

Fathers in the early years: How do they balance their work and family life?

Research Report

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1. Introduction

This is a report of the key findings and recommendations following a research project exploring how working fathers in Scotland balance their work and family life. The focus is on fathers with children under the age of 5 years, who live in a two-parent dual-earner household wherein their partner is also in employment. This research investigates what support fathers might benefit from in the workplace in order to reach their full professional potential and be able to fully engage in family life to the extent they want. To this aim, six questions were considered:

1. What types of family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements do fathers have access to in their workplace?
2. Which work-related family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements do fathers make use of?
3. What work arrangements hinder or promote fathers' engagement in their young children's upbringing and family life?
4. What work arrangements hinder or promote fathers' engagement with their career?
5. What do fathers know about paternity and parental leave?
6. What types of policies and support do fathers desire in order to improve their work-family balance?

To answer these questions, the project applied a mixed methods approach and analysed:

- a) Two large-scale longitudinal datasets, namely the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) and Growing Up in Scotland (GUS).
- b) A set of 20 in-depth interviews specifically commissioned for this piece of research with fathers of children aged below 5 years.

This research is undertaken collaboratively by the University of Edinburgh and Fathers Network Scotland for the Scottish Government.

Glossary

(The terms of leave as per the interviewing period, which was February 2015)

- **Additional Paternity Leave:** Before the introduction of Shared Parental Leave, in April 2015, fathers could take additional paternity leave for between 2 and 26 weeks, starting 20 weeks after the birth and before the child's first birthday, instead of the parents making use of maternity entitlement. APL was paid at £138.18 per week, or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower, for up to 19 weeks, if the APL starts 20 weeks after the birth and the mother makes no further claim on maternity pay from 20 weeks.
- **Annual Leave:** Almost all workers are legally entitled to 5.6 weeks a year of paid time off from work (pro-rata for part time employees).
- **Family Friendly Work Related Policies:** Statutory and non-statutory arrangements designed specifically to support employees with caring responsibilities. These include post birth leave schemes for mothers and fathers, a workplace nursery or crèche, childcare vouchers, time off for the family emergencies and other benefits.
- **Flexible Working Arrangements:** A statutory right of all (since June 2014) eligible employees, not just parents or carers, to request flexible working arrangements such as home-working, flexi-time, compressed hours, job-sharing, part-time working, specific shifts and other options.
- **Parental Leave:** An 18-week statutory unpaid leave reserved for each working parent, to be taken from soon after the birth of his or her child and up to the child's 5th birthday (or 18th in special circumstances).
- **Paternity Leave:** A 2-week statutory non-transferable paid leave (£138.18 per week, or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower) for working partners, to be taken soon after the birth of a child.
- **Shared Parental Leave:** Up to 50-weeks partially paid statutory leave reserved for working parents, which can be shared between the mother and the father as they see fit (mothers must still take 2-weeks leave immediately following childbirth). This was not available to interviewees as it came into force in April 2015.

2. Literature review

2.1 Situating working fathers in the UK policy context

The shared parental leave scheme which came into effect in April 2015 (BIS 2014) is amongst the latest additions to a growing inventory of work-related family friendly policies, developed and introduced by the UK Government over the past two decades. The shared parental leave legislation grants working fathers in the UK the opportunity to co-care for their babies and family soon after the birth of the child, while protecting them from the risk of being made redundant or demoted by their employers. This new leave scheme reflects an increasing public awareness towards the primary role that fathers can play in children's upbringing and the value many men place on father-child relationships.

Apart from various parental leave schemes (O'Brien, Moss, Koslowski & Daly 2014), the portfolio of family friendly policies potentially offered by employers in the workplace includes financial aid towards childcare provision, access to a workplace nursery or crèche, time off for the care of dependants, and other work-related benefits designed for mothers and fathers. On top of these family friendly practices, parents benefit from a statutory right to request flexible working arrangements such as home-working, flexi-time, reduced or compressed hours, job-sharing, part-time contracts, career breaks, special shifts and other practices. Although any employee regardless of whether or not he or she has caring responsibilities may request flexible-working arrangements (e.g. for study and training purposes), parents are considered to be core beneficiaries of these arrangements, and in particular mothers with young children.

Taken together, the key aims of these family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements are threefold. First, to get more parents into paid work and, by so doing, diminish child poverty in the UK by the year 2020 (CoE 2009). Second, to achieve greater equality in the labour market outcomes of mothers and fathers (Fatherhood Institute 2013). And third, to enable every child in the United Kingdom to have "*the best start in life*" (DfEE 1998a, 1998b) by maximising the extent and quality of parental care available to children in the early years. In this regard, the Scottish Government recently introduced the "National Parenting Strategy", a comprehensive programme designed to achieve the Government's ambition of "*making Scotland the best place in the world to grow up*" (Scottish Government 2012:6).

Such investment from Westminster in widening the supply and variety of work-related policies for parents in employment demonstrates an increasing recognition of "*the benefits of successfully integrating work and family life*" (Burnett *et al.* 2012:5). Indeed, research provides robust empirical evidence as to the associations for employed parents between high levels of work-family conflict and poor physical, emotional and social well-being (Allen *et al.* 2000; Amstad *et al.* 2011; Shockley & Singla 2011). Studies also show consistent links between high levels of work-family conflict and adverse work outcomes, including low productivity, decreased job

satisfaction and high workforce turnover (Allen *et al.* 2000; Amstad *et al.* 2011; Shockley & Singla 2011).

However, research findings indicate that the mere introduction of targeted policies aimed at supporting working parents, does not guarantee their uptake. For example, surveys of parents with young children reveal that just about half of fathers report taking statutory paternity leave to be with their newborns soon after childbirth (EHRC 2009b; O'Brien *et al.* 2014). Estimates suggest that fewer than 20% of fathers in the UK took more than the two weeks' statutory paternity leave after the birth of their child (ILM 2014; O'Brien *et al.* 2014). Studies looking into employees' work-family life dynamics indicate that about three-quarters of respondents in various organisations, across professions and seniority levels, reported having access to flexible working arrangements (Burnett *et al.* 2012; CIPD 2012), with more women than men making use of flexible practices at work (CIPD 2012). Other research suggests that even when fathers had access to flexible working options, only 30% made use of these options (EHRC 2009b).

Therefore, an important question to answer is: *What obstacles might fathers face in exercising their right to request and use family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements?*

2.2 Factors associated with the use of family friendly policy and the uptake of flexible working arrangements

There are various reasons why working fathers might not use, or make only partial use of their entitlements to employment-related family policies. For example, fathers may not be fully aware of these practices or think they personally are not eligible for these policies. Research shows that working parents are more aware of family friendly policies if they are: mothers, highly educated, live in a two-parent family, work long hours, hold a permanent contract, and/or have a union membership (Bagilhole 2006; Budd and Mumford 2006). Furthermore, mothers and fathers who work in routine or manual jobs are less aware of the right to request flexible working than counterparts employed in more middle-class occupations (O'Brien *et al.* 2014).

Even when fathers are aware of the availability of family friendly options within their workplace, and even if they value these policies, they may still refrain from using such practices (Burnett *et al.* 2013). Fathers report that economic constraints are an obstacle to taking paternity leave (EHRC 2009b). Financial necessity as a reason for not taking paternity leave is a more prevalent situation among Scottish and Welsh fathers than English fathers (Ellison, Barker & Kulasuriya 2009).

In the absence of economic constraints, fathers may still find it challenging to request or negotiate leave and flexible working arrangements with their employers. Findings from interviews with fathers in the UK and US show that fathers in both countries may experience difficulties in exercising their entitlements (Kaufman, Lyonette & Crompton 2010). Other key barriers to flexible working uptake include

operational requirements, supervisors' ability to manage flexible employees efficiently, unsupportive attitudes of line-managers and senior staff members (CIPD 2012; Burnett *et al.* 2013) and concerns that requesting flexible working might be interpreted as a sign of low commitment towards the job (Ellison *et al.* 2009) and adversely impact on the likelihood of being promoted (EHRC 2009b).

2.3 How do family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements benefit working fathers and their employers?

There is a paucity of Scotland and UK based research into the possible implications of family friendly policies and flexible work practices for fathers and their employers. This is possibly because it is difficult to observe practices that are relatively unusual. Nevertheless, that research which has been done lends support to the argument that access to, and usage of, such practices has mutual positive impact on employees and employers. A comprehensive study of working fathers in the UK shows that respondents who use at least one type of flexible working practice are significantly less concerned with their workload, work relationships, work-life balance and job security, than those who do not (Working Families 2011:6–12). The same study shows that fathers with high incomes, but not those with low incomes, perceive their organisation as more committed to the employee if they have access to flexible working arrangements (Working Families 2011:14). Another study reports that employees who use flexible working practices demonstrate higher levels of work engagement compared to those who do not (Burnett *et al.* 2012). This study also shows that employees who have high scores on various work-family conflict measurements have low work engagement scores (Burnett *et al.* 2012).

Other studies indicate that implementing family friendly practices within the workplace could bring benefits for employers. Employers feel that offering family friendly options helps to improve workers' productivity, employer–employee relations and staff retention (EHRC 2009a). Similarly, employers believe that introducing flexible working options has a positive influence on staff motivation and workers' engagement (EHRC 2009a; CIPD 2012).

2.4 The implications of fathers' uptake of family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements within the workplace for children and family life

In addition to the impact of family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements on employed fathers' outcomes, such policies have implications for children's development and family life. Research shows that high levels of work-family conflict, suffered by working fathers and mothers, have negative consequences for family life (Gatrell 2007; Burnett *et al.* 2012). For example, UK employees in two-parent families who experience high levels of work-family conflict are less satisfied with their romantic relationship with their partner than those who have low work-family conflict scores (Burnett *et al.* 2012).

In contrast, studies from a range of Nordic countries show that using family friendly policies is linked to positive outcomes for families and children. Taking paternity leave is related to greater and enduring father–child contact (Lammi-Taskula *et al.* 2011), higher levels of satisfaction with the father-child relationships (Haas & Hwang 2008), and more equal division of domestic tasks between mothers and fathers (Almqvist & Duvander 2014). Fathers' early engagement in childcare, in turn, is associated with positive developmental outcomes in children (Almqvist & Duvander 2014).

In the UK, research finds that not taking paternity leave or not sharing childcare responsibilities with a partner is related to developmental difficulties in three-year-olds (Dex & Ward 2007). Conversely, research shows that fathers who take paternity leave are more satisfied with their family life than those who do not (EHRC 2009b). Other UK-based studies indicate that paternity leave uptake enables fathers to become more engaged in their child's upbringing (EHRC 2009b), build up practical childrearing skills and develop a shared routine with their babies (Gatrell 2007). Fathers who take parental leave in the first 12 months after childbirth are more involved in childrearing practices than those who do not take leave (Tanaka & Waldfogel 2007).

3. Methods

To answer the research questions outlined in the introduction, a mixed methods approach is necessary. Data are analysed from two large-scale nationally representative surveys as well as from 20 in-depth interviews conducted in February 2015. The following section provides details of these data sources.

3.1 Secondary analysis of large-scale survey data

3.1.1 The Millennium Cohort Study (MCS)

The MCS is a large-scale longitudinal birth cohort survey, which collects data on children born between 2000 and 2002 across the four territories of the UK. The MCS visits the cohort children and their families at two-yearly intervals, gathering information on their health, education, family life and development (Hansen *et al.* 2010).

Data presented in this report are taken from the Scottish sub-sample of the first sweep of the MCS (MCS1). The Scottish sub-sample of MCS1 comprises 2,293 mothers and 1,744 fathers of 2,303 babies aged about 9-months (52% girls, 48% boys). Data collection for MCS1 was carried out in Scotland between 2001 and 2002.

3.1.2 Growing Up in Scotland (GUS)

Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is a large-scale longitudinal birth cohort survey, which follows the lives of groups of children and their families in Scotland. Data collection for the GUS survey started in 2005, when two sub-cohorts were recruited: a child cohort, comprising about 3,000 children born between 2002-2003, and a birth cohort, comprising 5,000 children born between 2004-2005. In 2011, GUS recruited a new birth cohort, comprising about 6,000 children born between 2010-2011, and their parents. GUS visits the cohort children annually, interviewing each cohort child's primary caretaker (in this study nearly always defined as the mother).

Data for the present research project were taken from the 2011 birth-cohort sweep, when the GUS babies were about 10-months old (51% boys, 49% girls). Interviews in that sweep were carried out with the cohort babies' mothers, who also provided information on the study child's father.²

3.1.3 Quantitative analysis of data from the MCS and GUS

Both the MCS and GUS used a complex sampling framework to recruit participants. Thus, all response frequencies presented in this report are based on weighted data as recommended by the survey documentation. In addition, the "complex samples" procedure³ was used in all analyses that report statistical significance. This procedure takes into account the surveys' weights, geographical clusters and socio-economic stratification⁴ and gives more confidence that the findings from the surveyed participants can be generalised to the wider population in Scotland⁵. The level of statistical significance in this project is set at $p < 0.05$ which means that the probability of obtaining the observed results by chance (and so an estimate not being representative of the general population) is no more than 5%. It should also be noted that while the MCS interviews both mothers and fathers, GUS unfortunately generally gathers information from mothers only. This variation in study design must be taken into consideration when comparing results from the MCS and GUS.

3.2 In-depth qualitative interviews

In-depth interviews with 20 fathers were carried out for this project during January and February 2015. A call for participants was circulated using the *Fathers Network Scotland*⁶ email list as well as the researchers' professional networks. Fathers were recruited if they satisfied the following criteria: they reside in Scotland,

² For more information about GUS BC2 sweep 1 see Bradshaw *et al.* 2013.

³ *SPSSStatistics* was the software package used by the research team.

⁴ For more information on the procedures involved in analysing GUS data using the complex sample design in SPSS see: Bradshaw & Corbett 2014.

⁵ Confidence intervals are available on request. Please contact the corresponding author.

⁶ <http://www.fathersnetwork.org.uk/>

are employed by a public sector organisation, have at least one child under the age of 5 years, and live in a dual-income household wherein the partner is also at work (or on maternity leave and planning to re-join the workforce).

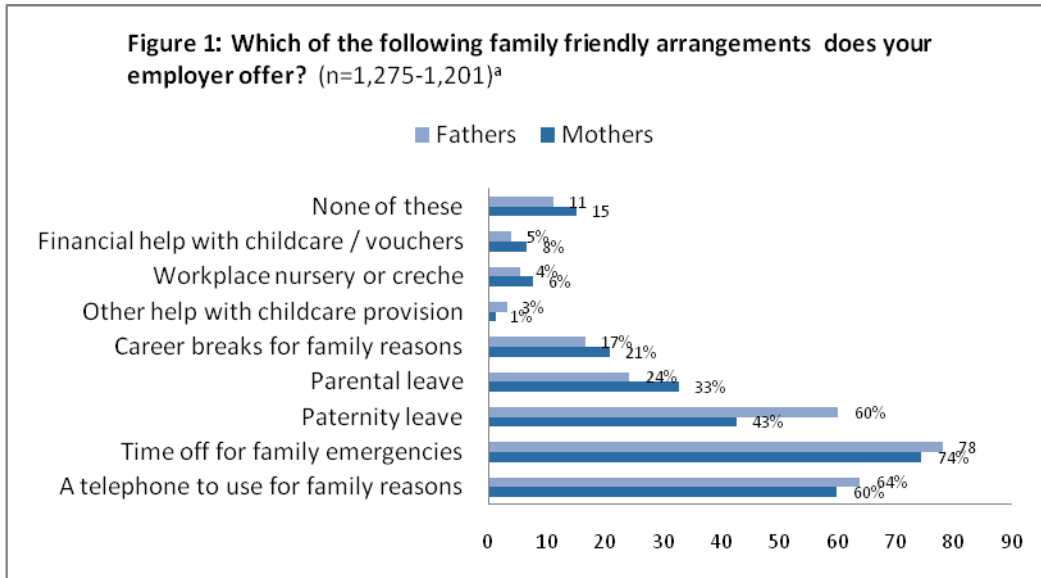
The decision to focus on fathers who work in the public sector (in light of the need to limit the scope of the research) was taken following research that shows that public sector employees are considerably more troubled by work overload and job security than those in the private sector, possibly a result of the public debate on potential economic cuts following the global economic recession of 2008 (Working Families, 2011). Also, public sector organisations are possibly more likely to offer flexi-working options than the private sector, though more research is needed in this area.

The interviews took between 35-95 minutes and were conducted at a location chosen by the interviewee. The youngest interviewees were in their early 30s and the oldest in their mid 40s. Fathers had between one and four children. The interviewees' jobs vary but can generally be classified as middle-class occupations. To protect the anonymity of the participating fathers, and their families, all names were changed at the transcription phase. The findings from these interviews should be taken as indicative rather than as representative of the population from which the sample was drawn.

4. Findings

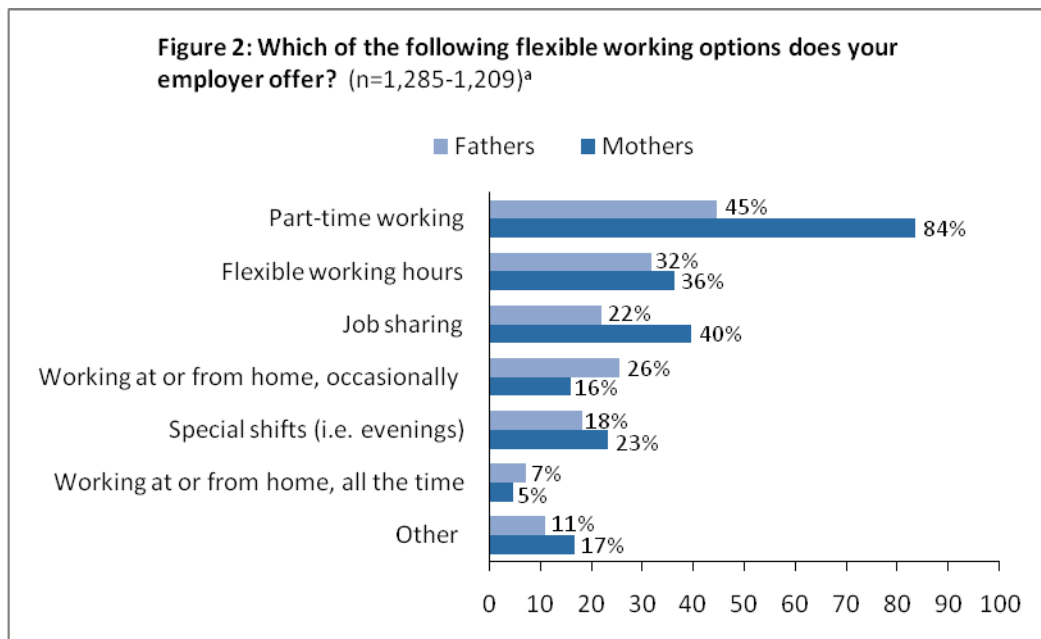
4.1 Fathers' access to family friendly arrangements and flexible working options

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate fathers' access to family friendly work arrangements and flexible working options in 2001. Figure 1 focuses on access to family friendly work arrangements, showing that 4% of the working fathers in Scotland reported being offered childcare vouchers or other financial aid towards childcare provision and 5% had access to a workplace nursery or crèche. Other family friendly arrangements that working fathers in Scotland had access to include career breaks (17%), paternity leave (60%), parental leave (24%), time off for family emergencies (78%) and a telephone to use for family reasons (64%). It should be noted that in 2001 fathers valued the ability to use the workplace phone for family matters given the limited availability of personal mobile phones at that time. While nowadays, using the organisation phone may no longer be seen by working parents as a benefit, the 2001 figure shows the key role technology plays in constituting a family friendly workplace.



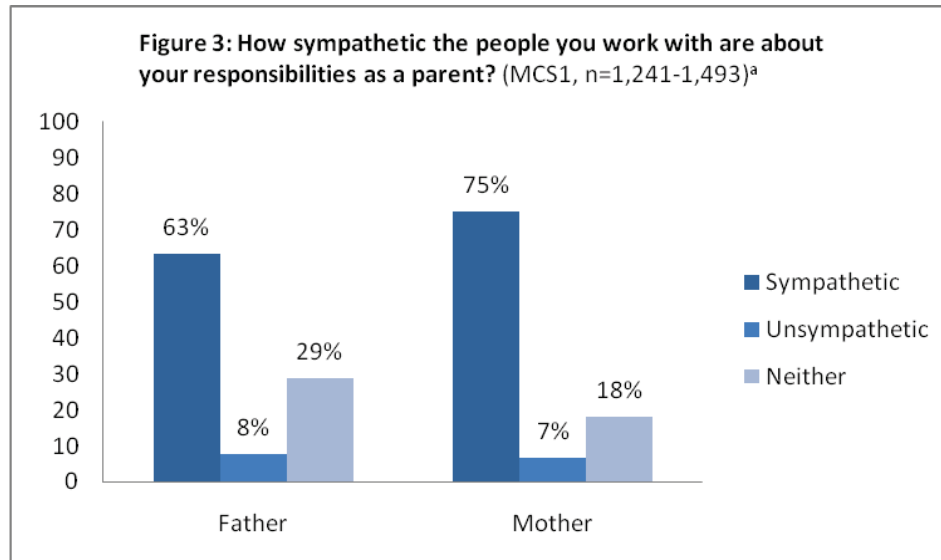
a. Data source - MCS1 Scottish sub-sample, 2001, all mothers & fathers who are in paid work.

Figure 2 illustrates access to flexible working arrangements in Scotland. It shows that nearly half (45%) thought they had the right to request part-time working (compared to 84% of mothers). Flexible working hours were on offer to 32% of fathers, 22% had potential access to job-sharing and 18% to special shifts (shifts specifically arranged). Some of the working fathers reported their employer might offer the option of working from home, either occasionally (26%) or regularly (7%).



a. Source - MCS1 Scottish sub-sample, 2001, all mothers & fathers who are in paid work.

Figure 3 shows that 63% of working fathers in Scotland perceived their colleagues as sympathetic towards working alongside people with parental responsibilities, compared to 75% of mothers. Conversely, 8% of fathers felt that their co-workers were unsympathetic and 29% exhibited neither positive nor negative attitudes toward fathers with parental responsibilities.



a. Source - MCS1 Scottish sub-sample, 2001, all mothers & fathers who are in paid work.

The process of requesting and negotiating the use of flexible working and family friendly policies can be further explored via analysis of data collected for this project in 2015 via in-depth interviews with 20 fathers working in public sector organisations. Findings from these interviews, although indicative rather than representative of all working fathers in Scotland, show that most interviewees feel supported by their direct line-managers and supervisors:

"...everything boils down to people really. Relationships. I feel that I have got an open enough relationship with my line-manager to be able to ask these types of things..." (Interview no. 15)

The majority of interviewees viewed requesting flexible working and family friendly arrangements as a relatively informal process, in which both the organisation's operational requirements and the employee's individual circumstances are weighed up:

"We said we would have a 6 month trial to see whether it worked from my point of view and from the business and the organisation's point of view". (Interview no. 9)

A number of fathers, all of whom had previously worked for private sector companies, reported that they felt that the lack of barriers for taking leave or

requesting other family friendly work arrangements was specific to their current (public sector) workplace:

"... I think what struck me...a big contrast between here and my immediately previous employer was just how enthusiastic everyone was that I took my full leave entitlement, there was no conversation about how I could minimise the inconvenience for month end, which I'd seen elsewhere, tell me when you want to be off, crack on, enjoy it, which was nice, and helped me feel less guilty about taking the leave off." (Interview no. 10)

Ease of communication around family friendly policies and flexible working, according to the interviewed fathers, is related to a range of factors, including having a line-manager or a direct supervisor who is a parent/grandparent, working alongside colleagues who have young children, having colleagues who use similar arrangements, a workplace in which employees feel encouraged to share family experiences, and perceiving the organisation as an "employee-friendly" environment in general, not just in the context of parents and families. As one father explained:

"My line-manager, she has a young family as well, and she works compressed hours, so she has an understanding..." (Interview no. 2)

Conversely, a small number of fathers perceived their organisation's Human Resources department as a barrier for accessing flexible working and family friendly policies:

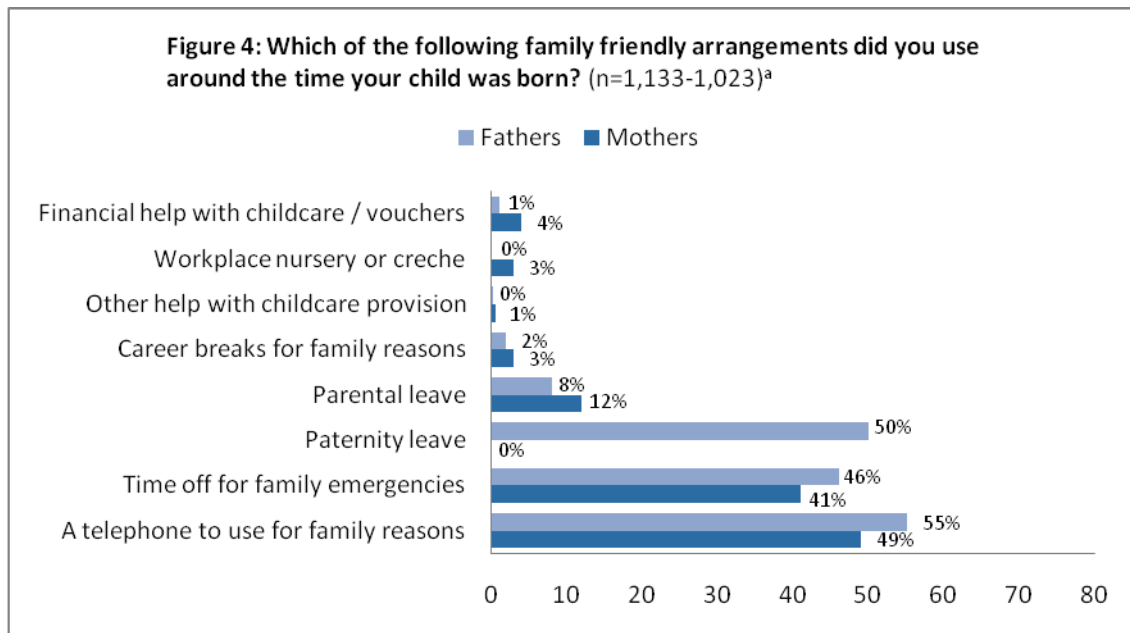
"I don't really trust that our HR Department accurately reflect or tell you in good time what's been going on, so you're really kind of left to police it yourself..." (Interview no. 10)

About half of the respondents said that they have learnt about new work-related family friendly policies through the media or by talking to better-informed colleagues. Three respondents, working for 3 different organisations, mentioned that their organisation's HR department publishes briefing papers with updates about employees' entitlements.

4.2 Fathers' uptake of family friendly work arrangements and flexible working options

Figures 4 and 5 illustrate fathers' uptake of family friendly work arrangements and flexible working options in 2001. Figure 4 shows that 50% of the working fathers in Scotland took paternity leave whereas parental leave was taken by 8% of the fathers.

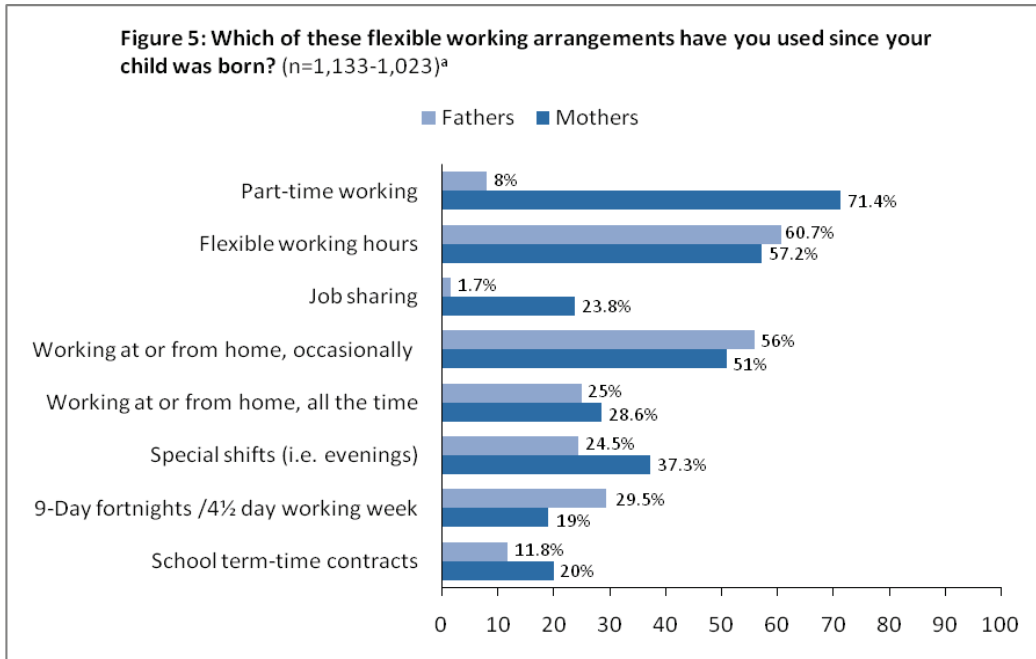
This finding indicates that not all fathers who reported potentially having access to these leave schemes at their workplace took such leave when their child was born.



a. Source - MCS1 Scottish sub-sample, year 2001, all mothers & fathers who are in paid work

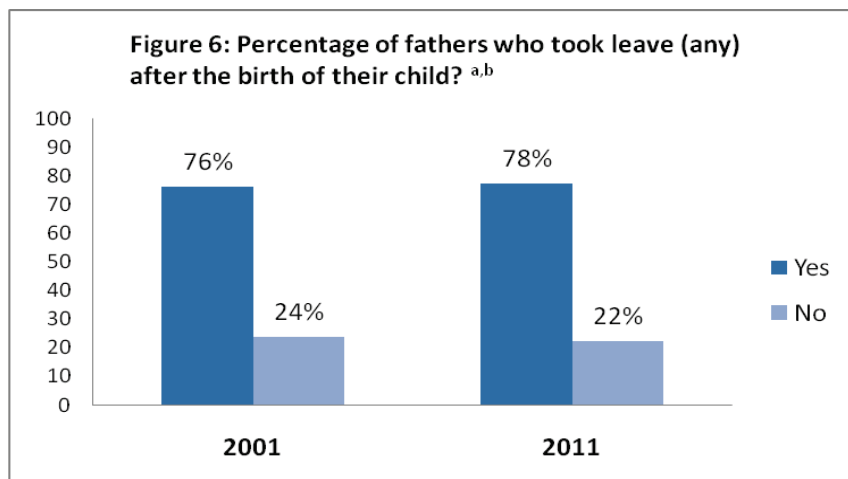
Similarly, fathers did not report using a workplace nursery or crèche even though 5% of them had access to this service (see Figure 1). Only 1% of working fathers used financial help toward childcare and 2% took a career break for family reasons. More prevalent arrangements among fathers in Scotland were using the workplace telephone for family reasons (55%) and taking time off from work for family emergencies (46%).

Figure 5 shows that, among the working fathers who used flexible working options after their child was born, about 61% have used flexible working hours. Other flexi-work options that were used by the fathers were working from home, either occasionally (56%) or regularly (25%), part-time employment (8%), special shifts (24.5%) and school term-time contracts (12%). A small minority of fathers (2%) used the job-share option (compared to roughly 24% of mothers).



a. Source - MCS1 Scottish sub-sample, year 2001, all mothers & fathers who are in paid work

Turning now to focusing specifically on post-birth leave uptake, Figure 6 investigates how many working fathers in Scotland have taken leave (of any kind) to be at home with their newborn children and family, and whether the numbers have changed between 2001 and 2011⁷

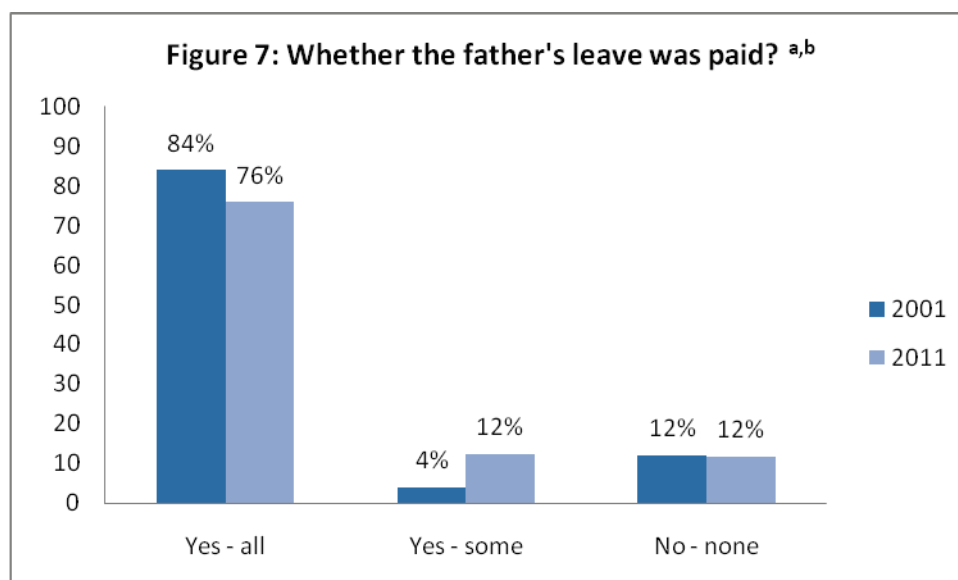


a. Data source 2001: MCS1 Scottish sub sample, n=1,591; b. Data source 2011: GUS-BC2, n=4,712.

⁷ Note: In GUS, mothers reported on their own and their partners' leave uptake. In the MCS, both the mother and father provided information on their leave usage.

As can be seen, in 2011, 78% of fathers in Scotland have taken some type of leave soon after the birth of their child, compared to 76% who took leave in 2001. As the data were collected differently by the two different studies (MCS for 2001 and GUS for 2011), this small change might well be the result of measurement error. This finding suggests that the overall percentage of leave uptake by fathers in Scotland has not changed dramatically over the first decade of the new millennium.

Figure 7 explores whether the leave fathers have taken after their child was born was paid for in full, in part, or not at all. The figure shows that, both in 2001 (before the introduction of statutory paternity leave, so this would be occupational paternity leave or annual leave) and 2011, the majority of fathers opted for fully paid leave (84% and 76% respectively). Nevertheless, in 2011, 12% of fathers took partially paid leave and another 12% had not received any monetary compensation towards taking leave to care for their newborn children.

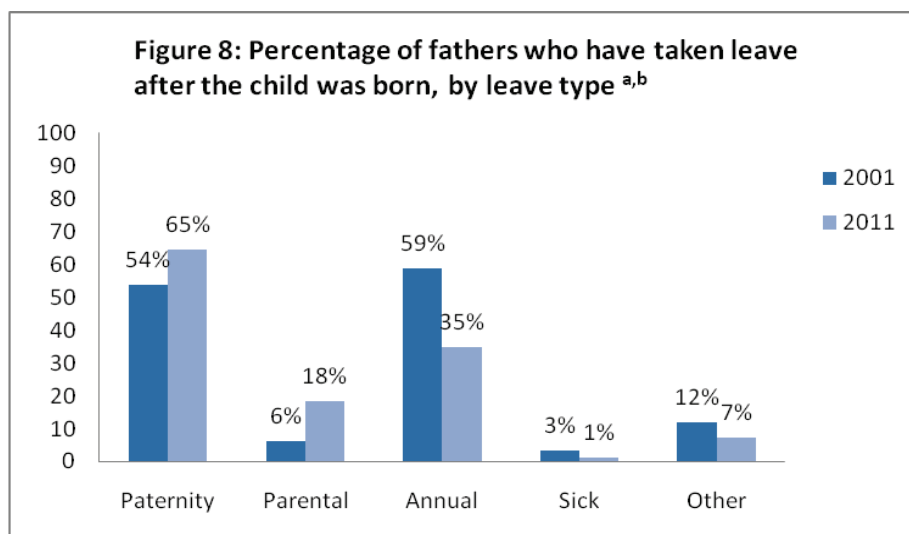


a. Data source 2001: MCS1 Scottish sub sample, n=1,210; b. Data source 2011: GUS-BC2, n=3,640.

Next, Figure 8 explores what types of leave were taken most frequently by working fathers in Scotland. The figure shows that, in 2011, paternity leave was the most commonly used leave after the birth of a child, with 65% of mothers stating that their partner has taken this type of leave to be at home with their newborn child. The second most frequently used leave type taken by fathers in 2011 was annual leave, with 35% of fathers taking such leave. Parental leave was taken by 18% of fathers and 7% have also taken other types of leave after their child was born.

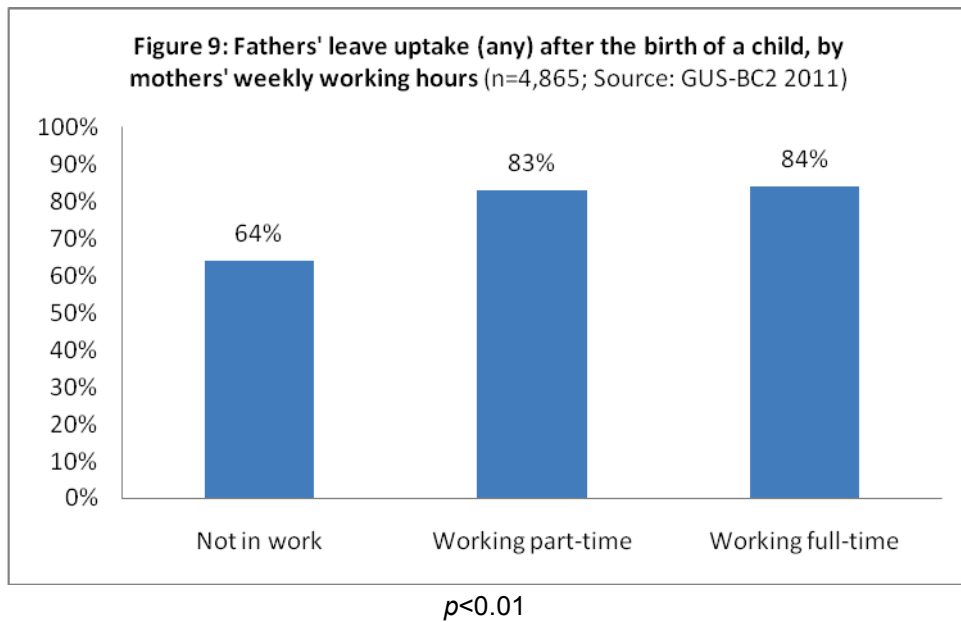
The numbers for 2001 are slightly different: Paternity and annual leave were both used by more than half of the fathers (54% and 59% respectively) while only 6% reported taking parental leave. It is important to bear in mind that while parental leave became statutory in 1999, working fathers received the right to take paid paternity leave for the first time only in 2003. It is possible that respondents who

were interviewed in 2001-2002 confused these two schemes while reporting which leave they took after their child was born. It is therefore best to compare fathers' leave uptake in 2001 and 2011 by examining the joint percentage of fathers taking both paternity and parental leave. Such comparison shows that, in 2001, only 60% took paternity and/or parental leave compared to 83% of fathers reported to have taken such leave in 2011. So, it would seem that the number of fathers taking parental and paternity leave in Scotland increased between 2001 and 2011 while the number of fathers taking annual leave after the birth of a child decreased (from 59% in 2001 to 35% in 2011). Again - these changes over time should be taken with caution as they may reflect, fully or in part, methodological (rather than substantive) differences given the different design of the two surveys.

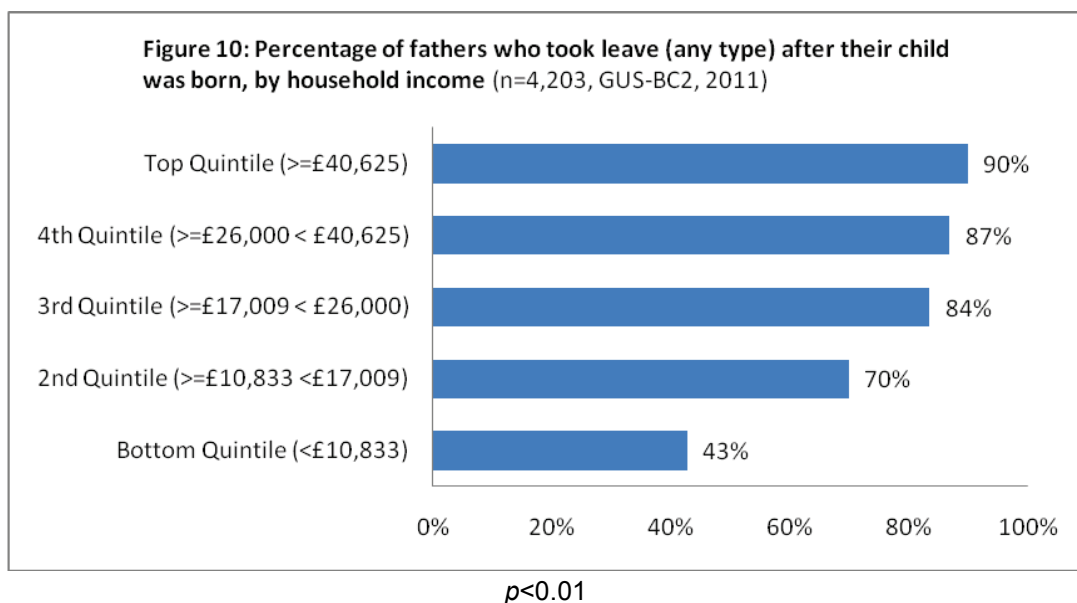


a. Data source1: MCS1 Scottish sub sample, n=1,176; b. Data source2: GUS-BC2, n=4,712. Differences may reflect differences in survey design as well as change over time.

Figure 9 shows that fathers' leave uptake in Scotland is significantly related to mothers' employment status. As can be seen, in 2011, just over 60% of fathers in households where the mother is not in employment have taken leave to be with their newborns, compared to between 83% and 84% of fathers who live with partners who are in paid work.

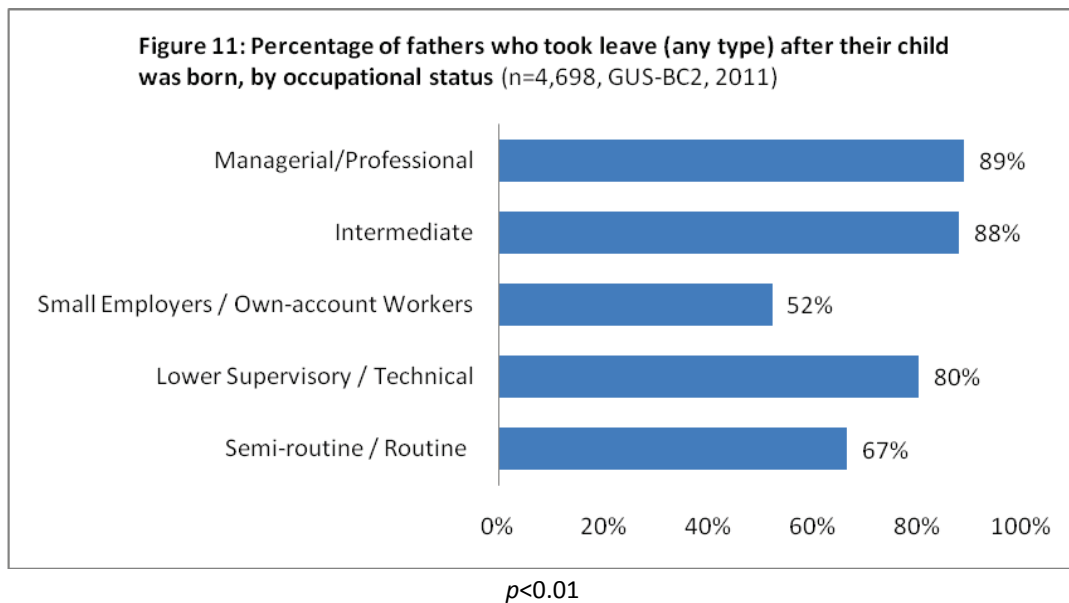


Figures 10 and 11 show that there is a statistically significant relationship between fathers' socio-economic status and whether or not they have taken leave (any type) after the birth of their child. Figure 10, firstly, shows that the number of fathers who took leave increases with the household's income: 90% of fathers in households that fall into the top income quintile took leave soon after their child was born compared to only 43% of fathers in households that fall into the bottom income quintile⁸.



⁸ The modified equivalised income scale is used in all analyses in this report.

Similarly, as figure 11 indicates, there is a significant relationship between fathers' occupation and whether or not they take leave after the birth of a child. Nearly 90% of fathers with managerial, professional or intermediate occupations have taken some type of leave compared to less than 70% of fathers with semi-routine/routine jobs and a little over half of fathers who work for small employers or are own-account workers^{9,10}.



Further analysis shows that the socio-economic gaps in fathers' leave uptake depend both on the type of leave taken and the specific socio-economic indicator under consideration. For example, an analysis of paternity leave uptake (Table 1) shows that the number of fathers who took this leave type is fairly similar across the different levels of household income. However, employees are much less likely to take paternity leave if they are working for a small employer or are own account workers.

⁹ Own account workers are people who are self-employed in a non-professional occupations and/or the agricultural field (for more information see section 6, article L9 in: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/soc2010-volume-3-ns-sec--rebased-on-soc2010--user-manual/index.html#3>).

¹⁰ Only employees with employment contracts are entitled to statutory paternity leave and pay and parental leave. There is no equivalent for self-employed fathers to claim.

Table 1: Percentage of fathers who took PATERNITY leave after the birth of their child, by household income and father's occupation
(n=3,647-3,299, GUS-BC2, 2011)

Household's Income	Bottom Quintile	2nd Quintile	3rd Quintile	4th Quintile	Top Quintile
%	66%	64%	66%	67%	64%
Father's Occupation*	Semi-routine / Routine	Lower Supervisory / Technical	Small Employers or Own-account Workers	Intermediate	Managerial/ Professional
%	67%	65%	30%	67%	68%

** $p < 0.01$

Parental leave uptake by fathers is linked both to income and occupational status. As can be seen in Table 2, in the highest income households, 20% of fathers have taken parental leave compared to only 11% of fathers from families in the lowest income households. The stratification by father's occupation is also significant: nearly 1 in 5 fathers with an intermediate occupation took parental leave compared to about 1 in 10 of those who work for small employers or are own account workers.

Table 2: Percentage of fathers who took PARENTAL leave after the birth of their child, by household income and father's occupation
(n=3,646-3,297, GUS-BC2, 2011)

Household's Income*	Bottom Quintile	2nd Quintile	3rd Quintile	4th Quintile	Top Quintile
%	11%	18%	17%	19%	20%
Father's Occupation**	Semi-routine / Routine	Lower Supervisory / Technical	Small Employers / Own-account Workers	Intermediate	Managerial/ Professional
%	18%	20%	11%	24%	18%

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Stratification by household income and fathers' occupations is seen again when annual leave uptake after a child is born is examined. Table 3 shows that there is a

monotonically increasing relationship between the number of fathers who have taken annual leave and the household's income: the higher the household's income is, the more likely it is that the father took annual leave to be at home with his newborn child. The final set of results in Table 3 show that, as with paternity leave and parental leave, fathers who work for small employers and those who are own-account workers also take annual leave after the birth of a child in much smaller numbers than fathers in any other type of occupation.

Table 3: Percentage of fathers who took ANNUAL leave after the birth of their child, by household income and father's occupation (n=3,646-3,298, GUS-BC2, 2011)

Household's Income**	Bottom Quintile	2nd Quintile	3rd Quintile	4th Quintile	Top Quintile
%	19%	30%	35%	39%	41%
Father's Occupation**	Semi-routine / Routine	Lower Supervisory / Technical	Small Employers / Own-account Workers	Intermediate	Managerial/ Professional
%	28%	34%	19%	38%	40%

** $p < 0.001$

Taken together, the findings in section 4.2 suggest that, in 2011, fathers in Scotland were much less likely to take paternity, parental and annual leave after the birth of their child if they have worked for a small employer or if they were own-account workers. Similarly, fathers in Scotland were less likely to take parental and annual leave (but not paternity leave) if their household fell into the lowest income quintile.

4.3 Flexible working arrangements and fathers' engagement in work and family life

It is likely that the extent to which fathers use flexible working options and family friendly work arrangements, as well as their level of engagement in their young children's upbringing, are linked to their attitudes towards care and work. Figure 12 explores parents' attitudes towards childrearing. As can be seen, the vast majority of fathers and mothers in Scotland agree that both parents should be equally involved in the child's upbringing, with slightly more fathers than mothers agreeing with the statement.

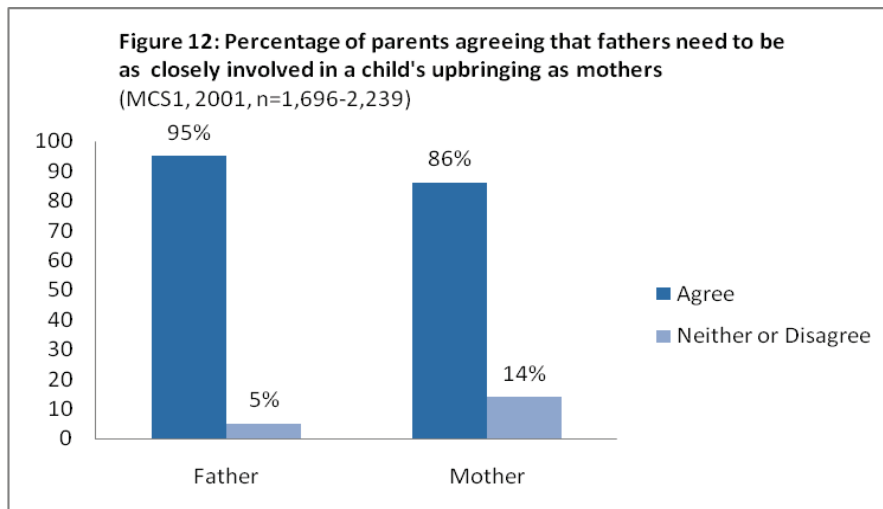
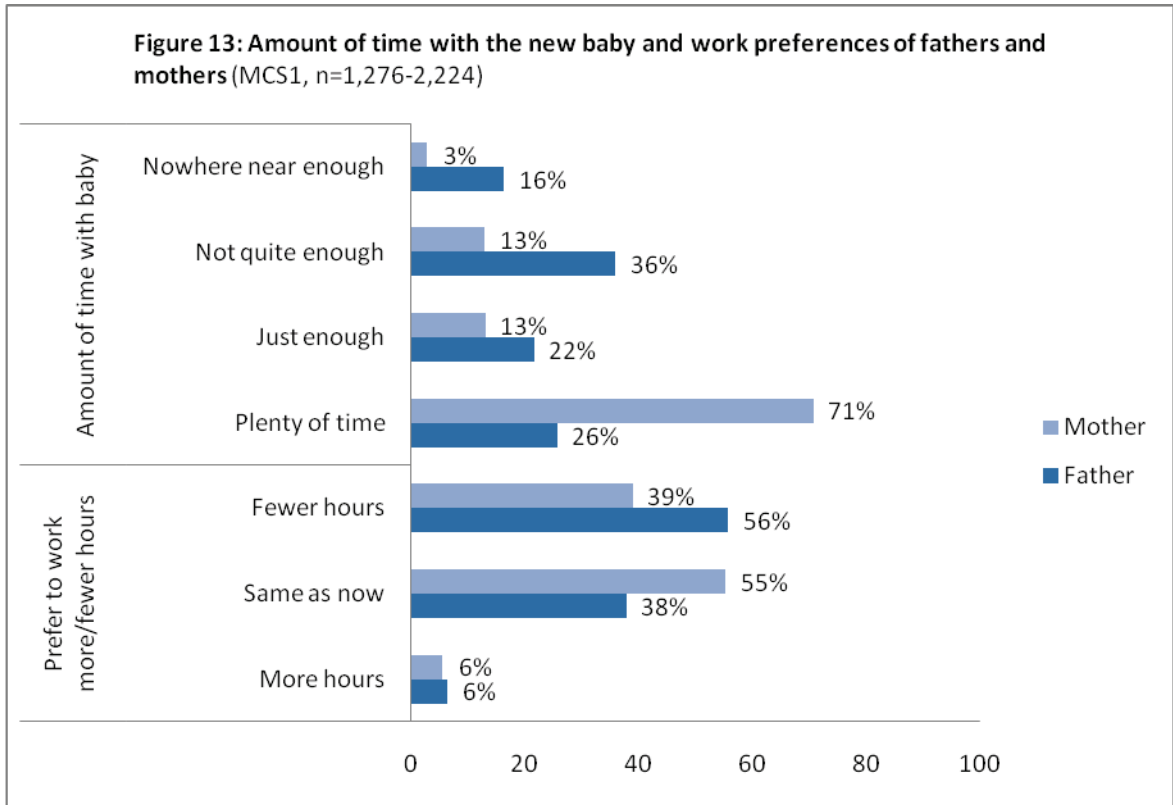
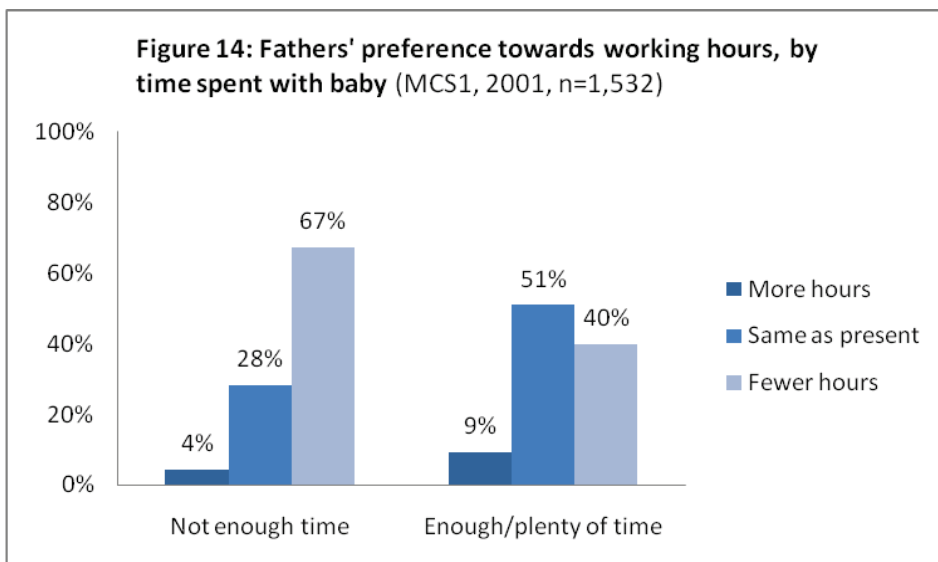


Figure 13 investigates whether fathers with children aged less than 1 year feel they spend enough time with their babies and whether they would have preferred to reduce, increase or maintain the number of hours they work. As can be seen, 52% of fathers felt that they did not spend enough time with their child, compared to only 16% of mothers. 48% of fathers felt that they spend enough or plenty of time with their babies compared to 84% of mothers. When asked about their working hours preferences, about half said they would like to work fewer hours, compared to 39% of mothers. 38% of fathers reported wanting to maintain the number of working hours they regularly work compared to just over half of mothers. Among both fathers and mothers, 6% stated they would have preferred to increase the number of hours they work.



Furthermore, Figure 14 shows that fathers' preferences towards working hours vary by the time they spend with their babies. Among the fathers who felt they that did not spend enough time with their child, 67% said they would prefer to reduce the number of hours worked compared to only 40% of those who felt they did spend enough time with their child.



So, it seems that the majority of fathers in Scotland believe that they need to be as involved with their child's upbringing as the mothers, but more fathers than mothers

report not having enough time with their babies and wanting to reduce their working hours.

Data from the 2015 interviews conducted for this study demonstrate how flexible working and family friendly work arrangements might be linked to fathers' engagement in childrearing and family life. Focusing first on post-birth leave uptake, these interviews reveal that all 20 fathers took the 2-weeks statutory paternity leave following the birth of their baby. The interviewed fathers told us that taking paternity leave helps in coping with the challenges involved with welcoming a new baby into the family. As one father said:

"I can't imagine what it would have been like if I hadn't had that time off. I think it would have been extremely difficult. Obviously, I would have taken annual leave but if, for some reason, I had an employer who wouldn't have agreed to that, I think it would have been incredibly difficult and it would have really spoilt those first few weeks and would have had a knock-on effect after that as well..." (Interview no. 2)

Taking such leave also enables fathers to support their partner while she recovers from giving birth or learns how to manage the baby's demands on her (and him):

"...Angela was physically exhausted...for those first three days, we had almost zero sleep and obviously until Angela's breast milk came... but then after that, the milk flows a lot easier, and at that time then, Alice was feeding okay, her tummy was full, she was sleeping, Angela got her sleep, and I had a chance to tidy up the house...the health visitor came in and said, oh there's nothing to worry about, you look very good, you're all looking very good, and what a bit of praise from somebody, you really valued their comments, and thought we've done it, but if I had gone straight back to work, for example, it just couldn't have happened..." (Interview no.13)

In addition, paternity leave provides fathers with the opportunity to give extra care for the older siblings, and protect them from feeling neglected following the new baby's arrival:

"I think me being around to make sure I did what I reasonably could in terms of support and taking the oldest one out so that the baby could have more time with his mum and stuff like that. And vice versa as well. Making sure that the eldest didn't get jealous and so had to put time with her mum. So I took the baby out for walks and stuff like that..." (Interview no. 16)

Most of the interviewed fathers stated that the two weeks paternity leave given to them by law are fair and sufficient. However, some fathers felt that they needed more time off from work to be with their newborn child and family, in which case, the fathers extended their leave by adding one or two weeks of annual or unpaid leave on top of their statutory paternity leave:

*"I didn't think that two weeks would be enough time for me to support my wife, immediately after giving birth, and anyway, it's quite an exciting thing that's happened, I wanted to spend more time, so I thought well if I can immediately take two weeks of annual leave, four weeks off it's quite a good amount of time off."
(Interview no. 3)*

In addition to taking post-birth leave immediately after their children were born, all 20 fathers interviewed for this research stated that their employers offered at least one type of flexible working option, including job share, home and/or mobile working, reduced hours, compressed hours and flexi-time. Of these various options, the two latter arrangements were used by most of the interviewed fathers, who explained that, while amendments to their working patterns were required after the birth of the child (or when their partner's maternity leave has ended), they opted for compressed hours or flexi-time to avoid the economic loss expected from going part-time or sharing their job:

"I'm aware of the ability to change my hours. I know some of my colleagues have. It's never been something that I've needed or particularly wanted to take advantage of. I'd rather have the money." (Interview no. 10)

Some fathers in the study stated that they, occasionally, work from home or do mobile work using laptops, tablets and smartphones. While a few fathers said that this helps them balance between their work and family life, and wanted their organisation to extend the use of technologies that enable mobile work, others expressed less positive feelings toward such arrangements. A number of fathers questioned whether a home with a young child would make a suitable work environment for them and raised concerns about a possible spill-over of work into the home environment:

"I suppose I've always tried to keep work and life quite separate, but increasingly there's a need to accept that there is a blurring of the division between work and life. People will check their e-mails at home, things like that." (Interview no. 2)

Fathers who compress hours or work flexi-time felt that these arrangements enable them to be more engaged in their child's upbringing. As can be seen in the following examples, using these flexible-working options makes it possible for the

fathers to be more involved in their child's daily routines as well as to participate in special events:

"If I'm at home, with Kate, more often than not, and I'm seeing her in the morning, and I'm spending time with her before she has her bath and goes to bed, then that's going to be a positive for her in her upbringing because it's not just all about her Mum who takes care of her. It's about me who takes care of her as well, so it's wanting to kind of enforce that as an image and a memory that she has...it's not just what do you remember from your childhood, well it was all just Mummy, no it wasn't, it was Mummy and Daddy." (Interview no. 3)

"I can get to my son's Christmas show at nursery... That's important, you know, kind of creates a social relationship in the family." (Interview no. 10)

In addition, fathers reported that working compressed hours and stock hours using flexi-time enables them to be more reactive to family emergencies like providing care for a sick child:

"If I knew that we needed to go for a hospital appointment, I would work longer days in order to build up a sort of a pot of time... when going to places like the hospital, I definitely wanted to be there and I think that my wife was very much glad that I was there." (Interview no. 3)

Finally, fathers stated that they use these arrangements to support their partner/wife, as these fathers demonstrate:

"I'm able to spend more time with my son and also in relation to supporting my wife and taking some of the pressure off of her and allowing her to do other things, so I think it's been positive overall really" (Interview no. 1)

"The main reason for doing it [compressing hours] is to support my wife as she's doing her studies so, in the future, it may not be necessary for me to work in this way." (Interview no. 2)

Using flexible working in order to maximise the time spent with the child is also seen as an opportunity to challenge gender conventions:

"... it means that the kind of child care arrangements aren't entirely strictly divided along gender lines. Because I'm able to, I can take some responsibility for looking after him, which is important, kind

of ideologically important on a personal basis, means my wife isn't just kind of sat at home looking after him." (Interview no. 10)

Overall, the interviewed fathers believe that using flexible working helps them to deepen the father-child relationship and improve their partner's well-being:

"The flexibility afforded here, helps me feel that I'm not a father that doesn't see his children. I've got friends whose employer works them to the bone and they don't get home until after bedtime and they leave early in the morning so they don't get that...it's only weekends and maybe they have to compress their fatherhood, their father responsibilities into 48 hours and even less. So I feel, here, I am a 7-day-a-week dad, not just a 2-day-a-week dad." (Interview no. 6)

4.4 Working arrangements and fathers' career engagement

Most fathers who were interviewed for this project indicated that, after becoming a father, their career expectations have changed:

"...career-wise, job-wise my priorities have shifted completely and I'm probably not top of the list as a go-to-person to deal with a certain situation because they know that I'm only going to be able to devote a certain amount of time to it probably." (Interview no. 5)

It seems that fathers generally view this shift in career aspirations as a temporary situation, not as an indication of abandoned professional ambitions:

"for the next few years, while my children are young, with this rigidity, I think that it would be very difficult for me to actually really concentrate on pushing my career, but I kind of don't care. I'm not bothered about pushing my career at the moment." (Interview no. 14)

All interviewees believed that having a young family doesn't prevent them from reaching their full professional potential. However, most of them indicated that they have made some career compromises since the arrival of their youngest child. A number of fathers reported considering applying for promotion but deciding not to go ahead with this plan as they didn't think the new role will leave them enough time to be with their family. As one father stated:

"There were opportunities recently here for promotion which I thought about but, in the particular situation that I'm in at the moment, decided not to do because... I wouldn't have wanted to go to that new job at a new level and then immediately say, alright,

sorry, I can't make this meeting, I've got to be home because I want to bathe Kate tonight or I want to be home for her tea, oh sorry, can't do that because I'm taking her to nursery or something like that.." (Interview no. 3)

A few fathers mentioned that balancing work with family life is particularly challenging when the job requires travelling. A father who needed to travel abroad for work said:

"...I feel that I'm not contributing sufficiently to the family, in that I'm going to be away for a week..." (Interview no. 14)

Furthermore, some fathers suggested that finding time for training and engaging in professional development activities is more challenging when having caring responsibilities for young children:

"...in terms of learning, whether that was formal qualifications or even just reading professional journals and things like that, they are definitely more limited now than they were." (Interview no. 2)

A number of fathers, who used formal childcare arrangements and had strict "dropping-off/picking-up" routines, struggled with committing to early morning or late afternoon meetings. Mid-day meetings were perceived by these fathers as a much more friendly option.

While none of the fathers believed that taking 2 or 4 weeks leave to be with their newborn child adversely affected their work, some expressed concerns that being away from work for a longer period of time could have such negative impacts:

"...I think it would be nice to have both parents off for the whole of the first year...How you fit that in with keeping highly skilled...knowledge workers...professionally fresh enough that they can go back to work, reasonably comfortably, at the end of their time off, I don't know." (Interview no. 10)

In addition, a few fathers worried that flexible working might be perceived as a manifestation of professional disengagement. Some fathers resented what they perceive as a dominant ethos according to which employees' commitment is measured by the time they spend at work rather than by work outcomes:

"People my age and similar standing to me in the organisation that don't have kids just pile in the hours, do as many hours as they want and it is generally seen as being more committed than me who has to go home... if I did decide to leave at 4 because I wanted to see my son there would be a perception that I'm not pulling my weight. So there is a perception that if people see you

leave early they're not going to think 'oh, he's got a kid, he's away to see him'. They'll think 'it's 4 o'clock, what's he doing leaving at 4 o'clock?'. (Interview no. 4)

Nevertheless, there was a general feeling among the study's fathers that having easy access to flexible working options constitutes greater commitment towards the workplace and creates reciprocal relationships with colleagues:

"I'm able to take a bit of time off when I need it but the flipside of that is to cover colleagues when they are similarly not here and we all collectively...we still have to meet the same set of quality standards and deadlines, so it builds a collegiate, contributes to a collegiate atmosphere. I think in terms of kind of general loyalty to an employer, it's the kind of thing which generates good will and it's also the kind of thing which generates I guess a financial reluctance to leave...I would need a significant pay rise to go and do a similar job somewhere else that didn't have similarly flexible working." (Interview no. 10)

A few fathers indicated that availability of family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements were among the reasons for choosing their current employer and turning down alternative job offers. A number of fathers said that having access to such arrangements in their workplace is more important for them than getting a better paid job in a less family friendly organisation.

4.5 Fathers' perceptions of paternity and parental leave

While all fathers who were interviewed for this project were fully aware of their statutory paternity leave entitlements, some interviewees seemed to be unsure about whether or not their employer offered other types of leave for parents with young children or what the parental leave scheme offered in their workplace actually entailed.

The interviewed fathers had all heard of the new shared parental leave scheme introduced in April 2015 and were generally aware of the scheme's structure. Opinions on the scheme, however, are mixed. Some interviewees perceive it as a positive initiative:

"If the scheme had been in place... I would absolutely have used it, and have taken more time off." (Interview no. 3)

and:

"I am very much in favour of it and I think, if anything, more of it and better in my view. We're a rich enough country. We can afford to look after our own kids." (Interview no. 10)

Others feel that the scheme fails to offer a valid solution for parents who want to share leave between the mother and the father:

"...it's not really going to make very many people's lives a lot easier and, in fact, because there is still a disparity between what the men and women earn, it will very often I'm sure be a financial one and because the men generally still earn more than women, it will be more financially worthwhile for the woman to be the one that takes the maternity leave..." (Interview no. 14)

and:

" I think it's one of these things that is good in theory. It's not going to happen in practice, I don't think. Or not to a great extent... unfortunately we still live in a society where mothers are seen as the primary carer and therefore, rightly or wrongly, need to be or will be the beneficiaries of any legal leave that is available around the time of the birth of your baby. So whether that then is arguing that there needs to be a separate entitlement for fathers and other persons who will have primary responsibility for supporting a mother and a newborn – I don't know... it obviously comes at a cost and the question is 'who bears that cost?'. " (Interview no. 18)

The extracts above represent a common belief among the interviewed fathers that the number of parental leave takers and the length of leave taken is unlikely to increase as long as parents experience a substantial drop in income during this period.

In addition, some fathers pointed out that mothers might act as "gatekeepers", and questioned whether they would be willing to give up their entitlements:

"I don't know about all the small print but practically I don't know how many Mums would really be willing to give up some of theirs, do you know what I mean, because they want as much time with the baby as well, so it's a nice idea, but I think the ideal would be to allow both parents the full leave." (Interview no. 8)

And:

"...I had this discussion with my partner about sharing aspects of leave and I think her view was 'I'm the primary carer so I'm taking all of my leave, I'm not sharing any of it with you'! So, okay, I understood her point of view with that." (Interview no. 18)

4.6 The policies and support fathers desire in order to improve their work-family balance

Nearly all fathers who were interviewed for this project said there is a need for more affordable childcare, including workplace crèches and nurseries. The majority of fathers with pre-school children felt that the cost of formal (non-parental) childcare is a major barrier which forces them either to use such services to a lesser extent than they would have hoped, or opt for less expensive options altogether:

"I just find it extraordinary that you can spend more on childcare costs for 3 days a week than you do on a mortgage for keeping a roof over your head for a whole month." (Interview no. 7)

Nevertheless, fathers who use formal childcare arrangements such as nurseries, childminders, nannies or a crèche greatly appreciate these services and their contribution to child's development:

"...my daughter went to a private nursery school and they were amazing... They would find interesting and educational and fun things to do all the time, out of thin air..." (Interview no. 14)

The interviewed fathers indicated that their work-family balance would have benefited from a longer and better-paid leave for themselves and their spouse:

"I think the reason that people don't take parental leave, or some people possibly don't take paternity leave, is loss of earnings, so if you really want us, as a society, if you want to encourage people to get more involved, then I think you have to be willing to pay them." (Interview no. 3)

A few fathers said that longer post-birth leave schemes must be flexible, with the option of breaking down the leave period into short blocks, so that, regardless of their gender, working parents would be able to keep in touch with their workplace, with their colleagues, with the job's requirements, and with a rapidly changing labour market in general.

A small number of fathers also said it would have been helpful for them to participate in groups for fathers and their children, similar to those available to mothers, or join a fathers' network:

"...I mean outside work, I think that predominantly parent and baby or parent and toddler groups happen on a Monday to Friday and they are aimed at mothers. Now they are aimed at mothers because I dare say 99% of the main carers are mothers, and that's fine, and it would be nice - this has nothing to do with work - but it would be nice if there was more dedicated groups on a Saturday

or a Sunday which focused on fathers and their children, but that's nothing to do with work." (Interview no. 3)

Some interviewees reported wanting a more developed learning culture within the organisation as well as greater personal guidance and mentoring on how to best use flexible working options and family friendly arrangements within their workplace:

"if I'm thinking of an ideal world how it would work...a conversation with someone saying 'how is it going? Maybe this is a good time thinking about taking that'. And encouragement to, because you get into these patterns of you just go into work and keep going to work and to break that pattern it really needs effort." (Interview no. 12)

5. Summary

Fathers' access to family friendly arrangements and flexible working options

Many working fathers in Scotland either had not been offered family friendly arrangements and flexible working options, or were unaware of the availability of such options in their workplace, according to analyses of data from the Scottish sub-sample of the UK Millennium Cohort Study (MCS1) from 2001. This was true even with regard to statutory parental leave. Findings from the MCS also suggest that there is a gender gap in access to, and uptake of, some flexible working options. Many more mothers than fathers reported having access to part-time working as well as choosing to work part-time after the birth of their child. A similar pattern is seen in relation to job-sharing: fewer fathers than mothers reported having access to such arrangements or choosing to share their job after the arrival of their baby. In contrast, more fathers than mothers reported being offered the option to work from home, even though the number of parents reporting using this option did not vary significantly for men and women. Overall, the gender gap in access to and usage of flexible working can be seen as a manifestation of a traditional divide of care and work along gender lines. Fathers interviewed for this project stressed the importance of a sympathetic line-manager as a gatekeeper to family friendly arrangements and flexible working options.

Fathers' uptake of family friendly work arrangements and flexible working options

Around 78% of fathers took some leave after the birth of their child in 2011. A comparison of post-birth leave uptake in Scotland in 2001 and 2011 indicates that there has not been much change in the total percentage of fathers who took such leave soon after their child was born. However, a more detailed comparison of these two points in time indicates that a shift may have occurred between 2001 and 2011 in the type of leave taken. It seems that in 2011, compared to 2001, the number of fathers taking parental and paternity leave has risen and the number of fathers

taking annual leave has fallen.

Findings from the Growing Up in Scotland study suggest that, in 2011, fathers were much less likely to take paternity, parental and annual leave after the birth of their child if they work for a small employer or if they were own-account workers. Similarly, fathers in Scotland were less likely to take parental and annual leave (but not paternity leave) if their household fell into the lowest income quintile.

Flexible working arrangements and fathers' engagement in work and family life

Fathers interviewed for this project believe that taking leave soon after the birth of a child, as well as working flexibly, particularly using flexi-time and compressed hours, enables them to engage in their children's upbringing and family life to a much greater extent than if they did not have such options. Fathers reported that taking post-birth leave enabled them to support their spouse while she recovers from giving birth, give special attention to older siblings upon the arrival of a new baby, and provide extra help with domestic tasks. Flexible working enables fathers to be more reactive to family emergencies, provide their spouse with time off for training or respite, take part in daily childrearing tasks and participate in special events involving the child.

Work arrangements and fathers' career engagement

Concerns were raised by some of the interviewed fathers with regard to using family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements. While fathers felt it was reasonable to work in a less well paid job provided the employer offers family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements, they were reluctant to use arrangements that would lead to a drop in their income. Financial constraints were also seen as the biggest obstacle for sharing leave between the father and the mother. Some of the interviewed fathers believed that, with more men than women in dual-earner families bringing home the higher income¹¹, and with no substantial economic compensation available for the leave taker, it is unlikely that many fathers will actually extend their time off from work after the birth of a child, even after the introduction of the shared parental leave scheme. And, although many fathers felt they could have benefited from taking a longer post-birth leave after their child was born, a number of fathers worried that going back to work after being away for a long period of time would be difficult. In addition, some fathers raised the idea that using flexible working could be interpreted by co-workers and managers as a sign of low commitment to the job, in a labour market that they feel rewards employees who are willing to stay long hours at work.

Perceptions of paternity and parental leave

Fewer fathers than mothers feel that their colleagues are sympathetic towards

¹¹ Which is the case on average in Scotland given the gender pay gap, see <http://www.closesthegap.org.uk/content/gap-statistics/> accessed March, 2014.

their family responsibilities, according to data from the MCS. However, data from recently conducted in-depth interviews with 20 fathers working for public sector organisations in Scotland highlight specific workplace characteristics that might help in breaking down awareness barriers and open communication channels around family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements. These include having a supportive and informed line-manager, a work environment in which employees feel encouraged to share family experiences, an "employee-friendly" culture in general not just in the context of parents, and working alongside other parents who serve as role models by using such arrangements themselves. While all fathers who were interviewed for this project were aware of their statutory paternity leave entitlements, there was confusion over other types of leave for parents, so there is a clear information gap. There was also the perception from some fathers in the study that mothers might act as "gatekeepers" and some fathers questioned whether they would be willing to give up their entitlements to share with the fathers, which would suggest a need for individual entitlements to leave.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for social policy:

- **Affordable childcare in the early years**: Fathers' work-family conflict could be eased by more affordable childcare, including workplace crèches and nurseries.
- **Better paid post-birth leave schemes**: The percentage of fathers' taking post-birth leave beyond the two weeks paternity leave is likely to remain low, with many eligible fathers not exercising their entitlement, as long as there is little or no financial compensation for the loss of earnings experienced by the leave taker and his family.
- **Flexible post-birth leave schemes**: Fathers want more flexibility. They want longer and better-paid leave, as well as greater flexibility and autonomy in deciding how to take this leave. Providing fathers with the possibility to break down the leave period into shorter segments, such as short term part-time working or taking a few days at a time, could increase the number of fathers deciding to take longer leave.
- **Individual entitlement - reserve some of the leave exclusively for fathers**: Some of the study's fathers felt mothers would be likely to want to use their full entitlement and thus be reluctant to share leave with them. Introducing a "father quota", namely an additional non-transferable fully or partially paid time off reserved for the father, which is not taken from the mother's entitlement, could increase the length of leave taken by fathers after the birth of a child.

- **Making space for fathers in their communities**: Providing fathers with greater opportunities to interact with peers could strengthen their identity as carers, increase their knowledge about childrearing practices and contribute to fathers' well-being in general. Father-baby or father-toddler groups as well as one off activities for fathers and their children could help generate such peer networks.
- **Targeted support for those on lower incomes, those working for small employers and self-employed fathers**: This research indicates that fathers working for small employers or who are own-account workers, as well as fathers with low incomes, are significantly less likely to take leave following the birth of a child. Thus, there may be scope for developing specific intervention programmes and targeted policies to tackle this socio-economic gap among fathers in Scotland. Another recommendation could be for the self-employed to acquire the rights of employees with regard to statutory paternity leave and pay.

6.2 Recommendations for employers and organisations:

- **Implement a "family friendly" time management framework**: Generally, organisations should take into account employees' family and caring responsibilities to address individuals' needs and balance them with business needs.
- **Train and inform line-managers**: Fathers could benefit from more guidance on how to best use the family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements available in their workplace. An informed line-manager who is able and willing to communicate these policies and arrangements could break down barriers to awareness and access faced by fathers.
- **HR delivery of awareness programmes**: Organisations should encourage their human resources departments to develop and deliver programmes to raise awareness towards fathers' entitlements in the workplace as well as including information about father-friendly practices in training for line managers.
- **Target fathers with information about policies and benefits**: Given the gender gap in access to, and usage of, family friendly policies and flexible working arrangements, it is important that organisations understand the particular needs of fathers and target them specifically and regularly. Increasing targeted internal communications of family policies and benefits could raise fathers' awareness of their entitlements.
- **Create a learning culture beyond HR programmes**: Establishing a learning culture within the workplace, wherein fathers are informed routinely of their entitlements and career progression options, may increase access to, and usage of, family friendly policies and flexible working. There are many ways by which organisations can promote such a culture: e.g. drop-in sessions, seminars, and peer support groups.

- **Enhance technology usage to strengthen work engagement and increase productivity:** For some fathers, doing mobile work using technology can help them to remain connected to work whilst reducing work-family conflict.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

- **Fatherhood research in Scotland is limited:** A lot is unknown on the situation of fathers in Scotland. This can be partially explained by the limited number of studies designed to explore the experience of fathers as well as the lack of appropriate data collected from a representative sample of fathers in Scotland. One way to address this gap would be to include fathers in existing projects such as GUS. To date, GUS has collected data from the cohort children's main carers, of which 98% are mothers. Another option is to allocate funds for research focusing on fathers and fatherhood. It is important to make use of administrative data (such as DWP records and/or company HR data) to monitor fathers' uptake of shared parental leave. It is also important to monitor occupational extra-statutory family benefits, which are likely to be an important source of benefits and support for families. It would also be helpful to understand more widely the extent and depth of work-life balance dispersal and practice, including parental and family leave arrangements, amongst employers and employees in Scotland. A Scotland-focussed sub-analysis of UK-wide surveys such as The Workplace Employment Relations Survey or the 4th Work-Life Balance Survey would provide an essential baseline against which to benchmark current practice in Scotland, and against which to measure social policy development, employee perceptions and employer practice.
- **"Fatherhood" specialists can contribute to research design:** Scottish and UK organisations specialising in fathers and fatherhood can contribute to future and ongoing research. Such specialists are able to: inform the process of sample selection by pointing at underexplored groups, help in developing questionnaire which address key areas of investigation, and assist with designing interventions and assessments. When possible, it is recommended to consult such specialists.
- **The advantages of longitudinal research:** Collecting longitudinal data by interviewing the same group of fathers in various points in time would make it possible to address questions that it is difficult (or even impossible) to explore by analysing cross-sectional data. For example, whether there are links between fathers' uptake of family friendly policies and career trajectories, life-satisfaction, work-family balance and child and family outcomes.

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