Fatherhood Institute
Annual Report 2008-09

November 2009
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Introduction

The Fatherhood Institute is the UK’s fatherhood think-tank.

Our vision is for a society that acknowledges and acts on the powerful research evidence that suggests children thrive when they have a strong and positive relationship with their father and any father-figures. We work for a society that supports both mothers and fathers as earners and carers, and prepares boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children.

What we do

We have identified three long-term goals for our ongoing work:

• To change work so that fathers can be more available to care for their children. We want to see more fathers, including fathers on low incomes, working flexibly and part-time, and taking more leave off for caring.

• To change education so that boys are prepared for future caring roles and boys and girls are prepared for the future sharing of these roles. We want to see children and young people discussing gender inequalities and understanding that mothers and fathers experience pressure to specialise in caring and earning roles, and that mothers and fathers should have a similar range of choices over their caring roles, not limited by gender. We want to see more encouragement of boys into childcare careers.

• To change supports to family life so that the caring role of fathers and father-figures is recognised and strongly supported. We want laws, policies and public services to encourage and enable fathers to invest more of their time and energy in the direct care of their children. We want all health, education, family and children’s services to be “father-inclusive” — that is, to support fathers in their caring roles as seriously as they currently support mothers.

How we do it

For each of these three goals, we adopt a four-fold approach to making change happen:

• We lobby for changes in the law, in Government policy and in the targets set for public services that support families, while paying particular attention to families who are disadvantaged

• We help employers and public services to change, by providing them with information, advice and training; by assessing and evaluating their policies and practice; and by piloting new practice

• In order to achieve change in all the above, we intervene in, and seek to change, the public ‘discourse’ about motherhood and fatherhood

• We ensure that the three activities identified above are informed by a solid, balanced and comprehensive body of evidence, readily accessible to ourselves and to others. We consult with experts and, where necessary, commission research in order to achieve a good understanding of the issues we address. We evaluate our own work in order to build our understanding.
Our team

A small and forward-thinking charity (reg. no. 1075104), the Fatherhood Institute uses remote-working technologies to operate as a ‘virtual’ organisation. Our core team all work from home – based in locations that include London, Cambridge, Northampton and Manchester. We communicate via email and phone, with frequent team meetings and other face-to-face meetings. We are supported by a central secretarial/administration agency based in Abergavenny, south Wales.

Our trustees

In September 2008, Jolyon Maugham replaced Dame Julie Mellor as the Fatherhood Institute’s Chair of Trustees. Jolyon was Chair of Gingerbread from December 2006 to May 2007, when he spearheaded the merger between that organisation and One Parent Families, and now serves as Vice-Chair on the board of the new merged charity. He has been a practising barrister specialising in revenue law since 1997. He is the author of several books and has written a radio play broadcast on BBC Radio 4. He is married with two young daughters and lives in central London.

Team changes in 2008/09

In January 2009, Duncan Fisher, our then Chief Executive was made an Officer of the British Empire for services to children in the 2009 New Year’s Honours List. He left the Fatherhood Institute to develop new partnerships and campaigns on fatherhood, later that month. Our then Services Manager David Bartlett and Director of Operations Steve Harwood shared the role of Interim Chief Executive for the remainder of the financial year.

Since April 2009: Our new Chief Executive, Rob Williams, joined us in May 2009, and David Bartlett was appointed Deputy Chief Executive. Steve Harwood – who was on secondment with us – returned to his employer, DCSF, in September 2009.

Professor Michael Lamb and Bronwen Cohen OBE left the board and several new trustees have joined. Our team has also expanded to include regional development officers and a web editor.

For a full description of our team and board, visit the About Us section of our website.
Our policy work and campaigns in 2008/09

In our first year as the Fatherhood Institute we have made a big impact in many areas of fatherhood-related policy.

Dads and maternity services

In April we launched a 12 point action plan to stop maternity services across the UK disadvantaging children from birth by ‘shutting out’ their fathers. Our report The Dad Deficit: The Missing Piece of the Maternity Jigsaw presented a mass of evidence demonstrating the profound extra benefits to child and parents of fathers’ active and positive involvement from birth.

The Dad Deficit was based on research involving maternity professionals and mothers and called for a total of 12 key changes to involve fathers more fully and so improve the overall health of the family. These included: registration of fathers by maternity services; NHS guidance on father-inclusion; information for fathers explaining their role in smoking, breastfeeding, alcohol, mental health and baby health, dealing with relationship stress and conflict and the impact of violence in the family.

Throughout the year we advised government on key fatherhood-related aspects of its developing Child Health Strategy, including the Fathers’ Early Years LifeCheck and the Healthy Child Programme.

When it launched in February 2009, we welcomed the Strategy, which called on maternity and health visitor services to improve their engagement with fathers. However we still face huge challenges in bringing about the major cultural shift in child health services’ thinking that would be required for their provision to become fully father-inclusive.

Joint birth registration

Research shows that engaging with fathers around the births of their babies is the ‘golden opportunity moment’ for intervention with them, so we are very much in favour of measures that require services to engage with fathers at that point.

So we were delighted in June 2008 to welcome the Government’s White Paper Joint Birth Registration: Recording Responsibility – based in part on our March 2007 discussion paper, Birth Registration and Parental Responsibility - as “potentially the most significant advance in fatherhood policy made by this Government”.

Expected to become law in 2011, we believe the introduction of joint birth registration could have a substantial knock-on effect in terms of fathers’ engagement with services, and in their children’s lives - because in order to ensure compliance with the legislation, there would be a statutory expectation on perinatal services to acknowledge and address fathers directly.
Separated families

In July, the Fatherhood Institute and three other charities - Relate, Families Need Fathers and One Parent Families - Gingerbread – launched a national debate called *Kids in the Middle*, focused on improving the support offered to the 1 in 3 children who experience parental separation before the age of 16, and their families.

More than 1,500 people contributed to the debate, which was backed by Deidre Sanders, ‘Dear Deidre’ of The Sun newspaper, and the nation’s most famous agony aunts and uncles. In September FI chief executive Duncan Fisher joined with them to meet up with Prime Minister Gordon Brown at 10 Downing Street.

In December the government set up its first ever Relationship Summit to explore the issues raised by the Kids in the Middle coalition, and Ed Balls pledged £60 million for schools-based counselling and £5.5 million funding for local pilots to support separating families.

Kids in the Middle continues and in 2009-10 we will be working with One Plus One to produce a guide for practitioners on how to support fathers in separated families.

Think Fathers

In November the Department for Children, Schools and Families published key research confirming the huge gap between the government’s aspiration for services to be more father-inclusive, and the reality at ground level.

The *Review of How Fathers Can be Better Recognised and Supported Through DCSF Policy* confirmed that at local level, family services are used much more by mothers than fathers (98% of respondents to a survey of local authorities reported this of services in their own area).

Only a fifth (22%) of respondents felt that fathers’ needs were explicitly met in their local authority. High percentages of a range of services were defined as ‘neutral’ towards fathers (for example 54% of secondary, 52% of primary and 45% of nursery schools), and a proportion as ‘discouraging’ (for example 10% of teenage pregnancy services and 5% of fostering and adoption services). With the exception of Sure Start Children’s Centres, very few family services were even monitoring their engagement with fathers in a robust way.

The DCSF’s response to the research was to launch ‘Think Fathers’ – a new campaign calling on family services to think distinctively about fathers rather than treating them as the ‘invisible parent’. The then children’s minister Beverley Hughes said: “Let’s grasp the nettle. Let’s make sure we ‘think fathers’ in every service we deliver and every policy we unveil.”

DCSF invited us to be one of the key partners in the campaign, along with the Children’s Society and the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners – and over the following six months our deputy chief executive David Bartlett was a key member on the Think Fathers Steering Group.

Outputs from the campaign included a ‘Dad Test’ guide to help children’s services improve the way they work with dads; a high profile publicity campaign; a Think Fathers website to encourage public services, professionals and the voluntary sector to look distinctively at fathers; and a Think Fathers Summit, held in June 2009. The Fatherhood Institute has now taken over the running of the Think Fathers campaign.
Child protection

In December we called for Local Authority children’s services departments to systematically engage with and assess fathers and father figures in cases where there are child protection concerns – and for Ofsted to address father-inclusivity in its inspections. Our submission to Lord Laming’s Inquiry on Safeguarding – set up in the light of the Baby P case - outlined ten recommendations to enable services and the inspection regime to grasp the nettle of engaging with and assessing fathers and, crucially, also stepfathers and other father-figures, systematically.

Lord Laming’s report emphasised fathers’ importance as protectors against child abuse, but stopped short of introducing any new requirements on social services or inspectors around fatherhood. We are continuing to lobby for a stronger emphasis on father-engagement across the child protection regime.

Training the children’s workforce

We sat on the Expert Group which advised on the 2020 Children and Young People’s Workforce Strategy, published in December – and helped ensure that the strategy emphasised the need for staff who work with children and young people to have the skills and knowledge to equip them to engage with fathers and support father-child relationships.

We also worked as a consortium partner on a Family and Parenting Institute research briefing paper on men and fathers in the children’s workforce, and this work is now being taken forward by DCSF and the Children’s Workforce Development Council.

Skilling up staff will be key to implementing the government’s new policies on fathers and fatherhood, and we continue to work with DCSF on the Common Core review.

"Particular mention should be made of the part to be played by fathers, not least as good role models. I believe the really important thing is that parenthood should be seen to be a lifetime commitment."

Lord Laming

Conference and events

During 2008/09 we spoke and/or ran workshops at many events including:

- Westminster Health Forum on Maternity and New Born Care
- Parent and Child 2008
- NatCen & University of Oxford ‘Parents Matter’ Conference
- National Association of Family Information Services Annual Conference
- Thurrock Children’s Centres Conference
- Campaign for Learning Conference
- National Engaging Parents Conference
- Early Childhood Forum Conference
- CAFCASS Conference
- Relationship Summit
Our training and consultancy in 2008/09

We continue to deliver a range of different services across the UK which are responsive to the changing policy and legislation framework. Courses are delivered by our core staff alongside our team of ten associate trainers. Quality of evaluations continues to be high with 70% of courses achieving ‘excellent’ or ‘very good’ ratings.

Audit and consultancy

Over the past year we have worked in a range of ways to assist local authorities and different agencies to transform their services at a strategic level. These have included:

- Auditing service delivery across Children’s Centres in Birmingham and Telford.
- Devising father-inclusive parenting strategies in Nottingham City.
- Adapting an assessment tool in Surrey to measure the mental health and wellbeing of fathers and their families postnatally.
- Extensive training of Children’s Centre managers and practitioners and direct work with fathers within the London borough of Brent.

Hit the Ground Crawling

Hit the Ground Crawling is the UK version of a groundbreaking American ante-natal peer support programme for dads-to-be. During 2008/09 we ran five Hit the Ground Crawling trainings to equip Children’s Centres and other children’s services across the UK on how to run it.

The Hit the Ground Crawling programme involves groups of expectant fathers learning childcare skills from new dads and their babies. Trained Children’s Centre staff, health visitors, midwives etc facilitate the sessions, which are very informal and are designed to provide space for the dads-to-be to discuss their thoughts and concerns with other dads in a relaxed setting, to watch their peers caring for their babies, and to have a go at changing nappies, cuddling, massaging, etc.

Hit the Ground Crawling produces more confident, less-isolated dads….and it is a great opportunity to ensure local fathers become familiar and comfortable with the full range of local services. We offer a full package of training and ongoing support to Children’s Centres and other ante-natal providers.

“Well at first I was very nervous and I hold my hands up…I was panicking about fatherhood. But this session has given me EVERY confidence and done me the world of good. I am full of confidence now.”

Dad-to-be in Stafford

In September our new ante-natal programme for dads, Hit the Ground Crawling, featured in a BBC Radio 4 documentary, Boot Camp for Dads.

‘Working with Fathers’ Accredited Courses

We have continued to respond to the steady demand for our Open College Network accredited ‘Working with Fathers’ training – in which participants submit a portfolio of work for moderation. The quality of work evident in the portfolio submissions is exceptionally high and reflects the commitment individual practitioners bring to their work with fathers.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course type</th>
<th>Number of courses run</th>
<th>Number of participants trained</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hit the Ground Crawling</td>
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<td>34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with Fathers Accredited Courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with Fathers one and two-day courses</td>
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<td>339</td>
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Our publications in 2008/09

Our publications reach a diverse range of managers and practitioners working in children’s family and health services - including parenting support services, Children’s centres, schools, extended services, nurseries/ pre-schools, teenage pregnancy and health visiting services and Connexions.

During 2008/09 we sold around 1,500 copies of our existing stable of publications, including the Toolkit for Father-Inclusive Practice and more specialised guides (Working with Fathers, Working with Muslim Fathers, Working with African Caribbean Fathers, Working with Fathers in Drug and Alcohol Services, Including New Fathers and Inside Fatherhood).

We also sold around 1,500 copies of the new publications we produced in 2008/09 – which were:

Fatherhood Institute Posters and Photo Packs

Research shows clearly that displaying positive images of fathers in childcare, health and education settings, and training ALL staff in how and why to engage with them, are key steps in successfully drawing fathers in – so in February 2009 we launched two great resources to help services do both.

The Fatherhood Institute Poster Pack is a set of four striking and beautifully produced A2 posters of real fathers and father-figures, each displaying a message that underlines their importance to their children, and with the words ‘welcome’ and ‘dad’ in a range of languages, including Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, French, Hindi, Polish, Somali, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu.

The Fatherhood Institute Photo Pack is a set of 10 A5 photo-cards designed to stimulate thinking and discussion about fathers and fatherhood. Each card features an attractive image or set of images and, on the reverse, key research findings, facts and simple exercises.

The cards, which provide the ideal ‘way in’ to talking with and about dads, can be used in group work or one-to-one, on parenting courses and in individual discussion, in meetings, supervisions and workshops, to train staff to think differently and distinctively about dads, to help mums and dads talk about their roles, and to allow teenagers or quite young children to speak about the people who ‘father’ them, in age-appropriate ways.

The Photo Pack is suitable for use by a wide range of family services providers, including schools and nurseries, further education and training, Children’s Centres, social care settings, youth workers, maternity and primary care services.
Invisible Fathers
Working With Young Dads Resource Pack

Young fathers (aged 16-24) are some of the most marginalised and vulnerable parents in the UK today. Many – though by no means all – have grown up in difficult circumstances, are on low incomes or benefits, have few academic qualifications and relatively poor career prospects. Some are homeless, or live in cramped, temporary accommodation. Yet most share with the young mothers of their children, an overwhelming wish for a better life for the children they adore.

Research shows that young dads really do respond well to the right support, delivered in the right way. The Invisible Fathers: Working With Young Dads Resource Pack – which includes a ‘research and practice’ guide, an award-winning DVD (produced by the U-Too dads’ group in Wiltshire) and photocopy-ready handouts for dads – shows services how to work with this key group.

'Dad cards' for black and minority ethnic fathers

The Dad Cards for Black and Minority Ethnic Fathers, produced in association with Dad Info, are small, credit card-sized, fold-out cards which provide detailed, culturally sensitive information for expectant fathers from particular ethnic and cultural backgrounds, presented in a range of community languages:

- African-Caribbean (English language)
- Muslim (English language)
- Polish
- West African (French language)
- Somali
- Bengali

The Fatherhood Institute online

Our website, www.fatherhoodinstitute.org, received 1.4 million successful page requests during 2008-09 – an average of just less than 4,000 per day. Throughout the year we kept the website refreshed with new case studies, research summaries, news, policy updates and information about events with a fatherhood theme. We also sent out 34 e-newsletters and e-shots about fatherhood-related news, policy, research, training and publications, to our 7,000-strong database. To sign up for our e-newsletters and e-shots, go to 'Register' on our website homepage.

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org
The Fatherhood Institute

The Fatherhood Institute is the UK’s fatherhood think tank.
The Institute (charity reg. no. 1075104):
• collates and publishes international research on fathers, fatherhood and different approaches to engaging with fathers
• helps shape national and local policies to ensure a father-inclusive approach to family policy
• injects research evidence on fathers and fatherhood into national debates about parenting and parental roles
• lobbies for changes in law, policy and practice to dismantle barriers to fathers’ care of infants and children
• is the UK’s leading provider of training, consultancy and publications on father-inclusive practice, for public and third sector agencies and employers

The Institute’s vision is for a society that gives all children a strong and positive relationship with their father and any father-figures; supports both mothers and fathers as earners and carers; and prepares boys and girls for a future shared role in caring for children.