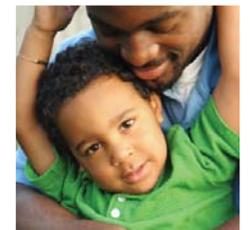


Six signposts for fatherhood

Many families are looking for change.

They want to take seriously the roles fathers, as well as mothers, play in their children's lives; and find better ways of balancing breadwinning and caring responsibilities. These six signposts show key directions for future policy which would help all fathers to do their best for their families.





Fathers should get more leave when their baby is born

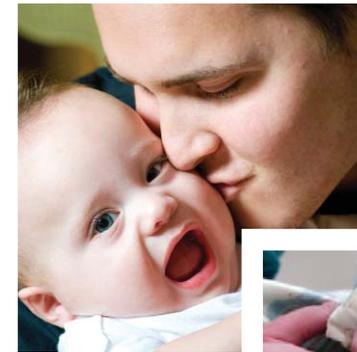
Mothers get 39 paid weeks off work. Fathers only get two paid weeks, to be taken straight after their baby is born. Fathers' leave should be at least doubled to four weeks to be taken within the first year – so that fathers can play their part in caring for their baby and supporting their baby's mother.





Paternity leave should be paid at 90% of salary

Half of fathers do not use their two weeks statutory paternity leave, which is paid at income support levels only (£123 a week) – mainly because they can't afford to. The loss of salary presents a big problem to families who are going through the expense of a new baby. The first six weeks of maternity leave are paid at 90% of the mother's salary. Paternity leave should be paid at the same rate of the father's salary.





New fathers should get more information

Pregnant and new mothers receive a wealth of government-funded information. Currently, fathers receive only one booklet (funded for 2010 only) – the **Guide for New Dads** – although there is ample evidence that they want and need more information. In future, information distributed to mothers should be written and designed to be relevant to fathers too; and continuing funding for the **Guide for New Dads** should be made available until this is achieved.





More fathers should be able to work flexibly

Women are more likely than men to ask for flexible working and more likely to get it when they ask. Men should be encouraged to ask for flexibility and treated fairly when they do so. This will require employers to be helped to understand the clear evidence that flexibility for fathers can support their business case.





Services should focus on supporting fathers

All health, education, family support and social care services should do as much to engage with fathers as they do to engage with mothers. Many services still regard mothers as sole natural carers and treat fathers as optional extras. We need services to reach out routinely to fathers and have high expectations of their involvement, recognising that today's dads are very hands-on and want to be more so – and that treating mothers as solely responsible burdens them unacceptably.





Non-resident fathers should be helped to stay connected

We know that when separated dads stay connected, their children tend to do better; and that when they lose touch, children and fathers suffer greatly. But Government policies and services still do almost nothing to support those fragile relationships. The whole system needs to be reviewed to ensure that fathers have every chance to care for their children even when they do not live with them full-time.

