

DEBUNKING THE MYTH OF THE ABSENT FATHER

Practice Guide

ISAFE

Improving Safeguarding
through Audited
Father Engagement

In this infographic we present key statistics that summarise what we know about fathers' presence in young children's lives. As you'll see, fathers are much more 'around' than you might expect...



95%

Of parents are in a couple relationship when their baby is born

95%

Of parents jointly register their baby's birth

- Kiernan, K. and Smith, K. (2003). "Unmarried parenthood: new insights from the Millennium Cohort Study." Population Trends (National Statistics 7) 114: 26-33.
- ONS (2020). "Births by parents' characteristics." London: Office for National Statistics.

86%

Of babies are living with both their biological parents at birth



At age 3, the figure is

82%



At age 5, the figure is

77%



23%

That remain have an 'own household mother' and an 'own household father'

We know that

2%

live with their birth father (separate from mother)

79%

Overall, of 5-year-olds live with their birth father

- Kiernan, K. (2006). "Non-residential fatherhood and child involvement: evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study." Journal of Social Policy 35 (4): 651-659
- Calderwood, L. (2007). "Family demographics and relationships" in Hansen, K. and Joshi, H. Millennium Cohort Study Second Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies
- Calderwood, L. (2008). "Family demographics" in Hansen, K. and Joshi, H. Millennium Cohort Study Third Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies

Among the **27.3%** have no face-to-face contact

21%

52.4% meet him weekly or less often

of 5-year-olds not living with their birth father

20.3% meet him at least three times a week

6%

Overall, of 5-year-olds neither live with, nor meet their birth father

4%

Of 5-year-olds live with a stepfather / mother's partner



- Calderwood, L. (2008). "Family demographics" in Hansen, K. and Joshi, H. Millennium Cohort Study Third Survey: A User's Guide to Initial Findings. London: Centre for Longitudinal Studies



36%

Of 'own household mothers' say their relationship with the child's father is 'friendly'

10%

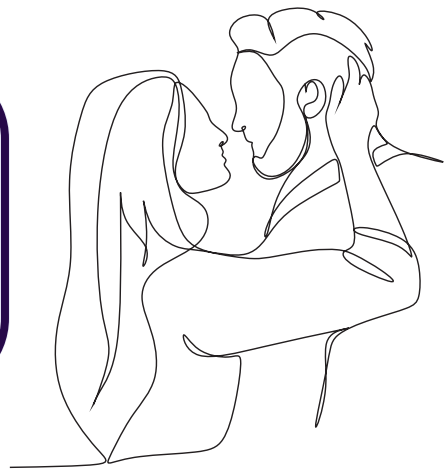
Say the relationship is 'bad' or 'fairly bad'

A study of 5,717 infants aged 18-months or under registered with Children's Centres in disadvantaged areas of England, found that only 250 (4%) were NEVER seeing their birth father face-to-face

- Kiernan, K., McLanahan, S., Holmes, J. and Wright, M. (2011). "Fragile Families in the US and UK." Working Paper WP 11-04-FF. Princeton, Centre for Research and Wellbeing
- Anderson, S., Bradshaw, P., Cunningham-Burley, S., Hayes, F., Jamieson, L., MacGregor, A., Marryat, L. and Wasof, F. (2007). "Growing up in Scotland: Sweep 1 Overview Report." Edinburgh: Scottish Centre for Social Research, Centre for Research on Families and Relationships

92%

Of babies of married parents are still living with both at child-age 5



Where parents had been co-habiting but were not married at the time of their birth **76%**

of the babies were, at age 5, still living with both their birth parents

Research on newly-made child protection plans found that there was very little information about the fathers in children's case files, although most were present in their lives and the majority were involved in parenting

Cafcass England records reveal that among mothers who return to court in relation to a child protection order (with a different child), 44% return with the SAME partner

- Philip, G. and Bedston, S. (2019). "Understanding recurrent care proceedings: fathers, mothers and family relations." Family Law, 23 September 2019.
- Brandon, M., Philip, G. and Clifton, J. (2017) "Counting fathers In: Understanding Men's Experiences of the Child Protection System." London: Nuffield Foundation