Advocating for involved fatherhood: Reflections for advocates

A GREAT DAD FOR EVERY CHILD

Men Care

fatherhood

For fathers to play a greater part at home, and for services to engage better with them, policy makers, practitioners and funders (as well as fathers and mothers themselves) need to really believe that involved fatherhood makes a difference. The following arguments, all of which are based in sound research evidence, have been used successfully. Remember that not every argument works with every audience.

TEENAGERS WERE FOUND TO BE LESS LIKELY
TO GET INTO TROUBLE with drugs/alcohol,
early pregnancy or anti-social behaviour when
their fathers had been highly involved with them
at age seven.

FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS BE THEY POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR
LACKING — HAVE PROFOUND AND
WIDE-RANGING IMPACTS ON
CHILDREN THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

FATHERS HAVE ENORMOUS IMPACT ON

MOTHERS: for example, teenage mothers with positive partner support are more loving towards and accepting of their children and score lower on the Child Abuse Potential scale.

DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN GAIN EVEN MORE FROM A STRONG FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

than better-resourced children; and suffer more when this is lacking.

PARENTS' RELATIONSHIPS ARE MORE STABLE

when mother and father both commit to supporting their families financially and both are highly involved in the day-to-day care of their children.

HIGH EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND SOCIAL MOBILITY

in young adults are linked with children's closeness to their fathers when they were in primary school.

IN SEPARATED FAMILIES, CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION is strongly linked with low-time spent with their non-resident birthfother, and with the child's perception of

lack-of-closeness to him.

WOMEN ARE NOT 'NATURALLY' BETTER AT CARING FOR CHILDREN THAN MEN.

Parenting skills are learned by both sexes – and given the same exposure and support, fathers learn as quickly as mothers.

CHILDREN DO BETTER IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

when their fathers have been highly involved in a wide range of caretaking tasks from when they were very young.

THEY ARE DOING IT:

The MenCare global fatherhood campaign has created short films which illustrate the value of fathers' spending more time participating in caregiving: www.men-care.org/Media/MenCare-Films.aspx. The campaign also offers posters that can be adapted to local contexts. The MenCare resources are useful for partner organizations, when launching a local campaign, and for starting the conversation on the importance of fatherhood and caregiving in a community.

To download other 'Bringing fathers in' resources and access relevant links and references, go to:

www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2014/bringing-fathers-intersources-for-advocates-practitioners-and-researchers