Chief Executives’ report

Since we started work in 1999 (as Fathers Direct) we have seen huge changes in family life, not just in our country but in Europe, America, and elsewhere. The increased involvement of men in the lives of their children which was already apparent at the turn of the 21st century has now become a commonly accepted aspect of modern life. Fathers dropping off their children at school are much less unusual, and more men are working part time or staying at home for longer periods of paternity and parental leave when their children are very young. They want to be good dads.

Part of the FI’s role is to identify the gaps between how family life is changing and the social structures around families which either help or hinder their efforts to work together bring up happy, healthy children. Although parenting involves much more equal partnerships at home these days, services for families like health and education continue to operate largely on the assumption that mothers provide all the childcare, and fathers are not particularly significant. The law does the same, as do the workplace and popular culture. This sets multiple barriers in the path of fathers and mothers who want to share parenting and breadwinning roles more equally, and underpins difficulties facing many fathers after separation and divorce.

Highly motivated fathers in successful relationships can negotiate their role in spite of the cultural, legal and services bias in favour of motherhood, but less motivated or confident fathers, and those who separate from their children’s mothers, find these systemic barriers to involvement harder to overcome and may drift into lower levels of involvement. This leads to children, and often particularly vulnerable children, losing out on the protective effects of positive and involved fatherhood.

Helping families to work together for the benefit of their children is an important challenge. We know that fathers have a strong impact on their children even though mums and dads themselves may not be aware of the evidence base. Dads’ positive involvement brings with it all sorts of benefits, while their absence or negative involvement are major risk factors for youth drug and alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as difficult transitions into adult relationships.

This annual report focuses on our work in what was a good and productive year for the Fatherhood Institute. During 2010/11 we also laid plans for future programmes which will support important changes in the UK’s family services.

These include:
• A new parenting programme called Family Foundations, which supports couples to transition into parenting and work together as a parenting team;
• A project to support child protection teams to more easily identify and work with the men around children at risk; and
• Our face-to-face and online Raising Happy Children courses for mums and dads.

You can find out more about all these programmes on our website, www.fatherhoodinstitute.org.

We hope you will enjoy this report and look forward to working with you in future years.

Adrienne Burgess
Joint Chief Executive & Head of Research

Kathy Jones
Joint Chief Executive & Head of Training
Alive or dead, co-resident or separated, good, bad or indifferent, dads matter to children. Our vision is for a society that understands this and responds accordingly - doing all it can to support positive father-child relationships, and to challenge negative ones.

The Fatherhood Institute (charity number 1075104) is the UK’s fatherhood think-and-do-tank. Since we launched in 1999, as Fathers Direct, we have made huge progress in helping to establish a new narrative about the importance of father-child relationships in British family policy.

**What we do**

We campaign for a father-inclusive society, which benefits from:

- Laws and policies that promote positive, and where necessary challenge negative, father-involvement
- Public services that work routinely and effectively with families to support positive father-involvement
- Greater public understanding about the benefits of positive father-child relationships and how to achieve them.

**How we do it**

1) We produce evidence-based insights to help the Government and other institutions pursue policies which reflect the importance of fathers’, as well as mothers’, positive involvement in their children’s lives
2) We support schools, maternity, health, social and other services, to develop father-inclusive strategies and practice
3) We pilot and evaluate pioneering, father-inclusive approaches
4) We help employers create more father-friendly working packages
5) We provide accessible, evidence-based resources to help families understand why positive father-child relationships matter.

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“The support and information I’ve received – thanks to having access to a worker who understood fathers’ importance and didn’t come at me with a deep-seated belief that non-resident fathers are 2nd class parents – have helped me in so many ways. I was shocked to find the “system” to be so focused on the mother and her needs and I had some very dark thoughts about myself and my future as a parent and even as a man. During the darker times having someone to point me in the right direction so I eventually got the help I needed has shaped the dad I am today.”

John - a father helped by a Fatherhood Institute-trained children’s centre worker

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**About the Fatherhood Institute**

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Helping families understand dads’ importance

When they have children, dads in the UK receive little or no information to help them make sense of their new role – everything is geared towards the new mum.

This year, thanks to a partnership with Bounty, who provided free distribution in the free packs they hand out to new mums, we published the Guide for New Dads, a 12 page booklet covering the rights and responsibilities of fathers, how to support breastfeeding, how to look after a baby, and how to keep your relationship as healthy as possible during the stress of new parenthood. We produced the guide with funding from the DCSF, and support from the Department of Health.

“Just to say that I read through the material that was in the Bounty Pack delivered to us following the birth of our child. Really impressed with both the content and the design - nice to see something for fathers as so often it is just for the mums! Really good advice.

Father who received Guide for New Dads

A survey of nearly 750 mums who received the Bounty Newborn Essentials pack during spring 2010 showed that:

- 40% of mothers recalled the Guide for New Dads
- 65% of these said their child’s father had read it (in 20% of cases the father alone had read it, in 45% the mother and father had both read it)
- 58% said it was ‘good to receive something for dads’

Respondents marked the guide’s usefulness thus:

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<tr>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th>USEFUL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advice on dads’ role in supporting the family health</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about dads’ importance</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas on infant communication</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/financial/workplace rights information</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about relationship support organisations</td>
<td>53%</td>
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...the Fatherhood Institute study finds that the UK is 18th out of 21 comparable countries in how equal its parents are. Not all fathers want to spend more time at home and not all mothers want to work more. But it’s time that parents here were given the chance to order their lives the way they want to. This Government, headed by two men with small children of their own, has said it wants Britain to be the most family-friendly country in Europe. It still has a very long way to go.

Mary Ann Sieghart: O father, where art thou?
In The Independent, 6 December 2010

Changing public perceptions

With the relatively generous maternity leave provision British mothers enjoy, it’s easy to believe that we live in a fair and family-friendly society. But the high cost of childcare, along with women’s lower pay, reduced chances of promotion and greater contribution to unpaid domestic work and childcare, suggest all in the garden may not be so rosy.

This year we carried out a major research project to examine how policies and practices help and hinder equal parenting in different developed economies – the first serious attempt to do so anywhere in the world. In December we published the results, as the Fairness in Families Index.

The report, which we produced with the support of a distinguished panel of academics, looked at a basket of indicators ranging from female representation in parliaments and boardrooms to the gender pay gap, full-time-equivalent paid paternity leave and the proportion of GDP spent on childcare and education.

The UK came 18th out of 21 countries, suggesting we have a long way to go to fulfil the Coalition Government’s ambition of becoming the most family-friendly country in Europe!

We launched the report at a parliamentary reception. FIFI received widespread media coverage, was very well received amongst policy makers and academics in the field – and formed the basis for a round of meetings with Ministers, bolstering our influence on discussions around parental leave reform amongst other key policy issues. It also created a platform on which to base future shared working with other organisations, particularly women’s groups.
Collating the evidence on why dads matter

This year, with support from the Department for Education, we updated significant sections of our internationally renowned compendium of research called ‘Costs and Benefits of Involved Fatherhood’ (originally compiled in 2007). We released updated sections as briefings on particular issues:

- Fathers and Mental Health
- Fathers, Mothers, Work and Family
- Fathers’ Influence on their Children’s Education and Learning
- The Business Case for Paternity Leave.

We published these on our website and promoted them to our database of around 10,000 local authority and voluntary sector service commissioners and providers; researchers, policy makers, journalists and other professionals with an interest in fatherhood and family policy. They also informed the briefing papers we sent to politicians and officials, as described opposite.

To make our research findings more widely accessible, we produced a series of five plain English ‘Why Dads Matter’ summaries for dads and others, and published these in the ‘For fathers’ section of our website.

We promoted the education and learning research summary to teachers and other education professionals by including it as part of the free information made available through Fathers’ Story Week – our annual event for schools, nurseries, children’s centres and other family learning settings (including prisons), which took place for the first time in June 2010, in the week leading up to Father’s Day. We also promoted it through The Dad Factor, our new CD designed to help schools and other family learning settings develop more father-inclusive practice.

It’s by constantly going back to the research that we’re able to convince politicians, opinion-formers and practitioners of the need for more father-inclusive laws, policies and practice. Without a strong evidence base, our fight for a new narrative on fatherhood would be lost.

Listen to the Fatherhood Institute on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme

You can listen to former FI chief executive Rob Williams and author Tony Parsons debating the UK’s father-friendliness on Radio 4’s Today programme here:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_9249000/9249767.stm
Evidence to the Coalition Government’s Children and Families Taskforce
In this, we demonstrated the relevance of active fatherhood to all policies relating to children and families; and explained how and why the reorienting of children/families policy and practice to include a specific focus on involving fathers would be essential for the Coalition to achieve its aims.

A submission to the Family Justice Review
In this we provided a critique of how fathers (and others) navigate the existing systems, and examined how one might provide greater contact rights to non-resident parents (as the current system defines those majority of separated/divorced fathers who live with their children for less than half the time).

A response to the Department for Work and Pensions’ proposals to reform the Child Support Agency
In our response to the Strengthening Families and Promoting Parental Responsibility consultation, we argued that reforms designed to increase the payment of child support by non-resident fathers, are likely to lead to greater father-involvement and, if properly handled, could reduce conflict between separating and separated parents.

A response to the Graham Allen Review of Early Intervention
In our FI Briefing Smoothing the path: fatherhood and couple relationships across the transition to parenthood we outlined why couples need support when becoming parents, the ways in which helping them effectively requires father-inclusive practice, and how services could be redesigned to allow this to happen.

A briefing paper for the Eileen Munro review of social work practice in child protection
Having convened a roundtable meeting for Professor Eileen Munro and her team to highlight the need for child protection practitioners to rectify this, Men close to ‘at risk’ children can often present risks which need to be addressed – but they may also act as resources which can be used to stabilise and improve a child’s situation. The roundtable had a significant impact on the content of Professor Munro’s final report, which incorporated most of our recommendations for change.

A paper for Downing Street’s Behavioural Insight Unit (aka ‘The Nudge Team’)
In our Promoting Strong Couple Relationships paper we considered a range of options for how the Coalition Government might use the promotion of strong couple relationships in its policy development, thus enabling a shift away from public services focused solely or primarily on the mother and child.

A response to the Modern Workplaces consultation
In this we responded in detail to the Government’s questions about how it might best reform the parental leave system, basing our response on Supporting Families and Relationships through Parental Leave – our business case for a more flexible approach (see page 12 for more details).
Transforming public services

Training the family services workforce

The Fatherhood Institute is the leading provider of training courses for statutory and voluntary sector agencies wishing to develop more father-inclusive provision.

We offer a range of ‘off the shelf’ training courses for early years and social care services, including:

- Working with fathers in early years & children’s centres
- Working with diverse fathers
- Working with young fathers
- Delivering father-inclusive parenting services

We also provide bespoke courses, and train teams as certified providers of Hit the Ground Crawling – our peer mentoring course for expectant and new fathers.

This year we created a training programme called The Dad Factor which is aimed at supporting schools to engage with fathers and help them to have a positive impact on their children’s attainment. The course was developed partly with the support of DfE funding and includes a CD-Rom manual, launched just before the end of the financial year at a special one day conference we organised for schools.

By the end of the year we had delivered a total of 51 training contracts including 16 contracts for Hit The Ground Crawling and a special master class in the Netherlands.

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.

Expectant father who attended Hit the Ground Crawling course

It has given me a real sense of achievement knowing I am helping other dads get involved sooner and helping them understand how hard it is for the mother.

Veteran’ father who acted as mentor on Hit the Ground Crawling course
Auditing services and consulting
As well as training staff on the ground, we have a strong track-record in supporting senior managers to develop more father-inclusive strategies at national, regional and local level.
During 2010-11 we provided audit and consultancy services to 11 clients, including a project to help the NHS thalassaemia screening programme increase screening take-up rates amongst fathers – whose involvement in genetic testing is vital to reduce and manage the incidence of thalassaemia and sickle cell disease.

Supporting with high-quality publications
Our work with public services is supported by a suite of high quality publications, including our core publication, the Dads Included Toolkit for Developing Father-Inclusive Services (a new version of which we published in 2010), the ‘Invisible Fathers’ Working with Young Dads Resource Pack, the Fatherhood Photo Pack, the Fatherhood Institute Poster Pack and specialist guides on working with Muslim and African-Caribbean fathers, and those who have problems with drink and drugs. This year we produced The Dad Factor, a CD-Rom designed to help schools get fathers more involved in their children’s learning.

As well as maintaining and redesigning our main FI website this year, and sending out regular e-newsletters and e-shots to our database, we launched our new online practitioner community, Dads Included, through which professionals across the family sector can share best practice and complete the Dads Included Test – a comprehensive online audit of their own services.

Helping schools get dads involved
In June 2010 we ran the first ever Fathers’ Story Week - a week long programme of activities for schools involving fathers in their young children’s education in the run up to Father’s Day. We were surprised both by the numbers of organisations who registered to take part (over 2,000) but also by the range. Although the project was aimed at primary schools we found that nurseries, pre schools, libraries, and even prisons were keen to get involved.
To underpin the project, we developed a website with free-to-download activity packs and lesson plans for primary schools. Supporters included major charities and the Children’s Laureate Michael Rosen.

Over 90% of fathers we surveyed said they thought the project was very good and that they would like to take part again. Schools were also very positive. One primary school in Harrow found 128 fathers turning up to their first ever fathers’ assembly, held as part of their Fathers Story Week activities (ample evidence that if you build such activities with dads in mind, they will come!). Nurseries also found the project worked well for them.

Reaching out to dads’ groups
During 2010-11 we studied the work of local groups which have a track record of bringing fathers together to provide activities for their children. Such groups can be a useful way for fathers to build their own networks of support and a positive way for them to help expand their children’s horizons.
By the end of the year we had collected the learning together into a Dads’ Activities Pack, including guides for fathers and professionals, on how to set up a local fathers’ group, plus a series of ‘how-to’ activities sheets.

Since I’ve been inside I’ve felt pretty helpless and my relationships have been under strain. It was good to have something to share with my children that was positive.
Dad who took part in Fathers’ Story Week, Barlinnie Prison, Glasgow

I had an excellent day. I was happy to spend the day at school with my child, it made me feel proud. I would definitely take the day off and do it again.
Dad who took part in Fathers’ Story Week, Stag Lane School, Harrow
Creating fairer workplaces

Campaigning for a fairer parental leave system

Since we launched as Fathers Direct in 1999, we have been lobbying for a modern parental leave system that gives mothers and fathers more choice over how to organise and share their bread-winning and caring responsibilities.

Our evidence-based briefings helped pave the way for the introduction of 2 weeks’ statutory paid paternity leave (in 2003) and since then we have been pushing for more and better-paid leave for new fathers. The previous Government pledged to introduce additional paternity leave from April 2011 – allowing fathers to take up mothers’ unused maternity leave after their baby reaches 20 weeks of age (this gives him access to 13 weeks’ APL paid at income support level and another 13 weeks unpaid leave).

Welcome a gesture as this was, our analysis of the evidence tells us that for families to have a genuine choice over how to share breadwinning and caring responsibilities, there needs to be a more radical redesign of the parental leave system, including a ‘use it or lose it’ fathers’ element, paid at salary-replacement level (or near to it).

So this year we pulled together the business case for more and better-paid paternity leave and a more flexible approach to parental leave, and published this as an FI Briefing Supporting Families and Relationships through Parental Leave. We also formed a Parental Leave Coalition with the TUC, Family and Parenting Institute, Fawcett Society and Family Lives – and worked together in various combinations with these partner agencies to promote change.

We met with Ed Davey, Minister for Employment, in December 2010 to encourage him to promote radical changes to how leave is offered to parents around the birth of their children. By the end of March 2011 it seemed clear that the Department for Business Innovation and Skills would put forward some important proposals for reform of the leave system, and these ideas were finally launched in a consultation document called Modern Workplaces on May 16th by Vince Cable and Teresa May.

The Government’s proposals would allow for a four week reserved period of parental leave for fathers and a further 30 weeks of parental leave which can be taken by other parent at any time in the first year of the child’s life. The leave would be flexible – both parents would be able to take time off at the same time if they chose to do that, and they could also extend the period of time over which the leave was used by opting to take the leave on a part time basis.

We contributed positively to the consultation, and eagerly await the proposals’ implementation! We would like to see more of the leave available to the father being paid and at a rate close to salary replacement. But we are pleased with the shape of the current proposals and will push for the Government to provide the financial support many families will need in order to enable fathers to take a significant amount of time out of work to care for their young babies.

““
It made me reflect – I rang my daughter immediately after the course. I now take more initiative to contact my daughter, I consulted her about what we could do to stay connected.

Dad who took part in a Staying Connected course

““
Supporting fathers as employees

We have been working with the Employers for Fathers group to promote the development of father friendly practices in the workplace. We spoke at their main launch event in 2010 and supplied evidence and briefings on the business case for measures to support fathers’ work-life balance.

We have also introduced a course called *Staying Connected* – originally developed in Australia – which helps separated fathers cope with the stresses that can result from separation from their children. The impact of separation on employers’ costs, in terms of absenteeism, lost productivity and staff leaving, is huge.

During 2010-11 we delivered *Staying Connected* four times to employees of large companies in the UK. The course evaluated extremely well, and we have since developed the model for delivery in children’s centres, to both mothers and fathers.

Conflict with former spouse has been reduced, I have changed my attitudes and approach to her.

Dad who took part in a *Staying Connected* course

I was motivated to do something about my anger because of hearing about the stories of other blokes who had been in trouble with the police.

Dad who took part in a *Staying Connected* course
Thanks to our funders

As well as the DfE, we would like to thank our funders during 2010-11:
• Yorkshire Building Society
• Bewley Charitable Trust
• Blakemore Foundation
• Bryan Lancaster’s Charity
• Reuben Foundation
• Lindsay Foundation

For a summary of our annual accounts for 2010-11, please download from the ‘About’ section of our website:
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.

The Fatherhood Institute

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