



# Cash or Carry?

## Fathers combining work and care in the UK

Adrienne Burgess &  
Jeremy Davies

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### Full report: introduction

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Reconciling provisioning and daily care of one's family is an important task for both men and women. The bulk of this report examines how contemporary British fathers manage such reconciliation, and the contexts (cultural, legislative, institutional, social and familial) framing their behaviour.

Almost all the findings presented here are drawn from studies of two-parent families, due to the paucity of research into fathers who parent alone or live separately from their children for part of the time. Nor does the research cited here distinguish between birth fathers and 'social' fathers (stepfathers, mothers' boyfriends, adoptive fathers, foster fathers, and so on). These are important research gaps.

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### *About the Fatherhood Institute*

The Fatherhood Institute (founded 1999, charity number 1075104) is a world leader in the fatherhood field, with a unique grasp of policy, practice and research. Our twin focus is child wellbeing and gender equality. Our research summaries, published free of charge on our much-visited website [www.fatherhoodinstitute.org](http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org), are drawn on and cited all over the world; and our trainings in father-inclusive practice (online and face-to-face) are highly praised and evaluated by service providers. We work directly with fathers and couples in community, education and health settings, and train local facilitators to undertake this work. We also work with fathers and mothers in the workplace (seminars/ webinars/company intranet materials) and offer HR support to organisations aiming to develop competitive edge and reduce gender inequalities at work, through recognising and supporting male employees' caring responsibilities.



### *About the Nuffield Foundation*

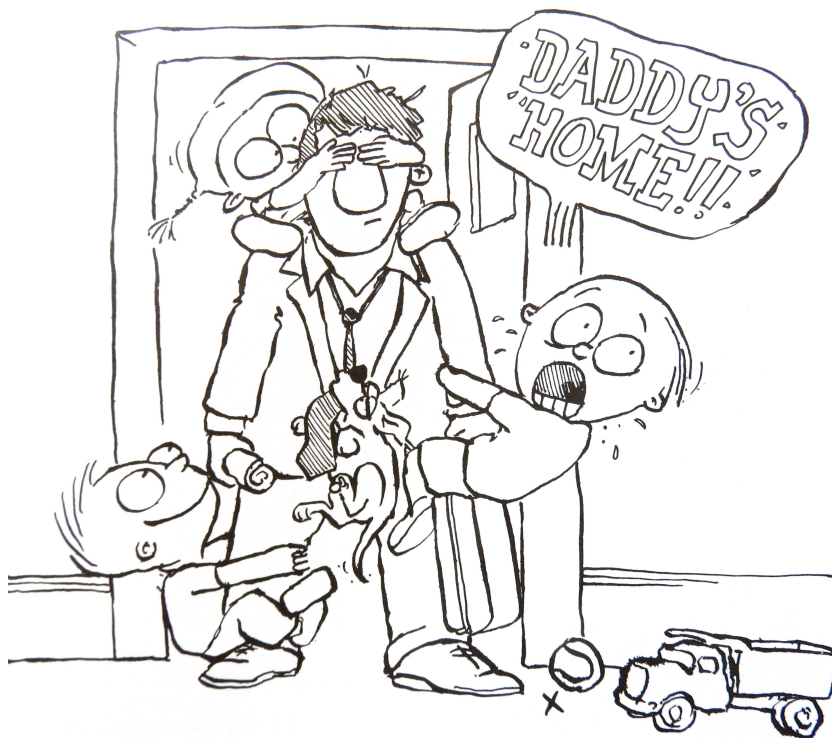
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## Section A: Child and family outcomes

### Father-care, children and families

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*“I think that it is quite positive that she will see that her mother is the main breadwinner – main money earner – and that her father has stayed in and sort of helped bring her up, so she . . . she will never think ‘well a man does one thing and a woman does another thing’. So... I think it’s sort of stripped away all the gender barriers which should be quite nice and good. (West et al., 2009: 212)*

In international research, a range of benefits including to gender equality, couple relationships, family stability, father-child relationships, child development and fathers’ health have been associated with fathers’ uptake of work/ family reconciliation policies, such as Paternity Leave<sup>1</sup>. For example, in Sweden it has been estimated that with each additional month of Parental Leave taken by the father the mother’s earnings increase by 6.7% (Johansson, 2010). And in Germany, when fathers have control over their own working time (‘hours flexibility’) their child’s mother earns more and advances in her career (Langner, 2017). Similarly, in the UK an online survey of 773 working fathers found 47% of those who worked flexibly and shared substantially in childcare duties reporting that their partner had progressed in her career since having children, compared with only 26% where the father had not worked flexibly or contributed much to childcare (Frith, 2016).

While associations don’t necessarily imply causality, some seem to be strong. For example, one study found that fathers who took formal leave were 25% more likely to change nappies and 19% more likely to feed their 8-12 month old babies and get up to them at night (Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007); and that this was unrelated to their pre-birth commitment to parenting or the time mothers or other family members spent with their child (Huerta et al., 2013). A substantial survey found that over half (56%) of British fathers who took Paternity Leave believe this was directly responsible for their greater involvement in the care of their children in the longer term; and 69% said it led to improvements in the quality of family life (Ellison et al., 2009).

In the UK as elsewhere, couple relationship satisfaction and stability have both been associated with the amount and frequency of childcare and housework that fathers undertake. British fathers of children born in 2000/ 2001 (the Millennium Cohort Study – the ‘MCS’) report higher family and couple satisfaction the more involved they are in housework and childcare, and the more they agree they ought to share this. Mothers are more satisfied too (Forste & Fox, 2012; Schober, 2012); and for both sexes doing less, or more, housework than one’s partner is associated with significantly lower satisfaction scores (Ausburg et al., 2015). Children may suffer too: when MCS fathers ‘allowed the mother to do all the home-based childcare instead of sharing’, their three-year-olds were more likely to have developmental or behavioural difficulties (Dex & Ward, 2007).

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2014/fi-research-summary-paternity-leave/>

Another of the great British birth cohort studies, the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (Alspac) which studied families of infants born in the West of England at the beginning of the 1990s, found that when mothers returned to work full-time when their children were very young, the fathers were significantly more involved in child rearing; and this more equal division of parenting duties had strong associations with positive child outcomes (Gregg & Washbrook, 2003). While the mothers spent significantly less time playing, caring, and cognitively stimulating their children, the children's fathers compensated (Lekfuangfu et al., 2015). Overall, Alspac children whose fathers had regularly looked after them solo, including during their first year, had better socio-emotional outcomes. Mothers were less depressed, too (Washbrook, 2007)<sup>2</sup>.

Another study found 20+ solo father-care hours per week associated with more positive 'emotional tone' in father-child play (Lewis et al., 2009), even though the fathers' occupational status was lower – and fathers' lower occupational status is usually connected with a more negative family climate (Conger et al., 2010) and harsh discipline (Atzaba-Poria & Pike, 2008). A review of a number of studies which drew on MCS data (Twamley et al., 2013), found positive links between fathers' involvement in childcare and children's mental well-being (Dex & Ward, 2007; Sullivan et al., 2010).

What about *full-time* solo care by fathers? Child outcomes should be worse because home-dad households are usually poorer and in more deprived neighbourhoods (Washbrook, 2007); and the fathers receive less support than similar mothers (Maisey et al., 2013). Unsurprisingly, then, slightly lower cognitive scores (George & Hansen, 2007) and language development (Jones & Smith, 2008) were found in MCS three-year-olds whose fathers had been their main carer; and slightly impaired 'school-readiness' in Alspac boys who had experienced that care pattern. However, Alspac girls did slightly better from full-time father-care than from other types of care, including full-time mother-care (Washbrook, 2007).

## Fathers' employment and child outcomes

*Somehow to me it just doesn't fit with my concept of a family in that you are not seeing your children when they're awake, you are not seeing them develop, you are not living through the joys of the things that they do. And you know, I guess you're not shaping their future and I think that's quite important.*  
(Mauthner et al., 2002: no page number)

What does the UK research tell us about relationships between aspects of fathers' employment and child outcomes? A tentative MCS finding (tentative because the information comes only from mothers and was not independently verified) is that in two-parent white

<sup>2</sup>This same study identified a link between higher father-participation and worse mental health in new mothers – other than when the fathers were full-time home-dads. It is possible that some insecure mothers may interpret higher input from their partner as an implicit criticism; or that some fathers may 'help more' when their baby's mother is distressed or disengaged.

families<sup>3</sup> where the father is the sole breadwinner, five-year-old girls are more likely to exhibit behavioural difficulties than in households where mothers are employed.

However, in households in which the mother is the sole breadwinner, five-year-old boys are more likely to exhibit difficulties. The best outcomes have been found in families in which children live with both their biological parents, and both those parents are employed (McMunn et al., 2012).

A few UK studies contribute to the international literature on possible links between the nature of fathers' employment (pre- or post- conception) and child health, pointing to associations between fathers' exposure at work to certain fertilisers (Raji, 2008) and infections (Pearce et al., 2004) and some childhood cancers. Other UK studies, however, find no such links (Fear et al., 2005; Fear et al., 2009; MacCarthy et al., 2010).

Being in work is associated with fathers' positive mental wellbeing (Twamley et al., 2013). Overall, this is likely to benefit their children. However, MCS children whose fathers had no access to flexible working or who had taken no leave (or only annual or sick leave) when they were born, exhibited more emotional and behavioural difficulties at age three (Dex & Ward, 2007).

Fathers who work unsocial hours may be marginalised in their families (Barnes et al., 2006), with regular weekend working particularly problematic (Hook & Wolfe, 2012). One study found daughters of fathers who worked unsocial hours more likely to be depressed and lacking in self-confidence<sup>4</sup> (Barton et al., 1998). Analysis of data from another of the large birth cohort studies, Growing Up in Scotland (GUS), found relatively poor father-child relationships reported by children whose fathers worked for small businesses or were self-employed (Parkes et al., 2017). We were unable to identify any studies that explored associations between child outcomes and fathers' insecure/ precarious employment – for example as 'workers' in the 'gig' economy.

Fathers' early morning working does not seem to prove negative (Barnes et al., 2006), and fathers' evening shift work is associated with the men spending an hour and fifteen minutes more per day than other fathers, looking after their children on their own and interacting with them - provided their children's mother is employed. If she is not employed, evening-working fathers spend less time with their children (Hook & Wolfe, 2013). Children whose fathers work non-standard hours show increases in their BMI (Body Mass Index) (Zilanawala et al., 2017).

Longer working hours by Alspac fathers when their children were babies was associated with behaviour problems in those children when aged 9-11 (Opondo et al., 2016). Analysis of British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) data found longer hours of work by fathers of

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<sup>3</sup> No information is available for children in black families.

<sup>4</sup> Boys may also have been negatively affected, but this study only measured depression (more common in girls) and not conduct problems (more common in boys).

preschoolers associated with increased risk of poor educational achievement – but also with reduced risk of psychological distress and unemployment in adulthood (Ermisch & Francesconi, 2001).

Very little UK research has asked children for their views. A small-scale study of families with two full-time working families found the children feeling their time tightly structured by their parents' employment unless one parent (father or mother – it did not matter which) worked from home, worked evenings or had a short commute to work (Harden et al., 2012). Another qualitative study found some children distressed when fathers often worked away from home or were frequently called out to work (McKee et al., 2003).

## Fathers' unemployment and child outcomes

*The instability and feeling that I couldn't provide for my family. Very, very traditional and very weird to feel that in myself because I always thought I was quite a liberal modern man (amusement) and suddenly you feel very upset that you can't provide for your family.... feeling I was kind of being dependent on them rather than they being dependent on me. (Shirani et al., 2012: 278)*

The association of fathers' unemployment with child outcomes has been far more thoroughly studied. Continuous/ repeated unemployment has been associated with a 'scarring' effect – for example, in relation to teenagers' (particularly girls') self-esteem and happiness. This effect may last even when their father is re-employed (Zwysen, 2015). Other studies, too, have found fathers' persistent worklessness associated with a range of negative child outcomes, but often the effects may be less from the father's unemployment than from multiple disadvantages in those same families (McMunn et al., 2001). Nevertheless, issues such as the unemployed father's loss of status in his child's eyes, his psychological response to unemployment (Warin et al., 1999a) and loss of family income all seem to have small effects (Andersen, 2013). While fathers' worklessness is sometimes associated with their sons' worklessness, this is not inevitable: labour market conditions and child characteristics also play a part (Macmillan, 2011). A father becoming unemployed has been linked to a slight negative effect on very young children's happiness, although not immediately – perhaps because father and child tend to spend more time together in the first year (Powdthavee & Vernoit, 2013; Zwysen, 2015). And when fathers of teenagers decide to leave the labour force, this is actually associated with their children's greater happiness (Powdthavee & Vernoit, 2012, 2013).

Unemployed fathers (like unemployed mothers) tend towards either unusually high or unusually low engagement with their children in 'developmental activities' – reading, music, sports etc. (Smith, 2010). And if an unemployed father has high aspirations for his children and is engaged in their schooling, they may do well (Macmillan, 2011). Unemployed fathers undertake a lot more childcare than full-time employed fathers, as long as their children's mother is employed (Washbrook, 2007).



## Section B: The ‘gender culture’: attitudes, beliefs and institutional practices

### Introduction

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*What seemed a fairly stupid thing to me, even then shocked me, that other people couldn't sort of visualise, well you don't have to be a woman to look after children. (West et al., 2009: 212)*

Research, policy and practice often adopt an allegedly gender neutral approach (Haas & Russell, 2015) to fathers' engagement in paid work, domestic activities and service provision (Clapton, 2009). So-called gender ‘neutrality’ is in fact usually gender-biased: policies and practices framed to meet the needs of women are assumed to meet the needs of men, who are regarded as no-different-from-women. Thus, for example, when fathers do not utilise ‘family friendly’ employment policies or fail to engage with services developed for ‘parents’ (but framed with mothers in mind), their behaviour is regarded as evidence of revealed preferences (Browne, 2015) – that is, lack of interest.

By contrast, in this Report we take a gendered approach. We consider fathers' aspirations and behaviour as being rooted in traditional structures of gendered social institutions, especially government and the labour market, which assume that fathers have limited caregiving responsibilities (Haas & Russell, 2015). We also explore other factors, such as public attitudes, which are likely, in line with social impact theory (Latané, 1981), to influence fathers' behaviour.

The constraints and opportunities which frame fathers' (and mothers') work/ family ‘choices’ (McRae, 2003) comprise what has been called the ‘gender culture’ (Gasser, 2015). A ‘progressive’ or ‘egalitarian’ gender culture supports a dual earner model in which both partners have career trajectories, while a ‘traditional’ gender culture supports a male primary earner model (Kil & Neels, 2014). Swiss researchers have formalised indicators of these two approaches into an Index, which has proven to be a high-ranking predictor of fathers' time spent on interactive care (Gasser, 2015).

### Cultural messaging

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*Gender stereotypes (in advertising) have the potential to cause harm by inviting assumptions about adults and children that might negatively restrict how they see themselves and how others see them. (ASA, 2017: 5)*

Some UK researchers have observed that there appears to be more frequent, casual reference to the image of caring fathers in everyday culture via advertising images and depictions of sporting and other icons (O'Brien, 2005; Segal, 2007) but this has not been systematically studied, and a 2017 report from the Advertising Standards Authority pointed to widespread

representation of men and fathers as bumbling and incompetent in the domestic sphere (ASA, 2017) – confining women to the kitchen while excluding men from it.

Parenting guides (Gregory & Milner, 2008) and parenting magazines (Sunderland, 2000, 2006) cast fathers in a clearly secondary role to mothers and emphasise men's alleged lack of 'natural' parenting skills. In young children's picture books, parents' behaviour is overwhelmingly gender stereotyped. In these books fathers are also significantly less likely to appear than mothers, to be mentioned by characters or narrators, to be depicted in or around the home or involved in any kind of domestic activity, to appear with their children or be involved in physical contact with them or be portrayed as expressing any emotion. The finding that fathers (when they did appear) were not significantly less likely than mothers to engage in stereotypically maternal touching (hugging and kissing) and were no more likely to engage in stereotypical paternal touching (tickling and swinging) led the researchers to hope for a slight loosening of the grip of traditional stereotypes (Adams et al., 2011).

An analysis of high-profile 'family' films found some fathers undertaking more 'maternal' roles, although other gender stereotypes remained in place: mothers did not take up paternal roles (Chang-Kredl, 2015). In video games, traditional hegemonic patriarchal values were inherent in all the representations of fatherhood studied (Lucat, 2017).

An analysis of newspaper articles about home-dads found caring fatherhood represented as a possible form of masculinity. However, almost invariably the traditional hegemonic masculine ideal remained a 'forceful presence' (Locke, 2014). Analysis of family advertising images in *Good Housekeeping* magazine from 1950 to 2010 found fathers first depicted as breadwinners (to the 1980s) and then, to the year 2000, in recreational mode. Between 2001 and 2010, however, no fathers appeared in family advertising in *Good Housekeeping* magazine (Marshall et al., 2014).

While some celebrity fathers, notably David Beckham, have featured positively in the cultural framing of fatherhood (Gregory & Milner, 2011), 'serious' men, such as politicians, who embrace active fatherhood may be ridiculed (Locke, 2014); or their fatherhood may be invisible<sup>5</sup>.

Does any of this actually influence fathers' beliefs, aspirations or behaviour? The Advertising Standards Authority report is clear that repeated gender stereotyping has powerful impacts (ASA, 2017). Overseas researchers concur (Kuo & Ward, 2016) and a small British study found father-role-models in the press and public life appearing to influence working fathers' thinking (Gregory & Milner, 2008).

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<sup>5</sup>The announcement that former Chancellor, George Osborne (still a constituency MP) was to take on a sixth job as editor of the *Evening Standard* <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4323582/George-Osborne-appointed-EDITOR-Evening-Standard.html> was met with incredulity. His 'seventh' job (father of two teenage children) was not mentioned.

## The gender culture in services

*There is a very big difference in the way that services treat men and women in (local area) . . . it is almost like you're excluded from this caring relationship that you have with (daughter – a child with disabilities) and I find that really quite annoying because as I say we have done it 50:50 from the beginning. (Towers, 2009: 55)*

In maternity services, fathers are constructed not as parents but as 'bystanders' (Locock & Alexander, 2006). Are they regarded as outsiders in other services? Yes. In Early Years this has been reported across local authorities (Page et al., 2008) and identified in national evaluations of family/ children's centres in England and Wales over many years (Ghate et al., 2000; Lloyd et al., 2003; Poole et al., 2015; Tanner et al., 2012)<sup>6</sup>. Focus on mothers' caregiving, generally to the exclusion of fathers', is also evident in a range of other service sectors<sup>7</sup>, not only because fathers are assumed to have no or limited caregiving responsibilities, but because their contribution to the health and psychosocial well-being of their families is not recognised.

As in practice, so in policy. Clapton (2009) found 'maternalism' permeating government policy in both Scotland and England. His subsequent review of materials promoting services for children and families to Scottish parents, found most of the visual images depicting mothers-with-children and most of the written messages addressed solely to mothers – despite the fact that 80% of Scottish children live with both parents (Clapton, 2014) and that the Scottish Government's parenting strategy had advised providers to seek to engage fathers (Scottish Government, 2012).

Inspection frameworks, such as Ofsted, can have impact. No inspection framework in health, education or family services in Scotland, England, Wales or Northern Ireland requires practitioners to engage with fathers, or even to record information about them. Fathers have been an optional target group for Children's Centres in England and Wales, alongside groups such as Travellers and Young Parents (Ofsted, 2015) – a surprising perspective, given that while those groups are generally very small or local, almost all children in families reached by Children's Centres are co-resident with their father or in regular contact with him (Maisey et al., 2013).

In policy, interest in fathers 'comes and goes' dissipating after bursts of interest and activity (O'Brien et al., 2015). It is the same in practice: in its work with service providers across 17

<sup>6</sup> While most Children's Centres identified fathers as a priority group locally (Poole et al., 2015; Tanner et al., 2012), engagement with them was sparse (Maisey et al., 2013) and limited to occasional interventions (Goff et al., 2013).

<sup>7</sup> 'Gendering' of services is also found in young parenthood (Davies & Neale, 2015); adoption (Clapton & Walsh, 2013); child disability (Towers, 2009); child and adolescent mental health, including in 'family' therapy (Walters, 2011); health visiting (Bateson et al., 2017; Donetto et al., 2013; Whitelock, 2016) – some of this related to deficits in training (Oldfield & Carr, 2017); educational psychology (Hart, 2011); family learning (Macleod, 2008), schools (Cullen et al., 2011); and behavioural parent training (Manby, 2005; Mockford & Barlow, 2004) – and see page 11 of this report for social work practice.

years, the Fatherhood Institute has found services with good father engagement one year, reverting to mother-focus the next, often when a particular individual leaves the staff. The Institute has found the knowledge base of the children's workforce in relation to engaging fathers to be poor overall; and strategies adopted specifically for them (e.g. fathers' groups) may have the effect of excluding them further from mainstream engagement.

In social work, the construction of fathers is dark. In theory and in training materials fathers are presented variously as a 'threat', 'absent', 'irrelevant' and/ or 'no different from women', with the notion of a caring or vulnerable father entirely missing (Clapton, 2009; Scourfield, 2001). This may contribute to social workers' well documented failure to engage with them (Ashley et al., 2006; Brandon et al., 2009; Featherstone, 2009; 2008; Gilligan et al., 2012; Osted, 2011; Scourfield et al., 2014; Skramstad & Skivenes, 2015), including in Scotland (Smithers, 2012) and Northern Ireland (Ewart-Boyle et al., 2015). Failure to engage with fathers can have disastrous consequences: practitioners may overburden mothers and overestimate, underestimate and fail to assess risks posed by fathers and father-figures (Brandon et al., 2009; Featherstone et al., 2014; NSPCC, 2015; Ofsted, 2011). Race and immigration status may intersect with sex to render black fathers particularly overlooked or viewed with suspicion, to such a degree that child and parental rights may be infringed (Gupta & Featherstone, 2016).

An important element in the gender culture is the extremely gendered nature of the workforce in almost all services for children and families, which sends out a clear signal that children are women's work. In addition, in these services, there is a perennial failure to link men as fathers and men as workers with children (Cameron, 2006). The gender culture also shapes, and is shaped by, the beliefs and behaviour of individuals in the workforce. Subtleties in communication may determine whether fathers will engage. Recordings made of telephone calls by childcare workers to parents (mainly mothers) with the aim of speaking with the child's other parent, found the callers unwittingly anticipating a 'no' response and communicating assumptions about the non-relevance of fathers (Symonds, 2015).

## The gender culture: parenting leave design

*If the state doesn't demand it then the corporate sector won't do it unless they see a market advantage. Social policies only ever come in from the state – once they are in things start to change slowly.*  
(Browne, 2015: 45)

A major means by which a government shapes the gender culture is through the design of its parenting leave system: for example, in Germany, following the introduction of paid Parental Leave months reserved for fathers (a 'father quota'), grandparents became far more positive about fathers' caregiving (Unterhofer & Wrohlich, 2017).

In the UK, parenting leave design is strongly 'maternalist': employed British fathers are entitled to two weeks' paid Paternity Leave; mothers, by contrast, to 52 weeks Maternity Leave (39 of them paid) plus holiday accrued during that period. No British father has a

statutory entitlement to paid Parental Leave on his own account<sup>8</sup>. Thus the UK's parenting leave design positions the mother as the only significant carer<sup>9</sup>.

This has begun to cause concern. In 2013, the UK's Department for Business Innovation and Skills criticised its own parenting leave design as gender biased, inflexible and failing to promote shared caregiving (BIS, 2013). Leading international feminists describe the UK system, and others like it, as anti-gender-equality (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2015); and the European Court of Human Rights has begun to recognise that achieving equality necessitates affording fathers the same parenting leave rights as mothers: in *Markin v Russia* (2013) 56 E.H.R.R. 8 (European Court of Human Rights) it held that the provision of long paid parenting leave in the military to mothers not fathers had the 'effect of perpetuating gender stereotypes disadvantageous both to women's careers and to men's family life' (Fredman, 2016)<sup>10</sup>. In the UK, a father's claims of direct and indirect sex discrimination and victimisation due to his company's policy of full-salary pay for 14 weeks for mothers v. two weeks for fathers, was upheld by the Employment Tribunal (Employment Judge Rogerson, 2017)<sup>11</sup>.

While legislatures may be flexing their muscles, it is clear that policy makers in Britain regard care by fathers as non-significant: when manifestos were produced ahead of the 2015 election, professional childcare was the topic on which the political parties sought to out-do each other, with father-care/ parenting leave design entirely missing from the debate<sup>12</sup>. This was in sharp contrast to the Swedish general election in 2014, where extension of the 'father quota'

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<sup>8</sup> Each employed father (and mother) in the UK is eligible for eighteen weeks *unpaid* Parental Leave (an EU entitlement), of which a maximum of four weeks can be taken in any one year. This entitlement is not widely publicised. The nearest British fathers get to paid Parental Leave is when, under very limited circumstances, their partner is permitted to transfer some of her Maternity Leave and Pay to him - a system called Shared Parental Leave (SPL). This is a misnomer: SPL is in fact Transferred Maternity Leave. Internationally, the term 'Parental Leave' is used for leave to which either a mother or father is individually entitled on his or her own account.

<sup>9</sup> Other UK policies confirming the mother as the 'caring' parent include only the mother's name being required on the birth certificate when parents are unmarried; and the benefits and child maintenance system recognising only one 'primary' carer.

<sup>10</sup> See also (Fredman, 2014; Timmer, 2011, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> A game change would be a successful legal challenge under equality law in the courts, not just in an employment tribunal. This is being mooted as a possibility <http://theconversation.com/legal-battles-loom-on-shared-parental-leave-from-fathers-not-getting-equal-benefits-5162>

<sup>12</sup> In the subsequent 'snap' General Election (2017) the three main parties' manifestos included perfunctory mention of leave for fathers. A Parental Leave quota for fathers was not suggested by any party, and the topic of any parenting leave for fathers was not raised publicly.

element of Parental Leave was a central issue, taken up by all the main parties and discussed in key election statements (Miller & Dermott, 2015)<sup>13</sup>.

The most progressive parenting leave design is one which, in addition to Paternity Leave to be taken at the time of the birth, reserves a substantial period of well-paid Parental Leave for fathers to care for their children ‘home alone’ in the first year. Why is this important? Firstly, care-taking patterns established early on are moderately likely to endure (Norman et al., 2014); and secondly, while working mothers of 10-month-olds prefer within-family care (Barnes et al., 2006), once the child has passed their first birthday Australian research has found them more relaxed about non-family care (MacCurdy, 2015). Thus, if the father does not play a substantial care-taking role early on, he may never do so. Nor is it useful for father and mother to take leave together: it is usually after fathers have cared for their children solo for extended periods that gender roles are transformed (Bünning, 2017; O’Brien & Wall, 2017).

*Well my wife would definitely like that. ... I think as an initial period it might help her psychologically to leave the child with me and go back to work, and then at a later stage to be able to leave the child with somebody else, when he's a little older. (Thompson et al., 2005: 90)*

Of all countries’, Iceland’s parenting leave design most nearly promotes gender equality. Iceland provides three months relatively well paid leave to mothers and the same to fathers, plus three months for the family to share-as-they-will (Eydal & Gíslason, 2016). Although this leave can be used over two years and parents can, in theory, take the time off together in practice most Icelandic mothers and fathers use their ‘stay home’ entitlement separately early on<sup>14</sup>.

Iceland’s system is helping to deliver gender equality<sup>15</sup>. In 2012, Icelandic fathers took an average of 87 days paid leave (176 days were taken by mothers), down from an earlier average of 100 days. The fall in fathers’ uptake was due to severe cuts in Parental Pay rates following the 2008 economic crisis, illustrating the necessity of relatively high wage replacement to fathers’ uptake. However, Iceland’s Parental Pay levels are gradually being restored; and influential committees have proposed an extension and revised design of Parental Leave to 12 months: five for the mother, five for the father and two to be shared. No commitment to this has yet been made by the government (Eydal & Gíslason, 2016).

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<sup>13</sup> Sweden’s fathers’ quota has been extended to three months, by taking away a month from the family quota, so in Sweden the 13 months’ well paid Parental Leave available per child, now comprises three reserved months for fathers and three for mothers, with seven months for families to share-as-they-please (though with the ‘default’ that these be equally shared).

<sup>14</sup> In Iceland, state-funded nursery care is not normally available to children under 18 months of age.

<sup>15</sup> [http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/rankings/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1491813369.8755269050598144531250](http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/rankings/?doing_wp_cron=1491813369.8755269050598144531250)

While early, well-paid father quotas are necessary to deliver gender equality, on their own they are not sufficient: Germany and Japan both offer paid father quotas but, due to other factors in their leave design<sup>16</sup>, have not achieved substantial take up by fathers.

## The gender culture: money matters

*We did talk at one time about whether I would take a reduction in hours and Fiona would work, but because I happened to be on a higher wage it made economic sense not to.*

*(Father quoted by Hatter et al., 2002: 38)*

When wage replacement is generous, more mothers take leave/ longer leave (O'Brien et al., 2015) as do more fathers (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2015). Thus the 'parenting pay' offer influences the gender culture, through encouraging or discouraging take up by one sex or the other.

In the UK, the first six weeks of Statutory Maternity Leave are paid at a significant level (90% of earnings, without a 'cap'<sup>17</sup>). Statutory Maternity Pay then drops to £140.98 weekly for the next 33 weeks, the same level as Statutory Paternity and Shared Parental Leave (SPL) Pay. This long and mainly-poorly-paid leave supports a traditional gender culture, by discouraging the higher earner (usually the father) from taking leave (Castro-García & Pazos-Moran, 2015).

Employers' 'top ups' of statutory pay are significant in shaping the gender culture. No survey has gathered information on remuneration levels for the very few fathers who are eligible to take Parental Leave<sup>18</sup>. As for Paternity Leave, surveys have found between 54% (Sharp, 2017),

<sup>16</sup> Germany introduced two non-transferable 'daddy months' in 2007 (paid at 67% of earnings) to try to increase take up of Parental Leave by fathers. However, possibly partly because of the relatively low wage reimbursement level, and partly because the family is 'rewarded' for the fathers' take up with an additional two months' leave (which mothers can take), German fathers' overall Parental Leave share for children born in 2013 was still only 8.2%; and since Germany offers no statutory Paternity Leave, and the 'father quota' can be taken while mothers are at home (Blum et al., 2016), it is likely that much of the German fathers' so-called 'Parental' Leave is taken at the time of the birth and is, in effect, Paternity Leave. In Japan, while fathers have an individual, non-transferable, entitlement of eleven months paid leave to be taken in the first year, uptake remains negligible. This may be due partly to cultural factors, partly to low wage replacement, and partly to the fact that the mothers are also entitled to eleven months paid leave in that first year. Thus the family is not disadvantaged if the father does not take his leave (Fatherhood Institute, 2016). Japan's level of gender inequality is one of the worst in the developed world, and continues to deteriorate (World Economic Forum, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> When there is a 'cap' on remuneration, it means that above a certain level, the amount paid does not increase. In the UK, an employer can reclaim from the State 90% of his employee's salary during the first six weeks of her leave – however high that salary level is. In most countries, a 'cap' operates.

<sup>18</sup> Either because their partner has transferred some of her Maternity Leave to them, or because their employer offers its own scheme, or because the employer pays for the unpaid 'EU' leave.

75% (BIS, 2014) and 81% (Chanfreau et al., 2011) of employers topping up the low Statutory Pay level: Chanfreau et al. (2011) found 39% of fathers receiving their full salary for some of their two weeks, 33% for the full two weeks and 9% for more than two weeks. The 19% of fathers in that study whose employers did not top up Statutory Paternity Pay worked mainly in small private companies, in manufacturing or in workplaces where there were few other 'family friendly' benefits.

While employer top-ups to Paternity Pay are to be welcomed, they are so minor in comparison with employer top-ups to the much longer Maternity Pay (BIS, 2014; Sharp, 2017)<sup>19</sup> that employers' remuneration activities at best confirm, and at worst exacerbate, traditionalism. A survey of 100 UK companies (My Family Care, 2014) found 21% of employers reimbursing mothers for six months or more, almost all at 100% of salary; and another 29% topping up for between three and six months at or near 100%. Among those same companies, only three (3%) granted fathers more than two weeks Paternity Leave at full pay. A more recent survey of 341 UK companies found only 5% leaving Maternity Pay at the Statutory Minimum: the other 95% enhanced it, often to a quite significant extent. Among those same companies, however, only 54% enhanced Paternity Pay for even part of the two weeks, with a mere 4.4% offering a longer period of paid Paternity Leave (Sharp, 2017)<sup>20</sup>.

A national Gender Pay Gap (GPG), with women earning substantially less than men, contributes to traditionalism through incentivising caring by the lower paid partner, (who is more likely to be female) and earning by the higher paid (who is more likely to be male). The extent of the GPG between mothers and fathers is far wider than the GPG between women and men, and is widest where mothers are better educated and qualified (Dias et al., 2016). And the earnings gap in couple families leaves responsibility for breadwinning squarely with the majority of fathers: in families with at least one working parent, only one mother in five (22%) brings home even half the family income (Cory & Stirling, 2015), a figure that rises to around one third in households in which both parents are in paid work.

In low income employment there is no Gender Pay Gap in rates of pay (Gershuny, 2009) and low income mothers are more likely than other mothers to earn a higher percentage of the couple's income (Cory & Stirling, 2015). Even so, extensive part-time working by mothers in low income families (Charles & James, 2005) effects a gender gap in earned income there, too. The extent to which policy makers grasp the importance of fathers' greater involvement in caring in reducing the Gender Pay Gap ranges from the substantial (Women & Equalities Committee, 2016) to the minimal (Government Equalities Office, 2016).

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<sup>19</sup> See also <http://mapper.uk.com/index.php/category/a-z-list/>

<sup>20</sup> Topping up Paternity Pay would not place a significant burden on employers, nor would it be burdensome for the Exchequer to pay an element of Parental Leave for fathers at a higher rate (Women & Equalities Committee, 2016). Over a recent two-year period in England and Wales, only 5% of male employees had babies born, affecting only 37% of workplaces. And in over half of these workplaces, just one birth was recorded (BIS, 2014).



Individual taxation (the norm in the UK) supports the dual-earner model, while transferable tax allowances support traditional gender roles by enabling the higher earner to benefit from the lower earner's Personal (Tax) Allowance. The introduction (2015) of the Marriage Allowance, whereby a very low earning partner can transfer some of their Personal Allowance to their higher earning partner<sup>21</sup>, could in theory signal a return to traditionalism. However, since few couples are eligible, take up low (Sweet, 2017) and the financial reward minimal, the impact on the gender culture is unlikely to prove significant.

In Child Benefit policy the amount of Child Benefit a family can claim is reduced when one partner earns more than £50,000 a year<sup>22</sup>. In some families, this may promote egalitarianism by 'nudging' couples to increase the secondary earner's income when the higher earner's income approaches the £50,000 ceiling. The new Tax-Free Childcare system may also 'nudge' families towards the dual-earner model: it pays more than the Childcare Vouchers system<sup>23</sup> but requires there to be two earners in the family<sup>24</sup>.

Universal affordable childcare is perceived as progressive in terms of gender equality because it supports mothers of young children into work. However, paradoxically, it can re-enforce traditionalism if a father does less childcare in his family because other women are paid to do it<sup>25</sup>; or if the family's perception is that the cost of childcare is set against the mother's earnings alone. No father can work, unless his childcare needs are met – a point that often passes unnoticed due to mothers' routine employment sacrifice. If, conceptually, half the childcare costs were set against each parent's earnings (or a higher percentage against the higher earner's) the narrative relating to universal affordable childcare would not reinforce traditionalism.

## The gender culture in the workplace

*The organisation has loads of great policies, gets loads of awards, but for people like me, well I am told I can't take advantage of them [because I am needed in the office]. (Gatrell, 2014: 481)*

The extent to which a workplace culture reinforces or challenges traditionalism in gender roles is affected firstly by company policies; secondly by the organisation's capacity and willingness to implement them; thirdly by the extent to which the policies are actively and effectively promoted to men; and fourthly by the awareness, attitudes and behaviour of

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/marriage-allowance-guide/how-it-works>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/ccmmanual/CCM18320.htm>

<sup>23</sup> Single parents and couple families with only one earner are eligible for this lower-rewards benefit.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.ft.com/content/a5807022-0f18-11e7-a88c-50ba212dce4d>

<sup>25</sup> At most only 2% of the early years workforce is male <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/nurseryworld/opinion/1155693/time-for-action-on-men-in-childcare>

workers, managers and employers. Line managers' attitudes and behaviour may be particularly influential (Burnett et al., 2013; Hatter et al., 2002).

Managers, employers and older employees tend to hold more traditional views (Burnett et al., 2013); and professional/ managerial fathers are expected to demonstrate high work orientation through long hours working (Gatrell & Cooper, 2008). Negativity by non-parents to fathers' leave-taking is reported (Burnett et al., 2013); and the working patterns and definitions of success among 'influencers' (usually senior males) tend to be traditional (Cornelius & Skinner, 2008). A qualitative UK study found line managers aligning their own perspective with that of their employer rather than employee fathers (Seddon, 2010).

In the accounting industry, line managers expected mothers, but not fathers, to arrange their working hours to suit the needs of their young families (Smithson et al., 2004). And a study that used a 'vignette' method to assess managers' attitudes to fictitious fathers and mothers with equivalent skills and qualifications seeking part-time employment, found the fathers regarded with greater suspicion and judged less committed to their work (Kelland, forthcoming, 2017).

Some organisations with positive policies may be reluctant to promote them to men, or overlook the need to do so. While a study found almost all fathers aware of their right to Statutory Paternity Leave (ILM, 2014), many are unaware of other policies or perceive them to be aimed at women and not at the main breadwinner (Burnett et al., 2013; Hatter et al., 2002; TUC, 2017).

For work/ family benefits to challenge maternalism they must be differentially promoted to men. A Belgian employer who did this recorded a dramatic increase in male employees taking up Parental Leave (EU, 2008). And evaluation needs to 'drill down' into the detail. For example, when flexible working was offered to male and female employees in accountancy firms, both sexes availed themselves of the opportunity to a similar extent. However, analysis revealed that women who worked flexibly or part-time typically did so to facilitate caring commitments at around age thirty, damaging their career prospects. Men who worked flexibly typically did so ten years later, and for a range of reasons, with no negative impact on career/ salary as seniority had been achieved. This gendered pattern of take up left the Gender Pay Gap in the organisation, and management attitudes, unchanged (Smithson et al., 2004).

When male employees hold exaggerated beliefs about the extent to which company practice is stacked against them, this in itself may contribute to traditionalism. One study found fathers assuming, erroneously, that flexibility was far more available to mothers (Gatrell et al., 2014). And in a large survey, 73% of employees believed that the career of any man who took even one day of Paternity Leave would be 'slowed down' (ILM, 2014). Whether this would be the case seems unlikely: while Maternity Leave is perceived by employers as disruptive because of its length, Paternity Leave (being so much shorter) is not (Jordan et al., 2014). And while one in eight of the 93% of hospital doctors who had taken Paternity Leave felt their employer was not supportive, only a small minority reported being pressured to forego the Leave or made to feel a nuisance for taking it (Gordon & Szram, 2013). A small qualitative

study of non-medical fathers who had taken Paternity Leave reported positive or neutral employer attitudes; and none felt taking the leave had damaged their careers (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017). None of these surveys reported on employer attitudes to fathers' taking Parental Leave. A very substantial survey (BSA, 2002) found fathers just as likely as mothers to report a positive response from their supervisor if they have to take time off for family reasons at short notice; and they are less likely than the mothers to be penalised financially for this (MacInnes, 2005).

In workplaces there is often substantial support for fathers' leave-taking in principle: over 80% of both managers and employees surveyed by the ILM felt mothers and fathers of newborns should be able to share a year's leave (ILM, 2014). Another survey found employers regarding paid parenting leave for fathers as 'morally right' (Jordan et al., 2014). Of course theoretical support does not automatically translate into practical support: a qualitative study of top executives found many expressing sympathy for fathers in the upcoming generation while expressing a sense of helplessness to effect supportive institutional change (Browne, 2015).

*"What would I wish for the next generation? A lifestyle which was more balanced." (Head of a Global Publishing Corporation) . . . "Take more time to reflect on what's really important to you – that is my biggest regret." (Head of an International Media Group) (Browne, 2015: 44)*

## The gender culture: public attitudes

In 2013, marketing communications company J. Walter Thompson Intelligence asked 500 adult British men to identify 'the primary things that define men today'. Among their responses, 'providing financial support for family' (51%) was rated by the men barely ahead of 'parenting abilities' (49%) and 'providing emotional support for family' (46%) (JWT, 2013).

Nevertheless, the male breadwinner ideal remains powerful, and not only among fathers. A study of men with tenuous/vulnerable links to the labour market found them exposed to charges, by themselves and others, of not being a 'good' father (Braun et al., 2011). Studies have identified nuanced attitudes among men: in South Wales, younger men were pragmatic about work-life choices and mainly unsupportive of traditional gendered divisions of labour (Charles & Harris, 2007).

*I think it would be less important if I lost my job ... Because [my wife's] approach to being out of work would be far more severe than mine. I'm far more mellow . . . [My wife] would walk the streets to get a job. That's the way she is. (Charles & James, 2005: 490)*

In Plymouth the 'male as provider' doctrine shaped many family choices. However, only a handful of men (most of them older) supported the traditional division of labour in principle (Chamberlain, 2004). A large survey found African Caribbean men holding the most egalitarian attitudes (Kan & Laurie, 2016); and qualitative research has revealed that in UK Bangladeshi Muslim, Pakistani Muslim, Gujarati Hindu and Punjabi Sikh communities, there

is now strong support by both sexes for high levels of early father-involvement (Chowbey et al., 2013).

Analyses of the large British Social Attitudes Surveys (BSA) reveal both progressive and traditional attitudes. While the percentage of the general population who believe it is the man's role to earn and the woman's to care has declined from 49% in 1984 to 13% in 2012 (with only 4% of 18-25 year olds expressing that view in 2012), 38% of the general public still think that when a woman<sup>26</sup> marries/ co-habits, she should not be obliged to contribute to household income (Scott & Clery, 2013). This has shown only a modest (11%) change since 1989, when 47% of the population held that view (Norman et al., 2017).

Attitudes and beliefs relating to motherhood can define fatherhood. For example, if young children are believed to need care from their mother above everyone else, father-care will be perceived as optional or even damaging, and traditionalism will prevail. According to BSA (2012), 95% of the population believe a pre-schooler will be damaged if their mother works full-time; and 37% think *any* working by a preschooler's mother will damage the child. However, whereas in 1989 only 6% of those questioned were unwilling to commit to a view either way, by 2012 the 'non-committals' had risen to 17% (Scott & Clery, 2013). This 'indifference response' is a marker of non-traditionalism (O'Reilly et al., 2014)<sup>27</sup>. When the same question was asked in the European Social Survey, this also recorded a high number of 'non-committals' among the UK respondents, as well as a small but significant minority who believed that full-time working by their father damages young children (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Another pan-European survey (the European Values Survey) asked, at two time-points (1999 and 2008/9), whether respondents believed fathers to be 'as well suited to look after their children as mothers'. In Britain, already-positive attitudes became even more positive across that decade, with less-educated men no less likely than better educated men to endorse the statement<sup>28</sup> (Kruse, 2017).

The first and only BSA question about father-care was asked in the 2012 survey when a number of work/ family scenarios for families with preschoolers were listed, and respondents were asked to choose the 'best' and 'worst' arrangements. Included in these was the 'home-dad' option. This received the lowest approval rating of all: not one respondent judged it the 'best' option; and more than 10% judged it the 'worst'. However, 20% refused to say either

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<sup>26</sup> Not just mothers - this question was asked about women.

<sup>27</sup> It has been observed that the measures used in BSA and other similar surveys (e.g. the MCS and the BHPS) are not good at capturing egalitarian attitudes, but tend to accentuate, and probably inflate, traditional outlooks (Schober & Scott, 2012). Perhaps it is time for the measures to be reviewed.

<sup>28</sup> Both fathers and non-fathers were equally positive. Among women, being a parent and being better educated predicted more progressive views.

way (Scott & Clery, 2013)<sup>29</sup>; and because respondents were not asked to rate all the options but only to choose the ‘best’ and the ‘worst’, some may have felt positive about the home-dad option but been unable to indicate that because their first preference was for another care pattern.

*I've noticed since I've been on leave that if I go to the supermarket during the week there are people that can't quite fathom out, there are kind of quizzical looks . . . it's almost as if they're looking at you thinking, "hang on, why aren't you at work? Why are you pushing a little baby around?" "Where's the mother?" (Shirani et al., 2012: 280)*

## The gender culture: parents' attitudes

What do *parents* think? In 2000/2001 more than 90% of MCS fathers in couple families and nearly as many mothers, not only thought that fathers should be closely involved in their children's upbringing, but that they should be *as closely involved as mothers* (Calderwood et al., 2005). The BHPS found only a minority of today's parents (27% women, 32% men) expressing traditional attitudes prenatally (Schober & Scott, 2012). Qualitative studies have found both sexes anticipating sharing the care of their newborn pretty much equally (Miller, 2011b).

But this does not mean when it comes down to it, that either mothers or fathers believe care of very young children should be equally shared, or even that fathers should undertake much of it. While fathers mostly rate mothers as very important, qualitative research finds mothers often perceiving their own child's father as relatively inconsequential both to their own parenting and to the child (Dermott, 2008; Leach et al., 2006), despite the aforementioned finding that most, in theory, believe fathers should be as closely involved as mothers in children's upbringing. A study of female users of *Mumsnet* (not representative of all mothers) found some unwelcoming of fathers in the public parenting 'space' (Pedersen, 2015).

Only 6.6% of 1201 mothers in Oxfordshire rated shared mother-and-father-care the best care-option for their three-month-old infant; and only 0.6% favoured the home-dad option, which they rated lower than care by an unspecified relative (1.7%). However, almost half the mothers did not feel full-time mother-care was ideal, either (Barnes et al., 2006).

A number of surveys have found fathers responding a little more traditionally than mothers when quizzed about mothers of pre-schoolers working (O'Reilly et al., 2014; Schober & Scott, 2012). Gender differences are sharper in professional/ managerial families, with fathers' attitudes more traditional and mothers' more egalitarian. The biggest shift over time has been in the attitudes of lower income fathers who, twenty years ago, were strongly convinced that young children would suffer if their mother worked. The majority no longer believe this, and lower income men are not only less likely to hold this view than their own partner, but

<sup>29</sup> Part-time working by both parents also received scant approval but not, the researchers hypothesised, because the public actually disapproved, but because they could not imagine families surviving financially on that working pattern.

also than managerial/ professional fathers (Crompton & Lyonette, 2010). And even those higher-income men, who may support the idea of mothers staying home full-time, may not welcome their own partner doing so (Gatrell, 2005; Kanji & Cahusac, 2015).

*I feel if (my wife) hadn't gone back she would have felt diminished as a person really... I could never have envisaged marrying somebody who would have just stayed at home, I couldn't, I wanted to marry my equal and that is what I have done. (Gatrell, 2005: 162)*

Depending on the question asked, fathers' attitudes may prove less traditional than mothers'. For example, in a substantial YouGov survey, only 23% of fathers compared with 34% of mothers agreed with the statement 'childcare is the primary responsibility of the mother'; and 55% of fathers, compared with 41% of mothers, thought that the 'parent who is paid more should stay at work regardless of whether they are male or female' (EHRC, 2009). Similarly, fewer MCS fathers than mothers agreed with the statement 'family life suffers if a mother works full-time' (Kanji, 2011).

Between couples, concordance in gender role attitudes is associated with relationship satisfaction (Bird, 2016). Overall, however, mothers' working is associated with both partners' positive mental health – whatever their gender role attitudes (Bird, 2016; Harkness & Skipp, 2015). Fathers with traditional attitudes do not experience psychological distress if their partner works unless she works long hours (Bird, 2016).

## Being and becoming

Neither fathers' nor mothers' attitudes to gender roles are fixed, and may change over just a few months, from before to after the birth. At that point, both attitudes and behaviour tend to become more traditional (Miller, 2011), possibly in response to the realisation (once the father returns to work) that anticipated equality in infant care is not going to happen (Schober, 2012).

Pragmatism seems to win out. Among the BHPS sample, the main predictors of both mothers' and fathers' postnatal attitudes are how much the mother earns, how many hours she works and whether the family uses formal childcare. When mothers of small children do not work for pay, both men's and women's gender role attitudes tend to become more traditional; and when the mother works-for-pay and the family uses formal childcare, both parents' attitudes tend to become more egalitarian. In fact, less traditional attitudes among mothers and fathers post-birth are more likely when women's postnatal engagement in paid work and the use of formal childcare contradict traditional prenatal attitudes (Schober & Scott, 2012).

Mothers' and fathers' work and parental identities (the extent to which they feel that paid work, or being a mother or a father, defines them as a person) are also flexible – again commonly in the face of inflexible circumstances (Himmelweit & Sigala, 2004): when children are very young, and full-time mother-care is most likely, fathers' work identity may increase and mothers' decrease (Gaunt & Scott, 2016).

What factors are associated with a strong parental identity in fathers? Firstly, income: the higher the father's income, the stronger his parental identity (Gaunt & Scott, 2016). Secondly, time spent caring for his children solo: the stronger his parental identity, the more hours of solo childcare he tends to undertake (Gaunt & Scott, 2014). While it is possible that hours of solo childcare may help some fathers develop a strong parental identity, prior commitment to fatherhood is likely to be significant: Alspac fathers whose partner was not employed but who, nevertheless, spent 15+ hours per week caring for young children solo, were more likely than other fathers to have felt positively about the pregnancy at the outset, and to have attended antenatal classes (Washbrook, 2007).

Fathers' working hours are not closely associated with their parental identity: both long- and short- hours working fathers can have strong, or weak, parental identities (Gaunt & Scott, 2014). A relatively powerful influence seems to be the mother's parental identity: when she has a strong parental identity her baby's father spends less time on childcare tasks (Gaunt & Scott, 2014; Norman et al., 2014). And while 54% of MCS fathers of preschoolers whose partner was not in paid work expressed theoretical disapproval of mothers of young children working (Calderwood et al., 2005), only 1.6% of the non-earning mothers gave 'my husband/partner disapproves'<sup>30</sup> as a reason why they were not working for money (Dex & Ward, 2008), suggesting that, in most families, circumstance or the mother's own wishes, were driving behaviour. This should not be taken to mean that a mother's wishes always predominate. A very small qualitative study of six UK couples who had chosen to share parental leave found the father positioned as the decision-maker (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017).

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<sup>30</sup> Fathers' active disapproval, though tiny, was found more often in higher-income families (2.5%) than in lower-income families (0.6%)

## Section C: Fathers (and mothers) at work: behaviour

### Fathers and mothers in the labour market

Given continuing traditionalism, including the Gender Pay Gap, it comes as no surprise to learn that, in 2011, 89% of fathers of dependent children were in employment<sup>31</sup>, almost all full-time (Connolly et al., 2013); and that this percentage has barely changed over decades (Scott & Clery, 2013)<sup>32</sup>.

However, changes are afoot: today, only 22% of UK couple families with dependent children comprise a working father and a stay-at-home mother, the smallest percentage ever recorded (Connolly et al., 2013)<sup>33</sup>. Down, too (from 37.2% in 2001 to 30.8% in 2013) is the percentage of families in which the father works full-time and the mother part-time (Aldrich et al., 2016a). Instead, more British families than ever have two full-time working parents: up from 26.4% (2001) to 30.8% in 2013 (Aldrich et al., 2016a)<sup>34</sup>.

Mothers' increasing participation in the labour market and fathers' continuing commitment to paid work, should not come as a surprise: time needed for housework, as well as the amount of time mothers are spending on it have been falling (ONS, 2016), leaving a significant time-gap which, when filled by their paid work, benefits their families financially. By contrast, fathers' participation in housework and childcare has not been facilitated by a time-gap; and reductions in their working hours are more likely to penalise their families financially.

Mothers work more hours when fathers work fewer hours and do more childcare. An Alspac analysis found that when fathers regularly provided 15+ hours of solo childcare, mothers

<sup>31</sup> The remaining 11% were not in employment and had not been seeking work during the previous month, or were unable to start work within the next two weeks.

<sup>32</sup> See Figure 5.1 at <http://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-30/genderroles/participation-in-the-labour-market.aspx>

<sup>33</sup> Working class women have always worked, although that may not have been recorded <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/apr/13/working-women-stay-at-home-wives-myths>

<sup>34</sup> Among mothers of preschoolers in couple families 65.7% are now working, rising to 75% when their youngest child is in primary school and to 81.1% when the child is aged 16-18 (ONS, 2014). By 2013 British mothers were working on average 29.1 hours per week, up from 26.8 hours in 2001 (Aldrich et al., 2016), and were less likely to work part-time (37% did so in 2001, 31% in 2011 (Connolly et al., 2013). Among part-time working mothers 19% wanted more hours (Aldrich, 2016). In another survey, 3% of working mothers said they worked more than 60 hours per week, and 19% of fathers worried that their children's mother was not spending enough time with them (Ellison et al., 2009).



worked 'slightly' longer hours and fathers 'slightly'<sup>35</sup> shorter. However, some of the high-childcare fathers did not work shorter hours, finding their extra childcare time by working non-standard hours (such as evenings or nights) or in jobs that did not require travel away for days at a time (Washbrook, 2007). MCS fathers whose female partner was the main earner, worked considerably fewer hours than other fathers, as was also common when partners were equal earners. Fathers in families in which mothers work more hours are less likely to work in occupations entailing long hours (Kanji, 2013).

MCS analyses found that fathers of infants and preschoolers were more likely to play a more equal role at home when their partner worked 31+ hours per week and they themselves worked 30-40 hours rather than 48+ hours (Fagan & Norman, 2016; Norman et al., 2014). Whether the fathers' care/ working patterns enable mothers to work longer hours or whether mothers' longer working hours (or other factors) drive the fathers' working/ caring patterns, is not known. A cross-national study which included the UK, found mothers' paid work significantly associated with fathers' routine childcare, although not with their interactive childcare (Gracia & Esping-Andersen, 2015). We could not find data on fathers and mothers working in precarious employment, for example in the 'gig' economy.

*If I were to take promotion I would be expected to be available more and I have said directly to the managers, I wouldn't want their job in my current circumstance with young children. Presently, I don't have to travel to meetings, I can do on-line or conference bridges so I don't have to travel up and down the country. But that is less the case for more senior staff. So I have put promotion on hold, I try to keep (travel) to an absolute minimum at present. (Gatrell et al., 2015: 234)*

## Pre-fathers, fathers and non-fathers

It is often reported<sup>36</sup> that fathers work longer hours than non-fathers, the inference being that they do so not merely to put food on the table, but because becoming a father stimulates in them an inordinate commitment to breadwinning. But is this so? A survey of 500 working males found that men with children were less ambitious than men without children; and that fathers of very young children had slightly lower ambitions than fathers of older children (Bevan & Jones, 2008).

Nor do men who have recently become fathers seem to work longer hours. While one analysis found new fathers working an average 45 hours weekly compared with non-fathers' 44 hours (Connolly et al., 2013), an analysis that took men's ages into account found new fathers working slightly shorter hours than non-fathers (Dermott, 2006); and another analysis found little or no working-hours-differences between fathers, non-fathers and pre-fathers (Koslowski, 2011). Where new fathers had higher employment rates, or worked longer hours

<sup>35</sup> The precise figures were not presented in this analysis.

<sup>36</sup> <http://lifewithoutbaby.com/2011/02/01/fathers-work-longer-hours-than-childless-men/>

or earned more, this was due mainly to ‘selection’: such men were more likely to become fathers (Smith, 2008).

The Government’s Maternity and Paternity Rights and Benefits survey found that fathers who had worked the longest hours before the birth were the most likely to reduce their working hours afterwards (Biggart, 2010). Where hours had risen very slightly or had not fallen, the fathers had often not been working particularly long hours in the first place. In fact for some (mainly lower income) fathers too little employment may be more of a challenge than too much (Warren, 2015). Type-of-job seems to be significant: managerial-level fathers are more likely work slightly longer hours post birth (Biggart, 2010). This small difference may relate to demographic factors, or to routine career advancement – a factor that was not considered.

### ‘Motherhood penalty’ v. ‘fatherhood premium’?

*When I was obviously pregnant, I lost jobs . . . I think there was a perception on (my clients’) part that I . . . couldn’t do their job effectively . . . I now think I should have sent my business partner on her own (to bid for business). (Gatrell, 2005: 186)*

It is widely claimed that becoming a mother (that is, the very *status* of motherhood) disadvantages women; and it is certainly true that mothers, on average, experience lower lifetime earnings and career advancement than fathers and non-mothers (TUC, 2016). By contrast, fatherhood status does not disadvantage men at work; and a wage premium has been recorded among fathers when compared with non-fathers (Misra & Strader, 2013). But whether this is *caused* by their fatherhood status is a moot point. The selection of men into fatherhood is likely to be significant: the wage premium begins *before*, not *when*, men become fathers, and may point to particular kinds of men achieving at work and planning for fatherhood (Koslowski, 2011).

UK research records discrepancies in the alleged fatherhood premium between high- and low-income fathers: low-earning and young men experience small but significant financial penalties over the life-course if they become fathers (Berrington et al., 2005; Cooke, 2014). Nor, it seems, do all British mothers experience the motherhood penalty: a recent report found mothers who had their first child after age 33 experiencing a wage premium compared with non-mothers (TUC, 2016). To be considered reliable, this finding would need to be replicated.

If it is the *enactment*<sup>37</sup> rather than the *status* of motherhood that is implicated in any motherhood penalty, and if the enactment of involved fatherhood is found to have as negative an impact on fathers’ earnings and career advancement, it may be time to start redefining the so-called ‘motherhood’ penalty as a ‘care-taking’ penalty. If that happens, employers and

<sup>37</sup> Time spent out of the paid workforce, participation in part-time rather than full-time work etc.

government may pay more attention to facilitating work/ care reconciliation for parents of both sexes.

## Fathers' working hours

Fathers' working hours have been declining slightly across Europe, even in economic 'growth' countries where, counter-intuitively, fathers tend to work fewer hours than in 'recession/ severe recession' countries. British dads in couple families, who in 2001 worked the longest hours in Europe (46.1 hours weekly), now record an average 43 hours, slightly fewer than in some other European countries.

'Intensive' working by UK fathers is also on a decline: between 2001-2011, the percentage of UK fathers in couple families with dependent children working 60+ hours per week fell from 13% to 10%, and the percentage working 48+ hours dropped from 40% to 31% (Aldrich et al., 2016c). Commuting times remain longer for fathers than mothers (Gatrell et al., 2015). Census data has revealed increases in commuting distances but slightly fewer people commuting to work. However the published data is not broken down by gender or by parenthood<sup>38</sup>. Fathers' (and mothers') commutes may warrant further investigation, not only in terms of time and distance but also in relation to child and family outcomes.

Analysis of Understanding Society data found British fathers' part-time working doubling between 2001<sup>39</sup> and 2011, albeit from a very low base: 3% to 7% (Connolly et al., 2013). And although one analysis of Labour Force Survey data found little change over time (Scott & Clery, 2013), another found 10.9% of fathers with one child working part-time and 8.9% of fathers with two children doing so in 2013 (Lyonette et al., 2016). A less rigorous but still significant survey found 15% of fathers of dependent children working part-time (Tipping et al., 2012). While not comparable with the extent of part-time working by mothers, these percentages are not insignificant.

Fathers in some ethnic minority groups are more likely to work part-time, probably due to reduced market opportunities. The MCS recorded 30% part-time employment among Bangladeshi and Pakistani fathers of four-year-olds, in addition to 18% unemployment (Dex & Ward, 2008). Part-time/ reduced hours working can of course be an indicator of underemployment. However in recent years (and despite the recession) there has been only a very slight increase in UK fathers reporting underemployment (Aldrich et al., 2016b).

The decade to 2011 saw a slight fall in shift-working by fathers with dependent children (down from 24% to 21%), and a marked decline in the numbers working non-standard hours: evenings, down from 52% to 33%; nights, down from 76% to 66%; weekends, down from 45%

<sup>38</sup><http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/distance-travelled-to-work/index.html>

<sup>39</sup> At that point the data service was called the British Household Panel Study.

to 26% (Connolly et al., 2013). However, a more recent cross-national study found an (unspecified) recent increase in UK fathers working non-standard hours (Aldrich et al., 2016a). Further research or analysis is needed. Qualitative research suggests that Pakistani fathers may be more likely to work at weekends than White British or Black Caribbean fathers (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009). Quantitative research finds more non-professional than professional fathers doing so (Hook, 2012).

## Self-employed fathers

The studies drawn on so far have been mainly of employee fathers. Self-employed fathers have been less thoroughly studied. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reports on self-employment among ‘workers’ and ‘male workers’, but ‘fathers’ is not a category. The ONS notes that in 2008, 13% of male workers identified as self-employed, rising to 15% in 2012 (ONS, 2014b). After a small drop, the upward trend has continued, with self-employment in the UK economy in February 2017 at its highest level ever<sup>40</sup>. An earlier study found self-employment rates of non-fathers (15%) and fathers (16%) to be comparable (Bell & La Valle, 2003). If this is still the case, at least one working father in six is likely to be self-employed. Self-employed people tend to work either very short or very long hours. Those who work long hours are more likely to be men (ONS, 2014b). There has been no study of the most vulnerable self-employed fathers - those in low-paid, very insecure work who are not able to negotiate their own terms with employers.

Self-employment may be more common among fathers of children with disabilities. These fathers have also been found to work shorter hours and closer to home. Self-employment may provide control over working hours or enable these fathers to be available at home at short notice (Thomas, 2011). In the main, however, self-employed fathers, like fathers who are managers and fathers who work for small businesses, tend to spend more time on paid work than other fathers (and than their partner) and, correspondingly, less on domestic activities (Bird et al., 2014). If this includes less time spent caring for their children, it may contribute to relatively poor father-child relationships (mentioned earlier) reported by children whose fathers work for small businesses or are self-employed (Parkes et al., 2017).

## Fathers and flexible working

*I have worked for the department for many years and obviously I've not always had children therefore I [previously] worked long hours. So when my son is old enough to go to school on his own, I'll do longer days again (but for now) I work condensed days, work through lunch, so that allows me to do what I want to do with my son. (Gatrell et al., 2015: no page number)*

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/latest>

The Government's Work Life Balance Employee survey (now discontinued) allows us to observe trends in flexible working by fathers. From the early to mid-2000s, the percentage of fathers working flexitime rose from 20% to 33%, with home-working up from 6% to 28%, compressed-week-working from 5% to 15%, and term-time working from 8% to 13% (Biggart & O'Brien, 2010; O'Brien & Shemilt, 2003). Higher proportions of fathers than non-fathers worked flexitime and from home (Biggart, 2010), and when the survey was re-run early in 2011, 48% of fathers with dependent children were working flexibly, fewer – but not substantially fewer – than the 59% of mothers who were doing so (Tipping et al., 2012). The relatively narrow gender gap may in part be due to flexibility being available to more fathers than mothers because it is more available to people with higher qualifications, higher skilled jobs and who work in male-dominated industries (Chung, forthcoming). Low-income fathers have less access to flexible working options (Working Families, 2016a; EOC, 2007).

Fathers' requests for flexible working are refused by employers at almost twice the rate of mothers' (Olchawski, 2016). Fathers are also twice as likely as mothers to fear that asking for flexible working will damage their careers (Working Families, 2017). Nevertheless, the Second Flexible Working Survey found 30% of fathers (v. 53% of mothers) requesting flexible working for childcare needs or to spend more time with their family (Grainger & Holt, 2005); and another fairly substantial survey found 18% of men v. 28% women using flexible working because it 'helps me manage caring responsibilities (children)' (CIPD, 2012). Fathers may be underrepresented in such figures because men are far more likely than women to work flexibly 'under the radar' (Russell & O'Leary, 2012). In one survey, while only 8% of fathers had formal flexibility agreements, a further 18% were working flexibly informally (EHRC, 2009).

## Section D: Fathers at home: behaviour

### Paternal Leave: take up by fathers

Taking leave after their children's births<sup>41</sup> would seem to be the starting point for fathers to reconcile the time demands of work and family. The extent to which they take leave is greatly under-reported, including in the *Daily Mail* and the *Guardian*, which have variously asserted, erroneously, that 'One in four new fathers does not take any paternity leave'<sup>42</sup>; that '25%'<sup>43</sup> or '40%'<sup>44</sup> 'take no time off at all'; and that new fathers 'stay in the office'<sup>45</sup>... 'choosing' not to leave their desks for fear of 'being penalised by their employers'<sup>46</sup>. In fact, surveys reveal that almost all working fathers take time off for the birth and afterwards: 94% in a 2005 (Thompson et al., 2005), 91% in 2007 (La Valle et al., 2008), 91% in 2009/10 (Chanfreau et al., 2011), and 95% in 2013 (BIS, 2014).

How much of the leave taken is Paternity Leave - that is, leave granted to an eligible employee father for that purpose, not holiday/ annual or any other kind of leave? Pre-2003, before the introduction of Statutory Paternity Leave, some employers were offering at least a couple of days, and 43% of employed MCS fathers took some Paternity Leave (Dex & Ward, 2007). What percentage of fathers currently take Statutory Paternity Leave? HMRC should theoretically have this data, since employers can re-claim from the Exchequer, via their National Insurance Returns, statutory maternity and paternity payments made to their employees. Between 2010 and 2013, employers only sought reimbursement for payments made to around 27% of new fathers per year. But this does not mean that only 27% took statutory leave: because Statutory Paternity Leave is paid at such a low rate and for such a

<sup>41</sup> Leave taken prenatally would also be of interest, since from 2015 expectant fathers have had a statutory right to two sessions of unpaid leave (capped at 6.5 hours) to accompany their partner to antenatal appointments. As far as we can ascertain, uptake is not being monitored. In an earlier sample of 1,253 working fathers (Chanfreau et al., 2011) two thirds took time off work in the antenatal period for 'child-related' reasons: 1:4 took one or two days; 1:5 three or four days; 1:5 took five or more days. Only 1:5 of expectant fathers earning less than £6 per hour took any time off - one of a number of pieces of research that reveal low-income fathers less eligible for or able to use workplace benefits.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2586498/Quarter-men-no-paternity-leave-managers-likely-time-off.html#ixzz3snFmAgS2>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/jan/30/millennial-dads-energy-for-affair-bridget-christie>

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/dec/20/mothers-careers-suffer-maternity-paternity-rights-gender-pay-equality>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/careers/fathers-choose-not-to-take-paternity-leave>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/apr/10/want-better-dads-happier-mums-and-healthier-kids-make-men-take-paternity-leave>

short period, many employers do not seek reimbursement (HMRC, 2014). A fairly substantial survey found only 46% of establishments with a leave-taking father able to confirm that costs had been recovered from the Exchequer (BIS, 2014).

A survey of NHS hospital doctors found that the introduction of Statutory Paternity Leave in 2003 had a notable impact. Take up increased from 52% pre-2003 to 94.8% afterwards (Gordon & Szram, 2013). Other larger surveys covering a range of employment sectors consistently show between two-thirds (Thompson et al., 2005); (Ellison et al., 2009; Kadar-Satat & Koslowski, 2015) and three quarters (Chanfreau et al., 2011) of eligible fathers taking some Statutory Paternity Leave, with 55% taking at least their full ten days (Ellison et al., 2009).

Among fathers who did not take Statutory Paternity Leave, 90% would have liked to (Ellison et al., 2009). The main barriers included not being eligible: two out of five working fathers are ineligible either because they are self-employed or because they have not worked for their employer for long enough (TUC, 2017). When eligible fathers do not take up their entitlement, low level of wage replacement or being too busy at work are the main reasons given – this last a particular issue for fathers in ‘micro’ businesses with fewer than ten employees (Ellison et al., 2009). Low-income fathers are half as likely as better paid fathers to take Statutory Paternity Leave (Kadar-Satat & Koslowski, 2015). They are also substantially less likely to receive wage top ups from their employer, as are those working in manufacturing, 41% of whom take holiday or annual leave instead (BIS, 2014). As mentioned above, self-employed fathers do not currently qualify for Paternity Leave and Pay. When asked whether they would take if it were available to them and paid at the then rate of £139.58 per week, self-employed men were only half as likely as employed men to say they would do so. This was especially so if they were self-employed in the sense of running their own business rather than undertaking contract work for other people (Citizens Advice, 2015).

Some fathers take quite long leave when their babies are born, adding annual or other leaves, including sick leave and unpaid leave, to extend their Statutory Paternity Leave: two studies found 25% doing so (Hudson et al., 2004; Chanfreau et al., 2011), and another found 6% of new fathers taking twenty days or more (La Valle et al., 2008). More recently, employers report that in 43% of workplaces fathers had added other types of leave to their Paternity Leave, rising to 77% in large workplaces, with fathers working in health and social care the most likely to extend leave (BIS, 2014). A small qualitative study in Scotland found half the fathers interviewed taking extended leave (Kadar-Satat & Koslowski, 2015).

*I actually took 4 weeks (Paternity Leave and holiday). Just being at home was just really good...4 weeks at home was just great, really, really, nice. We kind of got into the swing of kind of how things were and how things would be... (Miller, 2011b: 95)*

## Parental Leave: take up by fathers

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Unlike Paternity Leave, Parental Leave is usually taken by fathers to care for children while their partner is in work, education or training. A body of European and other research (Koslowski et al., 2016) suggests that Parental Leave may lead to fathers developing confidence in caring for children and remaining more involved once back at work. From 2011-2014 a limited number of UK fathers had a statutory right to Transferred Maternity Leave (unused Maternity Leave which some mothers could transfer to their partner). This was called Additional Paternity Leave – APL. When paid (some of it was unpaid) the statutory pay level was £139.58 per week. An estimated 1.5% of eligible fathers made use of it in 2014. However, this does not mean fathers were unwilling: the main reported barriers were ineligibility, ignorance of the leave's existence and low wage replacement (O'Brien & Twamley, 2017).

There are no reliable figures on take up of the replacement version of this leave (Shared Parental Leave – SPL – which, as already explained, is also Transferred Maternity Leave). Two small studies (100 parents or fewer in the samples) suggested that take up may be higher<sup>47</sup>, but such small samples cannot generate reliable data, and in December 2016 a survey of around 1,000 HR professionals revealed that only a fifth of organisations had received even one request from male staff<sup>48</sup>.

Again, however, it would be wrong to assume that this reflects fathers' unwillingness. In many of these organisations few, if any, men would actually have been becoming fathers (Sharp, 2017). And while SPL has been better promoted than APL (Working Families, 2016b) the same barriers remain. A survey published on the first anniversary of SPL found more than two thirds of employed women and two fifths of employed men unaware that it existed or unclear about how it worked. Three quarters had received no guidance from their HR department; and once the entitlement was explained, 85% thought that it would be unaffordable for fathers to take it anyway. Fear of negative impact on career and unwillingness of some mothers to share leave were also mentioned (Totaljobs, 2016). In another survey, employers reported few SPL requests and also believed unaffordability to be the main barrier to fathers' uptake. Employers who were enhancing Shared Parental Pay were receiving more requests (Carty, 2016). Employers in a small qualitative study reported some fathers reluctant to take the leave for fear of damaging their careers (Workingmums, 2017). We do not know how widespread these fears are, whether or to what extent they are justified, or how this varies, for example by amount-of-leave taken, father's seniority, size of business, business sector and so on.

Some employers leapfrog the Government's partial and complicated system to offer paid Parental Leave as an 'independent right' to their male employees – that is, without his eligibility depending (as in APL and SPL) on his partner's eligibility. There is no data on how

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<sup>47</sup> <http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/shared-parental-leave-take-30/>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/shared-parental-leave-take-woefully-low-cipd-reveals/>



widespread this practice is, remuneration levels, eligibility criteria or take-up; nor on take up of the little-known EU entitlement to unpaid Parental Leave<sup>49</sup>.

## Home-dads

*I suppose it was me who thought: 'I'm missing something here. My daughter's only a few months old and I'm not seeing her.' ...I was quite upset about it, actually. (Gatrell, 2005: 136)*

How many British fathers have left the workforce for a time, to become a 'home-dad' while their partner works full-time? This topic regularly catches the imagination of the media, who claim huge increases in numbers<sup>50</sup>. The truth is more sobering.

The Office for National Statistics collects information regularly, via the Labour Force Survey, on UK men and women who are 'economically inactive' for reasons that include 'looking after home and family'. Analysis reveals an increase in both the number and percentage of 'caregiver' men: up from 142,000 in 1995 (5% men v. 95% women) to 245,000 in 2014 (11% men v. 89% women) (ONS, 2014a). It is these figures that are usually quoted when mushrooming home-dad numbers are claimed. However, analysis of the figures for the last three months of 2014 reveals that only 16% of the caregiver men in that sample were caring for preschoolers. By contrast, 53% were caring for an adult older relative (ONS, 2015).

Further, among the full-time at-home parents of preschoolers during that period (sample: 1002 parents), just 3.8% were fathers, meaning that 96.2% were mothers. Far fewer mothers and fathers are at home looking after older children. However, at those childhood-stages, fathers represent a higher proportion: almost 8% of full-time at-home parents of primary-school-aged children; and almost 20% of full-time at-home parents of teenagers, are fathers (ONS, 2014a). Fathers (and mothers) of older children are far more likely to say that they are also at home because they have a long-term illness or disability, or because they are looking for work (ONS, 2014a).

What is the trend over time? In the early 1990s, 6-7% of (the Alspac) fathers were full-time home-dads (Washbrook, 2007). Ten years later, 6% of MCS fathers were in that role (Dex & Ward, 2010). The 2014 ONS figure of 3.8% is not exactly comparable (it refers to the percentage of at-home parents who are male, rather than to the percentage of fathers operating as home-dads), but even so it is plain that the population of home-dads is not booming. Like the number of mothers-of-preschoolers staying home full-time, it is very probably in decline.

<sup>49</sup> As already mentioned, employed fathers (and mothers) in the UK are eligible for the EU entitlement to eighteen weeks unpaid Parental Leave (an EU entitlement), of which a maximum of four weeks can be taken in any one year.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2593027/Stay-home-fathers-double-20-years-229-000-lookchildren.html>

The percentage of unemployed fathers of pre-schoolers whose partner is working for money (and who may therefore be in a position to be home-dads) is, according to the MCS, slightly higher in ethnic minority families<sup>51</sup> and highest (7.23%) in Pakistani/ Bangladeshi families (Dex & Ward, 2010)<sup>52</sup>. While this is likely to result mainly from reduced labour market opportunities among the men (Schwiter & Baumgarten, 2017), this remains a finding that will surprise many.

A recent review of the evidence in German-speaking countries found that, far from increasing, the number of full-time home-dads is falling – so much so that the researchers suggest shifting the discussion from stay-at-home fathers to fathers as part-time workers and part-time carers (Schwiter & Baumgarten, 2017). That is also probably the approach to take in the UK.

## Father-share

*When I was working full-time I wouldn't have thought like that, but since now, those 2 days are my days with him so I don't want to lose those 2 days. I mean if we have to and if financially we have to, then we'll do it. But I don't really want to. (West et al., 2009: 211)*

So far, so traditional. Does this mean most fathers' childcare contributions are negligible? No. At child age nine months MCS mothers reported that around one third (and, at child age three, one quarter) of their partners were doing as much, or more, childcare than they were (Fagan & Norman, 2016; Norman et al., 2014).

A qualitative study found that while mothers generally took major responsibility for childcare, many fathers played a 'crucial role in holding the childcare "package" together' and 'decisions about couples' employment strategies were often being taken in relation to the needs of the family unit, rather than the individual' (Crompton & Lyonette, 2010).

For decades now, fathers have been shouldering substantial responsibility for childcare: in the early 1990s, 13% of fathers regularly looked after their babies alone for 15+ hours, with 20% doing so when their child was slightly older (Washbrook, 2007). In the early 2000s, fathers were the main source of non-maternal care in the 11% of families with a child aged 9-10 months in which both parents worked full-time<sup>53</sup>. When the mother worked part-time, the father was the individual most likely to provide care in 20% of managerial/ professional families and 40% of low-income families. Black African fathers (75%) were the most likely to look after their nine-month-old infants on their own 'several times a week' although between

<sup>51</sup> The origins of the ethnic minority families in this study are from outside Europe.

<sup>52</sup> Figures adapted from Table 6.1, page 97.

<sup>53</sup> This feat they presumably achieved through home-working and/ or 'shift' parenting, which generally involves one parent or both in non-standard hours.

50-60% of fathers in all other ethnic groups, including in Pakistani and Bangladeshi families, also regularly cared for their infants solo (Calderwood et al., 2005).

Such findings mesh with those from the more recent YouGov survey which found 21% of fathers of under-fives solely responsible for their care at some point during the working week, and 43% of fathers of school-aged children providing solo care before or after school (EHRC, 2009). A very recent survey containing a relatively high proportion of dual-full-time-earner parents, found one third of fathers reporting that they are the 'first port of call' when childcare breaks down, and 70% of those aged 26-35 dropping their children off at school either every day or more than half the time (Working Families, 2016a). That figure is much higher than was found in previous comparable surveys.

A substantial survey found fathers with a disabled child twice as likely as other fathers to say they had primary responsibility for childcare (17% v. 8%), as was also the case among gay and bisexual fathers (20% v. 8%) (EHRC, 2009). In Bangladeshi Muslim, Pakistani Muslim, Gujarati Hindu and Punjabi Sikh communities, many fathers are contributing to core childcare on a regular basis (Chowbey et al., 2013)<sup>54</sup>. Among separated fathers, one survey found 40% having primary responsibility for their children part of every week; and 11% sharing the care of their children equally with their mother (Peacey & Hunt, 2008)<sup>55</sup>.

## Father-child interactions

Almost all fathers who are co-resident with their young children spend regular time engaging directly with them: among MCS fathers in 2003-4, more than 80% read to their three-year-old and put them to bed at least once per week; and 20% did so daily. Playing with their child 'several times a week' was reported by 94%, with 78% playing every day (Smith, 2007). Parental interactions can be quite gendered: while 40% of fathers v. 70% of mothers say they read 'several times a week' with their seven-year-olds, 73% of fathers v. 50% of mothers engage with them in sports or other physical activities at least weekly (Smith, 2010). This may have implications for childhood obesity in families with no co-resident male.

High-income fathers spend more time actively engaging with their children than low-income fathers<sup>56</sup> (Flouri, 2005; Hook & Wolfe, 2012) and stimulating their progress through 'developmental activities' (Altintas, 2016). But low-income fathers have more responsibility for childcare than middle-class men: their partner is more likely to work part-time (Hook &

<sup>54</sup> From this and other data on ethnic minority families reported in this report, a trend seems to be emerging of relatively high levels of care by fathers in a range of ethnic minority groups. This warrants further investigation.

<sup>55</sup> The UK data on fathers' residence and time spent with children after separation is limited.

<sup>56</sup> The same pattern is found between high- and low-income mothers.

Wolfe, 2012; Warin et al., 1999) and professional childcare is less likely to be bought-in (Calderwood et al., 2005; Chanfreau et al., 2011).

Low-income fathers are now catching up with high-income fathers in time spent interacting with their children, rather than just supervising them (Sullivan, 2010); and are also spending more time with their children on 'developmental' activities (Richards et al., 2016). Other research has found that in 1965 just over one-third of fathers were reading to their seven-year-olds at least once a week. By 2006, almost three-quarters were doing so<sup>57</sup> (Clark, 2009).

## Time diaries

The outstanding characteristic of the birth cohort studies, such as Alspac, the MCS and GUS, and the household panel surveys, such as BHPS/Understanding Society, on which we have drawn for this Report, is their sample size (thousands and thousands of mothers and fathers). Weaknesses lie in reliance on self-report or mother-report with parents estimating engagement in particular activities, and with few independent measures, which even when they exist may not be rigorous<sup>58</sup>.

To obtain more accurate data we turn to time diary research (Bianchi et al., 2000), where respondents fill out 24-hour diaries, charting their activities in real time. The UK Harmonised Time Use Survey (UK HETUS), which is part of the wider Multinational Time-Use Study (MTUS), employs this method<sup>59</sup>.

Firstly, housework: convergence between UK men's and women's housework time is evident (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016); and Indian and Other Asian men in the UK now spend more hours on housework every day than their white British counterparts<sup>60</sup> (Kan & Laurie, 2016). Secondly, father-care: the time diaries reveal remarkable increases since the mid-1970s (Henz, 2017). At that time, fathers of under-fives were spending 15 minutes a day on child-related activities. By 1999, it was two hours. Over the same period, fathers' time spent with older children rose from 15 to 50 minutes per day (Fisher et al., 1999).

And according to the time-diary data, the upward trend is continuing: between 2000 and 2015, UK fathers' solo childcare time increased, on average, by 11 minutes on weekdays and 17

<sup>57</sup> With their six-year-olds.

<sup>58</sup> The MCS asked teachers to estimate mothers' and fathers' interest in their children's education. Unsurprisingly, fathers' interest was rated around 20% lower than mothers' (Richards et al., 2016). However, as teachers are more likely to meet mothers, their perceptions may not be accurate. In the MCS the teachers' opinions are not based on empirical data.

<sup>59</sup> Accuracy is undoubtedly greater. However, the sample size is much smaller (around 800 fathers) and data is gathered less often than by the main birth cohort studies.

<sup>60</sup> Definitions of 'housework' may differ across cultures.

minutes on weekend days; and their total childcare time by 12 minutes on weekdays and 22 minutes on weekend days<sup>61</sup> (Henz, 2017). With their 'primary childcare' of preschoolers increasing by 15-20 minutes each decade, fathers are now spending as much time engaging directly in the care of very young children as mothers were in the 1960's (Altintas, 2016) – a decade which many would see as representing substantial mother-care.

When the ONS analysed the same data<sup>62</sup> and compared with mothers' childcare time they found the differential between the time mothers and fathers devote to primary childcare narrowing (ONS, 2016a). In 1961, fathers' preschooler care was 12-15% of mothers'. By 1999 it was about one third (Fisher et al., 1999). Today it approaches one half (ONS, 2016)<sup>63</sup>, meaning that for every hour a mother devotes to caring for a young child, a father devotes almost 30 minutes. This is a remarkable shift, given fathers' continuing much greater responsibility for breadwinning.

It may well be that given current constraints (policy, culture, workplace) there are limits to the equality that can be achieved (Altintas & Sullivan, 2016) without substantial structural change. Sacrifice of sleep and 'free time' is enabling some fathers to find the extra minutes and hours (Fox et al., 2011)<sup>64</sup>; and it is reported that one reason golf clubs are struggling for younger members is that today's fathers are more likely to be ferrying children to sporting activities than taking part themselves<sup>65</sup>. But there are limits to how much sleep or leisure time 'efficiencies' can be achieved. Highly involved fathers work half an hour less per day than other fathers (Koslowski, 2011), but for a seismic shift to occur, more significant changes in fathers' working time and in mothers' earnings will be needed.

*We have a traditional marriage but in a modern time... I feed the baby... I change the nappies, I bath the baby, I put the baby to sleep... it's not just the mother who looks after the baby. I think it's a duo, a partnership, and the father's part of that partnership is a very important role within the marriage and the family (Williams, 2011: 48)*

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<sup>61</sup> The analyses are restricted to fathers who lived with a partner and at least one child aged 14 or younger in 'nuclear' households that do not include any adult members beyond the couple or any children aged 15 or older.

<sup>62</sup> This analysis found smaller increases in fathers' primary care and total care of pre-schoolers, probably due to differences in sample selection criteria (Kelly Giannakou, School of Psychology, University of East Anglia, personal communication 25/04/17).

<sup>63</sup> At the Millennium, preschooler primary care was 209 minutes per day (mothers) v. 87 minutes per day (fathers); by 2015 the figures were 199 minutes per day for mothers v. 91 minutes per day for fathers (ONS, 2016).

<sup>64</sup> These findings are from a US dataset. We have not found the equivalent in the UK.

<sup>65</sup> <http://uk.businessinsider.com/the-future-of-golf-is-handicapped-2014-12?r=US&IR=T>

## Observations on father-care and father-share

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Time-diary data reveals no gender difference in the hours mothers and fathers with dependent children spend on earning and caring work combined (Lader et al., 2006). In fact, during the week fathers put in an average 50 minutes per day more than mothers on these combined activities, a position that is reversed at weekends (Hurrell & Davies, 2005). Yet very often the men are accused of ‘shirking’ (Petrassi, 2012). Why so?

Firstly, when alternatives to mother-care are analysed, father-care may be subsumed into ‘parental’ care and not reported, with only care from outside the nuclear family estimated: grandparents, nurseries and so on (Ben-Galim & Thompson, 2013; Leach et al., 2006). This renders care by fathers invisible.

Secondly, while fathers are regularly criticised for failing to share childcare equally, mothers are never taken to task for working fewer hours or earning less. This is probably partly because earning (unlike caring) is perceived as benefiting the individual; and partly because mothers are not regarded as personally responsible for their situation: the Gender Pay Gap and other factors constraining their engagement in paid work are widely discussed and documented. By contrast, when fathers’ breadwinning activities result in poorer father-child relationships or lower levels of involvement in parenting, the Gender Pay Gap and other institutional and social practices constraining their participation are not mentioned, so fathers themselves are blamed (Scott & Plagnol, 2012). Thus only mothers are seen as suffering an injustice<sup>66</sup>.

Thirdly, when parents’ relative contributions are compared, the framing of the question may over-represent traditionalism in responses and lead to claims that nothing is changing<sup>67</sup>. For example, in almost all the major datasets, responses to questions on housework and childcare allow for only three ‘positions’: ‘I mostly do (this task)’ or ‘we share (the task) *equally*’<sup>68</sup> or ‘my partner mostly does it’ (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2005). Thus where a person undertakes a task, say, 35% of the time, he or she must give the same response as a person who undertakes that task just 10% of the time. This is a blunt instrument for measuring change.

Fourthly, findings may be reported in ways that reinforce the old nothing-is-changing and dads-are-more-traditional-than-mums narrative, even when the facts do not support this. A 2015 survey found a single percentage-point difference between fathers’ (45%) and mothers’ (44%) beliefs that looking after a baby was a role ‘best done by mothers’. This was claimed as evidence of ‘strong gendered beliefs about who is best at caring’ (Working Families, 2015).

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<sup>66</sup> For analysis of this phenomenon in relation to wider personal and political responsibility, see Responsibility for Justice (Iris Marion Young), Chapter 2.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/mar/10/housework-gender-equality-women>

<sup>68</sup> Our italics.

In the following year, the repeat survey found that (a) women (60%) remain more likely than men (36%) to consider childcare responsibilities before taking on a new job (b) mothers remain the first port of call when childcare breaks down by a factor of two to one, and (c) mothers (45%) are more likely than fathers (25%) to start doing domestic chores as soon as they get home (Working Families, 2016a). These findings, reported so negatively, could as well have been presented from a 'glass half full' perspective, as follows: (a) 36% of men now consider childcare responsibilities before taking on a new job (b) one third of fathers are now the 'first port of call' when childcare breaks down, and (c) while mothers are almost twice as likely as fathers to start doing domestic chores as soon as they get home, this is probably because, generally working shorter hours and closer to home, most mothers reach home first.



## Section E: 21<sup>st</sup> century fatherhood: an employer dilemma

### Father-stress

*When my little boy was very small...fatigue was a huge fact and...I think...my performance had dipped at that time as well. I just didn't have it in me to put in the effort that was needed some days. And I think...if there's a...like a mechanism for that being acknowledged...that I think would be well worthwhile.*  
(Burnett et al., 2011: 21)

Working fathers in Britain are expressing dissatisfaction. In some surveys, not limited to fathers who work long hours, 50% believe they spend insufficient time with their young children (Ellison et al., 2009; Smith, 2007). In other surveys the figure is 70% (Dex & Ward, 2007; Thompson, 2005). Full-time working fathers (82%) are the most likely to believe this (Crompton & Lyonette, 2007), and age-of-child is significant. Fathers of preschoolers are more likely to feel the squeeze, although 40% of fathers of children aged 5-15 also report insufficient father-child time (Ellison et al., 2009).

The fathers most likely to report stress are those who are the sole earner in their family (Crompton & Lyonette, 2008)<sup>69</sup>, for whom the burden of breadwinning may be acute. Fathers in dual-earner families may also experience stress, possibly for different reasons, such as having a partner who is also in a demanding job, or is frustrated because her career-options are being reduced<sup>70</sup>.

A survey of 1000 employed British fathers, many of whose partner also worked full-time, found 69% reporting that the demands of their job interfered with family (Working Families, 2011). In a later survey in the same series, 38% of the fathers said they would be willing to take a pay cut to achieve a better work-life balance and 47% wanted to downshift to a less stressful job for family reasons (Working Families, 2017).

Preliminary findings from an analysis of the 2010 European Social Survey reveals UK fathers reporting the highest work-to-family conflict in Europe<sup>71</sup>: 35% 'always' or 'often' worry about work problems when not working; 37% 'always' or 'often' feel too tired to enjoy family

<sup>69</sup> Sole male breadwinner families are the poorest, due partly to the collapse of the male breadwinner wage over two decades, and because these breadwinner males are often low paid and/ or born abroad (Cribb et al., 2017)

<sup>70</sup> As the supply of educated women has grown, educated men (now partner with women with similar education and career aspirations, not with women who will be satisfied with being 'support' partners. This is due to 'assortative mating' - our tendency to partner with people like ourselves (Hugh-Jones et al., 2016).

<sup>71</sup> Fathers in Greece and France report the same levels of work-to-family conflict as UK fathers.



activities; and 34% report that their job 'always' or 'often' stops them spending sufficient time with their partner or children. Working more hours or unsocial hours is implicated, as is self-employment (Speight et al., 2014).

A cross-national study found both 'work-to-family conflict' and 'family-to-work conflict' negatively affecting male employees' mental health (Chandola et al., 2004). The fall-out is not limited to one domain. Often there's a negative 'loop' from one to the other and back again (Burnett et al., 2012).

Additional stress can arise from partners' reactions: 18% of working fathers report that their partner or family 'often' or 'always' gets 'fed up' with the pressure of their job, with an additional 37% reporting that this happens 'sometimes' (Speight et al., 2014). Couple conflict, not to mention separation or divorce, correlates with lower productivity at work (Burnett et al., 2012). And separation/ divorce may have a more negative impact on fathers' work performance than mothers': during and shortly after separation, the degree to which a mother's mental health suffers is strongly related to the quality of her mental health beforehand. However, even fathers whose mental health is usually good tend to experience poor mental health during separation (Brewer & Nandi, 2014a).

Both men and women are reluctant to admit to negative impacts of family on work – even when evidence of it is clear (MacInnes, 2005). Even so, the analysis of the 2010 European Social Survey cited above, found 32% of the fathers admitting that family responsibilities 'often or always' prevent them from devoting adequate time to their work; and 38% 'often or always' experience disrupted concentration at work due to family matters (Speight et al., 2014). These were the highest rates in Europe.

It seems likely that child characteristics and behaviour will also impact fathers' functioning at work. When their young children were poor sleepers, both the amount of time Alspac fathers spent working, and their economic performance, were negatively affected (Costa-Font & Flèche, 2017). A study of families of young children with complex disabilities, found fathers' sleep deprivation substantial - and their employment compromised (Thomas, 2011). This is also the case when, due to a new mother's poor mental health, she and their baby are admitted to a mother-and-baby unit (Muchena, 2007).

We know very little about the strategies fathers adopt to reconcile earning and fathering – 'cash and care'. Subterfuge seems common: the survey that included a high number of dual-full-time-earner couples found that 48% of 26-35 year old fathers had faked being sick to meet family obligations (Working Families, 2015). The survey the year before had found 58% lying in other ways (Working Families, 2014). Younger fathers were more likely to lie (58% v. 44% in the 2014 survey).

Even if there is no active deceit, employers' ignorance of fathers' family circumstances may result in stress. A large, rare study of British fathers of children with disabilities found that fewer than 10% had told their boss about their child's condition, mostly from fear it would affect their careers (72% felt under pressure as breadwinners). Ninety-six per cent experienced no workplace support; and 97% inflexible working patterns (Flamingo Chicks, 2017).

## What can employers do?

*A big contrast between here and my immediately previous employer was just how enthusiastic everyone was that I took my full leave entitlement. There was no conversation about how I could minimise the inconvenience... tell me when you want to be off, crack on, enjoy it. (Kadar-Satat & Koslowski, 2015: 12)*

As awareness of generous Parental Leave available to some fathers in high-profile organisations increases<sup>72</sup>, leave entitlements may become increasingly salient to fathers and expectant fathers. Studies carried out prior to Statutory Paternity Leave entitlement, found firms that provided paid Paternity Leave more likely to attract, and keep, male IT workers (James, 2009); and paid Paternity Leave was one of two ‘family friendly’ benefits most consistently related to above-average financial performance; and one of four most consistently related to above-average labour productivity performance (Dex & Smith, 2002)<sup>73</sup>. We do not have recent studies of the role parenting leave policies may play in recruitment or retention of male workers in the UK, or in financial or productivity performance.

Fifty-six percent of employed fathers believe they would have a better relationship with their child if their employer permitted them to work flexibly (Government Equalities Office, 2009). The availability (or otherwise) of flexible working may impact on recruitment and retention. First – recruitment. A representative survey found 66% of fathers considering the availability of flexible working when looking for a new job (EHRC, 2009). A survey carried out by the large insurance company, Aviva, found that among parents wanting flexibility for childcare, 11% of fathers<sup>74</sup> would look for it when searching for a new job – and for virtually all of these parents, not finding it would be a deal breaker. This survey also asked parents what type of flexible working most appealed. Only a small minority (8% fathers v. 11% mothers) wanted part-time hours. Working the same hours over fewer days (‘compressed week working’) was desired by 24% of fathers (and 20% of mothers); and working from home by 25% of fathers and 22% of mothers (Aviva, 2017).

Evidence is mounting of hidden ‘father-churn’ (fathers or expectant fathers changing employment because they cannot reconcile family/ work obligations, without telling their employer why they are leaving). A large representative survey (BSA, 2002) found one third of fathers adjusting their working arrangements to care for children, with 6% giving up work altogether for the purpose (MacInnes, 2005). Fathers with access to flexible working are less likely to change employer (Burnett et al., 2011). Forty-two per cent of fathers who work flexibly (compared with 26% who do not) are satisfied with their work/ family balance; and satisfaction with work/ family balance is associated with lower intentions to leave the

<sup>72</sup> <http://uk.businessinsider.com/generous-parental-leave-policies-in-america-2015-8?r=US&IR=T>

<sup>73</sup> The extent to which this was due to ‘good employers’ offering paid Paternity Leave was examined, and while there was a ‘good employer’ effect, this by no means accounted for the whole of the correlation.

<sup>74</sup> Father-specific data was not presented in the published report, but was from the publisher.

organisation (Frith, 2016). In the Aviva survey mentioned above, 26% of fathers<sup>75</sup> who wanted flexibility for childcare, said that access to it would make them more likely to stay with their employer (Aviva, 2017). A small qualitative study in Scotland identified a number of fathers who had left the private sector for the public sector, because they felt it better accommodated their fatherhood (Kadar-Satat & Koslowski, 2015).

As younger men become fathers, churn and dissatisfaction may increase. One survey found 75% of Millennial fathers (compared with 69% of fathers overall) saying they would consider childcare responsibilities before accepting a new job or promotion (Working Families, 2017). And anecdotal evidence indicates that younger men are asking about flexibility in job interviews<sup>76</sup>. It is estimated that by 2020 Millennials will form 50% of the global workforce; and among BSA respondents, 26% of Millennials said parents should share paid parental leave in the first year equally (Scott & Clery, 2013). Qualitative research suggests that recent waves of fathers are developing a sense of entitlement to parental leave (Gatrell & Cooper, 2016); and an affronted sense of entitlement is associated with negativity towards employers (Westerlaken et al., 2011).

Other surveys that disaggregate fathers' responses by age, reveal younger fathers to be increasingly hostile, disappointed and resentful of their employers when flexible working is not forthcoming (Working Families, 2016a). A major survey found younger workers especially eager for a positive work/ life balance and 28% disappointed in their employer's performance in relation to it (PWC, 2015). The authors of this and other similar reports suggest that, in the war for top talent, employers need to pay attention to a rapidly changing landscape to optimise the employee experience.

And finally, the workplace may be a productive arena for delivering parenting-related information to fathers. Fathers so addressed (via father-specific information on company intranets, webinars or face-to-face seminars or coaching) may experience recognition of their fatherhood, and may regard their employer in a more positive light. Lloyds Bank reports that twice as many employees listen to their 'Family Matters' online sessions when the topic is father-specific (Workingmums, 2017). In 2014, the Fatherhood Institute delivered seminars in more than 30 workplaces (mainly financial services) across the world, as part of a seminar-series that included speakers on a wide range of topics. The fatherhood seminars were reported to be the best attended of all the seminars on offer.

Thus it would seem likely (though only high quality research will reveal) that employers who set out publicly to recognise their male employees' caring aspirations and responsibilities may reap rewards. Such recognition could include provision of information, well paid and substantial Paternity and Parental Leave specifically marketed to men, a flexible working offer

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<sup>75</sup> Gender differences were not reported in the published report cited here, but were obtained directly from the publisher.

<sup>76</sup> Reports from employers and recruiters at the launch of the Women & Equalities Committee report on the Gender Pay Gap on Tuesday 22 March 2016, at Golin in London.

covering a range of flexibility options, and training for managers in addressing men's fatherhood. All these practices require high quality performance management systems for implementation to be successful; and thorough evaluation to identify impact and lessons learned.

## Section F: Conclusions and recommendations

To sum up, what we are witnessing is both continuity and change. Fathers' aspirations are changing, as are some of their behaviours, despite a 'gender culture' that, at every turn (from service delivery to parenting leave design to public attitudes to media representation), not only reinforces but also promotes traditionalism. While behaviour is changing too, in many families these changes are 'round the edges', leaving fathers mainly responsible for earning and mothers for caring. This incurs economic and personal costs.

The male breadwinner ideal condemns many families to poverty (Cribb et al., 2017), and is a major factor in the continuing Gender Pay Gap. It renders households vulnerable to the loss of the sole, or main, breadwinner wage, and women and mothers to poverty in older age; and mothers and children to poverty when parents separate (Brewer & Nandi, 2014). Other matters of concern include the economic costs of failing to maximise investment in women's education and training, as well as the high rates of separation and divorce and child maltreatment associated with gender inequality at home.

Meanwhile many fathers pay a substantial price in time spent with their children and the quality of their relationship. After separation, such fathers may find their role as 'secondary' parent, which was manageable when they cohabited full-time with their children, dwindling to that of outsider, along with their capacity to influence their lives. Too many of these fathers are ultimately excluded or melt away.

The current social, cultural, institutional and legislative frameworks for work-and-care in the United Kingdom amount to social engineering, directing women and mothers to invest in caring, and men and fathers to invest in earning. This is out of step with the reality of most parents' lives and aspirations.

As we have documented in this report, traditionalism in parents' gender roles incurs economic and personal costs. Where children are concerned, it is directly associated with negative developmental outcomes, with indirect effects including increased likelihood of family poverty and child abuse, as well as separation/ divorce. All of these present hazards for children. In addition, State support for mothers (but not fathers) as children's intimate caregivers, contravenes Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 7 accords children 'as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents.' Countries like the UK that have ratified the UNCRC are therefore required to do everything 'possible' to enable care by both parents. In this respect, the British government is clearly contravening Article 7. (One would have to employ considerable sophistry to argue that 'cared for' could mean financial support alone, without reference to direct care.)

Our six recommendations are set out below.

## RECOMMENDATION 1: Fair Jobs for Fathers

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In families with at least one working parent, only one mother in five (22%) brings home even half the family income. This is in part due to the Gender Pay Gap, which makes it difficult for fathers to work shorter hours or take leave for parenting, since family income is more likely to be compromised when they do. We therefore call on the Government to strengthen current efforts to eliminate the Gender Pay Gap by 2025. This will entail a radical shake-up of employment law to make it easier for fathers, as well as mothers, to care and earn for their families.

## RECOMMENDATION 2: Employers to provide parity in paid leave entitlements to mothers and fathers

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We recommend employers who wish to benefit fully from the loyalty and commitment of fathers in their organisation, to upgrade their policies to provide parity to mothers and fathers in leave entitlements, including taking immediate action to 'top up' Paternity and Parental Pay to the level of Maternity Pay they offer and actively promoting and facilitating take-up by fathers. By 2020, we would anticipate that progressive employers will, for expectant and new fathers, automatically schedule not only well-paid Paternity Leave but also well paid Parental Leave to match their offer to mothers (this leave to be taken during the first twelve months after the birth). Fathers not wishing to take these leaves could opt out.

## RECOMMENDATION 3: Require employers to publish 'care equity' information

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Large UK employers are now required to publish 'pay equity' information (i.e. comparative pay levels for female and male employees). For more details see [ACAS' guide to gender pay gap reporting](#). Such employers should also be required to publish, by gender and parent-status, 'care equity' information: take-up of Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave and flexible working 'for family reasons', as well as employer responses to flexible working requests.

## RECOMMENDATION 4: Redesign the UK's parenting leave system

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**1.A Eligibility for Paternity Leave and Pay** Fathers who will have worked for an employer for 15 weeks before their baby's due date (rather than for 41 weeks, as currently) should be eligible for the Statutory two weeks Paternity Leave, bringing this in line with mothers' eligibility for Maternity Leave.

**1.B Self-employed and non-eligible fathers** Self-employed and ‘dependent contractor/worker’ fathers, as well as employed fathers not eligible for Paternity Leave and Pay, should be eligible for a period of leave for parenting as well as a Statutory Paternity Allowance payment (equivalent to the Maternity Allowance currently paid to comparable mothers).

**1.C Abolish the current Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Pay system** (i.e. Maternity Leave and Pay that eligible mothers can transfer to an eligible partner). This policy is ineffective and discriminatory: eligibility is seriously limited; the policy is too complex for most to understand; the statutory pay level is too low for most fathers to be able to participate in the scheme.

**1.D In place of SPL, introduce a non-transferable 13-week leave (the ‘Father’s Quota’)**, reserved for fathers/ mothers’ partners to be taken in the first year of an infant’s life. Eligibility, as with current Paternity Leave, should rest solely on that parent’s own employment history, without reference to the mother’s.

**1.E Improve pay for fathers’ leave:**

(i) Expectant/ adoptive fathers/ mothers’ partners are currently eligible for unpaid time off to attend two antenatal appointments. *This leave should be paid at 100% of salary* (with a ‘cap’ – see below for definition of ‘cap’)

(ii) Statutory Paternity Leave (two weeks) *should be paid at 90% of salary* (again with a cap)

(iii) The first four weeks of the new 13-week Father’s Quota *should be paid, in line with current Statutory Maternity Pay, at 90% of salary* (with a cap). The remaining nine weeks of the Father’s Quota *should be paid at the Statutory Minimum* (currently £140.98 per week), with the ambition to increase both the length and pay levels of the Father’s Quota as well as the pay levels of Maternity Pay steadily over time to the point at which each parent qualifies for six months’ non-transferable leave paid at 90% of salary (with a cap) to be taken in the first year of their child’s life. Mothers could still take longer Maternity Leave if they so wished, but at a cost to the family’s finances, since the Father’s Quota (and associated pay) would be lost.

**1.F Introduce a ‘cap’ on Maternity Pay** (i.e. the amount the employer is reimbursed by the Exchequer when an employed mother takes Maternity Leave): currently, there is no ‘cap’ on the level at which the Exchequer must reimburse the employer for mothers’ earnings when she is on the first six weeks of Maternity Leave. The Exchequer must reimburse the employer for 90% of the woman’s salary for six weeks, whether she is paid £15,000 or £150,000 per annum. Other jurisdictions almost universally ‘cap’ the pay level at which the employer can claim for an individual employee who is on Maternity, Paternity or Parental Leave. If Paternity Pay (with a cap) is introduced in the UK (see RECOMMENDATION 1E above), equalities legislation will require an equivalent cap on Maternity Pay. The Government should explore savings to be made by capping Maternity Pay, to establish whether savings would be sufficient to support a fairer parenting pay system for all.

## **RECOMMENDATION 5: Redefine sex discrimination to encompass negativity towards male caregiving**

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Discounting, mocking and failing to protect men's/ fathers' caregiving amount to sex discrimination, and overburden women and mothers with caring responsibilities. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission should, in the next edition of the Equalities Act Guidance, name and respond to this. Gender equality/ unconscious bias training, gender equality impact and risk assessments and related activities and guidelines should also name and address this issue.

## **RECOMMENDATION 6: Require publicly-funded publications and initiatives to be 'father-proofed'**

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When only mothers' care-taking is valued, traditional gender roles and the Gender Pay Gap are both reinforced. To counter maternalism, Government and Local Authority commissioned/ promoted research, policy, resources, tenders and guidelines relating to work/ life balance and other aspects of child and parental health, education and family life should be proofed for father-inclusion by experts before publication. In the short- and medium-term this will be necessary to ensure that resources/ initiatives do not, as currently, solely or primarily, address mothers' circumstances and concerns and ignore or diminish fathers'.



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