages and a brief outline of the aims and programme of work. Full accounts of each round are contained within the publications *Fathers Matter: Research findings on fathers and their involvement with social care services* (Ashley, Featherstone, Roskill, Ryan and White, 2006) and *Fathers Matter Volume 2: Further findings on fathers and their involvement with social care services* (Roskill, Featherstone, Ashley and Haresnape, 2008).

### **Fathers Matter: Round 1**

Family Rights Group advises and supports parents and relatives of children involved with or requiring social care services because of welfare needs or concerns. In 2004 it submitted a successful bid to the Parenting Fund in conjunction with Children Law UK, Fathers Direct (now known as The Fatherhood Institute), The Grandparents' Association, and the Hackney youth organisation Sky Partnership. The proposal was to develop a project that aimed to identify barriers to the inclusion of fathers and paternal relatives of children within the child welfare system, and to start examining what works and why.

The impetus for the bid was the increasing number of calls being received by the advice line run by Family Rights Group from non-resident fathers and paternal

relatives, some of whom had only heard late in the day that their children had been taken into care. Some had confronted inconsistencies in policies and practices across the country and even within the same authority. There also appeared to be a lack of suitable support services and information materials for these fathers. Family Rights Group found that partner organisations were also witnessing a similar trend. For example, The Grandparents' Association found that calls from paternal relatives comprised 70% of their calls.

There also appeared to be a lack of practical help and advice for practitioners and a lack of research that examined the role and involvement of fathers in the child protection process.

The project aimed to:

- Explore the barriers encountered by fathers and paternal relatives whose children are involved with social services;
- Identify effective ways of working with fathers and paternal relatives;
- Recommend steps that could be taken by the judiciary, the courts, national government, statutory and voluntary agencies.

A steering group composed of representatives from the organisations involved in the bid and an academic partner was set up. The steering group agreed the following programme of work to meet the project aims:

- A detailed analysis of calls from fathers to the Family Rights Group's advice line;

- An international review of research;
- The launching and servicing of an electronic discussion board for fathers whose children are engaged with social care agencies and an electronic discussion board for practitioners to highlight events and research;
- Focus groups with young fathers, young mothers, grandparents and practitioners and individual interviews with fathers whose children are engaged with social care services;
- A survey of local authority Children's Services Departments on their policies, practices and service provision for fathers;
- Peer research training for young fathers and support to undertake a 'mystery shopping exercise' of services for fathers;
- Piloting of information materials for fathers that set out their legal rights as parents;
- Dissemination exercises including a seminar and a conference;
- The launch of a publication to draw together the research findings.

## **Key Findings – Young Fathers**

Eighteen young fathers, aged from 15 – 29 years, were interviewed in a focus group in Hackney, London. The majority of these fathers were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of the young fathers expressed insecurity about the future of their relationships with the mother and with the child, before during and after the birth. They feared rejection by the mother and losing contact with the child. Support from the fathers' own families and friends was usually available but young fathers often struggled to maintain a relationship with the mother's family. When fathers attended ante-natal appointments they were not automatically welcomed or involved.

Professionals were missing opportunities to provide help and support to young fathers before, during and after the birth. At the birth there was a need for professionals to be more aware of young fathers' emotional sensitivities and give further thought to ways of involving them.

The months after the birth can be stressful for young fathers, as well as the mothers and a time when there may be increased risks of domestic violence. There is a need for more support groups – either for young fathers on their own, or for both parents – to help young fathers to become involved and skilled parents and the piloting of a role such as 'midhusband' should be explored. Young fathers need more information about their rights and legal position as fathers.

It is important to note that the young men expressed a high degree of anger about, and suspicion of, services. They considered that they 'were on women's side' and it was only the enforcement agencies e.g. the Police that were interested in them.

### **Key Findings – 'Older' Fathers**

Thirteen 'older' fathers, aged from 30 – 59 years, participated in individual interviews (nine by telephone; four in person). The fathers described themselves as white British in the main. They described the early months of a child's life as a time of great vulnerability and some fathers were heavily involved in caring for children as babies. Substance misuse and alcohol problems were apparent at times of vulnerability and there was potential for domestic violence. Mental health problems were common

among both parents. Nearly half the fathers had been the subject of an abuse allegation.

Fathers' experiences at the time of interview ranged from having little or no contact with their children, having very regular contact or in a small number of cases caring full time. Relationships with mothers' new partner could be very difficult. It could be difficult for fathers to maintain contact with maternal relatives after breaking up with the child's mother.

The fathers made extensive use of the internet to obtain information and were in touch with organisations such as Families Need Fathers, Fathers Direct (now 'Fatherhood Institute') and the Association for Shared Parenting. However, they did not feel they had enough information on their rights. Fathers could find themselves left out of the school information loop and needed specific support when they joined a parents' group whose membership was mainly composed of mothers.

Too often Social Services did not respond quickly and positively to requests for help to avoid situations becoming more serious and they did not talk to fathers when planning for children in a crisis. Some fathers felt Social Services did not act with appropriate urgency when alternative accommodation was needed for their children or deliver on agreements for follow-up action. They did not always provide information to fathers on their rights; ensure their staff were up to date with the law; use clear jargon free language or consult fathers, where relevant, on issues in relation to cultural practices. They were also inconsistent in that they often did not apply the same rules to themselves as they did to fathers (e.g., expecting the same reliability of

themselves in transporting children to contact meetings, as they did of fathers). They did not always ensure that they acted in an even-handed way between parents and/or share documents that should have been in the public domain. Complex cases were not always allocated to staff with an appropriate level of knowledge and experience and new staff were not sufficiently briefed on the family background before visiting for the first time. Fathers living at a distance did not feel there had been adequate consideration of their needs in relation to attending meetings. Reports were said to contain inaccuracies and judges did not take sufficient care to explain their decision making.

### **Key Findings – Young Mothers**

Eight young mothers were interviewed in a focus group held in Hackney, London. Young mothers felt they needed to plan with the young fathers how they shared the initial information about the pregnancy with their respective families so that they retained some control. The young mothers praised the support they received from their immediate families and often received strong support from the father's family.

The mothers thought there were many opportunities missed by the professionals to help the father become involved and confident. They wanted the midwives, doctors and nurses to involve the father before, during and after the birth, and thought they should be helped to learn how to handle the baby. The mothers recognised that the months after the birth were a difficult time for the father. At this time the mother might be mainly focused on the baby. Both young parents may need support to negotiate the changed circumstances of the relationship after the birth. The young

mothers could find it difficult to trust others including fathers with the care of the child. Some young mothers suggested it might be helpful for the fathers' confidence to have times when they looked after the baby on their own. Grandparents needed to be sensitive to ensure that in supporting the mother, they did not inadvertently shut out the father. There was a significant lack of housing available in their local areas for a young family. Whilst the mothers themselves had not used services such as Social Services they thought this might be one of the sources of support for young fathers.

### **Key Findings – Grandparents**

Eleven Grandparents (five maternal and six paternal) were interviewed in June 2005. Eight participated in a focus group and three via telephone interviews. The issues of concern reported by maternal and paternal grandparents were not that dissimilar, but there were differences. Paternal grandparents can have greater difficulty retaining contact with their grandchildren, where the mother, as is usually the case, is the main carer post separation/divorce. These difficulties can be exacerbated if the mother has a new partner. Grandparents' situations varied from those caring full-time to those having limited contact. Grandparents caring full time for their grandchildren could often be doing this as a result of a trauma such as bereavement or in the context of ongoing difficulties due to parental drug and alcohol addiction. The financial implications were a source of serious concern with loss or reduction of earnings. These financial issues might be exacerbated by having to move when the child(ren) come to live with them. Grandparents suffered from variations in access to and rates of financial support including residence order allowances. Grandparents worried about the future when assuming long term responsibilities for grandchildren. Some

were undertaking caring responsibilities in the context of other caring responsibilities (e.g., for a parent). Some found themselves caring for great grandchildren. Some found their own relationship as a couple under strain. Some suffered from loneliness and loss of self-esteem particularly if they had stopped work

Many were fearful of asking for help from Social Services in case this was seen as ‘not coping’. Some had experienced frequent changes of social worker. They also found Social Services support to be inconsistent, for example, having very little contact for some years and then insisting on very formal involvement. They had to be extremely persistent to get what they considered the right solution for their grandchildren. Organisations such as Family Rights Group and The Grandparents’ Association were greatly appreciated.

Grandparents experiencing contact difficulties could be coping with very demanding family relationships and problems such as parental alcohol and substance misuse issues, violence and mental health. They could have fractured and conflicting family relationships with loss of contact not only with grandchildren but also with their children. They were, as a result, experiencing considerable emotional distress. Contact orders could be unenforceable because one of the grandchildren’s parents did not wish them to see the children.

They could be providing food and other basic necessities for grandchildren and have considerable financial issues as a result of trying to help a son or daughter with their problems. They found they were not listened to by Social Services and were overlooked as a resource by Social Services. They experienced difficulties with Social

Services inquiries, either finding that their concerns were brushed aside or assessments were too superficial. Some experienced problems at contact centres finding staff insensitive and that the transport to contact was not always reliable.

### **Analysis of Calls from Fathers to Family Rights Group's Advice Service**

As part of the research to inform the Fathers Matter project, all 105 calls from fathers to the advice service run by FRG over an eight month period (January – August 2003) were analysed. The calls fell into the following categories although as will be obvious there was some overlap:

- Fathers requiring family support (wanting an assessment or to challenge the provision of inadequate or inappropriate support);
- Non-resident fathers with concerns about their children's welfare
- Fathers involved in protecting their children
- Accusations and counter-accusations between parents regarding violence and abuse
- Child protection enquiries - the assessment of risk by local authorities.

#### *Fathers Requiring Family Support*

In many respects the nature of these calls were very similar to calls from mothers and other family carers who spoke of the frustration they experienced when they did not receive the support they required. However, the key difference appears to be that health, childcare, social welfare and education services are less likely to be geared to supporting fathers.

### *Non-resident fathers with concerns about their children's welfare*

There were particular issues for non-resident fathers with concerns about their children's welfare. Fathers noted the scepticism with which they were often treated by statutory agencies who appeared to assume automatically that the concerns were motivated by a desire to undermine their ex partner. A number talked of being in a double bind. If they informed Social Services then contact might be made harder by the mother. They might then be less likely to be in a position to protect the children especially if Social Services failed to investigate their concerns or took no action.

### *Fathers involved in protecting their children*

This category encompassed fathers who had significant concerns about their children, wanted more involvement with their children than they currently had or were raising their children, at least temporarily. Practitioners and fathers were often unclear about their legal rights and Social Services did not systematically identify and include fathers in discussions and decisions about their children where there were concerns or care proceedings.

### *Accusations and counter accusations regarding violence and abuse*

A number of fathers complained that despite the fact that they alerted Social Services or the courts to child welfare concerns; it was they who were assumed to be the risk. Some fathers stated that health and social care services overlooked their experience in bringing up their older children from a previous relationship. They could find they were only allowed supervised contact with a baby from a new relationship even when

it was, in fact, the new mother who had multiple problems and was struggling to cope with parenting.

#### *Child protection enquiries - Addressing risk by local authorities*

There appears to be inconsistency between and within local authorities with the same man being treated differently in terms of risk. Moving home to a different authority area can highlight these differences.

### **Survey of Local Authorities**

Questionnaires were sent out to 182 Children's Services Authorities and Local Authorities in order to explore the following issues:

- Whether policies and procedures in relation to assessment require and/or support the identification of fathers and their involvement in the assessment process;
- Whether policies and procedures require and/or support the involvement of fathers in meetings, reviews and conferences;
- Whether specific services for fathers are commissioned or provided;
- Examples of good practice;
- Suggestions for any changes needed to legislation or policies.

Responses were received from 28 departments, a response rate of just below 16%. Whilst this represents a relatively low response rate, those received covered a wide geographical spread and included a good range of inner city and rural areas.

*Fathers' involvement in the assessment process*

There was an expectation that fathers, whether resident or not, would be involved in assessments by the overwhelming majority of those who responded. However, it was unclear from the responses received how far the requirements of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH, 2000) were actually being met. Monitoring of compliance in relation to the inclusion of fathers appeared inconsistent and relied heavily on supervision which may be an unreliable strategy in a climate of staff shortages.

*Fathers' involvement in meetings, conferences and reviews*

Monitoring of the attendance of fathers at meetings, conferences and reviews appeared to be patchy, with most emphasis being placed on the monitoring of attendance at child protection conferences. Where monitoring was carried out, no attempt was made to distinguish between resident and non-resident fathers. Effective monitoring was hampered by the use of terms such as 'parents and carers' rather than 'mothers, fathers and carers'. There appeared to be a lack of formal procedures for the involvement of fathers at children in need meetings.

In some areas there was a distinction made between fathers with parental responsibility and those without. Policies and guidance referred to the need to include those with parental responsibility in meetings. Whilst a lack of parental responsibility

may limit the decisions fathers can make on behalf of their children, policies should not make any other distinctions between them.

*Specific services for fathers*

Specific social care services for fathers seemed to be limited reflecting wider research on the paucity of such services. Services were mostly provided through initiatives such as Sure Start, Children's Centres and the Children's Fund or through voluntary sector organisations.

*Good practice, national policies and legislation*

A number of examples of good practice in working with fathers were cited including individual work with families to engage fathers in services, the appointment of a fatherhood worker, and the Family Group Conference process. Legislation and policy guidance may support the involvement of fathers but it was clear that involving them in planning and decision making remained very much dependant on the skills, knowledge and attitudes of individual practitioners and their immediate line managers.

## **Fathers Matter: Round 2**

In 2006 FRG and its partners successfully applied for a further two years funding to the Parenting Fund to take forward the findings from Round 1.

This two year action research project had the following aims:

- To work with two Children's Services authorities to develop 'best practice' models that could be replicated elsewhere;
- To survey the work with higher education institutions in order to improve the teaching of social work students and the involvement of fathers in social work course design and delivery;
- To develop and pilot a training course for workers and managers;
- To support fathers to become joint trainers on this and other social care education services;
- To provide legal information and advice for fathers, paternal relatives and practitioners.

The survey of work with higher education institutions and on training is reported upon in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 reports on the work carried out in relation to developing resources on the law. This section highlights key messages from the work with the two local authorities.

Research on fathers in two Children's Services involved the following: an analysis of relevant policies; an audit of 67 cases randomly selected but including children in

need, child protection and looked after children; focus groups and interviews with managers, practitioners, fathers, mothers and voluntary organisations working with fathers.

#### *Research findings from audit of case files*

The audit of cases found that basic information on fathers, including their contact details and their legal status, was sometimes missing from files. For example, 20% of children's files audited did not have the birth father named on the file, with the figure at 31% for looked after children. Only 12% of children were living with both birth or adoptive parents, 54% were living with a single parent (mother). 80% of birth fathers were not part of the household where their child was living. Nearly a quarter of the children had a significant father figure, other than their birth father, recorded on the file.

The case files found considerable evidence of complex family problems including domestic violence and substance misuse issues. Thus the audit found that the families surveyed were characterised by a high degree of vulnerability and complexity.

There was greater involvement of fathers in child protection investigations as potential risks and protectors and in initial and review case conferences than in initial and core assessments. Less than half the fathers in touch with their child were invited to a meeting when a core assessment was being undertaken, Fathers were no more likely to be invited to core assessment meetings than initial assessments. When fathers were invited three quarters of them attended.

In relation to looked after children, the social workers were in touch with all the fathers who were in contact with these children. The father's situation was considered in the planning process for nearly all of these cases. Very few paternal kin were involved with initial assessments and there was more potential for the use of Family Group Conferences (FGC). Only 12 out of 67 children had been the subject of an FGC.

#### *Mothers' focus groups*

Three focus groups were held with mothers who had had contact with Children's Services concerning their children. Seventeen mothers were interviewed in total in the three groups. The following views were expressed:

- The mothers were often involved in a highly complex web of volatile relationships involving new partners, ex partners and wider family relationships;
- The mothers considered that social workers should be involving the fathers to a greater extent than they were irrespective of living arrangements;
- The mothers considered that fathers should have their own services and should have more information directed at them.

#### *Fathers' focus groups*

Two focus group meetings were held with fathers who had had contact with Children's Services concerning their children. In total, eight fathers were interviewed. Fathers considered that Children's Services did not communicate enough with them and did not always do what they promised. They expressed concern about young

social workers whom they considered insufficiently experienced to appreciate the issues involved. Despite negative experiences they were still able to be positive about those who had understood their situation and taken action to bring about the changes that were needed. In one Local Authority they made a split between the ‘brilliant’ family centre and the ‘uncaring’ social workers. They spoke about the family centre as if it was not part of Children’s Services, almost as though they did not want to acknowledge that the Local Authority could provide something they liked so much.

Some felt they were not treated even-handedly at contact centres. Although they were expected to be punctual and reliable this was not always reciprocated by those who brought the children to meetings. They wanted services to be open at times that suited their availability.

#### *Professionals’ views*

Four groups of local authority professionals were interviewed in the two authorities.

In total, 23 managers and 14 social workers were interviewed. Professionals considered that the following issues made engaging with fathers difficult:

- Lack of accurate information on files which posed difficulties in terms of identifying fathers;
- Lack of time to engage fathers, especially those who were non-resident;
- The opening hours of services posed difficulties in relation to engaging working fathers;
- Assumptions about fathers as threats especially in a context where most social workers were women;

### *Conclusion and ongoing work*

At the conclusion of Fathers 1 and 2 a range of recommendations were made. Since then further funding has enabled some of these recommendations to be developed further and at the time of writing there is an ongoing action research programme of work being carried out under Fathers Matter 3.

The practice issues highlighted in relation to recording practices and involvement in assessment and meeting processes are being carried forward through ongoing work in the two local authorities who participated in Fathers Matter 2. A specific focus of Fathers Matter 3 is how to work with families including fathers who are domestically abusive.

Chapter 3 highlights the ongoing work on developing resources in relation to disseminating legal information and there are links to frequently asked questions (FAQ) which has been used successfully by Family Rights Group in other areas of their work (available at [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)).

Chapter 4 highlights the findings in relation to education and training and the production of this resource pack is a contribution to developing accessible resources for educators. A DVD (available at [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)) has been developed for use as a training resource. This features interviews from a range of fathers, the majority of whom, had significant involvement with social care services. The views expressed support in a vivid way many of the practice messages identified above in relation to

the importance of social workers being consistent and reliable in their dealings with fathers. The DVD has proved a very valuable learning resource on a number of social work training courses and was also shown to fathers, educators and policy makers at a national event in 2009 where it was evaluated very positively.

## **Chapter Three      Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

This chapter reviews the literature on policy and research developments in relation to fathers in the context of social care services. The review aims to provide an overview of literature published since 2005 to provide an update to Ryan's (2006) review which appears in the first volume of 'Fathers Matter' and is summarised below.

### **Summary of Ryan (2006)**

Ryan's (2006) literature review begins by summarising the (then) current state of knowledge in relation to fathers and acknowledges the increased presence of fathers on the policy agenda and the impact of fathers on children's development. The evidence relating to paternal involvement in children's lives is highlighted along with a discussion of fathers' involvement in childcare and domestic chores. Despite changes in the workforce structure (such as more mothers returning to work), fathers were still considered to be the main breadwinner and this could create tensions between their desire to 'be there' (both practically and psychologically) for their children and the demands of work. For some men, unemployment and/or the exclusion of young fathers could affect their belief in their ability to be a good father.

In the context of social care few studies were found to have focussed exclusively on fathers although many described the family structure of children in contact with social care departments with a large proportion being characterised by lone parents or reconstituted families. Additional factors such as poverty, domestic violence, unemployment, family breakdown, mental health or drug/alcohol misuse were often

present. In assessing the risk of fathers/father figures in maltreating children, Ryan notes the evidence from child protection registrations which indicates roughly equal numbers of fathers and mothers being identified as the perpetrator. However, this data does not constitute a prevalence figure and there are known problems with extrapolating from such data due to the gender bias of the registration process and the tendency for families involved in child protection proceedings to be headed by a lone mother.

Few studies were found to have explored the impact of fathers in families under stress. Indeed studies which did explore confounding factors in family situations (e.g., domestic violence; drug/alcohol misuse; mental health issues) tended to fail to take into account the gender of the parent. Some evidence of fathers playing a supportive role in the presence of (maternal) mental health and substance misuse were noted.

Ryan goes on to detail evidence for the tendency for social care practitioners to focus on mothers, thereby excluding fathers from assessments and interventions, and subsequently, the potential to identify how they might support a family, or indeed how they might pose a risk. It was noted that the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need (DoH, 2000), with its requirement to gather information from *all* relevant family members, might begin to address this imbalance. However, initial evidence from evaluations of the Sure Start programme suggest that despite the willingness of staff to achieve greater engagement with fathers, this aim had largely not been achieved.

Barriers to involving fathers were noted to be the attitudes of some practitioners, which in turn could reflect wider societal attitudes (father = breadwinner; mother = caregiver) and also the attitudes of mothers and fathers themselves, particularly when family breakdown involved domestic violence or abuse. Practical barriers to engagement could include the timing of meetings and the failure to provide information to fathers. A limited number of studies have highlighted the positive impacts when fathers have been successfully engaged in services and interventions.

Ryan's review ends with some helpful pointers to overcome the barriers to engagement of fathers. These include staff being more aware of their attitudes towards fathers; management support for the involvement of fathers; assessments which fully assess the role of the father/father figure within the family and are flexible enough to allow the father to participate; and the adaptation of existing or development of new parenting programmes to ensure they are appropriate and accessible for fathers.

### **How the current review was carried out**

A literature search for published data since 2005 was carried out in order to update the review completed by Ryan (2006). Searches were completed in July/August 2009 using electronic academic databases and social care websites (Assia; PsycInfo; Social Services Abstracts; Sociological Abstracts; Science Direct; Communitycare.co.uk); and key policy websites (Department for Children, Schools & Families; Equality and Human Rights Commission; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Fatherhood Institute; Family & Parenting Institute). Search terms included 'fathers and social care'; 'fathers

and social work'; 'fathers and child protection'; 'fathers and family support'; and 'engaging/involving fathers'.

## **Summary of the Literature since 2005**

The purpose of this review is to provide social work educators and their students with an overview of the policy and research literature (since 2005) pertaining to fathers and social care services. The review will firstly outline the current policy context in relation to fathers before moving on to an exploration of fathers in the context of social care services. The second part of the review focuses on working with fathers in social care and begins to address the question of 'what works' in engaging with fathers.

### *Current Policy Context*

In the years since Ryan's (2006) review was published fathers have increasingly been the focus of Government policy initiatives. The then Government in 2008 announced a 'Think Fathers' campaign (DCSF press release, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008, [www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)<sup>1</sup>) to challenge the notion of fathers as the 'invisible parent' and to underpin the drive for increased engagement with fathers in public, health and family services.

Recent research by Page et al (2008), commissioned by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), has also explored how Government policy affects fathers' engagement with family services in England. The findings, which are based on a review of DCSF (and its partner agencies, e.g., OFSTED) policies, a

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<sup>1</sup> Following the change in Government in May 2010, the Department for Children, Schools and Families has been re-named the Department for Education (<http://www.education.gov.uk/>)

survey of 46 local authorities and over 250 qualitative interviews with local authority managers and practitioners, noted:

- Recognition of fathers in DCSF (and its partner agencies') policies was 'uneven', and, where reference to fathers was noted, there was little recognition of the different types of fathers (e.g., minority ethnic fathers; young fathers);
- At the local authority level, although there was an awareness of relevant national policies, many have failed to take a strategic lead on developing increased father engagement and the examples of good practice noted were largely as a result of specific managers and practitioners taking an interest in the issue;
- With the exception of SureStart Children's Centres, parenting support, safeguarding and looked after children, national policies did not tend to influence family services in relation to supporting fathers;
- Family services tended to be father 'neutral' rather than pro-actively 'father inclusive' and, with the exception of SureStart Children's Centres, there was little monitoring of progress in engaging with fathers;
- Barriers to engagement with fathers included national policy variability; the workforce within family services provision (predominantly female; lacking training); the attitudes and behaviours of some parents, both mothers and fathers (traditional views of fathers as 'breadwinners'); and difficulties in identifying and accessing fathers, particularly young and non-resident fathers.

A further in-depth exploration of men and boys and public policy in England and Wales has recently been published by the Coalition on Men and Boys (Ruxton, 2009). This report highlights some of the areas where progress has been made by Government policy initiatives, for example, in relation to fatherhood and also boys' education, but notes significant gaps in other areas of public policy. Policy makers tend to fail to take account of the extensive research literature on masculinity and some mainstream policies (e.g., employment and criminal justice) are still based on traditional notions of masculinity which view men as the main 'breadwinner'. Whilst challenging the notion that men and boys are 'in crisis', the report does highlight that although there is an "*enduring dominance of men in positions of power*" (page 3), for some men, such as the unemployed and/or unskilled, the challenges have become more acute, not least because of the current economic crisis. Further challenges may also be presented by inequality due to age, race, class, faith, sexual orientation and disability and the author notes that it is essential policies reflect these individual differences rather than viewing men and boys as a homogenous group.

### *Fathers and Social Care Services*

When we move on to consider fathers in the context of social care services, it is important first of all to ask the question – *what kind of fathers come to the attention of social care services?*

It is fair to say that for some time fathers have been 'curiously absent' from many social care services due to the tendency in child welfare interventions to apportion blame for failure to protect the child on mothers (Strega et al, 2008). This is despite the fact that empirical evidence continues to challenge the notion that fathers are

absent in families involved with child welfare services. In a recent US study the majority of families receiving services from child welfare had male relative involvement in their lives and the potential for these men to influence outcomes for children and families is noted (Bellamy, 2009).

More generally though, the literature in relation to fathers and social care services can be broadly categorised as relating to domestic violence and child protection and thus it is violent or abusive fathers who come to the attention of social care services:

*“when not threatening or abusive (and sometimes when they are) men are generally constructed as irrelevant or rendered invisible”* (Strega et al, 2008, page 707).

### *Child Protection*

Research in Canada has explored child welfare policy, practice and discourse with fathers of children (born to adolescent mothers) who come to the attention of child protection authorities (Strega et al, 2008). The desk-based review of 116 child protection case files identified 130 ‘fathers’ (including non-biological ‘father figures’) but noted that there was limited data recorded in the case files for these men. The research team assigned categories of ‘risk’, ‘asset’, or ‘irrelevant’ to these fathers on the basis of social workers’ descriptions (e.g., file recordings), actions taken (e.g., including/excluding a father in a parenting assessment), and the number and type of social worker contacts with the fathers. Almost 50% of the 130 fathers identified were considered irrelevant; 20% were viewed as a risk and 20% an asset to both mothers and children. Level of contact with fathers by social workers ranged from 40% (biological fathers, considered a risk to children) to 75% of the time (biological fathers, considered an asset to children). Thus, 60% of fathers who were deemed to be

a risk to children were not contacted by social workers in the cases reviewed. The researchers note that this is further evidence of the failure of social care practitioners to engage with fathers whilst simultaneously blaming mothers and that efforts to change this situation will require “*shifts in practice, policy and education*” (pg 713).

A further Canadian study explored socio-demographic characteristics and the extent of ‘personal problems’ (e.g., mental health issues) of mothers and fathers in 1266 families where child neglect had been identified (Dufour et al, 2008). Fathers were found to be less burdened with personal problems and families where a father was present also seemed to be less vulnerable. Another study by Guterman et al (2009) examined father-related factors predicting maternal physical child abuse risk and found fathers’ higher educational attainment and positive involvement with their children was most likely to reduce risk. Thus these studies provide crucial evidence for the need to consider fathers in cases of child maltreatment although the challenge of engaging fathers in the child protection process have been documented previously (Scourfield, 2006).

### *Violent Fathers*

It has been noted that there has been a failure to recognise violent men in terms of their identity as a father or father figure. This failure to recognise and support violent fathers may not only limit the effectiveness of support interventions for women and children, but also prevent the chance to engage with men as fathers which might offer opportunities to intervene and change violent behaviour (Lee et al, 2009; Featherstone, 2009; Featherstone and Peckover, 2007; Crooks et al, 2006). As Rivett (2010) has noted, an approach to violent male carers which privileges the ‘violent’

label at the expense of the ‘carer’ label may fail to consider the possibility of intervening with many men whose behaviour negatively affects children.

On the other hand, recent research emanating from Australia has used an in-depth discourse analysis of 20 First Instance unpublished judgements (delivered over a 5 and a half period) from one registry of the Family Court to highlight the judicial tendency to play down the fathers’ history of violence on the basis of the importance of father presence for children’s wellbeing and future development (Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008). Clearly, there is a middle ground which can encompass both these views, an approach which recognises violent men as fathers whilst challenging their violence and which avoids blaming mothers and gives children a voice.

Recent research in the United States examining the extent to which child welfare agencies involve non-resident fathers noted that child welfare caseworkers and administrators cited the possibility of violence as a reason for not involving fathers (Malm et al, 2006). However, in the cases reviewed almost half of the fathers were not contacted by agency workers suggesting that assumptions were made without a thorough assessment of actual risk.

Rivett’s (2010) theoretical analysis of working with violent male carers highlights how society constructs masculinity in a way which “*privileges a deficit model of male parenting*” (page 201) and makes reference to the recent Baby Peter Connelly case in Haringey, London. Crooks (2006) further explores the links between masculinity and violence against women at the individual, community and contextual level and highlights how (non-violent) fathers can be a useful resource in developing their

children's notions of masculinity and thus, challenging future violence against women.

In the current context of 'involving' fathers there has been a recent shift towards engaging with violent and abusive fathers and a suggestion that cross-departmental Government policy should reflect such joined up thinking in relation to fatherhood and violence against women and children (Ruxton, 2009). 'Think Family', a parenting initiative from the Social Exclusion Unit (2008) aimed to provide targeted support for 'at risk' families by adopting a 'whole family' approach - identifying and building on family strengths and resilience in a bid to tackle the factors that can lead disadvantaged fathers to become violent. Targeted work with disadvantaged fathers to facilitate engagement might also be achieved via the new Family Intervention Partnerships (Ruxton, 2009) although it has been suggested that Government's tendency to use gender-neutral words such as 'parent' or 'family' fails to challenge the dominant discourse of 'father absence-mother blame' in the context of child welfare (Strega et al, 2008). Burgess similarly notes the 'importance of disaggregating "parents" into "mothers" and "fathers"' (2005, page 60).

However, attempts to go as far as the introduction of a legal presumption to contact and shared responsibility were rejected by the previous Government, a decision which was welcomed by child welfare organisations on the basis that such a decision would fail to put the needs of the child first (Smart et al, 2004). Indeed a qualitative study with men involved in domestic violence perpetrator groups found that they lacked an ability to prioritise their child's needs (Harne, 2008). Similarly, Salisbury et al's (2009) research with (predominantly African American) men attending a US court-

ordered evaluation following conviction for partner assault found that the majority of fathers did not feel their children had been affected by exposure to interparental conflicts. However, research with fathers involved in domestic violence services in Israel found that whilst they struggled to appreciate the true impact of their violence on their children, they yearned to be a ‘good father’ and to achieve a ‘close and warm relationship with their children’ (Perel and Peled, 2008).

Traditional parenting programmes currently fail to address the need to work with violent male carers in a way that addresses both their violence and their caring role (Crooks et al, 2006). Their role as a father is deemed to be irrelevant in the face of their violence (Rivett, 2010). Of course, child welfare practitioners need to assess the risk to children of male violence but assessment tools have been slow to develop (Rivett, 2010). Rivett and Kelly (2006) note this may stem from the assumption that violent men should not be in contact with their children (see Rivett, 2010, for a review of the models to assess risk).

In the field of domestic violence approaches have been developed which target violent men from a pro-feminist, cognitive-behavioural stance (Rivett, 2010). The 24-week Duluth model programme is the predominant intervention model in the UK and is widely used in criminal justice settings and supported by Government (Rivett and Rees, 2008). The programme is founded on the assumption that men are violent to women (and children) due to the patriarchal construction of society which socialises men to believe they have entitlement over women (Rivett, forthcoming) although this theory is not without contention (Dutton, 2003).

The Duluth programme has been criticised though for failing to recognise the heterogeneity of violent male carers, for being ‘doctrinaire’ and for its lack of a ‘child focused intervention’ (Rivett, 2010). In relation to this latter point, practitioners have responded by incorporating more child-focussed interventions. Of particular relevance here are the programme adaptations which have integrated fatherhood issues, such as the ‘Caring Dads’ programme which was developed in Canada but is now also being delivered in the UK (Scott and Crooks, 2004) and the Alternatives to Violence programme based in Norway (Rakil, 2006). In these programmes men *are* recognised as both fathers *and* abusers although it has been suggested that their potential impact may be limited by the fact that they are long-term treatment programmes delivered in specialist centres when research has shown that many men would prefer to seek help in a local, non-specialist setting (Hester et al, 2006). This latter point does seem to have been addressed in Wales where Caring Dads is being delivered in local community settings.

Rivett’s (2010) detailed review settles for a *both/and* perspective. He argues that such men are often both violent and also fathers/ step-fathers. They are often both abusive and keen to be better fathers/partners; they can be both dangerous and open to change; they are violent both because of the social construction *of* masculinity and because of individual psychological processes.

So far in this section we have focussed on violent fathers but some argue that efforts to tackle violent men must also focus on preventative measures with non-violent men. Failing to engage with non-violent fathers has been described as a ‘missed opportunity’ by Crooks et al (2006) who outline an ‘information-motivation-

behaviour' model (originally developed to reduce high-risk sexual behaviour) for engaging non-violent fathers (and father figures) in preventing violence against women. In this model, fathers are given accurate information about the problem of violence against women and the role they can play to prevent it.

### *Working with Fathers in Social Care*

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the evidence that services often fail to engage with fathers, there has been limited research on the experience of working with fathers in social care and therefore '*very little is known about how to successfully engage fathers in existing services*' (Lee et al, 2009, page 227).

Clapton (2009) reviews the depiction of fathers in social work literature, policy and practice documents and notes that the '*over-concentration on mothers and the failure to include fathers*' (page 17) has been evident for twenty years. The blame for this ongoing failure to engage with fathers is laid at the foot of '*social work writers and researchers, the policy-makers and social work training and education*' (page 19) for their part in '*airbrushing*' or '*demonising*' fathers in academic textbooks, policy documents and training materials. Examples from current policy documents and key social work texts are used to illustrate this point and to posit a theory of '*an ingrained tradition of elevating mothers and marginalising fathers*' (page 24) which underpins the way in which social care practitioners interact with families.

Huebner et al's (2008) survey of fathers and social services workers explored needs and satisfaction levels in child protection services in one state child welfare agency in

the US. The research aimed to provide guidance to support policy initiatives designed to engage fathers and strengthen families, policies which were born out of the Bush administration's drive to reduce the decline of two parent households in the US. The survey of 339 fathers and 1203 agency staff highlighted low concurrence and significant gaps in levels of understanding amongst the two groups of respondents. For example, although the majority of fathers rated their contact with social services as 'satisfied' or 'neutral', the majority were less satisfied with the perceived effectiveness of the service and would not recommend it to others. Agency workers believed more strongly in the effectiveness of service provision for fathers but appeared disproportionately concerned about the likelihood of domestic violence (given known cases involving violence were excluded from the sample) and lacked training in engagement techniques. Workers also relayed examples of significant problems in establishing contact with fathers due to limited agency information systems. The fathers consulted would have liked to have seen more support groups available and the authors recommend this as one of the first steps needed to improve agency services (see also English et al, 2009).

#### *'What works' in Working with Fathers*

A number of, predominantly, American, studies have explored 'what works' in working with fathers to identify the enablers which support greater father involvement. Pruett et al (2009) report the findings of an evaluation of the Supporting Family Involvement (SFI), a Californian programme designed to strengthen father involvement and promote healthy child development in order to prevent factors implicated in child abuse and neglect cases. The randomised clinical trial was undertaken with 289 low-income Spanish and English speaking families and

identified a number of factors which enabled success including recruiting fathers via mothers in recognition of the mothers' role as '*gatekeepers in families*' (page 174) and the provision of child care support at intervention meetings. Cornille et al (2005) report an evaluation of another group intervention with fathers in the United States: the DADS family project which has been delivered to more than 3,300 fathers across a number of south eastern states. The programme adopts an experiential approach to working with fathers in diverse settings in order to support positive parenting and to prevent child maltreatment. One of the key enablers of this approach is noted to be the focus on helping fathers to develop their own "voice" as a parent, an approach which recognises the heterogeneity of fathers. In addition, the model is built on a peer support approach to allow participants to learn from each other and to build positive supporting relationships. Lam et al (2009) have recently published findings from one of the few studies to explore fathers' parenting behaviours alongside interventions for alcohol use. This small study found that treatment for alcohol use disorders which includes a parent skills training component may decrease the likelihood of parental involvement in child protective services.

Dudley (2007) presents a theoretical argument for greater commitment from social workers to unmarried fathers in the United States, drawing on policies and programme interventions that have been successful in achieving greater father involvement in their children's lives. Key 'father-friendly' enablers are considered to be interventions that are focussed on fathers' strengths rather than deficits; that are responsive to diversity including race and ethnicity; and give preference to conciliatory and collaborative approaches that allow mothers and fathers to work collectively rather than as adversaries. The need for social worker interventions to

*'become much more sensitive, inclusive and responsive to the father's importance in family systems...particularly...when these fathers are not as visible or readily accessible as the mother'* (page 179) is noted.

In the UK, the nationwide 'Think Fathers' campaign (<http://www.think-fathers.org/>), which was set up by a partnership including the Fatherhood Institute, the then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the Children's Society and the National Academy of Parenting Practitioners, aims to encourage family and children's services to look at how they include fathers in their day to day work. The Fatherhood Institute has also developed a 'Fatherhood Quality Mark' to enable health and social care practitioners to 'benchmark' and improve their work with fathers.

Bayley et al (2009) have recently summarised best practice in engaging with fathers in parent support programmes. Their findings, which are based on a review of published academic and policy literature and qualitative data collection with parenting experts and fathers in the UK, identified four key areas for practitioners to adopt: actively promoting services to fathers; offering alternative forms of provision; prioritising fathers within organisations; and recognising fathers' cultural and ethnic differences. Bayley et al (2009) suggest that services need to be targeted at *fathers* and not just *parents* and should be explicit in identifying the key benefits to fathers and children of greater involvement. Marketing and recruitment should also be more creative in reaching out to fathers, encompassing the use of strategic marketing techniques (e.g., advertising services in traditionally male spaces such as pubs, sports centres and workplaces), the internet, peer support and via mothers who are already engaged in services. Once fathers are recruited, practitioners need to ensure that they

are providing a welcoming environment which fosters a culture of male involvement.

In offering provision for fathers, practitioners need to be flexible about timing, location and format. Many programmes offer provision outside of traditional working hours but Bayley et al found that some fathers did not want evening provision as this was incompatible with children's sleeping patterns or was simply unpalatable at the end of the working day. Provision in social spaces (e.g., sporting venues) and/or the use of the internet (e.g., online forums) and other digital media (e.g., DVD loans) may be more appealing to some fathers. Achieving successful father involvement also requires top-down support from the organisational (senior management) level, underpinned by training and target setting and there is some evidence that targeted recruitment of male staff may contribute to father involvement although culture and ethnicity differences may be greater barriers than practitioner gender per se.

In their review of the former Government's policy in relation to fathers, Page et al (2008) identified the following enablers to increased engagement with fathers:

- *Timing and location of services* – services need to be flexible and operate at times and locations which facilitate engagement with fathers. For example, successful schemes have developed provision during evenings and weekends to facilitate engagement with working fathers and provided services in more informal settings outside of Children's Centres to provide opportunities for more practical activities and to enable fathers to feel more at ease;
- *Appealing to fathers' interests* – services need to be planned in such a way that they will appeal to 'male interests', such as sporting or practical activities,

particularly when engagement is voluntary. However, the research

acknowledges that not all fathers will be attracted by such activities;

- *Provision specifically for fathers* – in a bid to address the tendency for Children’s Centre and family support provision to be female-dominated, some practitioners have successfully set up provision specifically for fathers and their children. However, the potential for separate provision to further marginalise fathers has been noted;
- *Undertaking outreach* – targeted outreach to recruit fathers was felt to be an affective way of increasing engagement, particularly in rural settings and where mainstream provision tended to clash with fathers’ work commitments;
- *Use of voluntary and community sector* - working collectively with third sector organisations could provide alternative locations for provision and facilitate engagement with fathers who might be unwilling to engage with local authority services;
- *Positive language and images of fathers* – using images and marketing materials which promote positive images of fathers and children could help to overcome perceived barriers in relation to provision being overly-feminised. Choosing to market provision in more male-dominated environments (e.g., gyms) had also proved successful for a small number of participants in the research;
- *Employing male staff* – some local authority and early years staff consulted felt that the current workforce was too female-dominated and that more male staff were needed to facilitate engagement with fathers. A higher proportion of male practitioners in front-line services was felt to be a key area for improvement.

Ultimately, ‘what works’ in working with fathers is actually engaging with them.

Fathers have for too long been invisible to social care practitioners unless they are deemed to present an overt risk to the child and/or mother. As Strega et al (2008) notes:

*“Children, mothers and fathers suffer when workers fail to engage purposefully with fathers and father-figures. To move toward true inclusiveness in both protecting and supporting children, practitioners need to proactively assess and engage with all significant men in a child’s life, understanding that some may pose risks, some may be assets and some may incorporate aspects of both” (pg 713)*

Examples of ‘what works’ in engaging with fathers can also be found in the literature pertaining to SureStart children’s centres due to the practice guidance which stipulates:

*“SureStart children’s centres should be responsive to the level of local need to support fathers in their relationship with their partner and in their role as parent” (SureStart, 2005, page 54)*

McKenna’s (2007) qualitative research with fathers, SureStart Programme Managers and Community Development Workers in local children’s centres identified three factors that were crucial to successfully involving fathers in their children’s lives and in SureStart activities: confidence; challenging traditional views of fatherhood; and

'being there'. Fathers were more likely to participate in children's centre provision if they felt confident to do so and the most successful way of fostering confidence was via peer group support from other men. Traditional views of fathers as 'breadwinner' or as being somehow deficient in their ability to care for and nurture children were significant barriers to father involvement which the children's centre activities actively sought to challenge in order to foster father involvement in their child's development. Successful interventions also enabled fathers to 'be there' with their children by empowering them to become more involved in their children's lives, particularly via opportunities for 'dad and child' time.

Clapton (2009) suggests an eight-point plan for changes in social work practice with fathers:

- *Make fathers visible* (e.g., in case studies and text books)
- *One-sided advocacy for fathers' rights is likely to increase polarisation and exacerbate existing tensions between parents*  
(mothers will often be the key to successful father involvement and attempts to increase engagement with fathers should not alienate them)
- *Address domestic violence and worker concerns*
- *Incorporate fathers (resident and non-resident) early*
- *Appreciate the importance and potential contribution of fathers irrespective of whether they are resident or not, or appear actively involved or not*
- *Be alert to the dynamics and value of kinship*
- *Young fathers face particular challenges*

- *Attend to the practical issues* (e.g., address correspondence to both parents and schedule meetings at times that can accommodate working parents).

Featherstone (2009) argues that it is important that practitioners develop a critical systemic approach to engaging fathers and father involvement. Informed by a feminist understanding of continuing gendered inequalities in relation to care-taking and violence, she suggests that engaging fathers must always be located within a commitment to challenging entrenched power relationships. Concretely, this means that fathers are located within a complex web of relationships with mothers, other men, kin and children. She draws from the lessons of Fathers Matter 1 and 2 to illustrate her points (see Chapter 1, for example, on the composition of the families who come to the attention of social care services). She urges caution about policy developments such as ‘Think Father’ which can seem to promote father involvement without interrogating whether such involvement benefits women and children.

### **3.1     Introduction**

There are lots of legal myths in family law, for example, that when parents separate mothers automatically ‘get’ the children; that one or other parent may have ‘custody’; that fathers without parental responsibility don’t need to be involved in planning for children; that fathers might present a risk to children so cannot be considered as carers. The purpose of this chapter is to dispel such myths and instead to outline the legal framework as it affects fathers and father figures in relation to their children when they are involved with Local Authority Children’s Services (LACS). As such, it is a resource reference for students. However, there is also a series of frequently asked questions, written for fathers that students may also like to refer to. These are available on the Family Rights Group website ([http://www.frg.org.uk/frequently\\_asked\\_questions\\_for\\_fathers.html](http://www.frg.org.uk/frequently_asked_questions_for_fathers.html)).

### **3.2     The Right to respect for family life:**

Without going into a detailed analysis of European jurisprudence on this topic, a key guiding principle underpinning work with children and families is that both the child and his/her parents<sup>2</sup> has a right to respect for family life (Article 8 European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)); and that the State can only legitimately intervene in family life where it “is necessary in a democratic society ... for the protection of the health or morals or... the rights and freedoms of others” (i.e. where

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<sup>2</sup> Fathers who are not and have never been married to the mother, have to have some degree of involvement with the child to enjoy this right: where a father did not and indeed did not know of the child’s existence it was held that he did not have a right to respect for family life Re: L (Adoption: Contacting Natural father)[2008] 1FLR 1079

it is necessary to protect a child) *and* the response of the State is proportionate to the circumstances in the case (Article 8(2)).

S.6 Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) provides that it is unlawful for a public authority to act in a way which is incompatible with a Convention right. This means that local authorities must therefore observe the Convention rights of the child and his/her parents in relation to all decisions they make about children they are working with, otherwise they may be in breach of the HRA which can result in an order for damages or injunctive relief against them (s.7 HRA). Local authorities should therefore explore all possible options for the child to have a relationship with, and be cared for safely by, both his parents in such manner as meets the child's needs and promotes his welfare.

### **3.3 Parenthood and parental responsibility**

In relation to LACS working with children and families, the term *parent* generally includes fathers and mothers, although fathers without parental responsibility are specifically excluded from certain key aspects of adoption processes as discussed below.

#### ***Who is regarded as a parent in law?***

A child's birth certificate is *prima facie* evidence of who is regarded as a parent in law, hence if the father is cited on the birth certificate he will generally be treated as the father<sup>3</sup>. Where there is a dispute as to the paternity of the child, the person wishing to challenge paternity can apply to court for a declaration as to parentage

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<sup>3</sup> However if the mother is married, it is presumed that her husband is the father of the child although this presumption can be rebutted.

(s.55A Family Law Act 1986) and the onus of proof will be on the person disputing the matter. Within those proceedings the court may order DNA testing (s.20 (1) Family Law Reform Act 1969). However where a child is the subject of an adoption order or has been made the subject of a parental order following a surrogacy arrangement, the legal parents will be those named in the order and the birth parents will cease to be the legal parents of the child (s.67 (1) Adoption and Children Act 2002 (ACA) & s.39 & 47 Adoption Act 1976 as applied by Parental orders (Human Fertilisation and Embryology) Regulations 1994).

The Children Act 1989 (CA) sets out the basic framework for the care and protection of children both in a:

- private law context where parents are primarily responsible for the care and well-being of their children with the court intervening only where they are in dispute about the care of the child which cannot be resolved by other means; and in a
- Public law context where the local authority intervenes to ensure children are safe and well-cared because there is evidence that they may be at risk of harm and certain thresholds have been met which require there to be further investigation or protective action by the State.

When the term *parent* is used in the Children Act 1989, it means all parents irrespective of whether they have acquired *parental responsibility* or not (discussed below). Similarly in relation to child support, all parents are liable to support their child irrespective of whether they have parental responsibility (s.1 Child Support Act 1991).

### ***What is parental responsibility and who has it?***

The concept of *parental responsibility* was introduced by the Children Act to include '*all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property*' (s.3(1) CA).. It replaces the former notion of custody and in effect means that a person with parental responsibility, in this case a father, can make all major decisions relating to raising a child such as consent to medical treatment, school trips etc. without having to consult anyone else with parental responsibility (s.2 (7) CA). However, there are certain restrictions which apply to this exercise of parental responsibility:

- when it comes to taking a child outside the jurisdiction, the consent of every person with parental responsibility or the permission of the court (unless he has a residence order in which case he can remove the child for up to one month without getting such consent (s.13 CA)<sup>4</sup>, otherwise he will commit an offence (s.1 Child Abduction Act 1984)).
- Except where a residence or special guardianship order is in force in which case the consent of every person with parental responsibility or the leave of the court is required (ss.13 & 14C CA), the strict legal position is that one person with parental responsibility can change a child's name without reference to anyone else with parental responsibility<sup>5</sup>. However, following the House of Lords Decision in Dawson –v- Wearmouth<sup>6</sup>, good practice indicates that other interested parties should be contacted and in the event of disagreement the matter should be brought before the court to be resolved and

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<sup>4</sup> Where a special guardianship order (SGO) is in force the special guardian may also remove the child from the jurisdiction without getting such consents for up to 3 months, but this may only be relevant to father figures rather than fathers since SGOs can only be made in favour of non-parents.

<sup>5</sup> Re PC (Change of Surname)[1997] 2 FLR 730

<sup>6</sup> [1999] 1 FLR 1167

- where there is a dispute about the exercise of parental responsibility in relation to a particular child, the court may make a specific issue order or a prohibited steps order to resolve the dispute (s.8 CA).

Whilst mothers automatically acquire parental responsibility for the child when they give birth, a father will only acquire parental responsibility if he falls into any of the following categories:

- He is married to the mother at the time of the child's birth or they subsequently married; or
- He is registered as the child's father on the birth certificate if the registration took place **after 1st December 2003**; or
- If he was not on the birth certificate but then re-registers the child's birth after 1st December 2003 either jointly with the mother or alone provided the mother signs a statutory declaration that he is the child's father (see: <http://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/births>); or
- The mother and father have both signed an authorised agreement giving the father parental responsibility (s.4 CA); or
- There is an order of the Court giving the father parental responsibility (s.4 CA).

Father figures, who are married to the child's mother, may acquire parental responsibility by making a formal agreement on a specified form with the mother or by applying to the court for a parental responsibility order (s.4A CA). They, and

father figures who are not married to the mother, may also acquire parental responsibility if they are granted a residence order (s.8 CA)<sup>7</sup>.

### **Local Authority Children's Services' work with fathers:**

The basic rule about working with fathers of children who are receiving services concerning their safety and well-being from the local authority children's services, is that they should be consulted and involved in all planning and decision-making processes, irrespective of whether or not they have parental responsibility. This can be problematic if the mother does not agree to his involvement. Clearly she can prevent it by withholding the name and address. However the local authority should endeavour to work with her to assist her to consider the potential impact, including the benefits to the child of having his/her father involved in the planning process.

Further details on this are set out below:

#### *i) Family support services*

Every local authority is under a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs (s.17(1) CA). Such services may be provided to the child themselves or to any member of the family if it will positively impact on the child's welfare (s.17 (3) CA).

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<sup>7</sup> They could also apply for a special guardianship order (s.14A CA) although this would be unusual, unless they are no longer living with the mother of the child, as it would confer on them parental responsibility which they could exercise to the exclusion of anyone else with parental responsibility i.e. including the mother.

In order to determine which services should be provided in a particular case, the local authority must carry out an assessment of the child's needs in accordance with the *Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*. This *Framework* requires the local authority to consider the child's developmental needs, the capacity of the parents to meet those needs and wider family and environmental factors. It is envisaged that the assessment will be conducted **in partnership with parents** and wider family members. Therefore fathers, like mothers, should be centrally involved in this assessment process (irrespective of whether they have parental responsibility) particularly in terms of their potential capacity to meet the child's identified needs.

### *ii) Child protection*

When there is a suspicion that a child may be suffering significant harm the local authority is required to make enquiries about the child's circumstances in order to ascertain whether the concerns are substantiated and, if so, in order for a protective plan to be put in place (s.47 CA). Again these enquiries will involve an assessment of the child's needs in accordance with the *Framework* cited above, in particular the capacity of the parents (and wider family) to meet the child's identified needs. Government guidance to local authorities on how such enquiries should be conducted, as set out in *Working Together*, reiterates the importance of **working in partnership with parents** throughout the child protection process both in terms of identifying any risk they may pose to the child's safety, and in terms of their potential capacity to promote the child's safety and well-being. As with family support services discussed above, fathers should be centrally involved in this assessment and planning process,

irrespective of whether they have parental responsibility - there is no legal basis for them to be excluded<sup>8</sup>.

Moreover, there is a further pragmatic reason for involving fathers in this process. Not only may they be able to provide a safe home for the child which will meet his/her identified needs, but also, since the local authority does not have parental responsibility for the child (unless an emergency protection order or care order has been made which is unusual in s.47 enquiries), it will be necessary for one person with parental responsibility to agree any child protection plan for the child. Where the mother either disagrees or is incapable of agreeing to the plan, it may be that such agreement can be given by the father. Fathers, like mothers, should therefore be encouraged and supported to be involved in child protection planning and decision-making procedures provided it can be done safely. This includes sending a letter before proceedings when relevant and involving them in any pre-proceedings meeting which may look at care arrangements. Further, the research evidence is that there is a high level of attendance of fathers or father figures at a family group conference, than at statutory meetings (Ryan 2000).

### *iii) Care proceedings*

When children are subject to care proceedings fathers will automatically be parties to proceedings, whether or not they have parental responsibility. They therefore have a right to see all the papers in advance and attend each hearing. They are also entitled to legal aid i.e., non-means and non-merits tested public funding to pay for their representation in the proceedings.

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<sup>8</sup> Where there is a concern about violence, it may not be safe or appropriate for the father to be involved in meetings when the child/victim is present but this does not obviate the need for Children's Services to work with them and enable them to participate in the assessment and planning process.

#### ***iv) Looked after children***

When a child is looked after by the local authority, whether under a care order (which confers parental responsibility on the local authority) or in accommodation by agreement with a person with parental responsibility under s.20, there is a duty on the local authority to ascertain and give due consideration to the wishes and feelings of the child's parents (amongst others) in relation to all decisions about the child (s.22 (4) & (5)). Further, there is a requirement on the local authority:

- that any plan for an accommodated child must be agreed by a person with parental responsibility or if no-one holds parental responsibility, the last person caring for the child or the child him/herself where the young person is 16 or 17 (s.3 Arrangement for Placement of Children Regs 1991<sup>9</sup>).
- to make arrangements for a looked after child to live with a parent (or relative) unless it is not reasonably practicable or consistent with the child's welfare. place a child who is looked after (s.23 (6) CA)<sup>10</sup>.
- that if a care order is made, the local authority must allow the child contact with his/her parents, including fathers, unless terminated by the court (s.34 CA. If there is no care order, the local authority is under a duty to promote contact between a looked after child and his/her parents, including fathers, and relatives unless this is not consistent with the child's welfare (Sched 2 para 15 CA).

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<sup>9</sup> This provision is reiterated in Regulation 4 Care Planning and Review Regulations 2010 which are due to be implemented in April 2011

<sup>10</sup> This provision will be further reinforced when S22C CA (as amended by s.8 CYPA 2008) is implemented (also expected to be in April 2011) when local authorities will be required to place looked after children with their parents then relatives who are approved as foster carers as first choice before considering placements with unrelated carers

#### **4. Adoption**

Whilst Children's Services should be working with all fathers of vulnerable children who are subject to statutory involvement in relation to planning and securing their safety and well-being, the position is slightly different when it comes to adoption agency decisions relating to the adoption of a child. The reason for this is that the term *parent* in the Adoption and Children Act 2002 refers to *parents with parental responsibility only* (s.52(6) ACA). However, there is duty on the local authority to make enquires about whether or not the child's father is able to provide a potential home for the child and also to consider contact arrangements with him (s.1 (4)(f) ACA & Reg 14(3) Adoption Agency Regulations 2005 (AAR). Again the mother might prevent try to prevent this by withholding his contact details and there is little the court can do to force her to disclose in cases of outright refusal<sup>11</sup>; but the adoption agency should still work with her to help her to understand why it is important for the child's long term well-being that the father is consulted about the proposed adoption and any alternative proposals he may have regarding the child's future care. However, fathers who have not acquired parental responsibility will not be parties to placement or adoption order proceedings, nor will they be required to give their consent to adoption nor will they be entitled to have it dispensed with<sup>12</sup>. Moreover if the mother gives her consent to placement for adoption under s.19 ACA, the father, if he doesn't have parental responsibility, will be deemed to have consented to adoption by virtue of her consent (s.52 (9) ACA). If he later acquires parental responsibility, he will need to apply for the leave of the court to be heard on the question of consent to adoption at the adoption hearing. This will only be granted if he can prove there has been a

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<sup>11</sup> RE: L (Contacting Father) [2008] 1 FLR 1079

<sup>12</sup> ss.21(3) & 47 ACA

change of circumstances since the placement order was made or s.19 consent was given (s.47 ACA).

### **5. Conclusion:**

This brief summary of the law relating to fathers indicates that according to the legal framework, when their children are subject to local authority assessment, planning and decision-making processes, fathers should routinely be involved. The same applies to father figures who have had a significant involvement in the child's life. If there are safety concerns which prevent their direct involvement in meetings, they should nevertheless be contacted and supported to contribute to the decision-making processes through indirect means. This summary has been brief and has covered the basic framework; however, it can and should never be used as a substitute for legal advice in an individual case.

## **Chapter Five            Fathers and social work education**

In the research conducted as part of Round 1 of Fathers Matter (Ashley et al, 2006), fathers expressed concerns about their interactions with social workers. Their accounts suggested that not all social workers appeared to have accurate knowledge of the law and there were concerns about assessment and intervention practices. It was, therefore, decided to conduct a survey of higher education institutions offering qualifying social work training to consider the following:

- teaching and course materials on fathers;
- placement opportunities for working specifically with fathers;
- fathers' involvement as service users on courses and their self assessment of strengths, obstacles and the help required.

We are not aware of an audit of teaching about fathers having been previously conducted in the UK, though a comprehensive exercise has been carried out in Canada (see Strega et al, 2008). This review of Canadian social work courses found limited reference to fathers in a review of course syllabi: “family practice and child welfare courses need to include information on men and fathers and how to engage with them” (cited in Strega et al, 2008, pg 714). A review of social work education texts has been carried out in the UK which supports the findings from Canada (Clapton, 2009).

Twenty seven institutions (at that time it was believed there were 110 offering qualifying programmes) replied to a questionnaire. A seminar was held with nine

respondents from these institutions and three telephone interviews were carried out.

Participants were drawn from all four countries of the United Kingdom.

*Where were inputs on fathers to be found on the social work curriculum?*

Human development, assessment, and interventions were the most common areas on the curriculum where inputs on fathers were to be found. Less than a quarter had any input on fathers on courses dealing with ethics or anti-oppressive practice.

Some respondents considered that the lack of input was related to the decline of interest by educators or students in teaching about gender issues, whereas others seemed to see it as reflection of a concern not to be associated with fathers' rights organisations.

Given that social workers' knowledge or lack of knowledge of the law had been an issue for the fathers interviewed in Round 1 of Fathers Matter, it was of note that just under half of the respondents (12) indicated that they did not teach about fathers in their law teaching. This finding needs to be located in the context of the findings of a review of key law and social work texts (see Appendix One), which indicated that there was often some reference to fathers' rights in relation to paternity, parental responsibility, adoption and contact. Moreover, of those who did teach about fathers in their law modules, two indicated it was brief or cursory, one that it was solely about domestic violence.

Given that there is some, if limited, evidence that Family Group Conferences (FGCs) can be more successful than other types of meetings at including fathers, a question was asked about the nature and extent of teaching on these. More than half (15)

indicated some input about FGCs but of these, six said it was brief and very limited. Similarly more than half (15) indicated their courses provided some input on working with men and women on their relationships, but three said this was solely or primarily in the context of domestic violence.

Inevitably, the content of the courses reflected the differing expertise of staff as well as differing cultures and histories. For example, one course had developed specific expertise in working with men who were violent around fathering issues and eight in all said they provided some input in this area. However, one respondent said that the emphasis was to promote a positive view of fathers and therefore this input on domestic violence would be too negative.

A number of respondents indicated that they had an interest in teaching about fathers but this was not shared by the rest of their staff team. Thirteen felt they had no specific expertise to deliver such content.

The main obstacles identified were as follows:

- an already overloaded curriculum and competing demands

This is a key issue which has also emerged in the discussions since the death of Baby Peter Connelly in 2007 with the degree programme considered to be overloaded in the context of the modular system and the requirements for placement teaching.

Other barriers included:

- fear of appearing to promote fathers' rights;
- lack of learning resources and/or staff expertise;
- lack of a high profile for fathers (or an exclusively negative profile), mirroring the weaknesses in practice;
- the decline in interest in teaching about gender and anti-oppressive practice;
- lack of dialogue between educators and often a divide between researchers and educators and between institutions.

Suggestions to overcome these barriers:

- A move away from competence-based training and a move towards research-based academic learning;
- More of an emphasis on gender from the General Social Care Council (although some felt that less curriculum surveillance was needed)
- Introduction of specialist training to enable teaching on fathers to be included without further demands on the curriculum

#### *Opportunities for Students to Gain Experience of Working with Fathers on Placement*

Placement opportunities for students reflected the findings of the survey in Fathers Matter 1 and the discussions in Fathers Matter 2 with the two local authorities. Thus, whilst it is appreciated that Children's Services placements should offer the experience of working with fathers, this does not often happen. Skills based approaches to working with fathers should be embedded within a framework that critically engages with the aims and objectives of such work.

In terms of placements with specific projects, Sure Start was mentioned by five respondents but the opportunities to identify suitable placement opportunities reflected the wider picture of patchy services for fathers. There appeared to be a relationship between what is taught, what is available in terms of placements and what is being researched by staff at a given institution. For example, there were pockets of expertise identified in relation to engaging fathers who are violent and fathers in family support services.

#### *Fathers' Involvement in Courses*

This question was aimed at addressing whether fathers' identities were highlighted or recognised in teaching but the responses indicated the problems associated with highlighting one aspect of an individual's identity. For example, men may have been involved in a course, but not specifically identified as fathers. At one institution a service user had provided input into the mental health and law modules in his capacity as a mental health service user but drew specifically on his fathering experience in that context.

#### **Conclusion and ongoing work**

A key recommendation from the educators who attended the seminar was that learning resources should be developed and this publication has been developed in this context. Furthermore, as part of additional funding, a DVD has been developed as outlined in Chapter 1. A series of day training events have been developed successfully by Sean Haresnape from Family Rights Group and David Bartlett from the Fatherhood Institute. As the review by Clapton (2009) has indicated there is a considerable amount of work to be done to mainstream materials about fathers across

the texts used on core curricula. The book *Contemporary Fathering: Theory, Policy and Practice* by a member of the Fathers Matter Project team (Featherstone, 2009) has been designed to contribute to this project as it explores the role of fathers in sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, history, social policy and social work.

## **Chapter Six**

## **Key texts and resources for social work educators**

Ashley, C., Featherstone, B., Roskill, C., Ryan, M., and White, S. (2006). *Fathers Matter: Research findings on fathers and their involvement with social care services*. London: Family Rights Group

Bellamy, J. L. (2009). A national study of male involvement among families in contact with the child welfare system. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(3), 255 - 262

Burgess, A. (2005). Fathers and Public Services. In K. Stanley (Editor). *Daddy Dearest? Active Fatherhood and Public Policy*. London: IPPR

Clapton, G. (2009). How and why social work fails fathers: Redressing an imbalance, social work's role and responsibility. *Practice: Social Work in Action*, 21(1), 17-34

Cornille, T. A., Barlow, L. O., and Cleveland, A. D. (2005). DADS family project: An experiential group approach to support fathers in their relationships with their children. *Social Work with Groups*, 28(2), 41-57

Crooks, C. V., Goodall, G. R., Baker, L. L., and Hughes, R. (2006). Preventing violence against women: Engaging the fathers of today and tomorrow. *Cognitive and Behavioural Practice*, 13, 82-93

Department of Health (2000). Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their families. London: The Stationery Office

Dudley, J. R. (2007). Helping nonresidential fathers: The case for teen and adult unmarried fathers. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 88(2), 171-181

Dufour, S., Lavergne, C., Larrivée, M-C., and Trocmé, N. (2008). Who are these parents involved in child neglect? A differential analysis by parent gender and family structure. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 141-156

Dutton, D. (2003). Treatment of assaultiveness. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 7, 7-28

English, D. J., Brummel, S., and Martens, P. (2009). Fatherhood in the child welfare system: Evaluation of a pilot project to improve father involvement. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 3 (3), 213 - 234

Fathers Direct (2005). *Fatherhood Quality Mark*. [online]. Available from: [www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/index) [1st September 2009]

Featherstone, B (2010). Writing fathers in but mothers out!!! *Critical Social Policy*, 30, 208 - 224

Featherstone, B (2009). *Contemporary Fathering: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press

Featherstone B., and Peckover, S. (2007). Letting them get away with it: Fathers, domestic violence and child welfare. *Critical Social Policy*, 27(2), 181-202

Guterman, N. B., Lee, Y., Lee, S. J., Waldfogel, J., and Rathouz, P. J. (2009). Fathers and maternal risk for physical child abuse. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(3), 277 - 290

Harne, L. (2008). Violent fathering and the risks to children. *Respect Newsletter*, October. London: Respect, pages 20-26

Hester, M., Westmarland, N., Gangoli, G., and Wilkinson, M. (2006). *Domestic Violence Perpetrators: Identifying Needs to Inform Early Intervention*. Newcastle: Northern Rock Foundation and Bristol University

Lam, W. K. K., Fals-Stewart, W., and Kelley, M. L. (2009). Parent training with behavioural couples therapy for fathers' alcohol use: Effects on substance use, parental relationship, parenting and CPS involvement. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(3), 243 - 254

Lee, S. J., Bellamy, J. L., and Guterman, N. B. (2009). Fathers, physical child abuse, and neglect: Advancing the knowledge base. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(3), 227 - 231

Malm, K., Murray, J., and Green, R. (2006). *What About The Dads? Child Welfare Agencies' Efforts To Identify, Locate And Involve Non-Resident Fathers*. Washington DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation.

Page, J., Whitting, G., & Mclean, C. (2008). A Review of How Fathers Can be Better Recognised and Supported Through DCSF Policy. Research Report DCSF-RR040. London: DCSF

Perel, G., and Peled, E. (2008). The fathering of violent men: Constriction and yearning. *Violence Against Women*, 14, 457-482

Pruett, M. K, Cowan, C. P., Cowan, P. A., and Pruett, K. (2009). Lessons learned from the Supporting Father Involvement study: A cross-cultural preventative intervention for low-income families with young children. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 35, 163-179

Rakil, M. (2006). Are men who use violence against their partners and children good enough fathers? The need for an integrated child perspective in treatment work with men. In: C. Humphreys, and N. Stanley (eds) *Domestic Violence and Child Protection*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers (pages 190-203)

Rivett, M. (2010). Working with violent male carers (Fathers and Stepfathers). In: B. Featherstone, C-A Hooper, J. Scourfield and J. Taylor (eds) *Gender and Child Welfare in Society*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell

Rivett, M., and Rees, A. (2008). Working with perpetrators of domestic violence. In: S. Green, E. Lancaster, and S. Feasey, (eds) *Addressing Offending Behaviour*. Cullompton, Devon: Wilan Publishing (pages 344-364)

- Rivett, M., and Kelly, S. (2006). 'From awareness to practice': Children, domestic violence and child welfare. *Child Abuse Review*, 15, 224-242
- Roskill, C., Featherstone, B., Ashley, C., and Haresnape, S. (2008). *Fathers Matter Volume 2: Further findings on fathers and their involvement with social care services*. London: Family Rights Group
- Ruxton, S. (2009). *Man Made: Men, Masculinities and Equality in Public Policy*. London: Coalition on Men and Boys
- Ryan, M. (2000). *Working with Fathers*. Abingdon: Radcliffe Medical Press (for the Department of Health)
- Salisbury, E. J., Henning, K., and Holdford, R. (2009). Fathering by partner-abusive men: Attitudes on children's exposure to interparental conflict and risk factors for child abuse. *Child Maltreatment*, 14(3), 232 - 242
- Scott, K. and Crooks, C. (2004). Effecting change in maltreating fathers: Critical principles for intervention planning. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11, 95-111
- Scourfield, J. (2006). The challenge of engaging fathers in the child protection process. *Critical Social Policy*, 26(2), 440-449
- Shea Hart, A., & Bagshaw, D., (2008). The idealised post-separation family in Australian family law: A dangerous paradigm in cases of domestic violence. *Journal of Family Studies*, 14(2-3), 291-309
- Smart, C., May, V., Wade, A., and Furniss, C. (2004). Residence and Contact Disputes in Court: Research Report 6/2003, Department for Constitutional Affairs
- Social Exclusion Unit (2008). Think Family: Improving the life chances of families at risk. London: Cabinet Office

Strega, S., Fleet, C., Brown, L., Dominelli, L., Callahan, M., and Walmsley, C. (2008). Connecting father absence and mother blame in child welfare policies and practice. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 705 – 716

SureStart (2005). *SureStart Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*. London: SureStart

## **APPENDIX 1: REVIEW OF LAW AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE ACADEMIC TEXTS**

A number of key law text books relating to social work practice have been reviewed to ascertain whether fathers are represented within the published content. Texts for review were identified via first year social work law module reading lists at the Universities of Bradford (BA Social Work Studies, Law module) and Huddersfield (BSc (Hons) Social Work, Law and Human Justice module). In addition, catalogue and manual shelf searches at each library were also completed to identify any additional texts not included on the module reading lists.

Each book was assessed by carrying out a detailed review of the index to identify relevant terms for follow up in the main text. Key relevant terms included father\*; men; male; paternal\*; masculinity\* (and their antonyms); and gender<sup>13</sup>. None of the texts reviewed listed ‘father(s)’ or ‘men’ in the main indices and just one text referred to ‘unmarried fathers’ in the index. Therefore the search was widened to identify index listings of the terms parent\* and family\* to assess whether the main text within these sections made reference to fathers and/or male carers.

The review failed to find any texts which exclusively focus on fathers and the law in respect of social work and child welfare, indicating a gap in the currently published texts. A number of texts in the general area of ‘family law’ were found to have small sections covering fathers’ rights in relation to paternity, parental responsibility, adoption and contact and some included examples of case law with regard to fathers

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<sup>13</sup> The truncate symbol (\*) was used to expand search terms where indicated to include all forms of a root word, e.g., parent\* will search for parent, parents, parental, parenting etc.

seeking Judicial review on decisions considered to be a breach of their human rights.

These texts are detailed below:

Bainham, A. (2005). *Children: The Modern Law*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Bristol: Family Law

Ball, C. and McDonald, A. (2002). *Law for Social Workers*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Aldershot: Arena

Brammer, A. (2007) *Social Work Law* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Harlow, Longman

Brayne, H., and Broadbent, G. (2002). *Legal Materials for Social Workers*. Oxford: University Press

Cull, L. and Roche, J. (Editors) (2001) *The Law and Social Work: Contemporary Issues for Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave

Dalrymple, J., and Burke, B. (2006). *Anti-Oppressive Practice: Social Care and the Law*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Davis, L. (2007). *See You in Court: A Social Worker's guide to Presenting Evidence in Care Proceedings*

Fortin J. (2005) *Children's Rights and the Developing Law* (2nd Edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Harris-Short, S. and Miles, J. (2007). *Family Law: Text, Cases and Materials*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Herring, J. (2007). *Family Law*, 3rd Edition. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited

Johns. R. (2005). *Using the Law in Social Work*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Exeter: Learning Matters

Kaganas, F., King, M., and Piper, C. (Editors) (1995). *Legislating for Harmony: Partnership under the Children Act 1989*. London: Jessica Kingsley

White, R., Broadbent, G. and Brown, K. (2007). *Law and the Social Work Practitioner: A Manual for Practice*. Exeter: Learning Matters

White, R., Carr, P. and Lowe, N. (2002) *The Children Act in Practice*, 3rd edition, London, Butterworths

Williams, J. (2008). *Child Law for Social Workers*. London: Sage