

# A Review of How Fathers Can be Better Recognised and Supported Through DCSF Policy

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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We would also like to thank all of the staff in local authorities and family services who participated in the research.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned GHK and Ethnos to undertake a research project focusing on how DCSF policy affects fathers' engagement with family services for children and young people in England.

The objectives of the research were to analyse:

- the extent to which DCSF and its partners'<sup>1</sup> policies recognise fathers;
- levels of awareness and influence of DCSF and its partners' policies on local authorities and family services in supporting fathers;
- how inclusive of fathers different family services are and what steps have been taken to improve engagement with fathers;
- what barriers there are to further engagement with fathers in family services (including any policy barriers); and
- how DCSF and its partners' policies might better support engagement with fathers in local authorities and family services.

There were three phases of research:

- *policy review* – a comprehensive review was conducted of DCSF and its main partners' policies relating to family services and the extent to which these explicitly recognise fathers;
- *survey of local authorities* – an electronic survey was sent to all 150 local authorities in order to gain a greater understanding of how DCSF policy affects engagement with fathers at the local level. It explored levels of awareness and influence of national policy, as well as any perceived barriers to further engagement. Approximately one third of local authorities responded (n 46). This was supplemented by a short qualitative interview with 26 of the respondents; and
- *qualitative fieldwork* – in-depth qualitative research was carried out in a sample of eight local authorities. Interviews were conducted with senior managers within each local authority and a mix of managers and practitioners in at least ten family service settings. These explored the barriers and enablers to engaging with fathers in family services, the role of national and local policy in influencing practice and how national

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<sup>1</sup> For this research DCSF's main partners were identified as: Ofsted, Training and Development Agency (TDA), Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). These partners were chosen as they have played a key role in shaping family services alongside DCSF.

policy might better support fathers. In total over 250 interviews were conducted.

## **Key findings**

Key findings in relation to each of the research objectives are presented below.

### ***Recognition of fathers in DCSF and its partners' policies***

Overall, explicit recognition of fathers in DCSF and its partners' policies was partial and uneven. Recognition of fathers was highest in 'top level policy' documents (such as Green and White papers, policy statements and reviews and strategy papers) and policy documents relating to 'workforce and service delivery' (including non-statutory guidance and standards, training and good practice documents). A full list of policy documents that were reviewed in this research is included in Annex C in the main report.

The policy documents containing the most sustained and detailed recognition of fathers were:

- DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*;
- EOC (2007) *Gender Equality Duty and Local Government: Guidance for Public Authorities in England*;
- DCSF and DH (2007) *Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts*;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*;
- HM Treasury and DfES (2007) *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families*;
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*;
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*;
- DfES (2004) *Engaging Fathers: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement*; and
- DfES and DH (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Core Standards*.

However, there was little or no explicit recognition of fathers in terms of: 'legislation' (including acts of parliament, regulation and statutory guidance and standards), though this might be expected in primary legislation, which refers to 'parents' in a legal sense; 'financial framework' documents (relating to funding, commissioning and charging arrangements) or monitoring and evaluation (such as inspection criteria, monitoring arrangements, performance indicators and quality assurance).

Where recognition of fathers does exist in national policy, it was focused on certain family services (some of which provide a number of services for parents) – predominantly Sure Start Children’s Centres, teenage pregnancy services and schools, though there was some recognition of fathers in policy relating to parenting support services and youth offending services too. There was little or no recognition of fathers directly in relation to other types of family services.

There was also little detailed recognition of different types of fathers (such as minority ethnic fathers, young fathers, lone parent fathers, resident and non-resident fathers) and their specific needs. The main exceptions to this were top level policy documents which identify that young, minority ethnic and non-resident fathers are less likely than other fathers to engage with family services. Young fathers also receive direct recognition in teenage parenting strategy documents.

### ***Awareness and influence of DCSF and its partners’ policies***

Local authorities responding to the survey reported high levels of awareness of DCSF and its partners’ policies and generally saw these as the main driver for developing father inclusive policy and practice locally. However, some local authorities felt that national policies were ‘behind’ local policy and practice or not sufficiently tuned to local circumstances. Others identified that they had only limited capacity to respond to and implement new policies.

In both the survey and the qualitative fieldwork, the following policy documents were found to be the most influential in encouraging local authorities to develop father inclusive policy and practice:<sup>2</sup>

- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children’s Centres: Practice Guidance*;
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children’s Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*;
- HM Treasury (2004) *Every Child Matters*; and
- DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*.

These were generally seen as being more influential than other policy documents because they contained sustained and explicit recognition of fathers – though this applied less to *Every Child Matters* and *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note DCSF (2007) *The Children’s Plan* had not been published at the time of this phase of the research

Inspections of local authorities (through the Joint Area Review or Annual Performance Assessment) did not require any evidence of support for fathers, though this was seen as being a potentially powerful lever for influencing local policy and practice in future.

Managers in different family services had varying levels of awareness of national policies that recognise fathers. From the policy review, recognition of fathers in national policy was found to be greatest for Sure Start Children's Centres and schools, yet whilst Sure Start Children's Centre managers were aware of relevant policy documents, senior staff in schools were less so.

In contrast to local authorities, most family services reported that national policy had not directly influenced their behaviour in terms of supporting fathers. The main exceptions to this were Sure Start Children's Centres, parenting support services and safeguarding and looked after children. Other family services generally reported only an 'indirect' influence through policies such as *Every Child Matters* which had led to attaching greater importance to engaging with parents in general.

As with local authority inspections, inspections of family services by Ofsted do not include an assessment of engagement with fathers.

### ***Father friendliness and engagement with fathers***

Local authorities reported taking a number of actions aimed at supporting fathers in the survey and follow-up interviews, such as an explicit focus on fathers in the parenting strategy. However, most local authorities did not appear to have taken a 'strategic lead' on supporting fathers in family services in their area. Rather, any local practice had generally developed sporadically and was the result of specific managers and practitioners taking an interest in the issue.

Father inclusive practice was not seen to be routine or mainstream in family services. Whilst widely recognising the importance of supporting fathers, interviewees in local authorities and family services described services as being 'neutral' towards them, rather than pro-actively father friendly. The survey of local authorities identified Sure Start Children's Centres, parenting support services and teenage pregnancy services as being the family services most likely to be father friendly. Teenage pregnancy services were also the family service most likely to be identified as being discouraging of fathers (though this only applied to 10% of local authorities), which suggests that there is some variation across different local authorities.

With the exception of Sure Start Children's Centres, there was generally very little monitoring of engagement with fathers by family services or local authorities. However, virtually all local authorities and family services reported that engagement with fathers was substantially lower than with mothers.

### ***Key barriers and enablers of engagement with fathers in family services***

Several generic barriers to engaging with fathers were identified:

- some staff in family services did not view engagement with fathers as a priority and did not think pro-active support was important to engage fathers;
- the workforce was predominantly female, particularly in early years services and targeted and specialist services which may lead some fathers to think that the service was 'not for them';
- there was a lack of training and skills among managers and practitioners to help them understand the needs of fathers and engage effectively with them;
- national targets on teenage pregnancy focus exclusively on young mothers and were seen by interviewees to be a direct barrier to working with young fathers (particularly among teenage pregnancy services);
- local authorities and some types of family services (mainly schools and youth offending services) felt that they faced 'policy overload' with numerous nationally determined targets and priorities, which made it difficult to develop a strong focus on engagement with fathers;
- difficulty identifying young and non-resident fathers was seen as a critical barrier to engagement with them across virtually all family services;
- health services (including midwifery and ante-natal services) were not seen as adequately identifying and engaging with fathers (particularly young fathers) during the important initial stages of pregnancy and birth;
- in relation to youth offending, the courts were seen as not adequately ensuring that fathers were present whenever possible with the result that parenting orders and parenting contracts tended to be applied to mothers much more frequently than fathers (even where the father was resident or active in their child's life);
- accessing provision could be more problematic for fathers than mothers due to a lack of flexibility in the timing of services (particularly for employed fathers unable to engage with services during normal working hours and non-resident fathers that may only have access to their children on evenings and weekends);
- fathers were seen to be less likely than mothers to respond to communication (including any marketing as well as direct communication with parents) that was not addressed to them, did not refer directly to fathers or did not include positive images of fathers and their children; and

- based on a 'traditional' view of parenting (particularly among some minority ethnic groups) which sees the mother as the primary carer and the father as the main breadwinner and source of discipline, many fathers were perceived to think that family services were 'not for them'.

This is summarised at a very basic level in Table 15 in the main report. It sets out which of these generic barriers applied particularly to the family services included in the qualitative fieldwork.

The following potential enablers were also identified:

- developing provision that appeals to fathers' interests and is available in informal settings and on evenings and weekends;
- undertaking outreach (particularly in rural settings);
- making use of voluntary and community sector organisations with strong links with fathers;
- reviewing communications with parents to ensure that positive language and images of fathers are used; and
- employing more male practitioners that have contact with parents.

***Recommendations from local authority staff and family services for national policy***

Staff in local authorities and family services suggested several ways in which national policy might potentially better support fathers in family services:

- making support for fathers a more explicit national priority across all family services by developing an 'Every Father Matters';
- training for managers and practitioners in family services focused specifically on engaging with fathers;
- specific guidance and best practice documents for family services;
- policy co-ordination with other bodies such as health services and the courts to ensure that fathers are involved; and
- promoting positive images of fatherhood through a national media campaign.

There were mixed opinions on whether or not national targets and / or inspection requirements related to supporting fathers would be beneficial. While it was widely accepted that this would have a major influence on local authorities and family services nationally, most interviewees thought that the potential negative effects (such as drawing resources away from other activities and fostering a 'tick-box' approach to including fathers) would outweigh the benefits.

## **Conclusions and recommendations**

Improving engagement with fathers represents a major challenge across all family services and local authorities nationally. Whilst the importance of engaging with 'parents' is generally accepted, most family services are delivered in a gender neutral manner that does not differentiate between fathers and mothers and this has tended to result in unequal levels of access for fathers.

Substantial barriers to improving engagement with fathers in family services exist in relation to: recognition and support for fathers in national policy; the workforce and delivery in family services; and the wider attitudes and behaviours of fathers and mothers in society. Our recommendations are set out below in relation to the first two of these issues.

### ***Recognition and support for fathers in DCSF and its partners' policies***

Explicit recognition and support for fathers in DCSF and its partners' policies has been found to be important in positively influencing behaviour within local authorities and family services. The Children's Plan (which has since been published) emphasises support for fathers and is likely to be influential. In addition, DCSF might wish to consider:

- producing a single document (*'Every Father Matters'*) to set out the department's aspirations, highlight best practice and draw together existing policies on engagement with fathers across all family services;
- ensuring that future policy documents relevant to parental involvement in family services define 'parents' as including fathers and mothers and take account of their different needs;
- modelling future management and practice guidance for family services on the current guidance documents for Sure Start Children's Centres which address engagement with fathers as a distinct theme;
- reviewing targets (particularly the national teenage pregnancy targets) and inspection processes (with Ofsted) for family services and local authorities to ensure these support the development of father inclusive practice;
- considering how financial framework policy documents might better support engagement with fathers through the purchasing and commissioning of services;
- co-ordinating support for fathers with other key bodies such as health services and the courts; and
- clarifying and publicising the implications of the gender equality legislation in relation to fathers and mothers accessing family services.

### ***Workforce and service delivery***

Engagement with fathers in family services should be routine. However, very few local authorities or family services have begun to develop pro-actively father friendly policy or practice and, where this has occurred, it has tended to be sporadic and dependent on specific managers and staff taking a sustained interest in working with fathers. In addition to the recommendations above, DCSF could consider the following:

- supporting the development of training for managers and practitioners in family services and local authorities focused on developing father friendly practice;
- encouraging family services (where possible and appropriate) routinely and pro-actively to take steps to identify and communicate with non-resident fathers about their children;
- reviewing how family services that engage directly with young males (such as Connexions and integrated youth support services) might play a more pro-active role in identifying and addressing the needs of young fathers;
- reviewing how family services (particularly universal services such as Sure Start Children's Centres and schools but also parenting support services, for example) can recruit a higher proportion of male practitioners that have contact with parents;
- supporting local authorities and relevant family services (such as Sure Start Children's Centres and Families Information Services) to conduct more outreach work – particularly in large rural communities; and
- encouraging routine monitoring of engagement with fathers and mothers in all family services.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In July 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned GHK and Ethnos to undertake research into how fathers can be better recognised and supported through DCSF policy.

DCSF commissioned this research based on the evidence that, while fathers can play an extremely important role in achieving positive outcomes for their children, they also face significant barriers to engaging with a range of family services. This is reflected in the recent publications *Every Parent Matters* (DfES, 2007) and *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families* (HM Treasury and DfES, 2007) - both of which clearly set out the importance of fathers in successful parenting but also acknowledge that “*it can be a challenge to involve fathers*” due to: a lack of understanding among services of fathers’ roles; a feminised culture in children’s services created because service users and the workforce are predominantly female; and, an underestimation of the significance of fathers if they are not resident or they do not engage with a particular service.

The available research reflects this. Desforges and Abouchaar (2003)<sup>3</sup> has shown that parental involvement is one of the most important factors in children’s achievement and adjustment and that fathers are vitally important in this. Goldman (2005)<sup>4</sup> found that fathers’ involvement with their children’s school is strongly correlated with better educational outcomes, and Flouri (2005)<sup>5</sup> found that high levels of paternal involvement are associated with positive outcomes for their children including higher self-esteem, better peer relationships and lower criminality and substance abuse.

There is also clear evidence that family services cater more effectively for mothers than for fathers. Burgess has found that, until recently, in public services the term ‘parent’ has often been synonymous with ‘mother’.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, research has illustrated a failure to engage with fathers across numerous family service contexts. In relation to Family Centres, Ghate et al. (2000)<sup>7</sup> found a powerful combination of social, cultural and individual barriers as well as a feminised culture of service provision preventing fathers from engaging more fully. The study also emphasised the importance of challenging gender-neutral policies, which fail to address gender inequality. Similar issues in engaging with fathers have been uncovered in relation to Sure Start

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<sup>3</sup> Desforges, C. & Abouchaar, A. (2003) *The Impact of Parental Involvement, Parental Support and Family Education on Pupil Achievements and Adjustment: A Literature Review*, London: DfES

<sup>4</sup> Goldman, R. (2005) *Fathers’ Involvement in their Children’s Education*, London: National Family and Parenting Institute

<sup>5</sup> Flouri, E. (2005) *Fathering and Child Outcomes*, Chichester, West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons

<sup>6</sup> In Stanley, K. (ed.) (2005) *Daddy Dearest? Active Fatherhood and Public Policy*, London: IPPR

<sup>7</sup> Ghate, D., Shaw, C. & Hazel, N. (2000) *Fathers and Family Centres: Engaging Fathers in Preventative Services*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

(Williams and Churchill 2006<sup>8</sup> and Lloyd et al. 2003<sup>9</sup>) and Family Support (O'Brien, 2006) for example.

At a more detailed level, different groups of fathers may also have particular needs and barriers. Moon and Ivins (2004)<sup>10</sup> have demonstrated that there are important attitudinal differences towards their children's education between parents of white and of different minority ethnic origins. Similarly, there may be other issues connected to ethnicity, such as any language difficulties, experiences of racism and a higher likelihood of deprivation among minority ethnic families, which may act as barriers to engagement. Other factors which could be important include whether a father is resident with his children, a lone parent or of a young age. For example, the National Evaluation of Sure Start Plus (2005) found a lack of successful engagement with young fathers to be a particular concern.

## 1.1 About the research

The focus of this research is how DCSF policy affects fathers' engagement with family services in England for children aged 0-16.

In light of the evidence about the barriers that fathers face, this research was commissioned to investigate how current policies support fathers, the extent to which they have supported the development of father inclusive practice at a local level and what more can be done to support them.

The specific objectives of the research were to analyse:

- the extent to which DCSF and its partners'<sup>11</sup> policies explicitly recognise fathers;
- the awareness and influence of DCSF and its partners' policies on local authorities and family services in supporting fathers;
- how inclusive of fathers different family services are and what steps have been taken to improve engagement with fathers;
- what barriers there are to further engagement with fathers in family services (including any policy barriers); and
- how DCSF and its partners' policies might better support engagement with fathers in local authorities and family services.

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<sup>8</sup> Williams, F. & Churchill, H. (2006) *Empowering Parents in Sure Start Local Programmes*, London: DfES

<sup>9</sup> Lloyd, N., O'Brien, M. & Lewis, L. (2003) *Fathers in Sure Start*, London: DfES

<sup>10</sup> Moon, N. & Ivins, C. (2004) *Parental Involvement in Children's Education*, London: DfES

<sup>11</sup> For this research DCSF's main partners were identified as: Ofsted, Training and Development Agency (TDA), Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). These partners were chosen as they have played a key role in shaping family services alongside DCSF.

In order to meet these objectives, there were three phases of research:

- *policy review* – a comprehensive review was conducted of DCSF and its main partners’ policies relating to family services and the extent to which these explicitly recognise fathers;
- *survey of local authorities* – an electronic survey was sent to all 150 local authorities in order to gain a greater understanding of how DCSF policy affects engagement with fathers at the local level. It explored levels of awareness and influence of national policy, as well as any perceived barriers to further engagement. This was supplemented by qualitative interviews with a proportion of respondents in order to gain further detail about their response to the survey; and
- *qualitative fieldwork* – in-depth qualitative research was carried out in a sample of eight local authorities. Interviews were conducted with senior managers within each local authority and a mix of managers and practitioners in at least ten family service settings. These explored the barriers and enablers to engaging with fathers in family services, the role of national and local policy in influencing this and how national policy might better support fathers.

For the purposes of this research, the following definitions are used:

- the term ‘father’ includes biological fathers (both resident and non-resident) as well as other male carers with parenting responsibilities (including step-fathers, grandfathers, male foster and adoptive carers);
- ‘policy’ is defined broadly to cover all legislation and communications by DCSF and its partners which set out the services to be provided and how they should be delivered. This can apply to local authorities’ commissioning, monitoring and delivery of services, as well as to other service providers directly; and,
- ‘family services’ include all children’s and adult services that support the physical or emotional wellbeing of a child and have a focus on the relationship between parent and child.

## **1.2 Structure of the report**

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- *Section 2* reviews the methodology for this research in more detail;
- *Section 3* presents the findings from the policy review;
- *Section 4* sets out the results of the local authority survey and follow up interviews;
- *Section 5* describes the key findings from the qualitative fieldwork in local authorities and family services; and

- *Section 6* draws together the key findings and conclusions from the research.

There are also three annexes:

- *Annex A* lists the family services included in this research and gives a brief description of each;
- *Annex B* summarises recognition of fathers in each of the policy documents reviewed in this research; and
- *Annex C* lists all of the policy documents that were reviewed in the research and shows which define 'parents' as including fathers and mothers and which contain explicit recognition of fathers.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

There were three phases to the research: a policy review of DCSF and its partners' policies and the extent to which these explicitly recognise fathers; a survey of local authorities, with follow-up qualitative interviews with a proportion of respondents; and in-depth qualitative research in a sample of eight local authorities. Each of these is described in more detail below.

### 2.1 Phase one – policy review

Phase one of this research – the policy review – was undertaken in August 2007 and updated throughout the life of the project. The first step was to identify a full list of relevant services that the research would cover (as there was no pre-existing comprehensive list of family services) and to identify a set of broad categories into which policy could be sub-divided to allow for greater analytical clarity and to highlight the linkages between different types of policy. These are both described in more detail in Section 3.

Following this, a review was conducted of all DCSF and its partners' policies relevant to parental involvement in these family services. This was intended to cover all current policy documents, with no regard to when they were produced. A large number of current documents (over 150 in total) were identified and categorised under one of five broad policy areas (legislation, top level policy, workforce and service delivery, financial framework and monitoring and evaluation). The documents were then reviewed for any and all recognition of fathers using a key word search. The words 'parent', 'paternity', 'father' and 'dad' were searched for in each policy document and each explicit mention of fathers and policies specifically to support them were summarised. (This is shown in Annex B.) This did not cover policies which might indirectly support fathers (such as extended opening hours) as there were no clear criteria on which to base such a judgement. Rather, such indirect support for fathers was intended to be identified through the later stages of the research.

The critical aspect of conducting the policy audit was for its coverage to be comprehensive. In order to ensure that all relevant policy had been identified, consultations were undertaken with the following groups:

- DCSF policy staff – the head of each relevant policy team in DCSF was contacted by email and asked to highlight all relevant policies that they were responsible for and to highlight any policies specifically related to fathers;
- DCSF partners – Ofsted, Training and Development Agency (TDA), Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC);

- expert bodies – the Fatherhood Institute<sup>12</sup>, the Family and Parenting Institute and Parenting UK; and,
- local authorities – six local authorities were identified through the parenting leads in the government offices of the regions and agreed to take part in this stage of the research. These were a diverse range of authorities located in different English regions, covering rural and urban settings and at different stages in developing their parenting strategy.

An open-ended search for relevant policy documents was also undertaken online. This included searching the following websites: DCSF, TDA, Ofsted, SSAT, NCSL, CWDC, Youth Justice Board, Teachernet, Every Child Matters: Change for Children, Respect, Sure Start, the Fatherhood Institute and the Family and Parenting Institute.

Additional policy documents that were identified in the second and third phases of the research have also been incorporated and included in the analysis.

## **2.2 Phase two – survey of local authorities**

Phase two of this research – a survey of local authorities and follow-up qualitative interviews – was undertaken from September to November 2007. A detailed questionnaire was constructed around four broad sections:

- national policy – asking local authorities about the extent of their awareness and the level of influence of national policy documents identified in phase one as explicitly mentioning fathers;
- local policy – the actions taken by local authorities to support the engagement of fathers with family services in their area both as a result of national policy and outside of this;
- monitoring – the extent to which local authorities undertook, or were aware of, any monitoring of fathers' engagement in family services; and
- improving engagement – the barriers to increasing engagement with fathers and the role of national policy in further supporting this.

The first draft of the questionnaire was piloted with the six local authorities identified in phase one of the research. The comments from the piloting stage led to a number of revisions which were incorporated into the final version.

Single parenting commissioners were identified as being the most appropriate contact to send the questionnaire to in the first instance.<sup>13</sup> The questionnaire was administered online, partly in order that several respondents (not just the single parenting commissioner) from each local authority were able to provide information before submitting the completed response.

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<sup>12</sup> The Fatherhood Institute was previously known as Fathers Direct

<sup>13</sup> DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England* required local authorities in England to create this post so the single parenting commissioner could oversee parenting support services and commission evidence-based parenting programmes

In total 46 completed questionnaires were submitted, representing slightly under one in three local authorities in England. Whilst the number of responses to each question varied, the findings in each of the tables in Section 4 are based on responses from a minimum of 20 local authorities.

Following the deadline for submissions, the person or persons that were identified as having taken the primary role in completing the questionnaire (this was not always the single parenting commissioner) were contacted to conduct a short telephone interview of approximately 20-30 minutes. This provided further qualitative detail on the following:

- national policy – which policies have exerted a particular influence on policy and any barriers to implementation of national policies;
- local policy and practice – perceptions of the role of the local authority in supporting engagement with fathers and what data is collected through monitoring; and
- recommendations – views on how national policy could support and recognise fathers to engage with family services in their area.

Interviews were completed with 26 respondents in November 2007.

### ***Limitations***

While both the coverage (in terms of the number of local authorities that responded) and depth of information from the survey and follow-up interviews was relatively high, it is important at this point to emphasise some of the limitations of the findings from this phase of the research. First, they are based on respondents' perceptions and no evidence has been required to validate the responses, though evidence gathered from the qualitative fieldwork can help to confirm or question this data. Second, while respondents were encouraged to consult with colleagues, it is likely that to some extent the responses reflect differing levels of knowledge about different types of family services based on the roles and responsibilities of the respondent(s). Finally, despite emphasising the confidentiality of individual responses in order to achieve honest answers, it may be the case that some respondents have provided what they perceive to be the 'right' or expected answer. For example, questions on the respondent's awareness of national policies (particularly statutory policies) are potentially sensitive and there may be a tendency to provide positive responses. However, it is obviously not possible to determine from the data whether or not this has happened and, if so, the extent to which it is the case.

## **2.3 Phase three – qualitative fieldwork**

In-depth qualitative fieldwork was undertaken in eight local authorities, chosen from those that indicated that they would be willing to participate in this stage of the research through the survey of local authorities. The local authorities were selected as they appeared to be at different stages of development in engaging fathers (based on their responses to the survey) and represented a mix of: regions across England; urban and rural settings; levels of deprivation;

overall population sizes and characteristics; and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) ratings for children’s and young people’s services.

In each local authority in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with:

- at least four senior staff within the local authority with a strategic overview of a number of family services (including assistant directors, heads of service and the single parenting commissioners); and
- an average of three managers and practitioners in at least 10 family service settings.

In order to ensure sufficient depth, the ten family service settings that were visited in each local authority were chosen from a short list of 12 types of family services (which had been agreed with DCSF). These 12 types of family services are shown in the table below, along with the number of each that were visited during the research:

<b>Type of family service</b>	<b>Number visited</b>
Sure Start Children’s Centres	8
Primary schools	8
Secondary schools	8
Families Information Services <sup>14</sup>	6
Special schools	6
Behaviour and attendance	6
Teenage pregnancy	7
Integrated youth support	7
Connexions	7
Parenting support services	7
Youth offending services	7
Safeguarding and looked after children	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>

In total, over 250 interviews were completed, providing an extremely large and rich source of information.

In order to preserve the anonymity of the family services involved, the findings have been written up anonymously for each service type. The only exception to this is where a specific example of good practice has been highlighted and, in each case, this has been done with the consent of the service provider.

### ***Limitations***

An important limitation to this phase of the research should be noted here. While the eight local authorities were chosen from the survey to provide a diverse sample based on the criteria set out above, the choice of specific family service settings was left to the local authorities. This creates an important issue around potential selection bias. However, this was carefully

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<sup>14</sup> Families Information Services were previously known as Children’s Information Services

considered and was felt to be the only practical way of conducting such a large scale piece of research in the timeframe. Moreover, this was not thought to be too problematic for the research as the purpose of the qualitative research was to understand more about the detail and process of engaging with fathers in each type of family service and not about providing reliable quantitative data.

In addition, while the qualitative research picked up on differences between engaging with certain types of fathers (such as non-resident, minority ethnic, young and lone parent fathers), this was not the focus of the research. Important findings are presented in Section 5, though relatively few interviewees expressed clear opinions directly on the impact of factors such as ethnicity or income deprivation on engaging with fathers.

## 3 POLICY REVIEW

### 3.1 Introduction

A comprehensive review of DCSF and its main partners' policies relevant to parental involvement in family services was conducted in August 2007 and updated throughout the life of the project. This was intended to determine to what extent national policies explicitly recognise fathers and any gaps that might exist. This section presents an overview of findings, while Annex B and Annex C provide details of the specific policy documents that were reviewed and any recognition of fathers within each document.

### 3.2 Mapping family services and policy categories

Prior to undertaking the policy review, it was important to establish a full list of family services that this research would cover as there was no pre-existing and comprehensive list.

Discussions with several local authorities revealed that the best way to categorise the various family services was through the organising principle of whether a service was broadly universal, targeted or specialist. These three categories of service provision were defined as follows:

- universal – services for all children and families (e.g. Sure Start Children's Centres and mainstream primary and secondary schools);
- targeted – services for children and families with identified needs (e.g. special educational needs) or complex problems (e.g. teenage pregnancy and behaviour, attendance and exclusions). This tends to be associated with services that are accessed through a professional gatekeeper following an assessment of need; and,
- specialist – services for children at high risk (e.g. safeguarding, looked after children and youth offending). These services are typically available to a very small number of children and families and have a very high threshold for accessing them.

However, it is important to recognise that, while these categories of service provision are generally distinct from each other, services represent points along a continuum of need. The boundaries between universal, targeted and specialist services are, therefore, not absolute and some service provision will be on the border between universal / targeted or targeted / specialist.

In addition, the Every Child Matters reforms, which require local authorities to provide integrated children's and family services, have resulted in a high degree of partnership and multi-agency service delivery. As a result of this, some of the family services listed below (such as Sure Start Children's Centres

and extended schools) deliver a broad range of service provision, some of which is universal and some targeted.<sup>15</sup>

Taking account of these complexities and ambiguities, a list of family services that this research covered is provided in Table 1 below. This was developed initially from earlier research on family services<sup>16</sup> and was refined in discussion with local authorities. Table 1 sets out each family service, grouping services into universal, targeted and specialist provision.

**Table 1 – List of family services included in this research**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Universal, Targeted or Specialist</b>
Families Information Services	Universal
Sure Start Children's Centres	Universal
Early Years Centres	Universal
Nursery schools	Universal
Other childcare and play settings	Universal
Primary schools (including extended schools and pre-school provision)	Universal
Secondary schools (including extended schools)	Universal
Admissions	Universal
Integrated youth support	Universal / targeted
Connexions	Universal / targeted
Parenting support services	Universal / targeted
Special schools	Targeted
Family centres	Targeted
Behaviour / attendance / exclusions	Targeted
Fostering and adoption	Targeted
Teen pregnancy	Targeted
Education other than at school (EOTAS)	Targeted / specialist
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Targeted / specialist
Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and educational psychology	Targeted / specialist
Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol)	Targeted / specialist
Youth Offending Teams (YOTs)	Specialist
Safeguarding and looked after children	Specialist
Relevant pilot projects (e.g. Family Intervention Projects)	Universal / targeted / specialist

In addition, it is important to distinguish between different policy areas in order to provide greater analytical clarity and understand the relationships between

<sup>15</sup> For example, extended schools may provide universal services such as wrap around care as well as targeted provision such as Family Resource Workers and Educational Welfare Officers

<sup>16</sup> Henricson, C., Katz, I., Mesie, J., Sandison, M & Tunstill, J (2001) *National Mapping of Family Services in England and Wales – a Consultation Document: Executive Summary & Consultation Questions*, London: National Family and Parenting Institute; and PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2006) *DfES Children's Services: The Market for Parental and Family Support Services*, London: DfES

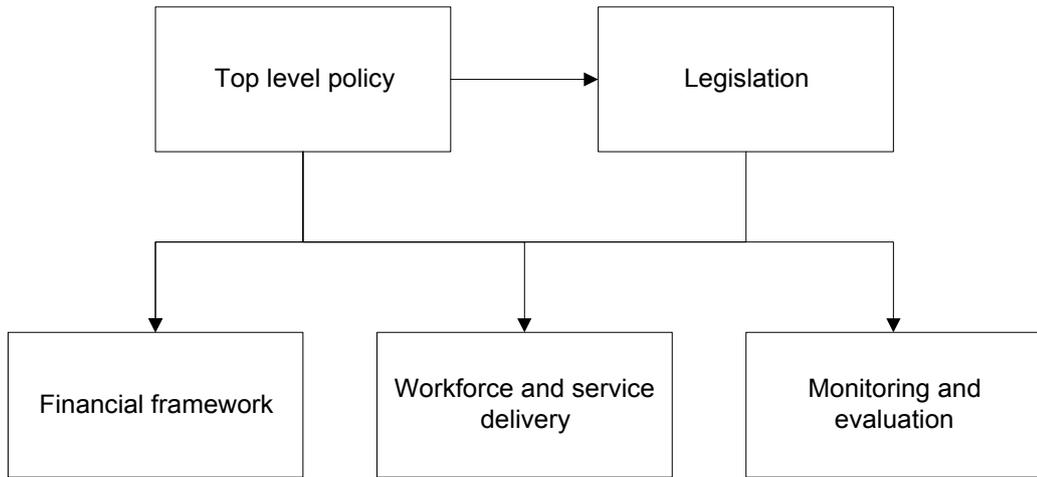
different types of policy. The categorisation of policy presented in Table 2 below was discussed and refined in consultation with a number of local authorities, who found it to be both intuitive and comprehensive. This has been used to organise policy documents that have been reviewed, with each document being placed in one of the following five categories.

**Table 2 – Policy categories**

<b>Policy category</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Legislation	Acts passed by parliament (e.g. Children Act 2004) Regulation Statutory guidance and standards
Top level policy	Green and White papers Policy statements and reviews (e.g. Every Parent Matters, Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families) Strategy papers (e.g. Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners)
Workforce and service delivery	Non-statutory national guidance and standards Terms of reference Training materials and good practice documents
Financial framework	Funding Commissioning frameworks Charging arrangements
Monitoring and evaluation	Inspection criteria Monitoring arrangements Performance indicators Quality assurance

‘Top level policy’ includes high profile, departmental or cross-departmental documents such as Green and White Papers and strategy documents. Whilst these may set out pre-existing policy, the documents are not generally statements of new policy in themselves. Typically, top level policy contains statements of intent and plans for future policy, which are then translated into current policy through the four other policy areas. Where ‘legislation’ (including regulation and statutory guidance) follows, this sets out what is required of service provision in law. Both top level policy and legislation can then be seen as setting a lead for the other policy areas. In general, the ‘financial framework’, ‘workforce and service delivery’ and ‘monitoring and evaluation’ policy documents set out in much more detail the basis on which each service is funded, delivered and monitored. This is set out diagrammatically in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 – Relationship between policy categories**

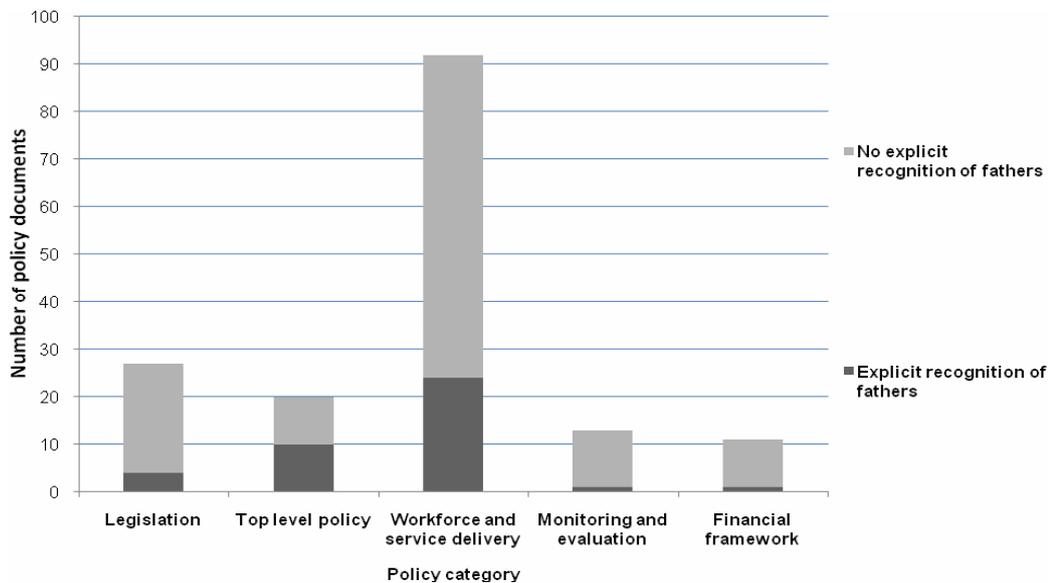


**3.3 Key findings**

**3.3.1 Recognition for fathers in national policy**

In total, 163 policy documents were identified and reviewed. Of these, under one in four (40) explicitly mention fathers and under one in five (32) define ‘parents’ as including fathers.<sup>17</sup> This is shown in Figure 2 below for each of the five policy categories.

**Figure 2 – Recognition of fathers in DCSF policy by each category**



Among the documents that explicitly recognise fathers, there were two consistent messages found across a wide range of policy documents:

<sup>17</sup> Not all documents that define ‘parents’ as including fathers also explicitly mention fathers and vice versa

- fathers' engagement in their children's upbringing is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes; and
- in order to improve engagement, family services need to take into account the needs and motivations of fathers.

These statements are important in that they help to set the agenda for engaging fathers in family services by creating a narrative which: defines the issue (fathers not being sufficiently engaged in family services); the potential benefits which flow from addressing it (positive outcomes for children); and how this can be achieved (by taking account routinely of fathers' specific needs). However, it should be noted that while the core of this message was common among the documents that explicitly mention fathers, only a small number of these documents provided more extensive detail on ways to support fathers.

### ***Top level policy***

In terms of the five policy categories, top level policy documents were most likely to explicitly recognise fathers (in exactly half of the 20 documents reviewed). This is important because, typically, top level policy sets out the government's future intentions and plans, setting a strategic lead for the other four policy categories. Three recent top level policy documents in particular provide extensive recognition and support for fathers:

- DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* sets out the government's plans to make England the best place in the world for children to grow up by 2020. It contains explicit recognition that fathers and mothers are critical to making this happen but identifies that fathers (particularly non-resident fathers) are not sufficiently engaged by health and children's services. In terms of support for fathers, Sure Start Children's Centres will be expected to engage fathers and help develop their parenting skills; Parent Know How (a support service for parents) will provide information in ways that are more easily accessible for fathers; and, schools will be expected to develop stronger relationships with fathers through ensuring that governing bodies listen to fathers and working parents as well as recording the details of non-resident parents and trying to involve them where possible;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters* contains a review of existing DCSF policies and highlights the importance that the department places on supporting fathers and mothers across a range of family services. In relation to fathers, it summarises existing policies:
  - Sure Start Children's Centres are expected to collect information on engagement with fathers and undertake outreach;
  - schools are encouraged to take account of the different needs of fathers and mothers when engaging with parents;

- local authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) should mediate a positive relationship between teenage mothers and fathers where appropriate; and
- advice and support for parents must meet the needs of fathers as well as mothers.
- DfES (2007) *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families* provides specific recommendations for future policy: increased funding through Sure Start Children's Centres to support outreach and provide parenting classes for up to 30,000 parents with a particular emphasis on reaching and supporting fathers; and outlines that DCSF will lead work to consider how fathers can be better supported by family services.

Other examples of support in top level policy that are specifically aimed at fathers include:

- HM Treasury (2003) *Every Child Matters* recommends that fathers (especially non-resident fathers) should be offered parenting support programmes, and that schools should focus on improving communication with fathers; and
- HM Treasury, DfES, DWP and DTI (2004) *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children* sets out government plans to increase parental leave, paternity leave, adoption leave and introduce the ability to transfer a portion of maternity leave to the father.

### **Legislation**

There was relatively little recognition of fathers in relevant legislation and, where this did exist, it was not related to top level policy. Rather, the majority of relevant legislation focused on the specific legal question of defining parental responsibility.

Parental responsibility<sup>18</sup> was first defined in the Children Act (1989) such that it is given to both the child's father and mother where they are married to each other at, or after, the child's birth, while in the case of unmarried parents, the mother has parental responsibility and the father does not (though he may acquire it through a court application or an agreement with the mother). The

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<sup>18</sup> Parental responsibility is a particularly important legal concept. Fathers with parental responsibility are entitled to: be joined automatically as a party to care proceedings (Family Proceedings Rules 1991, Appendix 3); be joined automatically as a party to adoption proceedings (Adoption Rules 1984, rules 4 and 15); and remove a child from accommodation (in accordance with Section 20(8) of the 1989 Act).

Fathers without parental responsibility do not have these, or other, rights associated with parental responsibility. For example, when all those with parental responsibility have consented to adoption, a father without parental responsibility is also deemed to have done so. A father who does not have parental responsibility still has some legal rights, for example: he has an automatic right to apply to the court for certain court orders in respect of his child; and, if the child is in local authority care, he has a right to have reasonable contact with his child.

law was also revised in the Adoption and Children Act (2002) such that, from December 2003, an unmarried father acquires parental responsibility where he and the child's mother register or re-register the child's birth together.

Separately from this, the only recognition of fathers in relevant legislation was in the DCSF (2007) *Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006*, which sets out that information services should be made accessible to fathers as well as mothers, with a particular emphasis on increasing access to information for those who may be socially excluded (including young fathers). Information services should also assess the needs of fathers in their area and make efforts to provide information in formats and through routes that are likely to engage fathers.<sup>19</sup>

### **Workforce and service delivery**

Recognition of fathers was relatively high in 'workforce and service delivery', particularly in relation to non-statutory guidance and good practice documents. There was widespread recognition in these documents of the benefits of fathers' involvement in their child's upbringing and a consistent message that providers should involve fathers more extensively in services. There were several key documents for explicit recognition and support of fathers in this policy category. These were:

- EOC (2007) *Gender Equality Duty and Local Government: Guidance for Public Authorities in England*, which contains non-statutory guidance on how local authorities might better support fathers in relation to the gender equality duty. This might include setting an objective for increased uptake of family services by fathers, making childcare accessible to fathers and providing better support for young fathers;<sup>20</sup>
- DCSF and DH (2007) *Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts*, which contains a chapter on young fathers – based partly on a consultation exercise with young parents. It describes how young fathers can feel excluded from maternity and health visiting services as well as Sure Start Children's Centres where practitioners are seen to be negatively judgemental. It also sets out the need for better identification of young fathers and better support to engage in learning or training;
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*, which contains a chapter specifically on working with fathers. The guidance suggests that Sure Start Children's Centres should: seek the

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<sup>19</sup> Whilst the gender equality duty is also important, neither the legislation itself nor the explanatory memorandum contains any explicit recognition of fathers. The related guidance for local authorities, which was produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission, is non-statutory and is therefore discussed under 'workforce and service delivery'.

<sup>20</sup> It also sets out that men and women should be asked about the impact of services on them and local authorities should consider the impact of commissioning decisions on men and women specifically – however, this does not relate directly to parents.

views of fathers when planning service provision, consider how events can engage fathers, consider employing a 'fathers' worker' to help develop a strategy for engaging fathers, and work with Jobcentres to help fathers move into employment;

- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*, which adds to the practice guidance document in setting out that Sure Start Children's Centres should collect information on fathers and assess how well they engage with them;
- DfES (2004) *Engaging Fathers: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement*, which sets out good practice in how to engage fathers in the life of a school in some detail (e.g. in relation to developing home-school links, communicating effectively with parents and training and professional development); and
- DfES and DH (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services* documents also contained a substantial focus on fathers in relation to: core standards, maternity services, and disabled children and young people and those with complex needs. These documents acknowledge that fathers can play a key role in securing positive outcomes for their children but this is sometimes overlooked, and, in relation to maternity services, that it is important to engage fathers in the process as this is likely to secure greater involvement with his child in the early years.

There was some limited recognition of fathers in relation to youth offending services and parenting support services through MoJ, YJB & DCSF (2007) *Parenting Contracts and Orders Guidance* and DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*.

Overall, it can clearly be seen, however, that recognition of fathers in workforce and service delivery documents generally precedes, and does not follow on from, top level policy as might be expected. Explicit recognition of fathers in workforce and service delivery documents has taken place since 2004 (but there have been few examples since 2006), while recognition of fathers in top level policy has only become a major feature in top level policy documents since 2007.

### ***Financial framework***

There was virtually no recognition of fathers in relation to funding of services, commissioning processes or charging arrangements. The only exception was HM Government (2005) *Planning and Funding Extended Schools: A Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and Their Partners*, which identifies that parents should be involved in shaping extended service provision and that this may require different activities to engage fathers and mothers. However, no specific financial implications were attached to this.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation***

Similarly, there was only minimal recognition of fathers in monitoring and evaluation documents. The only document that contained any reference to fathers was the self evaluation form for Sure Start Children's Centres, in which centres are expected to: list what they have done to involve fathers; how fathers have been involved in the planning of services; what proportion of fathers have accessed services (including targeted services for fathers); and outline how they have sought the views of fathers (including those that are not directly involved with the Sure Start Children's Centre).

#### **3.3.2 *Policy gaps in recognising fathers***

There is very little recognition for fathers in terms of legislation, financial framework and monitoring and evaluation that relates specifically to fathers:

- there is currently only one relevant statutory duty that relates to engaging fathers (which is for local authorities to be pro-active in providing information for fathers in formats which are likely to engage them);
- there is no recognition of fathers in national policy documents relating to funding, commissioning or charging arrangements; and
- only Sure Start Children's Centres are required to monitor and report on how they are supporting fathers.

Where recognition for fathers does exist in relevant policy documents, this also tends to be focused on only a few types of family services. Recognition of fathers was most extensive in relation to Sure Start Children's Centres and schools (though for schools this was usually good practice documentation rather than national guidance). There was also some recognition of fathers in relation to teenage pregnancy and parenting support services. However, there is little or no reference to fathers in policies relating to other family services.

In addition, few policy documents differentiated between different types of fathers (such as minority ethnic fathers, young fathers, lone parent fathers and resident or non-resident fathers). The main exceptions to this were the three top level policy documents: *The Children's Plan*, *Every Parent Matters* and *Aiming High for Children*, which note that young, minority ethnic and non-resident fathers are least likely to access family services. Young fathers were also recognised specifically in relation to teenage pregnancy services. The Sure Start Children's Centre Practice and Management guidance documents also refer to vulnerable and excluded fathers. Overall, however, detailed recognition of the specific needs of different types of fathers in national policy was low.

## 4 LOCAL AUTHORITY SURVEY

### 4.1 Introduction

The survey of local authorities took place in September and October 2007. An email was sent to the single parenting commissioner in every local authority in England, though the questionnaire was in some cases completed by other colleagues. An analysis of who responded to the survey and how representative these local authorities are in relation to a number of criteria is presented below, along with an analysis of the data in relation to six key themes:

- father friendliness – how father friendly family services are seen to be;
- monitoring and engagement – what monitoring (if any) is undertaken of fathers' engagement and levels of engagement compared to mothers and for specific groups of fathers;
- influencing behaviour – what has influenced local authorities to take specific actions to support family services to engage with fathers;
- awareness and influence of national policies – the extent to which respondents are aware of national policy documents that specifically mention fathers in family services and which of these have influenced local policy or practice;
- local authority actions – specifically in relation to supporting fathers to engage with family services both directly as a result of national policy and independently of national policy; and
- barriers and challenges – what affects the implementation of national policies relevant to engagement with fathers in family services.

In total, 46 local authorities submitted completed questionnaires. Whilst the number that responded to each question varied, the findings in each of the tables in this section are based on responses from at least 20 local authorities.

Follow up interviews were conducted with a sample of respondents to the survey who were willing to be contacted. This was intended to provide further detail about the response that had been given to the survey, through asking about:

- national policy – which policies have exerted a particular influence on policy and any barriers to implementation of national policies;
- local policy and practice – perceptions of the role of the local authority in supporting engagement with fathers and what data is collected through monitoring; and
- recommendations – views on how national policy could better support and recognise fathers to engage with family services in their area.

## **4.2 Survey of local authorities**

### **4.2.1 Respondents**

The local authorities that responded to the questionnaire closely reflect the national picture on a number of key characteristics:

- there is a very close match between the respondents and the distribution of local authorities in each region, with the only differences being that two more local authorities responded from the East Midlands than would be expected, while one less than would be expected responded from London and the North East;
- a little over a quarter of respondents (28%) were from rural local authorities, which matches the national split between urban and rural authorities across England;
- in terms of the different types of local authorities, counties and metropolitan districts were marginally over-represented (by 6 and 2 percentage points respectively) while London boroughs and unitary authorities were under-represented (by 3 and 5 percentage points respectively); and
- using the indices of multiple deprivation rankings of local authorities, both the third most deprived and the third least deprived are over-represented (by 6 and 4 percentage points respectively) while the middle third are correspondingly under-represented (by 9 percentage points).

In almost two fifths of cases (39%), the questionnaire was completed by someone other than the single parenting commissioner to whom it had been sent initially. These respondents held job titles such as 'Strategic Manager for Sure Start Children's Centres', 'Parenting Services Co-ordinator', 'Strategy' or 'Commissioning' Officer and 'Area Co-ordinator'. Even where the identified single parenting commissioner had completed the questionnaire, only a small number of these described their job title as such. Other reported job titles for this group included: 'Family Support Manager', 'Strategy Manager', 'Service Development Manager' and 'Parenting Education Co-ordinator'.

The reported length of time in post ranged from one month to 20 years, with almost half (48%) having been in post for one year or less. However, the identified single parenting commissioners were no more likely to report their length of tenure as being one year or less (despite the DfES guidance calling for local authorities to establish this position being issued in October 2006). This is likely to reflect either that several single parenting commissioners have misread the question or that they have kept their previous post as well as taking on this role (which is also consistent with the range of job titles reported above).

Finally, 67% of respondents were female, which was the same proportion as for single parenting commissioners across the country.

#### 4.2.2 *Father friendliness*

Respondents were asked three general questions about how family services meet the needs of fathers in their local authority. The findings (excluding no replies<sup>21</sup>) are shown in Table 3 below.

**Table 3 – Meeting the needs of fathers in family services<sup>22</sup>**

	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neither agree nor disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Our services are used much more by mothers than fathers	48	50	0	2	0
We ensure that fathers' needs are explicitly met in our local authority	10	12	50	26	2
In reality it is hard to tailor services to fathers' needs	4	30	26	37	2

The overwhelming majority (98%) of respondents thought that family services in their area were used more by mothers than fathers and only 22% of respondents agreed that fathers' needs are explicitly met in their local authority (compared with 50% who neither agreed nor disagreed and 28% who disagreed).

However, respondents were divided on whether or not it is hard to tailor services to fathers' needs – 34% agreed, while 39% disagreed.

Local authorities were then asked for their opinions on how 'father friendly' each type of family service in their area is. (Father friendly services were defined in the questionnaire as being: "services which recognise the importance of engaging fathers and have taken measures, or have been designed, to address fathers' specific needs in order to support engagement with them".) The findings are presented in Table 4 below.

It is important to be cautious in interpreting these results because, as one respondent commented, it can be difficult to generalise where individual service settings within each type of family service vary in how father friendly they are (for example, different primary and secondary schools in an area may vary). In addition, the proportion of respondents choosing 'don't know' for most types of family service is substantial, which suggests that in many cases respondents had little information on which to base a judgement.

However, the results indicate that, overall, family services are most likely to be perceived as being neutral towards fathers. Only five out of the 23 types of

<sup>21</sup> All data in this section is shown excluding no replies unless otherwise stated

<sup>22</sup> All percentages have been rounded to the nearest integer and may not sum to exactly 100% in every case. This applies to all the tables in this section

family services were more likely to be seen as being father friendly than neutral towards fathers. By contrast, very few respondents felt that family services in their area were discouraging of fathers.

**Table 4 – ‘Father friendly’ family services**

Family service	Father friendly (%)	Neutral towards fathers (%)	Discouraging of fathers (%)	Don't know (%)
Family Information Services	23	66	5	7
Sure Start Children's Centres	61	28	0	12
Early years centres	28	45	3	25
Nursery schools	23	45	0	32
Other childcare and play settings	15	56	0	29
School admissions	13	58	3	28
Integrated youth support	22	49	0	29
Connexions	26	43	0	31
Primary schools	17	52	2	29
Secondary schools	14	54	2	30
Special schools	19	45	2	33
Family centres	35	30	0	3
Behaviour / attendance / exclusions	10	54	0	37
Fostering and adoption	26	41	5	29
Teen pregnancy	45	24	10	21
Education other than at school (EOTAS)	5	47	5	44
Children and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) and educational psychology	12	56	0	33
Special educational needs (SEN)	7	54	2	37
Safeguarding and looked after children	21	52	2	24
Youth offending teams	30	39	2	37
Substance misuse	9	56	0	35
Parenting support services	48	43	2	7
Relevant pilot projects	50	23	0	28

The family services most frequently reported as being father friendly were: Sure Start Children's Centres (61%), relevant pilot projects (50%), parenting support services (48%), teen pregnancy (45%) and family centres (35%). There were four family service types where fewer than 10% respondents described them as being father friendly: education other than at school (7%), special educational needs (9%), substance misuse (9%) and behaviour / attendance / exclusions (9%). Notably, three of these four are education-related and the proportion of respondents that viewed primary, secondary and

special schools as being father friendly was also relatively low (17%, 14% and 19% respectively).

The family services most commonly cited as discouraging of fathers were: teen pregnancy (10%), followed by fostering and adoption (5%) and education other than at school (5%). Teenage pregnancy services appear to be perceived by respondents as both one of the most and one of the least father friendly services, which suggests that the approach to engaging fathers in these services and / or expectations of the appropriate level of engagement with fathers varies significantly across different local authorities.

The proportion of 'don't know' responses was high across almost all categories, however it was lowest for parenting support services (7%), information services (7%) and Sure Start Children's Centres (12%), which may reflect that respondents had a closer relationship with these types of family services than others.

#### **4.2.3 *Monitoring and engagement in family services***

Respondents were asked whether or not family services undertook any monitoring of fathers' engagement. Sixty one per cent reported that they did undertake monitoring, while 39% did not undertake any monitoring at all.

Those that did report undertaking some monitoring were asked about the extent of this in relation to each type of family service. The results are shown in Table 5 below.

Again, the proportion of 'don't know' responses is very high. This ranged from 14% in Sure Start Children's Centres to 92% in education other than at school and accounted for the majority of respondents in all but five family services (information services, Sure Start Children's Centres, teen pregnancy, parenting support services and relevant pilot projects).

However, Table 5 shows that only a small proportion of respondents were able to identify robust formal monitoring in most family services. This ranged from no respondents reporting robust formal monitoring in nearly half of family services to 39% of respondents for Sure Start Children's Centres. The other services in which robust formal monitoring was most commonly reported were: relevant pilot projects (24%), information services (18%), teen pregnancy (16%) and parenting support services (15%). Some formal or informal monitoring was more commonly reported and was highest in parenting support services (65%), Sure Start Children's Centres (43%) and teen pregnancy (40%).

Respondents were asked to provide further details about any monitoring that was undertaken. However, the comments did not offer much extra information, suggesting that respondents were not aware of the details of any data that was collected.

They were then asked about the extent of fathers' engagement in each type of family service in comparison to mothers. The results are not reported in detail

as, in the majority of cases, respondents indicated that they did not have enough information to judge. However, (reflecting the findings above) the responses that were given reflected that levels of engagement were thought to be lower with fathers than with mothers.

Respondents were also asked if any particular groups of fathers (young, minority ethnic, non-resident and lone parent) were less likely to engage with family services than others. Again, the proportion of respondents that did not have enough information to judge was very high so the results have not been reported in detail. Overall, however, minority ethnic fathers were most frequently identified as being less likely to engage with family services than other groups of fathers.

**Table 5 – Monitoring of fathers’ engagement in family services<sup>23</sup>**

Family service	Robust formal monitoring (%)	Some formal / informal monitoring (%)	No monitoring (%)	Don't know (%)
Families Information Services	18	29	14	40
Sure Start Children's Centres	39	43	4	14
Early years centres	5	32	5	59
Nursery schools	0	18	9	73
Other childcare and play settings	0	17	13	71
School admissions	0	13	13	74
Integrated youth support	8	17	8	67
Connexions	8	28	4	60
Primary schools	0	17	13	71
Secondary schools	0	13	8	79
Special schools	0	4	9	87
Family centres	10	38	5	48
Behaviour / attendance / exclusions	0	13	13	75
Fostering and adoption	4	21	13	63
Teen pregnancy	16	40	8	36
Education other than at school (EOTAS)	0	0	8	92
Children and adolescent mental health (CAMHS) and educational psychology	0	17	8	75
Special educational needs (SEN)	0	9	9	82
Safeguarding and looked after children	4	38	4	54
Youth offending teams	12	32	4	52
Substance misuse	0	13	4	83
Parenting support services	15	65	4	15
Relevant pilot projects	24	33	5	38

#### **4.2.4 Factors influencing local authority behaviour in how family services are delivered to users**

Local authorities were asked to think generally about the extent to which certain factors influence how they provide family services to users (i.e. not specifically for fathers). The results are shown in Table 6 below.

<sup>23</sup> NB: this question was only asked for those respondents that had indicated that their local authority undertook some monitoring of fathers’ engagement in family services. The findings in Table 2 therefore reflect answers from 28 respondents and not all 46. The lowest number of respondents for any row in this table was 21.

**Table 6 – Influences on local authority behaviour in how family services are provided to users**

	Major impact (%)	Some impact (%)	No impact (%)	Don't know (%)
Legislation and statutory requirements (e.g. equality legislation)	91	9	0	0
National policy documents (e.g. Green and White Papers and strategy papers)	80	20	0	0
Non-statutory guidance	20	73	4	2
Budgetary considerations	58	40	0	2
External evaluations (e.g. Joint Area Review)	71	29	0	0
Meeting targets	67	31	0	2
Local policies or initiatives	58	42	0	0
Feedback from service users	31	69	0	0
The quality of the staff and expertise available	48	48	2	2

Legislation and statutory requirements (91%) stand out as being perceived most frequently to have a major impact, followed by national policy documents (such as Green and White Papers and strategy papers), external evaluations and targets. Notably, these are all exogenous influences on local authorities, which tend to be driven at a national level. The only area of national policy which was not widely seen to have a major impact was non-statutory guidance, which was cited by just one in five respondents as having a major impact.

Local factors (feedback from service users, the quality of staff and expertise available, local policies or initiatives and budgetary considerations) were seen as having a lower impact than the national drivers of change. In particular, feedback from service users was cited by less than one in three respondents (31%) as having a major impact.

Respondents were also asked to list any other important factors that were not covered by this list. A small number of respondents listed other factors which tended to focus on other local processes. These included: having champions for fathers in different services; innovative practitioners; and, undertaking local consultations as part of developing the local authority's children and young people's plan or parenting strategy.

#### **4.2.5 Awareness and influence of DCSF policies and those of its main partners that recognise fathers**

Local authorities were asked about their awareness of national policies that were identified in the policy review as explicitly recognising fathers and the extent to which these had influenced local policy or practice. The policy documents were grouped under three (rather than five) headings: legislation, top level policy and 'other' national policy (which comprised the policy

documents previously described as ‘workforce and service delivery’, ‘financial framework’ and ‘monitoring and evaluation’ in the policy audit).

The ten policy documents most commonly cited by respondents as directly influencing local policy or practice in relation to fathers’ engagement are shown below in Table 7.

The majority of the ten most influential policy documents in relation to fathers were ‘other’ policy – a large proportion of which comprised various Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance documents. Two top level policies (*Every Child Matters* and *Every Parent Matters*) were widely seen as being influential. The list also included the one legislation document (DCSF (2007) *Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006*) which asks local authorities to consider the information needs of fathers.

**Table 7 – Most commonly reported national policy documents that have directly influenced local policy or practice<sup>24</sup>**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Policy category</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance</i>	Other national policy	74
HM Treasury (2003) <i>Every Child Matters</i>	Top level policy	73
DfES (2007) <i>Every Parent Matters</i>	Top level policy	69
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance</i>	Other national policy	64
DfES (2006) <i>Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England</i>	Other national policy	61
DCSF (2007) <i>Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006</i>	Legislation	60
DfES (2007) <i>Governance Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools</i>	Other national policy	58
Self Evaluation Form for Sure Start Children's Centres	Other national policy	58
DfES (2007) <i>National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres</i>	Other national policy	55
HM Government (2006) <i>Common Assessment Framework</i>	Other national policy	55

Each of the three categories of national policy is examined in more detail below:

### **Legislation**

Table 8 shows the extent of awareness and influence of 'legislation'.

While this covers only a small number of policies, there is substantial variation in the responses. The level of influence was highest for DCSF (2007) *Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006*, followed by the Children Act 1989. The lowest level of influence was for the Adoption and Children Act 2002.

Respondents were also asked to identify any other legislation not listed above that they were aware of and has had a direct influence on how family services in their area engage with fathers. There were four acts of parliament that were listed by a small number of respondents: Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Children Act 2004.<sup>25</sup> While all three documents place a heavy emphasis on parents, none

<sup>24</sup> DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures* was not included as it had not been published at the time of conducting the survey. It was reviewed and incorporated in the policy review later on in the project.

<sup>25</sup> Three out of four of these are focused on criminal or anti-social behaviour and had not been identified in the policy review as these had originally been the responsibility of the Home Office. However, with the recent restructuring of responsibility for youth offending (such that DCSF now holds joint responsibility alongside the Ministry of Justice) these documents have become relevant to the research.

mentions fathers specifically or defines ‘parent’ explicitly as including mothers and fathers. Similarly, the Children Act 2004 (which was reviewed) does not mention fathers specifically (and hence was not included in this list).

**Table 8 – Awareness and influence of legislation**

Policy	Directly influenced policy / practice (%)	Limited or indirect influence on policy / practice (%)	Familiar with but not influenced policy / practice (%)	Not aware of and not influenced policy / practice (%)	Don't know (%)
DCSF (2007) <i>Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006</i>	60	24	7	2	7
Children Act 1989	52	29	10	0	10
DfES (2001) <i>Special Educational Needs Code of Practice</i>	40	28	16	2	14
Adoption and Children Act 2002	28	35	9	0	28

**Top level policy**

As with legislation, there is substantial variation in terms of the level of influence that top level policy documents are perceived to have had. This is shown in more detail in Table 9 below.

A majority of respondents reported that four of the top level policy documents had directly influenced local policy or practice. These were:

- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*;
- HM Treasury (2003) *Every Child Matters*;
- HM Treasury & DfES (2007) *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families*; and
- HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI (2004) *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare*.

Within this, HM Treasury (2003) *Every Child Matters* and DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters* clearly stand out as being the two most influential documents, with 73% and 69% of respondents respectively reporting that these have had a direct influence on policy or practice. Whilst (as illustrated in the policy review) *Every Parent Matters* contains repeated and consistent reference to fathers, *Every Child Matters* does not mention fathers specifically as frequently or in such depth.

By contrast, very few respondents reported that the documents relating to parental separation had directly influenced local policy or practice and the proportion of respondents that were either not aware of these documents or were familiar with them but did not think they had influenced policy or practice was relatively high (35% and 31% respectively).

**Table 9 – Awareness and influence of top level policy**

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Directly influenced policy / practice (%)</b>	<b>Limited or indirect influence on policy / practice (%)</b>	<b>Familiar with but not influenced policy / practice (%)</b>	<b>Not aware of and not influenced policy / practice (%)</b>	<b>Don't know (%)</b>
HM Treasury (2003) <i>Every Child Matters</i>	73	9	11	0	7
DfES (2007) <i>Every Parent Matters</i>	69	27	2	0	2
HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI (2004) <i>Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A Ten Year Strategy for Childcare</i>	51	36	7	0	7
HM Treasury & DfES (2007) <i>Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families</i>	51	23	14	0	12
DfES (2006) <i>Youth Matters: Next Steps, Something to do, Somewhere to go, Someone to Talk to</i>	45	24	14	0	17
DfES (2004) <i>Department for Education and Skills: Five Year Strategy for Learners</i>	43	21	17	2	17
DfES (2006) <i>Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress</i>	35	28	12	5	21
HM Government (2005) <i>Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parental Responsibilities – Next Steps</i>	14	26	28	7	26
HM Government (2004) <i>Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parental Responsibilities</i>	12	31	24	7	26

***Other national policy***

Table 10 overleaf shows the level of awareness and influence of other national policy documents.

**Table 10 – Awareness and influence of other national policy documents**

	Directly influenced policy / practice (%)	Limited or indirect influence on policy / practice (%)	Familiar with but not influenced policy / practice (%)	Not aware of and not influenced policy / practice (%)	Don't know (%)
DfES (2007) <i>Governance Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools</i>	58	26	9	2	5
DfES (2007) <i>National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres</i>	55	23	11	2	9
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance</i>	74	12	7	0	7
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance</i>	54	25	2	0	7
Self Evaluation Form for Sure Start Children's Centres	58	19	7	2	14
DCSF (2007) <i>Setting up a Parent Council: A Resource Pack</i>	12	22	20	12	34
HM Government (2007) <i>Extended Schools: Building on Experience</i>	32	34	9	0	25
HM Government (2005) <i>Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All – a Prospectus</i>	35	37	7	0	21
HM Government (2005) <i>Planning and Funding Extended Schools: A Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and their Partners</i>	30	37	5	7	21
DfES (2004) <i>Engaging Fathers: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement</i>	18	30	23	7	23
TDA (2006) <i>Role Specific Initial Training for PSAs. Module A Handbook: Working in Partnership with Parents</i>	16	18	13	18	36
TDA (2006) <i>Role Specific Initial Training for PSAs. Module B Handbook: Working Together for Child and Family Wellbeing</i>	14	21	14	18	34
DfES (2006) <i>Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England</i>	61	16	9	2	11
DCSF & DH (2007) <i>Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts</i>	52	25	11	0	11
DfES & DH (2006) <i>Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on Effective Delivery of Local Strategies</i>	50	25	14	0	11
DfES (2006) <i>Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010</i>	50	21	14	2	14
HM Government (2006) <i>Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: Practitioners' Guide</i>	55	23	16	0	7
DfES (2006) <i>Gender Equality Scheme</i>	27	27	16	9	21
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Core Standards</i>	50	25	7	0	18
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs</i>	34	39	5	0	23
DfES & DH (2004) <i>Children's and Maternity Services Information Strategy – Supporting the Children's, Young People and Maternity Services National Framework</i>	30	36	7	2	25

Most of the documents classified as other national policy relate specifically to one of the following services: Sure Start Children's Centres, schools, parenting support and teen pregnancy services.<sup>26</sup> This makes it possible to compare, very broadly, the relative levels of awareness and influence that these documents have had in different types of family services (though these results should be used cautiously as different documents have different purposes e.g. non-statutory guidance and good practice guides).

The clearest finding from this is that policy documents related to Sure Start Children's Centres were the most influential on local policy or practice. The practice and management guidance documents (Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance* and Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*) were the two most influential documents. From the policy audit, it is clear that these two documents (particularly the practice guidance) make extensive mention of the importance of engaging fathers. The practice guidance provides examples of good practice specifically on engaging fathers (e.g. employing a fathers' worker), while the management guidance emphasises that managers should collect and assess data on levels of engagement with fathers.

By contrast, other national policy documents related to schools were clearly not seen as being directly influential of local policy or practice. It should be noted, however, that the proportion of 'don't knows' is also highest for these documents, which may reflect less understanding of how influential these may be on practice in schools. It is also worth reflecting here that the two documents in this section which have been produced by the Training and Development Agency have among the lowest levels of direct influence and the highest proportion of respondents that are not aware of them or don't know.

Among the policy documents not directly related to these family services, the findings are varied. The most directly influential of these was HM Government (2006) *Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: Practitioners' Guide*, which sets out that practitioners working with young males should ask if he is a father when undertaking an assessment. Amongst the three National Service Framework documents, DfES & DH (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Core Standards* had the highest level of direct influence on policy or practice and the lowest proportion of respondents that were either not aware or replied 'don't know'. DfES & DH (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and those with Complex Health Needs* and DfES & DH (2004) *Children's and Maternity Services Information Strategy – Supporting the Children's, Young*

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<sup>26</sup> The exceptions were: three documents related to the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services, HM Government (2006) *Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: Managers' Guide* and DfES (2006) *Gender Equality Scheme*

*People and Maternity Services National Framework* were more likely to have had a limited or indirect influence on policy or practice.

#### 4.2.6 Local authority actions

Respondents were asked about any actions that their local authority had taken specifically in relation to engaging fathers in family services. They were asked to respond separately for any actions that had been taken as a direct result of national policies and for those that were *not* taken as a direct result of national policies.

Table 11 shows the results for initiatives undertaken as a direct result of national policy.

**Table 11 – Local initiatives undertaken as a direct result of national policy**

	Yes (%)	In the process of developing (%)	No (%)	Don't know (%)
Any pilots or specific initiatives aimed at fathers	67	22	11	0
Information, advice and outreach activities for parents	50	43	5	2
Strategies and plans	22	64	9	4
Training provision and materials	17	37	34	12
Guidance materials	7	49	30	14
Information for managers or practitioners	7	47	33	14
Other	27	18	36	18

Two thirds of local authorities had pilots or specific initiatives aimed at fathers in place, with a further 22% in the process of developing this. When asked to describe what these were, they were most likely to be sessions run specifically for fathers (such as drop-in sessions and discussion groups) or activities for fathers and their children (such as “Dads and Lads” activities), most of which were being run by Sure Start Children’s Centres. Respondents also identified parenting programmes for fathers (such as Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities), family learning and community involvement aimed at including fathers, and specific work with teenage fathers. When asked which national policies had influenced this, the Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance<sup>27</sup> was most commonly cited, as well as DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters* and DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*.

<sup>27</sup> It was not possible to identify which individual guidance documents respondents had intended as the responses were not specific enough

Half of local authorities had already developed information, advice and outreach activities for parents, while virtually all of the remainder (except 7%) were in the process of developing this. Again, the vast majority of this provision was delivered through Sure Start Children's Centres and Families Information Services (though extended schools also played a role in some cases). The national policies that were identified as having influenced these actions were very similar to those given above in relation to pilots or specific initiatives for fathers: the Sure Start Children's Centre guidance, DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*, the Childcare Act 2006, HM Government (2007) *Extended Schools: Building on Experience* and Teenage Parents Next Steps Guidance.

The remaining activities were reported much less frequently. Over a quarter (27%) reported having 'other' activities in place. However, only two respondents gave any details of what these were – one described developing courses such as computer and photography skills to engage fathers and the other reported undertaking a review of current data in the authority to assess engagement with fathers.

Just over one in five respondents (22%) reported having strategies and plans in place and almost two thirds (64%) were in the process of developing this. The majority of the plans already in place were the local authority's Children's and Young People's Plan or its Parenting Strategy.

Training provision and materials had been developed in 17% of local authorities (though these were not clearly described by respondents), and just 7% of respondents reported having produced guidance materials and information for managers or practitioners.

Table 12 below shows the results for local actions *not* undertaken as a result of national policy.

**Table 12 – Local initiatives not undertaken as a direct result of national policy**

	Yes (%)	In the process of developing (%)	No (%)
Strategies and plans	8	33	58
Guidance materials	6	35	59
Information for managers or practitioners	6	30	64
Training provision and materials	17	29	54
Information, advice and outreach activities for parents	19	31	50
Any pilots or specific initiatives aimed at fathers	36	18	46
Other [including no replies]	20	-	-

Far fewer respondents identified local policies or initiatives that had been undertaken (or were in the process of being developed) independently of national policy. For all but one of the categories above at least half of local authorities were not taking any action.<sup>28</sup> Again, this reflects the finding above that respondents thought that local policies relevant to fathers engaging in family services were directly influenced by national policies.

Respondents were asked to describe the actions, which fell into four types:

- strategic groups – groups that meet within the local authority from across different service contexts to take a strategic approach to improving parental engagement;
- dedicated teams working across family services – such as a ‘Parental Outreach Team’ and ‘Parental Involvement Programme’ that are working directly with family services such as Sure Start Children’s Centres, schools and Family Centres;
- parenting programmes – particularly programmes developed to address very specific issues, such as a fathers only parenting programme for children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and a ‘Caring Dad’s Programme’ to support fathers to engage with their children following domestic violence); and
- training for practitioners working with fathers – this was described as being for practitioners across various children’s services with fathers’ organisations (such as the Fatherhood Institute).

Respondents were also asked which of the following were the main reasons for putting these measures in place. This is shown in Table 13 below (respondents were able to give multiple reasons).

**Table 13 – Main reasons for local initiatives not undertaken as a direct result of national policy**

Reason	Percentage
Felt it was right thing to do	92
Local campaigning by groups or individuals	39
External assessment	15
Local political priorities	12
Received complaints	4
Other [including no replies]	15

The overwhelming majority of respondents identified that they felt these actions were the right thing to do. Almost two in five respondents (39%) found that local campaigning by groups or individuals was one of the main reasons for taking these actions. External assessment was a main reason for 15% of

<sup>28</sup> However, this is not directly comparable with Table 13 above as respondents were not able to answer ‘don’t know’

respondents, while 12% identified local political priorities and just 4% said that they had responded to complaints. Other reasons given for local actions included: awareness of the beneficial outcomes of engaging with both parents; having identified lack of engagement with fathers as a gap in service provision; and, having identified engaging with fathers as a priority in the local authority's parenting strategy.

#### 4.2.7 **Barriers and challenges**

Table 14 shows the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed that the following barriers exist to implementing relevant national policies.

**Table 14 – Challenges when implementing national policies for fathers**

	<b>Strongly agree (%)</b>	<b>Agree (%)</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree (%)</b>	<b>Disagree (%)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (%)</b>
Lack of funding attached to policy on engaging with fathers	50	34	7	9	0
Short timescales to implement policy	25	48	18	9	0
Lack of skills or knowledge in the workforce to implement policy	23	46	18	11	2
Unless national and / or local policies mention fathers specifically, family services tend to be orientated towards mothers	22	50	24	4	0
Lack of detail in policies relevant to fathers	16	39	25	21	0
Lack of clarity in policies relevant to fathers	16	23	40	21	0
Policies on fathers are inconsistent or contradictory	7	12	51	30	0

The main barriers identified by respondents were a lack of funding attached to policy on engaging with fathers (84% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 9% that disagreed) and short timescales to implement national policy (73% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 9% that disagreed).

Lack of skills or knowledge in the workforce to implement policy was also a key issue, with 69% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Importantly, this is the only factor from the list which touches on the local authority's own capacity to implement policy.

In relation to the content of national policies, respondents generally felt that it was very important that national and / or local policies mention fathers specifically (72% agreed or strongly agreed compared to 4% that disagreed) in order that family services are not orientated towards mothers. In addition, lack of clarity and detail in national policies were commonly thought to be barriers to

implementation (55% and 39% respectively agreed or strongly agreed), while inconsistencies or contradictions were not (30% disagreed compared with 19% that agreed).

When asked to give examples of specific policies that respondents had found difficult to implement in relation to fathers and the reasons for this, only a few respondents did so. The most common policies that were identified were those related to Sure Start Children's Centres and the reason given was the difficulties in consulting with fathers that are unwilling to engage (which respondents either put down to the female dominated environment of Sure Start Children's Centres or an unwillingness among fathers to engage in this way).

### **4.3 Follow-up interviews**

Respondents to the survey were asked if they would be willing to participate in a short interview to provide further qualitative details to complement the findings from the survey. Interviewees were asked to comment on specific questions based on the following topic areas:

- national policies;
- local policy and practice;
- monitoring and inspections; and
- how national policy could better support and recognise fathers to engage with family services in their area.

Each of these is explored in more detail below. Interviews were undertaken with the single parenting commissioner (or other respondent) in 26 local authorities. This represents slightly over one in six local authorities in England. This was not expected to be a 'representative' sample but represents a diverse mix of authorities in terms of: regions; urban / rural contexts; types of local authorities; and deprivation (measured using the IMD).

#### **4.3.1 National policy**

Interviewees were asked about the following issues in relation to national policy:

##### ***Influence of national policy on local policy and practice***

Most interviewees saw national policies as being the main driver for local policy and practice. This was particularly the case in local authorities in which local policy and practice around engaging fathers was seen as being in the early stages of development. It also reflected the extent to which the local authority was seen to have the capacity to identify and respond to national policies. As one said, "*national policy has been extremely influential as the local authority is very good at looking outward to see what government policies exist and what they need to pick up on.*" National policy was generally seen by these

interviewees as taking a lead on setting out the issues which local authorities need to address and framing how this should be done.

However, several interviewees felt that national policies had not had much influence and that local priorities and circumstances had been the main factors in developing local policy and practice. There were several common reasons for this. First, national policies were seen by some to be 'behind' local policies and needed to catch up. As one said, "*Government policy is often a reflection of thinking that has gone on elsewhere. Usually it reflects what [the local authority] were already thinking and mirrors this, so local priorities have been most important.*" Second, some reported that their local authority had only limited capacity to take in and respond to new national policy initiatives. One said, "*We have a huge amount of stuff that comes through to us and part of it is absorbed. It makes a difference having time to digest this, rather than being under pressure, which means only focusing on what must be done.*" And, third, national policies are not generally specific enough to meet local needs: "*national policy is quite general and not tuned to local needs, which are the key factor for any local authority.*"

Reflecting the findings from the survey of local authorities, the national policy documents which interviewees identified as having been particularly influential over local policy or practice in engaging with fathers were:

- Sure Start Children's Centre guidance: Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*; Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance* and DfES (2007) *Governance Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools*;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*;
- HM Treasury (2004) *Every Child Matters*;
- DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*; and
- Teenage pregnancy guidance: DCSF & DH (2007) *Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts* and DfES and DH (2006) *Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on Effective Delivery of Local Strategies*.

Respondents were asked what effect these policy documents had had in their local authority. Many described changes in practice within family services (predominantly in relation to Sure Start Children's Centres) such as: services being delivered at different times; provision specifically for fathers and their children; monitoring of engagement with fathers; and employing male workers to undertake outreach to engage fathers directly. More widely, respondents

reported that these documents had helped to facilitate a ‘culture change’ towards engaging with fathers in the local authority and family services. In particular, this was associated with DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*, which was seen as emphasising the importance of parenting across all children’s and family services, and the Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance. The latter, despite being service specific, had had a much wider effect in the local authorities and in various family services. As one interviewee said, “*The Children’s Centre guidance documents were quite influential in changing our attitudes and that has spilt over into other services in the local authority which should also be engaging with fathers.*”

When asked why these national policy documents had been more influential than others, a number of reasons were given:

- in terms of presentation, several interviewees noted the importance of policy documents being written in “clear” and “simple” language, drawing out key points explicitly without being repetitive or long-winded. As one interviewee put it, “*Local authorities have too much to read – when a document is short and to the point and written in plain English, it is more likely to influence our policies*”;
- recognising fathers explicitly was seen as extremely important. This was true for both service-specific guidance and for policy documents which applied to several family services. As one interviewee said of the Sure Start Children’s Centres guidance, “*specific and repeated mention of fathers is crucial as practitioners and managers are reminded at every turn of the importance of engaging with fathers*”; and
- there were two examples of policies that had required local authorities or family services to take specific actions in relation to parents and fathers. The Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance made it a requirement to monitor engagement with fathers, which was seen as being extremely influential. And, DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England* required local authorities to appoint a single parenting commissioner and to produce a parenting strategy, which was seen to raise the profile of parenting and specifically working with fathers.

### ***Barriers to implementing national policies***

Interviewees were asked about any barriers to implementing national policies. These were seen to include:

- insufficient funding and time to deliver on national policies – as one said, “*the main barrier is that we are under-resourced. The government rolls out new legislation and expects us to implement it without additional funding*”;

- some national policies were seen to be too rigid to effectively address local priorities. Indeed, even where funding was attached to implementing national policy initiatives, this could still be problematic where budgets could not be used flexibly and targeted appropriately by the local authority;
- “*policy overload*” was seen as a significant issue by many interviewees where new national policies were introduced at too fast a rate for local authorities to be able to implement each one effectively. This had the effect of both reducing the amount of time available to respond to each policy and creating too many priorities simultaneously which made it more difficult to focus on other issues such as support for fathers;
- the workforce in family services was thought to be a major issue in several local authorities, with interviewees describing practitioners as not valuing engagement with fathers highly and being resistant to change. This was predominantly the case for early years and social services, in both of which the workforce was perceived to be predominantly female; and
- related to this, interviewees also noted that the workforce in family services often lacked the skills and the knowledge to be able to engage more effectively with fathers even if this was set out as a priority.

### ***Inspections***

On inspections, virtually all interviewees agreed that inspections had not had much impact on local policy or practice in engaging with fathers. Inspection arrangements were widely acknowledged as playing a crucial role in influencing behaviour within local authorities and family services. As one said, “*Inspection is the most influential factor, it focuses the mind, with targets and reporting, which means that you will get your act together. What gets measured gets done.*” However, with the exception of monitoring undertaken by Sure Start Children’s Centres as a result of the practice and management guidance, there were no arrangements in place to evaluate levels of engagement with fathers in family services. One interviewee reflected that “*we have just had the Joint Area Review but there is nothing in the review that was specific about parenting or fathers.*” Similarly, respondents did not feel that the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) had any relevant indicators for engagement with fathers. Thus, inspection was seen as a potential means of changing behaviour, but one that has not yet been utilised.

### 4.3.2 **Local policy**

Interviewees were asked to comment on the following issues in relation to local policy and practice:

#### ***Role of the local authority***

There was a split between interviewees that felt their local authority played an important and pro-active role and those that did not think their local authority had yet played any significant role in supporting family services to adopt father inclusive practices. The latter tended to be aware of some practice that had developed in family services in their area aimed at engaging fathers, but felt the local authority had so far taken a laissez-faire approach to this. In most instances where this was the case the local authority was not far advanced with producing their parenting strategy and the need to produce one had raised the issue as being one of importance. One said that, *“the local authority has not taken any role so far. It has allowed individual services to run with it [including fathers] if they wanted to. We have just started asking the question about including fathers now and this was included in the consultation for our parenting strategy.”* However, these interviewees did not perceive that their local authority could not or should not play a role in this and all suggested that including fathers was a rising priority which the local authority should begin to take forward.

Those that described the role of the local authority in supporting fathers to date identified several different roles that it fulfilled. Most commonly, this entailed taking a strategic or co-ordinating role across family services. Often, but not always, this was linked to the development of the parenting strategy which was seen as an opportunity for local authorities to raise the profile of engaging fathers as an issue for service delivery. In policy terms, a number of authorities had developed either a focus on hard to reach groups (of which fathers were one) or on equality and diversity measures (which included fathers as a group that must be addressed) with which services in their area would need to pro-actively respond. One authority had mainstreamed equality and diversity measures (such as age, gender and ethnicity) across all local policies and strategies, which has been used as a key driver to challenge family services to improve engagement with fathers.

On a more ongoing basis, several local authorities had created strategic groups in which parenting issues (including engaging fathers) could be addressed. Typically, such groups would convene staff from across the range of family services to work together to spread good practice and to foster dialogue to improve multi-agency links. In one example, a multi-agency parents' forum had been set up ten years previously and was now a well established body within the local authority which took a strategic lead on responding to national policies on parenting and sub-groups within it took responsibility for specific activities such as strategy, commissioning and workforce development. In some other instances these also included voluntary

sector partners, which were often seen as having valuable knowledge and experience in working with fathers.

Other roles that were identified for local authorities included spreading good practice between different services and ensuring that services work with fathers through the commissioning process (for example, by incorporating support specifically for fathers as a performance indicator in contractual documents such as service level agreements). Typically, spreading good practice among practitioners was seen as being less directive than producing policies and strategies and consisted of highlighting national research and good practice and helping local practitioners to share what they were doing with each other. Commissioning was seen as being potentially a powerful lever to improve engagement with fathers. This was because explicit goals and aims about delivering father friendly services could be incorporated into the contract specifications. This could lead to family service providers' performance being judged partly on their including fathers. The suitability of potential providers competing to provide a service for the local authority could also be judged partly on this basis.

### ***Measures to engage with fathers***

Interviewees were generally unclear on the details of father inclusive practice that was being undertaken in family services in their area. Some said they were not aware of any relevant practice, while others indicated that certain activities were taking place but were unable to describe these in much detail.

Of those that did describe specific practice, this was most likely to relate to Sure Start Children's Centres, parenting support services and teenage pregnancy. According to interviewees, there were a number of activities in Sure Start Children's Centres, including: fathers' groups run on evenings and weekends, and with some targeted provision (e.g. for minority ethnic fathers and their children); employing men's development workers (usually but not always male) to make services more inclusive towards fathers; and undertaking outreach to engage fathers. Reported activities in teenage pregnancy services included: targeting young fathers directly to engage them in ante-natal and post-natal classes; setting up groups for teenage fathers in conjunction with integrated youth services; and working with Connexions to give young fathers access to information about opportunities in work or learning that may be open to them. In parenting support services, there were reported initiatives such as running father only courses and drop-in groups, which took place at different times so that fathers are more likely to be able to attend.

In terms of outreach being undertaken to approach fathers directly, in the majority of cases this was seen as being undertaken by Sure Start Children's Centres alone. As one interviewee said, "*Children's Centres are based on an outreach model and so they have attempted to go out and talk to fathers.*" The significance of the Sure Start Children's Centre guidance was emphasised

again by interviewees as it was seen to emphasise the importance of outreach in engaging groups that might not otherwise engage with the service. This was seen as particularly important in large rural authorities, where outreach was a critical part of supporting engagement with fathers in small villages and towns across the county that would otherwise not be reached by services that were generally located in more densely populated areas.

The voluntary and community sector also played a key role in several local authorities, through delivering services that were inclusive of fathers and in sharing good practice with the local authority and other service providers in order to improve engagement across the board. Certain voluntary and community organisations were seen as having strong connections with some of the 'harder to reach' groups of fathers (in most cases this referred to minority ethnic fathers), for whom they had developed provision with successful and sustained buy-in and engagement. This was seen to range from small community groups for specific communities to locally based branches of larger, national organisations such as the YMCA with a specific focus on fathers.

### ***Monitoring***

Reflecting the findings from the survey, interviewees were clear that little robust formal monitoring took place specifically on engagement with fathers that they were aware of. Where monitoring did take place, it was solely quantitative in nature and did not record fathers' qualitative experiences of engaging with a service. In addition, formal monitoring was also seen as almost exclusively being undertaken within Sure Start Children's Centres. While one interviewee noted that the local authority had a central database to collect the monitoring data from all Sure Start Children's Centres in the area, this was extremely unusual. No others reported that their local authority produced any kind of formal output or report on fathers' engagement and most reported that any monitoring was, as one said, "*still done within services, without anyone taking an overview of this for the local authority.*" Indeed, any formal monitoring that took place was generally seen as being undertaken due to service specific guidance such as Sure Start Children's Centre guidance, which requires Sure Start Children's Centres to keep specific data on who they are engaging with as part of their key performance indicators in their self-evaluation process.

Informal monitoring was seen to be even more limited and rare than formal monitoring. Virtually all interviewees reported that this did not occur, while the only examples of informal monitoring were of conducting consultation exercises with parents which asked about their experiences of various family services. However, this was seen as being patchy and infrequent.

### **4.3.3 *Recommendations from interviewees for national policy***

Finally, interviewees were also asked to comment on how national policy could better support fathers to engage with family services in their area. The responses were as follows:

- making engagement with fathers a more explicit national policy: several interviewees wanted to see the importance of engaging with fathers raised in national policy. Central to this was creating a national policy document that is specifically about fathers and is of strategic (not service-specific) importance. As one commented, “*We’ve had Every Parent Matters, but if we could be specific enough to have something along the lines of Every Father Matters this would make a difference*”;
- monitoring / reporting of engagement with fathers: related to the previous point, many interviewees identified the importance of asking local authorities and family services to report specifically on the level and nature of engagement with fathers. It was felt that this would automatically change attitudes towards fathers as it would be clear that this is a priority and is expected of them. However, some cautioned against introducing mandatory requirements or legislation to achieve this as it could be counter-productive and lead some to take a tick-box approach. Others suggested that existing legislation (in the form of the Gender Equality Duty) could be used more effectively if family services were challenged on engagement with fathers as part of meeting this duty;
- guidance and best practice: while some guidance and best practice exists around how to engage with fathers (e.g. Sure Start Children’s Centre guidance and DfES (2004) *Engaging Fathers: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement*), this remained limited and only existed for some family services. Interviewees felt that what was needed was simple and clear national guidance. As one said, “*It would be good if we could get more specific guidance from DCSF. We need specific examples, case studies of good practice, information about pilot projects and knowledge of what works and what doesn’t*”;
- focusing on the workforce: family services in general (and early years particularly) were seen as being feminised environments which made both recruiting fathers as part of the workforce and engaging with fathers as service users more difficult. Some advocated thorough-going reform of the pay and qualifications structures, which were seen as being orientated towards women, in order to improve recruitment of men, while others emphasised the importance of training so that a female dominated workforce was better equipped to engage with fathers. Those that emphasised training felt that national policy was required to ensure that all relevant training included father-specific information about how to engage with fathers successfully and the benefits of doing so; and
- more resources and time to implement national policies: reflecting the findings from the survey, several respondents felt that greater funding and more time to implement national policies would improve their local

authority's ability to support engagement with fathers. It was felt by some that where new initiatives or guidance came into being without any funding attached, or where spending was too rigidly dictated centrally, this made it difficult to deliver effectively in the local area. One specific suggestion to remedy this was that a small proportion of funding to be allocated specifically for parenting issues that is not tied to specific services.

#### **4.4 Key findings**

##### ***Father friendliness and engagement with fathers***

The overwhelming majority of respondents to the survey reported that family services in their area were used more by mothers than fathers and only one in five felt that their local authority ensured that fathers' needs were met in their area.

Family services were generally seen as being 'neutral' towards fathers, rather than actively father friendly or discouraging of fathers. Sure Start Children's Centres, relevant pilot projects, parenting support services, teenage pregnancy and family centres were most likely to be perceived as being father friendly, while education other than at school, special educational needs, substance misuse and behaviour, attendance and exclusions were least likely to be seen as father friendly.

Only a very low level of monitoring of fathers' engagement was reported to take place. Those that were most likely to undertake formal monitoring were also most likely to be perceived as being father friendly.

##### ***Awareness and influence of national policies***

In most cases, national policy was seen as being the key driver for local policy and practice in relation to fathers. The following documents clearly stand out as having been most influential:

- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*;
- HM Treasury (2004) *Every Child Matters*;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*; and
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*.

This was mainly due to the extent to which fathers were specifically recognised and prioritised.

Policy documents relating to Sure Start Children's Centres were repeatedly identified as having had a large impact both on Sure Start Children's Centres and more widely across the local authority. By contrast, policy documents

relating to education and schools were not perceived to have been highly influential.

The main barrier to implementing national policies effectively was seen as being a lack of funding and short timescales. Related to this, 'policy overload' was perceived to be an important issue in several local authorities with the effect of creating too many priorities for local authorities to be able to focus on fathers specifically. The other key challenge related to the skills and makeup of the workforce.

Inspections (such as the JAR and the APA) were not perceived as having been influential over local policy and practice, as there was no assessment of engagement with fathers. However, this was seen as potentially being an influential lever.

### ***Local policy and practice***

Interviewees most commonly saw the role of the local authority as one of taking a strategic lead in working with family services in their area to support engagement with fathers. Producing a parenting strategy was an important part of this, while a number of authorities had also convened multi-agency groups within the local authority to co-ordinate responses to national policies and local priorities across the different service areas.

When asked about the actions that had been taken locally to support fathers to engage with family services, these were most likely to be pilots or specific initiatives aimed at fathers, followed by providing information, advice and outreach activities for parents. Only in very few instances had local authorities produced guidance materials or information for managers or practitioners in their area.

## 5 QUALITATIVE FIELDWORK

### 5.1 Introduction

In-depth qualitative fieldwork was undertaken in eight local authorities from across the country.<sup>29</sup> These were selected from the survey of local authorities and (based on their responses) appeared to be at different stages of development in engaging fathers. They also represented a mix of: regions across England; urban and rural settings; levels of deprivation; overall population sizes and characteristics (in terms of minority ethnic groups); and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) ratings for children's and young people's services.

Within each of these local authorities, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior staff within the local authority (including assistant directors, heads of service and the single parenting commissioner) and with a mix of managers and practitioners in at least 10 family service settings.

In order to ensure that the findings were sufficiently robust to generalise from, a short list of 12 types of family services was selected in discussion with DCSF. These were:

- Sure Start Children's Centres;
- primary schools;
- secondary schools;
- Families Information Services;
- special schools;
- behaviour and attendance;
- teenage pregnancy;
- integrated youth support;
- Connexions;
- parenting support services;
- youth offending services; and
- safeguarding and looked after children.

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<sup>29</sup> The local authorities have not been listed here. However, part of the research brief was to identify examples of good practice in specific family service settings, which have been named below

Findings from the local authorities and each of the family service types are presented below.

## 5.2 Local authorities

### **Contexts**

The very different contexts in the eight local authorities were important in understanding the specific circumstances, barriers and challenges in engaging with fathers in each of the local authorities. Generally:

- urban local authorities had more diverse populations and larger concentrations of minority ethnic groups;
- all local authorities contained some areas of material deprivation, but this was larger and more extensive in urban areas;
- levels of family breakdown and the diversity of family structures appeared to be higher in urban areas; and
- rural authorities faced particular issues with providing services for dispersed communities in rural areas.

### **Recognition and support for fathers in local authorities**

Local authorities generally saw their role as taking a 'strategic lead' in encouraging father friendly practice in family services in their area. This was described by one senior member of staff as having "*responsibility for taking the lead on promoting engagement with fathers, but also to recognise and spread good practice where it develops in different services.*" However, very few interviewees identified their local authority as actually having played such a role to date.

Generally, local authorities had developed very little in terms of local policies, strategies, guidance or training with a specific focus on fathers (though some felt that this was implicit in local policies and strategies that emphasised working with parents). Where steps had been taken to support fathers, these included: having a specific focus on the needs of fathers within the local authority's parenting strategy; working closely with the voluntary and community sector (for example employing fathers' workers to undertake outreach work); and a few small scale examples of helping to fund training for managers and practitioners with some focus on working with fathers.

The perceived barriers to engaging with fathers in these local authorities reflected those that were found in Phase two of the research. The key barrier to responding to national policies was seen to be a lack of funding and time to implement national policies relating to fathers effectively and 'policy overload', with pressure to meet a large number of targets and priorities which made it difficult to focus on other issues such as supporting fathers. The other major challenges revolved around the workforce in family services (which was seen

as being predominantly female and in some instances not recognising the importance of engaging with fathers or lacking the skills to do so effectively) and the 'traditional' gendered views of parenthood seen to exist more widely among mothers and fathers (with mothers generally seen as being the principal carer while fathers are seen as being the main breadwinner and source of discipline).

#### **Nottingham local authority**

Nottingham local authority has taken a strategic lead in addressing engagement with fathers in local family services. There was a strong commitment to improving support for fathers among senior staff in the authority, which was reflected in the work of the authority. The single parenting commissioner has acted as an advocate for fathers across a range of family services and has been integral to developing the local authority's parenting strategy (which is clear about the importance of fathers as well as mothers) and in the ongoing development of an additional sub-strategy specifically for fathers. This will be a stand alone document but also directly linked to the parenting strategy. It will set out what constitutes successful provision for fathers and how this can be evaluated as well as spreading good practice and identifying areas for future development.

Parents (approximately half of which are fathers and several from minority ethnic backgrounds) are directly involved in decision-making in the local authority. Fathers and mothers sit on a 'shadow board' which scrutinises and feeds into the work of the local authority's Strategic Partnership: Children, Young People and Families Executive Group (responsible for overseeing how the local authority achieves the five Every Child Matters outcomes). This has ensured that fathers have had a voice at a high level within the local authority and has made a direct difference to the local authority's priorities (such as influencing the sub-strategy for fathers).

Another important aspect of the work has been to work closely with relevant voluntary and community sector organisations in service provision. For example, Men United (a local fathers' group) and the Family Welfare Association have been consulted to provide expert knowledge on how to better engage with fathers across a range of family services such as Sure Start Children's Centres and parenting support.

None of the local authorities reported having recorded data in a systematic manner in order to monitor levels of engagement with fathers in family services. In the majority of cases, father inclusive practice had developed in a bottom up manner, with pockets of practice emerging where individual managers and / or practitioners had taken an interest or responded to particular issues such as complaints by fathers, analysis of usage or developing specific projects based on short-term funding. In several local

authorities third sector providers had played an important role in developing good practice and prioritising work with fathers.

### ***National policies***

With no targets relating directly to fathers, national policy was seen to have played only a limited role in influencing the behaviour of local authorities to work with fathers. The most commonly mentioned policy document across a range of practitioners was Every Child Matters, which emphasised the importance of parents in achieving the five desired outcomes for children even though the policy itself does not draw out fathers specifically as a priority group. Some interviewees (particularly the parenting commissioners) identified Every Parent Matters as a key document because it set out the importance of parents (and specifically fathers) across a range of family services. A small number of interviewees mentioned that the Sure Start Children's Centre practice and management guidance had been influential more widely in the local authority and had helped to raise the profile of fathers in services beyond just the Sure Start Children's Centres. The only other national policy document mentioned by local authority staff (usually the relevant head of service) was the teenage pregnancy guidance, which specifically mentioned fathers.

Local authority staff all reported that neither the JAR nor the APA required them to report on the level or type of engagement with fathers in family services. Whilst both of these ask the local authority to provide evidence of effective engagement with 'parents', they are not required to specify the extent to which this relates to mothers and / or fathers.

Interviewees were asked how national policy might better support local authorities to engage with fathers in their area. Responses included:

- DCSF producing an overarching policy document highlighting the importance of fathers across all family services;
- funding for local authorities to be able to appoint a dedicated champion for fathers with input into local policies and strategies;
- greater resources for local authorities to be able to undertake more extensive outreach (particularly in large rural areas);
- replacing the perceived plethora of short-term pilots and initiatives for working with fathers with a single more secure and long-term funding stream;
- specific training for managers and practitioners in family services to better understand how to engage fathers; and
- developing national targets and inspection requirements for local authorities to meet the needs of fathers (though there were mixed opinions on this as it was widely recognised that local authorities

already had a large number of nationally determined targets and priorities).

In a few cases, interviewees also specifically identified that they would like clarification of current gender equality legislation and the extent to which it might be applied to family services' to require them to engage with fathers as well as mothers.

### **5.3 Family services**

In general, the family services visited in this research could be described as being 'father neutral', with few responding pro-actively across the board to the specific needs, interests and circumstances of fathers. Only a minority of service settings could be described as being 'father friendly'.

A summary of findings for each type of family service is provided below:

#### ***Sure Start Children's Centres***

Sure Start Children's Centres generally reported having very low levels of engagement with fathers in mainstream services compared with mothers. This was the case across all contexts, though it was also emphasised particularly in areas with large numbers of non-resident fathers or, conversely, large (particularly Asian origin) minority ethnic populations in which, despite strong family units, fathers were perceived to see caring for their children in the early years as being predominantly the mothers' responsibility.

However, Sure Start Children's Centres were more likely than any of the other types of family service to have been pro-active in trying to become more father friendly. Most commonly, this was through sessions and events targeted specifically at fathers, such as 'dads and lads' sessions run on a weekend based around practical or sporting activities. Some Sure Start Children's Centres had consulted fathers in the kinds of services that they wanted – either through a formal group such as a 'parents forum' or informally through talking to fathers individually about what they wanted. Outreach work was also an extremely important aspect of engaging with fathers who would not visit the Sure Start Children's Centres. This was particularly the case in rural settings where access to the physical location was difficult. Some Sure Start Children's Centres had dedicated 'fathers workers' working in the centre and helping to support outreach work with fathers. In addition, most interviewees reported that their Sure Start Children's Centre had reviewed how welcoming they were to parents (and especially fathers) and how they communicated with parents in terms of the language used (to ensure that fathers were picked out directly) as well as using positive images of fathers as well as mothers in marketing and in posters in the centre.

### **Wellington Sure Start Children's Centre**

This Sure Start Children's Centre serves an area in Ipswich that suffers from multiple deprivation including low incomes, high rates of unemployment and high levels of health deprivation. The centre provides services to children and their families from the ante-natal period up until the child reaches the age of five including: early learning, day care provision, family support services, child and family health services, and support for children and parents with special needs.

The manager at the centre sees engaging with fathers as a priority and is clear that a very different approach is needed in relation to involving males. One of the steps taken to increase engagement with fathers has been to commission a male family worker to work at the centre specifically to engage with fathers. The family worker has been successful in setting up a fathers' group which has subsequently been taken forward by the fathers themselves. The sessions are popular with the fathers and are perceived to be well attended because they are organised around practical activities and male interests such as tiling, brickwork and carpentry. The sessions have brought these fathers into the centre and they have then gone on to use a number of other services there.

More widely, the family worker has also established a 'consent to contact' scheme in the county, which works with young adolescent fathers who have been discharged from the army and worked with them to gain their consent to put them in touch with their local Sure Start Children's Centre so they could help them overcome the barriers and go back to their families.

The Sure Start Children's Centre monitors the number of fathers and mothers that engage with the service and, while access still remains unequal, fathers account for over a third of parents attending provision.

Sure Start Children's Centres do undertake monitoring of parental engagement as every child's parents are registered on a database when they first visit the centre. Attendance at every event is then recorded so that the Sure Start Children's Centre is aware of exactly what provision each parent has engaged with. This can be interrogated for the difference between mothers and fathers, but this was rarely reviewed systematically by the Sure Start Children's Centres.

From a service delivery perspective, the specific barriers to engaging with fathers in Sure Start Children's Centres were seen as being:

- the workforce being predominantly female, with very few male practitioners, which could give fathers the impression that the services was 'not for them';

- a feminised environment designed around the needs of mothers and their children. In many cases there were many more positive images of mothers rather than fathers with their children and some also displayed potentially negative images of fathers (such as posters asking women if they were suffering from domestic violence);
- a reluctance amongst some practitioners to work with fathers as they felt intimidated by males;
- practitioners requiring additional training and skills to engage effectively with fathers;
- provision that appealed predominantly to mothers and not fathers (such as classes on breast-feeding and having large discussion groups, which were generally seen to be off-putting for fathers);
- despite some activities being run on evenings and weekends, it was seen as being very difficult for fathers that were employed full-time to attend the vast majority of events which were run during normal working hours;
- the absence of other fathers taking part in mainstream sessions meant that it was difficult in some cases to recruit other fathers as groups were generally made up of mothers; and
- difficulties in identifying non-resident and young fathers – which it was felt needed to be done at the earliest possible stage (when these fathers were more likely to be reachable) through health practitioners in ante-natal services. Where fathers were not identified and were absent, Sure Start Children’s Centres were often unwilling (if there was resistance from the mother) or unable to identify them.

More widely, virtually all interviewees felt that fathers were less likely than mothers to take responsibility for caring for young children and, therefore, did not see Sure Start Children’s Centres as being ‘for them’.

Managers and practitioners reported being influenced strongly by the Sure Start Children’s Centre Practice and Management Guidance, both of which pick out fathers specifically as a priority group that should be engaged with. However, some expressed a view that, while this had emphasised the importance of engaging with fathers, it offered little support in how to do this successfully. There is also no requirement to work with fathers and the inspection regime does not inquire specifically about the level or type of engagement with fathers.

Ways in which staff felt that national policy could better support engagement with fathers were:

- several managers called for a general document such as an 'Every Father Matters' to highlight the importance of fathers specifically in achieving positive outcomes for children across a range of family services;
- disseminating best practice based on different approaches that have been tried and found to be successful nationally;
- providing training for practitioners to be able to work with fathers effectively and to be aware of what fathers want from the service;
- some practitioners called for an evidence-based checklist or minimum standards framework to be developed and used by all Sure Start Children's Centres to ensure that they were taking positive action to work with fathers;
- some managers and practitioners called for national policy to support the recruitment of more males into the workforce, through, for example, national advertising aimed predominantly at men; and
- many managers and practitioners indicated that they would welcome a requirement to report on levels of engagement with fathers through the inspection process (though some disagreed and felt that this was unnecessary).

### ***Primary schools***

Primary schools varied in the extent to which interviewees felt they were engaging with fathers, though all reported that engagement was much higher with mothers than with fathers. Head teachers, teachers and other practitioners (such as dedicated parenting liaison staff) at all primary schools visited were highly aware of the benefits of engaging with 'parents' in achieving the positive outcomes in Every Child Matters. However, the extent to which they considered working with fathers specifically to be an important issue varied a great deal.

Many primary schools were seen as being 'gender neutral' in not having attempted to engage fathers specifically. However, some had taken pro-active steps to encourage fathers to engage with the school. Where this had taken place, it was primarily due to head teachers taking an interest in this and spreading this ethos through the school. Some of the actions specifically aimed at fathers included: ensuring that staff are welcoming of all parents when they drop their children off or pick them up from school and encourage them to enter the school; running activities and sessions that would appeal to men (typically described as being more practical or sporting activities) and doing so on evenings and weekends; displaying positive images of fathers in the school;

considering the use of language in communication with parents to ensure that fathers as well as mothers felt included; some outreach work; and encouraging fathers to read to children at the school, participate in children's homework assignments or attend events. Some primary schools also had dedicated parent liaison staff, which was seen as being particularly important to engage with fathers as they had more time than other teachers to make contact directly with fathers that were not engaging with the school.

### **Longshaw Infant School**

The school is located in an area of high deprivation in Blackburn (which is itself a deprived local authority). It has just under 200 pupils, 80% of whom are from families located in the poorest Blackburn income decile. Only around one third of households are in employment. Within the school, 40% of pupils claim free school meals and 33% have Special Educational Needs. The local catchment area is predominately white British and there are very high numbers of lone parents. The school finds that children will often have multiple issues when coming to school and speech and language assessment carried out when pupils enter the school consistently finds children two years behind the national reading average. All of these factors make parental and father engagement challenging. Despite these factors the school's recent Ofsted report was 'good' with pockets of 'outstanding'.

The school has a Parental Involvement Leader (PIL) who is the main contact point regarding parental engagement. The school was asked to participate in a project focused on engaging fathers in their children's learning. This is one of a number of projects supported in Blackburn by 'Parents as Partners in Early Learning' (PPEL) funding (provided by DCSF). Workshops were initiated in the Autumn 2007 term, supported by the fact that the PIL had been on a PPEL training workshop some years before. It operates as a 6 week course under the title of 'Me and my Dad' (including grandfathers and male carers) and occurs on Friday afternoons. The funding covers supply teaching for the PIL time as well as travel, materials and other related expenses. Examples of activities during these sessions include: fathers making puppets and jam tarts with their sons, going on a trip to museum, and fathers and their children going to the local football ground at Ewood Park (as an 'incentive' for attendance at the sessions).

The school started another set of workshops in the Spring 2008 semester and have had a positive response from pupils and families regarding the first tranche of workshops. The PIL observes that the project has worked well with fathers as many only see their children at the weekends – this kind of work is additional to their contact time. For example, one father booked six afternoons off work to attend the sessions with his son. Also the PIL identifies how much pupils look forward to the session - "*the kids talk about it at school – one boy asked on Thursday – 'Is it Dads day yet?' - and he gets all excited*".

Particularly in areas with a high proportion of minority ethnic families, some primary schools had also taken specific actions to engage with fathers from different cultures. For example, a primary school in a deprived urban area with a high proportion of fathers of different minority ethnic groups had attempted to engage with them through both celebrating the different cultures they represented in the school and, where fathers felt it was predominantly the mother's role to engage with the school, communicating directly with fathers by letter and telephone to show that they expected them to play a role in the school.

Primary schools did not generally undertake systematic monitoring of the type or levels of engagement with fathers. Most commonly, primary schools would record which children's parents attended parents' evenings, and even this would not typically be recorded in terms of whether this was the mother, father or both. However, teachers and head teachers did not feel that they required formal monitoring data as they tended to have detailed knowledge of the level of engagement with each child's parents.

The main barriers to engaging with fathers in primary schools were identified as being:

- a predominantly female workforce, particularly among teaching staff in the classroom;
- a sense of 'policy overload', with schools having too many priorities simultaneously, which made it difficult to focus specifically on engaging fathers;
- while formal events (such as parents' evenings) were seen as being equally for fathers and mothers, there was a lack of informal activities being run that were perceived to appeal to male interests;
- fathers were unlikely to feel that communication from the school was 'for them' if it was not specifically addressed to them and did not mention fathers as well as mothers;
- identifying and communicating with non-resident fathers, which applied particularly in urban and deprived areas where there were high instances of parental separation. In addition, one school noted specifically that they were not able to maintain non-resident parents' addresses on their record system (as there was only room for one entry per child) and so were unable to communicate with them even when this was desired by the school and the whole family;
- engaging with fathers who are employed full-time due to a lack of flexibility in the timing of activities;

- engaging with minority ethnic fathers in some communities in which mothers are expected to play the main caring role and / or there are language barriers.

As in Sure Start Children's Centres, there was also a widespread view that the 'traditional' view of fathers as being the main breadwinner and the mother being the main carer for young children was a key factor in why fathers were less likely to engage with primary schools.

Head teachers generally found that communication from DCSF was not sufficient to enable them to keep fully up to date with new policy documentation. They reported the constant need to be pro-active in searching through several media outlets (particularly the BBC) and websites (such as Teachernet) as well as other networks and local authority communications. DCSF and its partners' policies were rarely seen as having had a direct influence on the primary schools recognising the need to work with fathers or raising this as a priority. One of the key issues was a sense of 'policy overload', with the perceived large number of targets, national priorities and policy documents leading to head teachers and other school staff not having the time or resources to be fully aware or respond to the specific details of every new policy announcement – particularly if these did not relate directly to meeting a legal requirement or target.

A small number of head teachers cited *Engaging fathers: involving parents, raising achievement* as an important influence in showing why it was important to work with fathers and developing their understanding of how to do this. However, awareness of this and other policy documents identified in phase one of this research was generally very low. The most important influence was that of Every Child Matters through emphasising the importance of engaging with parents. None reported that any training had been provided on working with fathers. And, whilst Ofsted inspections and self-evaluation forms required schools to report on their level of engagement with parents generally, there was no requirement to ensure that this included fathers.

Interviewees were generally conscious of not wanting to add additional requirements to schools' workload. In particular, this meant staff did not want targets or inspections to require working with fathers. However, it was felt that national policy might better support engagement with fathers through:

- disseminating best practice – though this already exists, interviewees felt it was important to link working with fathers directly to achieving positive outcomes for children in order to make it seem more relevant. Also, the existing DCSF document was produced in 2004 and it was felt that best practice released now would have more impact as the importance of working with fathers has a higher profile now;
- providing additional funding to employ a dedicated staff member to liaise with parents. Whilst some primary schools already employed

staff in this capacity, it was generally done through short-term funding, which created problems of sustainability.

### ***Secondary schools***

With a small number of exceptions, interviewees at secondary schools reported that they struggled to engage with fathers in a systematic or sustained way. There was also generally a lower level of importance attached to working with fathers than in the primary schools visited. In many cases, staff in secondary schools were pleased to be able to engage with even one parent (which was usually the mother) and felt that they were not yet at a stage where they could focus specifically on engagement with fathers. This was seen by many as being, in part, a consequence of the lower level of parental engagement overall as children became older and more independent. It was also seen by interviewees to be exacerbated in deprived areas with a high incidence of non-resident fathers and parents with lower aspirations for their children.

Very few of the secondary schools had taken specific steps to engage with fathers. Apart from one exception (described in more detail below), the only actions that had been taken were: to offer specific appointments at times that parents could attend instead of running a parents evening at a fixed time for all parents; and to develop activities that were thought to be more likely to appeal to fathers (being based around practical, IT-based or sporting interests) and were run outside of normal school hours.

Engagement with fathers had, generally, otherwise been the result of general policies to engage with parents. For example, one urban school that was recently in special measures had developed a parent council to give parents a role in decision-making in the school and, while numbers were relatively low, approximately one third was made up of fathers and two of these had gone on to become parent governors at the school. In other cases, interviewees highlighted the importance of being welcoming towards all parents and the role of staff members such as dedicated family support workers, but this was not specific to fathers.

As with primary schools, secondary schools did not maintain any kind of formal monitoring of engagement with parents that recorded the level or type of engagement with fathers. Again, any monitoring tended to be based on formal activities such as attendance at parents' evenings and did not differentiate between mothers and fathers. However, informal awareness of engagement by each pupil's parents was not as high in primary schools, probably due to the greater independence of the children as they got older and the greater number of students and parents in secondary schools.

### **Haringey secondary school**

The school is situated in an extremely deprived urban area, with two thirds of pupils registered for free school meals. A very high proportion of families are from minority ethnic groups and come from a wide range of different cultural backgrounds. And, as the head teacher noted, "*there are very few children living with both parents at home and with their fathers around, so there is a large group of hard to reach fathers.*"

The head teacher has placed a strong emphasis on parental engagement but it was clear that very few fathers attended formal events such as parents' evenings. In response, the school has developed a number of approaches to getting fathers more involved in the life of the school.

Staff at the school place an explicit expectation on fathers to attend events at the school. This includes both formal events and targeted events for certain groups of parents who are seen to be harder to reach (including fathers specifically). Non-resident parents (mainly fathers) are expected to engage with the school too, with the only exception to this being where this may cause instability to the existing family unit.

The school has received a small amount of funding from the local authority for the past few years which has been used to pay for staff to contact parents that have not been engaging at the school, ask them why not and challenge them on how they are meeting their responsibility as a father to their children. The weight of expectation is added to through the children, who take the message home that their parents should be attending.

The school has also recruited a core group of between 15 and 20 fathers who spend time mentoring children in the school. These fathers spend anything between two hours and a full day in the school talking to pupils (most of which are boys but also girls) about any general issues they have. The impact on the pupils is monitored by the school and teachers have found very positive effects on motivation and behaviour, particularly with boys.

The key barriers to fathers engaging with secondary schools were similar to those in primary schools, including:

- a predominantly female workforce (though less so than in primary schools);
- lack of parental engagement in general with secondary schools as young people become more independent;
- a sense of 'policy overload', with secondary schools having too many priorities simultaneously, making it difficult to focus on engaging fathers;

- lack of training and skills to be able to engage with fathers effectively;
- fathers were unlikely to feel that communication from the school was 'for them' if it was not specifically addressed to them and did not mention fathers as well as mothers;
- fathers' own negative experiences of school;
- identifying and communicating with non-resident fathers; and
- engaging with fathers who are employed full-time due to time constraints.

Head teachers in secondary schools identified similar issues as those in primary schools in how national policy was communicated to them. DCSF communication was generally not seen as being comprehensive or up to date, and head teachers spent time searching out policy developments from several other sources as well. Again, there was a sense of 'policy overload', which meant that it could be difficult to be aware of and respond to all of the detailed aspects of new policy announcements.

A number of head teachers noted that national policies tended to have an indirect influence on their behaviour, which was shaped predominantly in trying to respond to their local circumstances. No national policy documents were identified as having had a clear impact on raising the importance of engaging with fathers or how to do this effectively. In the few cases in which secondary schools had tried pro-actively to engage with fathers, the head teachers saw this as being ahead of national policy and felt they were waiting for policy to 'catch up'. Similarly, very few interviewees were aware of any direct support from their local authorities. Again, as with primary schools, Ofsted inspections and self-evaluation forms required schools to report on their level of engagement with parents generally, but did not inquire if this included fathers.

Interviewees were not keen to add new policies, targets or requirements to those that already exist for secondary schools. However, suggestions for how national policy might better support working with fathers included:

- a small but consistent amount of funding for schools to employ staff to contact parents (and particularly fathers) directly;
- training for staff in secondary schools to be able to work with fathers and to be more aware of what they want from the school;
- best practice to be disseminated based on national evidence about what works in engaging with fathers to achieve positive outcomes for their children; and

- DCSF to lead a national campaign to make fathers aware of the impact they have on their children and how they can make a positive difference by engaging with schools.

### ***Families Information Services***<sup>30</sup>

Interviewees in Families Information Services all felt that engagement with mothers was substantially higher than with fathers, irrespective of the context of the local authority.

Interviewees generally reported that the services were provided in a gender neutral manner, though there was recognition amongst most that pro-active measures have to be taken in order to engage with fathers more effectively. Among the few services that had attempted to engage fathers, this included: marketing the service and undertaking outreach in places where fathers were more likely to take notice (for example with some employers and in leisure centres); ensuring that marketing materials and family information websites identified fathers specifically and made prominent use of positive images of fathers with their children; a few Families Information Services had consulted with fathers groups about what they would like from the service and how it could meet their needs; a few had also employed male staff to answer the phones and to conduct outreach work in the hope that this would make the service more father friendly. In addition, several services noted that they were available from early in the morning until late in the evening during the week which should make it easier for working parents to access the service, which would predominantly help fathers.

Services recorded the gender of all callers along with their ethnicity, the age of their children and what support was required. This was also analysed on a regular basis to review the number and type of service users. However, this was not generally seen to have influenced services to become more inclusive of fathers. No data was collected in relation to who accessed the information provided online, which was also felt to be important as, anecdotally, staff felt that fathers were more likely to access the service online than by telephone.

The main barriers to fathers accessing Families Information Services were seen as being:

- a lack of resources to focus specifically on working with fathers, due to low numbers of staff delivering the service and pressure on the service to meet other targets and priorities;
- related to this, there was limited resource to conduct outreach – which was felt to be important in engaging a higher proportion of fathers. This was particularly the case in large rural areas, with the Families

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<sup>30</sup> Families Information Services were previously known as Children's Information Services. They officially changed their title in April 2008 along with taking on additional responsibilities

Information Service often having just one dedicated staff member providing outreach;

- a predominantly female workforce, which was seen as being potentially less inclusive of fathers where it was predominantly female voices answering the phone and being potentially less aware of fathers' needs or approaches to accessing information;
- lack of training and skills among practitioners to better understand how to engage fathers and support their needs for information;
- the service is delivered primarily through telephone contact, though fathers may be more likely to use alternative methods of access such as web-based services or text messaging; and
- fathers were perceived to be less likely to be the primary carer and to take an interest in finding childcare – as one manager said, “*men don't like the touchy feely aspects of childcare.*”

Despite the high levels of awareness and influence attributed to DCSF (2007) *Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006* in the survey of local authorities, none of the interviewees identified this as having been influential in relation to engaging with fathers. There was also no ongoing inspection of Families Information Services.

Managers and practitioners identified the following as ways that national policy might better support fathers:

- extra funding to undertake more extensive outreach – again, this was particularly in large rural areas where it is more difficult to support a widely dispersed population;
- training for practitioners to be more aware of fathers' needs and preferred means of accessing information; and
- a few interviewees felt it would be helpful to have regular monitoring of engagement with fathers to ensure this was being addressed.

### ***Special schools***

Staff in special schools reported that engagement with parents across the board was much higher and more intensive than in mainstream primary and secondary schools because of children's additional needs and the requirements on special schools to communicate regularly with parents about caring for them. Engagement with fathers was generally lower than with mothers, though in some cases fathers were extremely involved with their child and the school. This was seen to vary considerably in relation to the particular context of different families and their response to their child's disability.

Special schools placed an extremely strong emphasis on engaging with parents and ensuring that the school was welcoming and inclusive. However, special schools had not generally taken many steps specifically in relation to engaging with fathers. Where this had occurred, schools had tried to: host parents' evenings and other sessions on evenings when fathers in full time employment would be more likely to be able to attend; running events and activities that would appeal to fathers; ensuring that the school's communications with parents address fathers as well as mothers so they know that it is intended for them; and, in one case, inviting non-resident fathers to the school separately from mothers. In addition, home visits can be particularly important in engaging with fathers as they are more likely to feel comfortable in their home environment.

The main barriers to engaging with fathers included:

- a higher level of non-resident fathers in families where the additional needs of the child had created extra strain on family relationships;
- fathers were less likely to feel that communication from the school was 'for them' if it was not specifically addressed to them and did not mention fathers as well as mothers;
- the attitude of some fathers in being less accepting than mothers of their child's disability (attitudes to disability were also seen by interviewees to vary strongly across both minority ethnic groups and different income levels as those with more resources were better able to cope); and
- additional issues of access in rural areas where the school might be far from the father's home and / or workplace and difficult to reach.

Special schools recorded attendance by parents at school events but this was not typically differentiated for mothers and fathers so it is not possible to monitor this formally. However, teachers and head teachers tend to have very close relationships with each child and their parents and felt that they were very aware of which parents were engaging with the school.

Policy was communicated directly through DCSF to head teachers and through the local authority. However, as in primary and secondary schools, head teachers felt the need to use a number of different sources to be fully aware of new policies affecting them and tended to rely on websites and national media. The only document that was identified as having influenced engagement with fathers was Every Child Matters, which had had an indirect effect through emphasising the importance of working with parents to achieve positive outcomes. Generally, staff in special schools felt that they were already highly aware of the importance of working with parents (including fathers) and that national policy merely supported this indirectly. No interviewees described

Ofsted inspections as requiring them to report on engagement with fathers specifically.

Views on how national policy might better support engagement with fathers included:

- additional resources for home visits – particularly in rural areas where fathers may find it more difficult to access the school;
- national guidance which highlights the importance of working with fathers specifically and provides evidence of how this can be done effectively for fathers with children with special needs.

### ***Behaviour and attendance services***

Behaviour and attendance services all reported that engagement with parents was substantially higher with mothers than with fathers. However, this varied in relation to the context within each local authority due to issues such as access in rural areas, perceived higher proportions of non-resident fathers in more deprived urban areas, and higher proportions of some minority ethnic groups.

Generally, service managers did not attach a high level of importance to working with fathers and found it challenging to engage with even one parent (usually the mother) or carer in many cases. Very few services had taken any steps to make the service inclusive of fathers. Where this had occurred, it was generally through working with schools in the local authority to identify fathers and develop relationships with them. One behaviour and attendance service in a deprived urban area had worked closely with a large secondary school to develop a fathers and sons group for children with disengaged non-resident fathers in which the father was invited into the school to talk to his son. This was thought to have had a big impact on the young people involved, though it was only operating on a small scale.

The main barriers to engaging with fathers were seen as being:

- families with non-resident fathers, particularly where schools had not identified or communicated with these fathers as it was then felt to be extremely difficult for behaviour and attendance services to make contact or build a relationship with the father from scratch (though there was little evidence that services had attempted to do so);
- some fathers among particular minority ethnic groups were seen as being more difficult to engage with – usually in deprived urban areas, managers and practitioners identified particular difficulties in working with fathers of Afro-Caribbean origin both through a high proportion being non-resident and not involved in their children's upbringing and due to the stigma attached to the over-representation of boys from this background in behaviour and attendance services. In addition, some rural authorities had found difficulty in engaging with some fathers who

were recent immigrants from central and eastern Europe who might face language barriers and were thought to place a high importance on working but not necessarily on their child's behaviour or attendance at school;

- where parenting contracts and parenting orders had been issued, these have tended to apply only to the most visible parent or carer (which is usually the mother);
- the timing of sessions (often during school hours) could make it difficult for fathers to attend – particularly in rural settings where the increased distance and poor transport links might make it more difficult for fathers in full-time employment to take time out from work;
- the perceived difficulty in engaging any parents in the behaviour and attendance service meant that staff were often pleased to have the involvement of even one parent (usually the mother) and often did not think it was necessary to try to involve another parent or carer; and
- a lack of training and skills to understand the particular needs of fathers and how they can be engaged in the process.

There was no systematic recording of the level or type of engagement with fathers reported by interviewees.

Behaviour and attendance services typically relied very heavily on their local authority to communicate relevant national policies and to set the agenda for working with parents – though none reported that their local authority had raised support for fathers as being a priority.

No national policies were identified as directly influencing behaviour on engaging with fathers, though Every Child Matters was seen as being an important document which emphasised working with parents (though it did not pick out fathers specifically). Inspection was undertaken through the JAR, APA and Ofsted – none of which asked for any information on engagement with fathers specifically.

Interviewees thought that national policy might better support fathers through:

- encouraging (some interviewees suggested requiring) schools to identify and work with fathers of children that display poor behaviour or attendance as part of school action and passing this information on to behaviour and attendance services when making a referral;
- producing a guidance and best practice document setting out explicitly the important role that fathers (both in themselves and alongside mothers) can play in addressing poor behaviour and attendance in their children and how to work effectively with them; and

- ensuring that, where possible and appropriate, parenting contracts and parenting orders include fathers as well as mothers (whether or not the father is resident).<sup>31</sup>

### ***Integrated youth support***

Working with young parents is a key strand of work for integrated youth support services through providing positive activities, personal and social development and signposting to other services. However, the vast majority of this work was reported as being with young mothers rather than young fathers. Engagement with the parents of young people was seen as being very limited and typically involved minimal contact, such as asking for parents' consent for their child to attend certain activities.

Integrated youth support services tended to work closely with other services such as teenage pregnancy and Connexions<sup>32</sup> to provide positive activities and support for young parents. In general, the focus was reported as being heavily on working with young mothers to meet the national targets to support young mothers to participate in employment, education or training. Very few interviewees noted that any specific actions had been taken to increase engagement and support for young fathers. In the very small number of cases where this had happened, this related to particular practitioners that had taken a particular interest and tried to provide some more intensive support for young men they knew to be fathers.

The most commonly reported barriers to young fathers engaging with integrated youth support were:

- identifying young fathers – asking if a young man was a father was not a required or standard part of engagement and young fathers were thought to be unwilling to identify themselves or ask for support from public services;
- national targets for working with young mothers ensured there was provision available to them through other services (principally the teenage pregnancy service, Connexions and Sure Start Children's Centres), however, this was not the case for young fathers;
- some practitioners were seen by managers as having a negative attitude towards young fathers;
- in rural areas it could be more difficult to provide positive activities and support to groups of young fathers due to the dispersed population and,

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<sup>31</sup> The guidance states that both parents should be included, however the legislation only *requires* one parent to be included.

<sup>32</sup> Interviewees in some areas noted that Connexions and integrated youth support services would be brought together in April 2008 under local authority control

often, a lack of transport links. This meant that any support had to be provided on a more intensive basis, working with smaller numbers of young fathers; and

- young fathers in rural areas were also seen to be less willing to engage with services because of a lack of anonymity where there was no choice of different provision available.

Services reported recording if young people were known to be parents. However, no interviewees reported that this was monitored regularly for the level or type of engagement with fathers.

Communications from DCSF around policy were reported as being sent to senior local authority staff and not directly to service managers, which could lead to problems with cascading of information. Managers relied on a plethora of sources (such as websites and connections with other services such as the teenage pregnancy service) to ensure that they were aware of new policies. This was not felt to be an effective means of communication. None of the interviewees identified any national policies that had directly influenced their behaviour in working with fathers. A few managers reported that Every Child Matters had indirectly affected how services were delivered in taking a more holistic approach to the needs of young people (including young fathers). Services were inspected for their work with young parents through the JAR, however, no specific details were required for work with young fathers.

Interviewees raised the following as ways in which national policy might better support engagement with young fathers:

- ensuring that youth services try to identify young fathers by: asking young males if they are a parent and offering support on a confidential and non-judgemental basis, and by asking young mothers about the father;
- reviewing the national targets for working with young mothers to include working with young fathers too (see teenage pregnancy services below for more detail); and
- additional resources to employ specialist workers, particularly in rural areas where more intensive outreach support is often required.

However, it was also noted that one key part of the relationship between young people and youth support services is that contact is on a voluntary basis and that this should not be jeopardised through having rigid requirements to work with young fathers.

## **Connexions**

Connexions attempts to work with all young people aged 13-19 and was seen as being 'gender neutral'. However, interviewees reported that it was much less often the case that the service would be aware that a young man was a parent compared with a young woman. As a result, engagement with young fathers was thought to be much lower than for young mothers (who are almost all known to the service). Connexions also works with the parents of young people but, as with integrated youth support services, this tends to be very limited.

It was generally reported that Connexions services had not taken any specific steps to work with fathers. Where actions had been taken, this tended to include working with the teenage pregnancy service, integrated youth support and any third sector provision to ensure support was available for young fathers and that they were aware of the services available to them.

The main barrier to engaging with young fathers was identifying them. There was no requirement or expectation that personal advisers should ask young men if they were fathers and young fathers were extremely unlikely to proactively identify themselves. One manager noted that in several years of service neither she nor any adviser she knew of had ever had a young man identify himself as a father. Additional perceived barriers included:

- national targets for Connexions in relation to young parents focus exclusively on young mothers (in terms of the proportion of young mothers that are known to Connexions and that are in education, employment or training) with no recognition for young fathers;
- young fathers were thought to be reluctant to engage with public services if they held negative attitudes towards them;
- some young fathers were seen not to know that they were a parent or to take responsibility for their child(ren).

Connexions maintain extremely detailed information on all young people that it engages with using its Insight database. This records key information such as the young person's gender, age, ethnicity, key relationships and school-related information (such as qualifications, any behavioural or SEN issues). Eighteen key risk factors are also recorded through the 'Richter scale', to assess the level of support required for that young person. Where they have been identified, this system of data collection records a great deal of information on young fathers and the support provided for them.

National policy affecting Connexions directly is emailed as 'action notes' to managers and then cascaded to other staff as appropriate. This was seen as being effective, though keeping up to date with other relevant policies that were not aimed directly at Connexions meant relying on other channels such as the

local authority and other services (such as teenage pregnancy and integrated youth support) in communicating these. No interviewees were aware of any national policies that applied directly to Connexions that had raised the issue of working with fathers or suggested how this could be done effectively. Similarly, interviewees were clear that no inspection criteria for Connexions exist in relation to working with fathers (either young fathers or the fathers of young fathers).

Interviewees identified the following ways in which national policy might better support engagement with young fathers:

- highlighting the importance of identifying young fathers, through, for example, requiring personal advisers to ask young men if they are a father and through greater data sharing with other services that might have identified a young father (including health services, schools and Sure Start Children's Centres);
- reviewing national targets which focus exclusively on young mothers to also include identifying and working with young fathers. However, there was also recognition that this would require very intensive work and that, without additional support, this could draw resources away from other priorities; and
- training and best practice guidance for personal advisers to understand how to work with young fathers effectively and what support they require.

### ***Teenage pregnancy***

Teenage pregnancy services varied greatly in the extent to which they had engaged with fathers who were the partners of young mothers (these may be young fathers but in many cases were also older men). In the majority of cases, engagement with these fathers was reported as being extremely low. In a small number, engagement with fathers was reported as being significant, if still far below that with young mothers.

Most teenage pregnancy services had not taken any pro-active steps to engage with young fathers. However, by contrast, a few of the services had undertaken a great deal of work with fathers. This included, for example, individual support for any father that attended groups or meetings; working with Sure Start Children's Centres and ante-natal services to engage young fathers; and, targeted support groups for young fathers. A small number of services had also worked closely with parenting support services and Sure Start Children's Centres to ensure that there was specific provision for young parents (including young fathers) as young parents are likely to have different needs to other parents and may feel that they are being judged by others.

There were two key barriers to engaging with fathers, which were both identified by virtually all interviewees in teenage pregnancy services:

- identification of fathers connected with young mothers was seen as being extremely challenging. Interviewees had encountered problems in identifying and contacting fathers where they did not know that they were fathers; where they refused to take responsibility for their child(ren); or the relationship between the father and mother had broken down or the father was 'pushed out' by the mother or her family and denied a role in raising their child(ren). By the time the teenage pregnancy services got involved with pregnant mothers, it was frequently too late to engage with the father as well; and
- all interviewees in the teenage pregnancy services visited also mentioned that the national targets were a key barrier to working with fathers. The two national targets (to decrease the conception rate among females aged under 18 by 50% 2010, and to increase the proportion of mothers aged under 18 in employment, education or training to 60% by 2010) are focused exclusively on young mothers. As a result, interviewees in several teenage pregnancy services argued that working with fathers would mean taking resources away from meeting these targets. One teenage pregnancy service had wanted to undertake work with young fathers but decided that it could not justify using its resources in this way as it did not directly help to meet the national targets.

In addition:

- engagement with young fathers in ante-natal classes was seen to be low –particularly where there was no specific provision for young parents;
- the workforce was predominantly female, which could be off-putting for young fathers;
- services in rural areas identified that providing support for young fathers in large areas with dispersed populations and potentially poor transport links, was an added challenge which could leave some young fathers isolated; and
- in one urban local authority there were also problems with gangs among young people which could mean that young men faced additional pressures not to take responsibility for their child.

Teenage pregnancy services did not generally record any data on the level or type of engagement with fathers.

National policy was widely seen as being communicated effectively. Emails directly from the Teenage Pregnancy Unit in DCSF to the service co-ordinators were seen as being informative and up to date, while the cadre of regional co-ordinators were also helpful in clarifying any questions in relation to policy. It was clear from all service co-ordinators that national policy had a very direct impact on how the services were run. In relation to engaging with fathers, national policy had predominantly had a negative effect – as discussed above. However, some interviewees recognised that national policy guidance did draw out fathers specifically and encouraged services to work with them. Inspection of teenage pregnancy services was described as being focused exclusively on the work to meet the two national targets, with no interrogation of work being undertaken with fathers.

Interviewees identified the following as ways in which national policy might better support engagement with young fathers:

- identification of fathers at the earliest possible stage through other services. Most importantly, health practitioners offering ante-natal support (as this is the stage at which fathers are most likely to still be present and contactable) should be encouraged to identify young fathers and share this data with teenage pregnancy services. One teenage pregnancy manager noted that *“health is very focused on the needs of the mother and child and not on fathers”* and also that *“there is a lack of communication between health and other services”*. Similarly, youth offending services are likely to come into contact with a proportion of young fathers and should attempt to identify where this is the case;
- reviewing national targets which focus exclusively on young mothers in order to ensure that policy does not act as a barrier to working with young fathers and, instead, actively emphasises the importance of doing so; and
- disseminating best practice which describes in detail some of the examples of services nationally that have effectively engaged with young fathers.

### ***Parenting support***

Engagement with parenting support services was generally seen to be lower for fathers than for mothers, though the difference was not thought to be very large and a minority of interviewees reported that there was a roughly equal level of engagement.

Managers and practitioners generally attached a high degree of importance to working with fathers as well as mothers and had taken steps to do so. This included running courses at times when fathers were more likely to be available (mainly evenings and weekends); running sessions specifically for

fathers and for young parents and different minority ethnic groups to ensure that fathers from these groups felt comfortable attending; reviewing the language used to market the services and communicate with parents; and consulting fathers (as well as mothers) in making decisions about the services and activities on offer. Managers had also worked closely with a range of family services (including Sure Start Children's Centres and schools).

### **Swindon parenting support services**

The family centre is situated in a low income area and is run by a national charity for the local authority. The manager recognised that they were failing to draw in fathers voluntarily or to enable some fathers (particularly absent fathers) to take an active role in parenting their children, which made it more difficult to meet their aims of achieving positive outcomes for children.

Project funding enabled work to engage more fathers to get off the ground several years ago. Further funding has since enabled one of the staff who worked on the project to provide advice and guidance about what works to engage fathers more in other service settings in the area (including Sure Start Children's Centres).

At the family centre their work has included: creating and facilitating a group of fathers with young children aged under 5 to increase their involvement in bringing up their children; approaching fathers on a one-to-one basis to engage them in parenting classes and providing individual support if parenting classes are not appropriate; and overcoming some staff's fears that some fathers are a threat and 'difficult' to handle by demonstrating how to manage situations where fathers can appear to be aggressive initially. Through this they have been able to demonstrate the benefits for the children concerned of having active fathers as parents.

The team have also adapted the way they approach fathers and maintain contact with them during the course. For example, they use word of mouth, telephone and text to keep in touch; made changes to the play, reading and learning materials available with more emphasis on practical tasks and computers; and avoided a didactic approach to any session.

The member of staff who has led this work has also worked with other services to make their provision more father friendly; supported other services to start activities for fathers and their children and has undertaken outreach work with their staff one day a week to develop and promote their activities for fathers; and given training and guidance to student practitioners.

The data recorded varied across different local authorities and the different programmes running within each local authority. Some programmes did not record the gender of parents attending the services. However, the majority of programmes collected detailed data on the parents attending and the level of impact the provision had had for each (through recording needs and

confidence levels before beginning a course and afterwards). Data monitoring was reported to be focused on the general impact on parents' confidence but had not focused on fathers specifically.

Typically, barriers to engaging effectively with fathers were seen as being:

- a predominantly female workforce which meant some fathers were put off or felt the service was not 'for them';
- in some cases other partner services (either involved in recruiting parents or being the location for provision) such as Sure Start Children's Centres were not sufficiently father friendly;
- where parents were directed towards parenting support services through a parenting order or contract, this generally applied more often to mothers than fathers;
- fathers having a negative image of parenting support services as being a critical judgement of their ability as a parent;
- fathers thinking that the service was 'not for them' unless they were addressed directly in communication by parenting support services; and
- fathers either not perceiving themselves as having an important role in parenting or not being aware of the impact that they have on their children.

DCSF communicates policy directly to local authorities through the single parenting commissioner and service managers. However, this was often seen as being ineffective in ensuring that managers and practitioners were aware of new policies. A number of national policies were described by several interviewees as having directly influenced how the service was provided, including: the National Service Framework (particularly for managers and practitioners funded by the Primary Care Trust rather than the local authority) and Every Child Matters – both of which had been influential in emphasising the role of parents and family in achieving positive outcomes for children; and the national guidance on parenting support (which specifically highlighted the importance of working with fathers but not in detail or with any particular requirements). There were no inspection arrangements for parenting support services.

Perceptions of how national policy might better support engagement with fathers included:

- national research and best practice to add to the 'evidence base' of effective practice in appealing to fathers and supporting them effectively through parenting programmes;

- encouraging courts to ensure that parenting orders and contracts apply to fathers as well as mothers wherever possible;
- an 'Every Father Matters' document which sets out the importance of engaging with fathers across a range of family services and how to do so effectively; and
- DCSF leading a national awareness strategy to raise awareness about the important role that fathers play in their children's lives.

### ***Youth offending services***

The main point of engagement with parents in youth offending services was through one to one and group parenting support (which in the majority of cases is voluntary but may be required through a parenting order or contract). It was generally agreed that most engagement with parents was with mothers rather than fathers.

It was generally services in rural areas which had taken action to work with fathers. Also, in some of the youth offending services that were visited, there was a divide between the service managers and the practitioners working directly with parents. The latter generally attached a high importance to increasing engagement with fathers, while managers did not usually see this as being a key issue to be addressed. Several managers mentioned that engaging with any parents was a challenge and that working with fathers specifically was too far beyond their current practice. In general, very few steps had been taken by managers in youth offending services to engage fathers. Some parenting practitioners reported that they had made attempts to recruit and work with fathers through, for example, running parenting courses specifically for fathers and during evenings and weekends to enable working fathers to attend. A few youth offending services noted that supervised dialogue through 'family group conferencing'<sup>33</sup> had been a positive method for engaging fathers (and especially non-resident fathers) in addressing their children's behaviour.

Commonly reported barriers to engagement with fathers were:

- a reluctance among some youth offending team staff to work with fathers who may also be offending (and therefore seen as being 'part of the problem') or display aggressive behaviour;
- a sense of 'policy overload' combined with a lack of resources for parenting support work, which meant that provision was often very limited;

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<sup>33</sup> Family group conferences are opportunities for families (including parents and the child or young person) to come together to make plans for their children to address their behaviour. Professionals such as social

- the justice system and courts not generally requiring the attendance of both parents, which often meant it was only the mother who then became the sole subject of a parenting order or contract while the father was not part of the process; and
- a high level of non-resident fathers among families with young people offending, which could be difficult to identify and communicate with alongside the rest of the family.

In addition, youth offending services were aware that a certain proportion of young male offenders were likely to be young fathers but that they did not attempt to identify them.

There was some recording of data on the attendance of parents with one to one and group support. However, this was rarely disaggregated between mothers and fathers and was not monitored regularly for levels of engagement with fathers.

National policy is communicated through monthly bulletins to service managers. There was some concern expressed among service managers that there was a 'policy overload' and, as a result, there was a danger that anything that was not a target or a requirement (such as working with fathers) did not receive sufficient attention. There was no inspection of youth offending services that took account of engagement with fathers.

Perceptions of how national policy might improve engagement with fathers included:

- increased and stable funding for parenting interventions (including family conferencing) and outreach that have a specific focus on working with fathers;
- training for parenting practitioners to better support working with fathers that may display challenging behaviour and be alienated from the rest of the family;
- co-ordinating policy with the courts and local authorities so that (where possible) both parents are required to attend and are subject to any resulting parenting orders or contracts,<sup>34</sup> and
- some managers and practitioners supported having a national target, followed up through the inspection framework, that focused on working with fathers – as youth offending services are seen by staff as being

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workers, teachers and health workers may also be present to feed into discussions but the focus is on families making their own decisions

<sup>34</sup> DCSF guidance does state that all parents should attend court, however it is up to the local authority when applying for an order to state the names of parents

driven by a 'target culture', this was thought to be the only way to make this a priority.

### ***Safeguarding and looked after children***

Interviewees involved in safeguarding reported that engagement was relatively high with biological fathers whose children might be taken into care.

Engagement was also seen as being high with men once they had become approved foster carers. However, initial identification and recruitment of male foster carers was seen as being low compared with prospective female foster carers (especially for lone male carers).

#### **Lincolnshire children and families social work team and looked after children**

Lincolnshire is a large rural county, with a population of over 670,000 – of which almost a quarter are under the age of eighteen. Roughly one in seven of the wards across the county are also amongst the 20% most deprived in England.

Over the last decade there has been a change in practice which has seen social workers move away from working mainly with mothers to being more inclusive of fathers as well as other family members. The practice guidelines explicitly recognise the importance of engaging with a child's absent family members, who are usually fathers. Where previously social workers generally accepted the mother's word if she felt it was not appropriate to contact the child's father, this is not now accepted and social workers make every effort to locate fathers, step-fathers, grandfathers and other male carers and include them in all assessments, which has resulted in increased engagement with fathers. In addition, engagement with fathers and mothers is recorded so that engagement can be monitored.

In large part, this is seen as being a response to the changes in statutory requirements to engage with fathers. Social workers are held responsible if they have not engaged with fathers and there are large cost implications for the service should a case reach court without this having been done.

The Family Placement Service has also taken steps to ensure males are engaged in the fostering process. Previously, females were taken to be the main foster carer and the male partner was seen as having more of a support role. However, the service now requires both partners to register as foster carers and to take part in training and assessments to be approved. The service has also become more flexible around the timing of training and assessments to ensure male carers are able to fully participate in the process.

There was strong support from managers in safeguarding services for engaging with fathers as the service is required by the relevant boards, case

conferences<sup>35</sup> and courts to demonstrate that it has identified fathers (or other male carers such as step-fathers or grandfathers) of children at risk and assessed them as potential carers for their children. If this is not carried out satisfactorily, safeguarding services may be held accountable and it may also be costly (in terms of time and money and also the potential negative effects on the child) where cases that have reached court have been rejected and the process has to be conducted again.

In relation to looked after children, most interviewees identified specific actions that had been taken to recruit and support male carers. These included: advertising specifically aimed at men using positive images of males as carers; support groups for male carers; and individual and general training programmes with specific elements for male carers. In addition, recent policy changes were reported as having required important changes such as couples both having to register and take part in the assessment and training to become registered carers (where previously fathers were usually seen as having only a supporting role to the mother as the main carer).

Commonly reported barriers to engaging with fathers in safeguarding included:

- lack of time and resources to identify and contacting non-resident fathers that have little or no involvement with the child or mother – in some cases this was seen as being made more challenging in cases where the mother resists or obstructs making contact with the father;
- a lack of male social workers (which was seen to be important in engaging with some fathers); and
- a lack of training among some social workers in how to deal with fathers – particularly where fathers behave aggressively.

Barriers to recruiting male carers included:

- negative attitudes among some practitioners in relation to fathers as carers;
- a 'traditional' view of mothers as carers and fathers as being the main breadwinner and potential source of discipline, coupled with a general lack of positive images of males as carers; and
- fears among fathers of potentially being seen as paedophiles for wanting to be a carer.

While social workers recorded information on every contact they had with parents, it did not appear that this could be interrogated systematically to

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<sup>35</sup> Case conferences are an opportunity to bring together different agencies to analyse risks to a child's wellbeing and to decide what future action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child

analyse engagement with fathers. Records were kept of all male and female carers, but again this was not generally monitored on an ongoing basis.

Local safeguarding children's boards are multi-agency partnerships, so relevant policy was communicated to the boards by designated support staff, generally within the local authority. Communication from DCSF was also sent to directors of children's services and cascaded to the boards. Legislation and court proceedings were seen as being the crucial source of policy, setting the framework for engagement with fathers in safeguarding. Policy for fostering and looked after children's teams was disseminated through DCSF bulletins to managers, though relevant sector associations (such as the British Association for Adoption and Fostering) were also important sources of information. Again, legislation was generally the important source of policy for engaging with males as carers and directly influenced the looked after children teams. However, inspections of the local authority services (through the JAR and APA) did not require any reporting of data on engagement with fathers.

Interviewees felt that national policy might better support fathers through:

- additional training for the workforce and evidence-based best practice in order to be able to engage effectively with fathers (or other male carers) of children at risk;
- reviewing possible ways to address the gender imbalance among social workers and recruit more males; and
- additional resources specifically to advertise for male carers but also more widely to promote positive images of fathers as carers, challenging the 'traditional' view of gendered parenting roles and fears of men being potential paedophiles.

#### **5.4 Common barriers and enablers to engaging with fathers in family services**

There was a substantial degree of commonality in the barriers and enablers to engaging with fathers across different types of family services. These are set out in more detail below.

##### ***Commonly reported barriers included:***

**A predominantly female workforce** – interviewees in virtually all family services reported that the workforce (particularly practitioners) was predominantly female. This was seen as being a particularly important issue in early years services (such as Sure Start Children's Centres, Families Information Services and primary schools) and targeted and specialist services (such as safeguarding and looked after children, parenting support services and parenting practitioners in youth offending services). This was thought by some to be off-putting to fathers, who might be more willing to engage with male staff or think that a service is 'not for them').

**Views of the workforce** – this was a key issue across the board and was manifest in several ways. In a number of cases managers and practitioners were clear that they did not see engagement with fathers as a priority issue and that, in practice, ‘engaging with parents’ meant working with the most accessible parents (which usually meant mothers). In other cases, managers and practitioners felt that they managed the service in a fair, gender neutral manner and that the barriers to engagement lay with fathers and not how the service was delivered. There was also some evidence from interviewees that ‘traditional’ views of fathers remained prevalent among the workforce. This was seen to have led some staff to hold negative attitudes towards males as less able or willing carers of young children (particularly in Sure Start Children’s Centres and safeguarding and looked after children).

**Lack of training and skills** – there was seen to be a lack of training and skills among managers and practitioners in several family services. In some cases this simply reflected a lack of understanding about how to engage with fathers and what they wanted from the service. In other instances, practitioners did not feel they had the skills to engage with fathers that were seen as being intimidating or potentially aggressive (particularly in Sure Start Children’s Centres and youth offending services).

**Policy barriers** – the national teenage pregnancy targets were seen by many interviewees in teenage pregnancy services, Connexions and integrated youth support as having a direct impact on working with young fathers. Separately, ‘policy overload’ was identified by several family services (particularly schools and youth offending services) as a barrier to engaging with fathers. These services were seen by interviewees as having numerous priorities determined by national policy, which made it difficult to focus on other issues such as engaging with fathers.

**Identifying young fathers** – staff in teenage pregnancy services, Connexions and integrated youth support services reported that the single biggest challenge in engaging with young fathers was identifying them. There were several reasons for this, including the perceived high level of breakdown of relationships between young parents and young fathers not taking (or in some cases being allowed to take) responsibility for their child. However, there were also missed opportunities to identify and engage young fathers through health services (see below).

**Identifying and communicating with non-resident fathers** - many interviewees reported that services did make an effort to find out about non-resident fathers and would ask mothers about the father if he was not present. However, in most cases, where the mother did not want the father to be involved or refused to give his details then services would not typically attempt to take this any further (unless expected as part of the legal process – in the case of safeguarding and looked after children, for example). Some services also reported that they only recorded the home address for the child and did

not record any additional addresses for non-resident parents in order to communicate with them (even where this was desired by all members of the family).

**Health services and the courts** – certain family services work closely with health services and / or the courts and felt that barriers existed to effective engagement of fathers. In health services, whilst virtually all mothers are identified and registered by health services, this was not thought to be the case for fathers. This was seen to create difficulties for family services where fathers were no longer involved with the mother or the child and could not be identified – this was particularly important for young fathers. In addition, health services were perceived to focus predominantly on the mother and child, often to the exclusion of the father. In relation to youth offending, the courts were seen not to require the attendance of both parents (even if both are still involved in their child's life) which resulted in mothers being more likely to be the subject of parenting contracts and orders.

**Access** – interviewees from virtually all family services found that engagement with fathers was made more difficult because they were less likely to be able to engage during normal working hours when most services and activities for parents were run. This was seen as being even more of a barrier for non-resident fathers as they might only have access to their children on weekends and a certain number of evenings during the week. There were also particular issues in rural areas where distance and poor transport links could make it harder for fathers to engage with services.

**Communication** – the majority of interviewees from across the different family service types raised communication as an important issue in recruiting fathers in the first place and sustaining engagement over time. Language and images in marketing, general communication and displays in family service settings were all seen as being important. Typically, it was felt that where language referred simply to 'parents' this would not appeal to fathers, who were thought to be likely to assume that this was aimed predominantly or exclusively at mothers. In addition, most positive images of parenting were seen as depicting mothers with their children, with very few positive images of fathers and a number of potentially negative ones (such as posters with a picture of a woman asking if they had suffered domestic violence).

**Fathers' and mothers' attitudes** – most interviewees also described attitudes among parents in their area as being a source of difficulty in engaging fathers. These were seen to mirror the attitudes among the workforce, in having 'traditional' views of fathers as 'breadwinners' and more likely to be involved in disciplining their children than being part of the more positive, caring side of parenting. While this was seen as being the case in all areas irrespective of the different contexts, it was identified particularly strongly with some ethnic minority groups (particularly Muslim and Asian origin groups). This was thought to lead to fathers being unlikely to think that many family services were aimed

at them but also that they were less likely to want to be involved. Another, related attitudinal barrier was seen to be that fathers often had negative experiences of services (particularly their experiences in the school system) which made them reluctant to engage.

***Potential enablers included:***

**Timing and location of services** – only a few of the family services had developed provision on evenings and weekends (principally some Sure Start Children’s Centres, schools and parenting support services). Where this had occurred it was seen as being an effective means of recruiting and engaging fathers over time. In terms of location, it was also widely felt to be important to offer some activities or other provision in more informal settings – for example, away from the classroom or Sure Start Children’s Centre – if fathers did not feel at ease there. Alternatives included outdoor activities; local trips; alternative spaces such as workshops or studios for practical activities; and some schools provided rooms specifically for parents to use.

**Appealing to fathers’ interests** – particularly in services in which engagement by fathers was voluntary, interviewees felt that it was important to offer activities which were more likely to appeal to male interests. Whilst it was widely recognised that not *all* fathers wanted to participate in sporting or practical activities, these were seen as offering a hook for a larger number of fathers.

**Provision specifically for fathers** – some practitioners (particularly in Sure Start Children’s Centres and parenting support services) felt that a large proportion of fathers were not comfortable participating in group activities that were attended predominantly by mothers and wanted to have some provision specifically for fathers and their children. Where this had occurred, some successful groups of fathers had developed sustained relationships with each other and the family service. However, it was also noted by some that there was a danger that this could result in provision for fathers becoming separated from mainstream provision.

**Undertaking outreach** – several services that were undertaking outreach to recruit parents reported that this was a very effective way of engaging with fathers. This was particularly the case for services in rural settings and where the timing and location of services presented a potential barrier to engagement with fathers (such as Families Information Services and Sure Start Children’s Centres, which were often seen as being feminised environments).

**Use of voluntary and community sector** – a small number of family services were working closely with the voluntary and community sector organisations. This was seen to help with: engaging some fathers who have negative perceptions of public services; providing alternative locations for provision; and tapping into networks of parents that voluntary and community sector organisations had already developed.

**Positive language and images of fathers** – services that had reviewed their use of language and images generally identified that it was important to pick out fathers specifically and to use positive images of fathers to ensure that they were aware that services were aimed at them as well as mothers. Related to this, a small number of providers had pro-actively tried to market provision in places that fathers would be more likely to take notice, such as in pubs and gyms.

**Employing male staff** – some interviewees (particularly in local authorities and early years services such as Sure Start Children’s Centres and primary schools) felt that recruiting a higher proportion of male staff was required to make a big impact on engagement with fathers. Most argued, however, that it was not necessary to have more men in the workforce generally to engage fathers but that it could be very effective to have male practitioners.

This is summarised at a very basic level in Table 15 below. It sets out which of these generic barriers applied particularly strongly to each of the family service types that were included in the qualitative fieldwork.

**Table 15 – Summary of key barriers faced by types of family services across 8 local authorities**

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Sure Start Children's Centres</b>	<b>Primary schools</b>	<b>Secondary schools</b>	<b>Families Information Services</b>	<b>Special schools</b>	<b>Behaviour and attendance</b>
Views of workforce	√					√
Predominantly female workforce	√	√	√	√	√	
Lack of training/skills	√		√	√		√
Direct policy barrier / 'policy overload'		√	√			
Health / courts						√
Access	√	√	√		√	√
Communication	√	√	√	√	√	
Identifying non-resident or young fathers	√	√	√		√	√
Fathers' and mothers' attitudes	√	√		√	√	√
<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Integrated youth support</b>	<b>Connexions</b>	<b>Teenage pregnancy</b>	<b>Parenting support services</b>	<b>Youth offending services</b>	<b>Safeguarding and looked after children</b>
Views of workforce	√				√	√
Predominantly female workforce			√	√		√
Lack of training/skills						√
Direct policy barrier / 'policy overload'	√	√	√		√	
Health /courts			√	√	√	
Access	√		√			
Communication				√		
Identifying non-resident or young fathers	√	√	√		√	√
Fathers' and mothers' attitudes	√	√	√	√		√

## 5.5 Recommendations from interviewees for national policy

Interviewees in family services were asked how national policy might better support their service to engage with fathers. Their suggestions included:

- Every Father Matters – there was a view among several interviewees from across different family services that fathers were not adequately recognised in DCSF policy and that this could be most effectively addressed through one headline document akin to Every Parent Matters but focused specifically on fathers. Such a document would highlight that fathers are a priority group across all family services and set out in one document how working with fathers would help services to meet targets, priorities and requirements;
- training and best practice – interviewees from all local authorities and family service types felt that training for service managers and practitioners working with fathers would be beneficial. This was seen as being helpful to emphasise engaging with fathers as a priority; address negative perceptions and attitudes towards working with fathers; ensure that managers and practitioners better understood what fathers want and need from services; and give practitioners the skills to work with fathers more effectively. Similarly, a large proportion of interviewees across the board expressed a desire for best practice to be disseminated by DCSF on how to work with fathers. However, there was also acknowledgement among interviewees that best practice guidance alone may not have a large impact if it does not relate to an issue that is already seen as a priority. Indeed, levels of awareness of existing DCSF good practice guidance on working with fathers were generally very low;
- inspection – there was widespread agreement that inspection was potentially an extremely powerful means of influencing behaviour in local authorities and family services, however, a range of views became apparent on what role it should play in supporting engagement with fathers. Some, who felt that engaging fathers was central to the effective provision of all family services, thought that inspections should place a stand-alone requirement on local authorities and family services to provide evidence of this. Others disagreed with this view and felt this was unnecessarily heavy-handed as it might draw resources away from other areas and, potentially, disadvantage services working with families where fathers are harder to reach (such as those with a higher incidence of non-resident fathers). A more subtle approach was also advocated, in which either inspections that ask about engagement with parents could ensure that this included work with fathers, or to include fathers as an ‘excluded group’ and therefore ensure that services are taking steps to reach them;

- targets / policy requirements – a small number of interviewees in some local authorities and family services advocated that DCSF should develop targets or other mandatory requirements to work with fathers. These interviewees felt that this was the only option to ensure that engagement with fathers would be a priority uniformly across the country and across family service types.<sup>36</sup> The majority, however, did not support this view and felt that (as with making this a requirement through inspection) this would take resources from elsewhere and might penalise services in areas in which fathers were harder to engage. In addition, a number of interviewees felt that simply adding to existing targets would not encourage buy-in among the workforce and could lead to a tick-box approach rather than developing effective practice;
- gender equality in the workforce – it was widely agreed that the workforce in family services across the board was predominantly female. Whilst there were mixed views on the extent to which this was a barrier to engaging with fathers, there many thought that having more male staff would have a positive effect and it was widely agreed that, currently, men were not as likely as women to want to be part of the workforce. Some actions such as improving the marketing and recruitment process to target men / fathers more effectively were suggested. More broadly, it was felt that the gender divide in the workforce could not be addressed effectively without reviewing pay scales and hours of work to make this more attractive to men;
- policy co-ordination with other bodies – there is substantial overlap between different family services and other bodies (particularly those in health and the legal process). In some cases effective partnerships had been developed (such as PCT and local authority provided parenting support services working together), however, some points of disconnection were also raised. The most commonly raised issue was the role of health visitors in ante-natal care, who were not seen as being inclusive towards fathers and were not required to register the fathers' details. Some areas were attempting to address this through the use of the Common Assessment Framework. Similarly, in relation to youth offending, the courts were not required to engage with both parents and frequently applied parenting orders and contracts solely to mothers (who were seen as being more likely to attend court hearings) even where the father was present. A number of interviewees felt that there needed to be a more co-ordinated policy response to ensure that the different services could work together more effectively to engage fathers. This could include working together to meet common targets and priorities, for example; and

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<sup>36</sup> Staff in one local authority thought that it would be possible to use existing gender equality legislation to require that family services ensured provision was equally accessible to fathers and mothers

- awareness raising – interviewees from a number of local authorities and family services felt that DCSF should undertake a high profile national campaign to raise the profile and importance of fathers in parenting and to challenge the negative ‘traditional’ views of fathers among the population generally. This was seen as also having the potential to have a positive effect on the attitudes and approach to fathers among staff in family services.

## 5.6 Key findings

At the broadest level, virtually all of the family services and local authorities reported that engagement (in any form) with fathers was generally substantially lower than with mothers. All local authorities and the vast majority of family services recognised this as an important issue and expressed a high level of buy-in to addressing it. However, there was limited evidence of specific actions that had been taken to improve engagement with fathers.

Local authorities and family services offered a wide range of reasons why fathers engaged with services less than mothers. A few interviewees felt that the barriers to engagement lay predominantly with fathers themselves, who were not actively seeking to engage with the services available to them. Some reported that it was how services were delivered (including the attitudes and composition of the workforce) that was the main challenge and recognised that provision needed to become more ‘father friendly’ to improve engagement. Most interviewees reported a combination of both.

With the exception of Sure Start Children’s Centre staff and senior managers in local authorities, few interviewees reported that DCSF or its partners’ policies had directly influenced their behaviour in attempting to work with fathers. This reflected the belief by most interviewees that national policy had not addressed the importance of working with fathers. Frequently, where national policy had influenced behaviour, the effect had been ‘indirect’ – due to policies such as Every Child Matters, which have fundamentally changed how services are delivered by placing an emphasis on parents and families in achieving positive outcomes for children, but without highlighting the importance of fathers specifically. No interviewees in local authorities or family services were aware of being required by inspection mechanisms to demonstrate that their work with ‘parents’ included working with fathers.

Where practice had developed that was pro-actively inclusive of fathers, this tended to be the result of practitioners and or managers taking a sustained interest in and championing engagement with fathers. In a few cases the voluntary and community sector had played an important role in raising the profile of working with fathers and had taken pro-active steps to do so.

Interviewees made the following suggestions for how national policy might better support their service to engage with fathers:

- an 'Every Father Matters' document to highlight the importance of fathers;
- training and dissemination of best practice;
- attempting to recruit more men into the workforce;
- using inspection arrangements to require reporting on engagement with fathers;
- co-ordinating policies with other services such as health and the courts; and
- awareness raising through a national campaign on positive fatherhood.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Key research findings

Key findings from the study are presented below in relation to each of the research objectives.

#### ***Recognition of fathers in DCSF policies and those of its main partners***

Overall, explicit recognition of fathers in DCSF policies and those of its main partners<sup>37</sup> was partial and uneven. Recognition of fathers was highest in top level policy documents (such as Green and White papers, policy statements and reviews and strategy papers) and workforce and service delivery documents (including non-statutory guidance and standards, training and good practice documents).

There were three recent top level policy documents containing sustained recognition of fathers:

- DCSF (2007) *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*; and
- HM Treasury and DfES (2007) *Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families*.

There were also six key workforce and service delivery documents which recognised fathers:

- EOC (2007) *Gender Equality Duty and Local Government: Guidance for Public Authorities in England*;
- DCSF and DH (2007) *Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts*;
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance*;
- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*;
- DfES (2004) *Engaging Fathers: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement*; and
- DfES and DH (2004) *National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Core Standards*.

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<sup>37</sup> This refers to specific mention of fathers in relevant policy documents (excluding defining 'parent' as including fathers and mothers)

However, there was little or no explicit recognition of fathers in terms of:

- legislation (including acts of parliament, regulation and statutory guidance and standards) – though this might be expected in primary legislation, which refers to ‘parents’ in a legal sense;
- financial framework documents (relating to funding, commissioning and charging arrangements); and
- monitoring and evaluation (such as inspection criteria, monitoring arrangements, performance indicators and quality assurance).

Where recognition of fathers does exist in national policy, it was focused on certain family services (some of which provide a number of services for parents) – predominantly Sure Start Children’s Centres, teenage pregnancy services and schools, though there was some recognition of fathers in policy relating to parenting support services and youth offending services too. There was little or no recognition of fathers directly in relation to other types of family services.

There was also little detailed recognition of different types of fathers (such as minority ethnic fathers, young fathers, lone parent fathers, resident and non-resident fathers) and their specific needs. The main exceptions to this were the three top level policy documents noted above, which identify that young, minority ethnic and non-resident fathers are less likely than other fathers to engage with family services. Young fathers also receive recognition in teenage parenting strategy documents.

### ***Awareness and influence of DCSF policies and those of its main partners***

Local authorities responding to the survey reported high levels of awareness of DCSF policies and those of its main partners that recognise fathers and generally saw these as the main driver developing father inclusive policy and practice locally. However, some local authorities felt that national policies were ‘behind’ local policy and practice or not sufficiently tuned to local circumstances. Others identified that they had only limited capacity to respond to and implement new policies.

In both the survey and qualitative fieldwork, the following policy documents were found to have been the most influential in encouraging local authorities to develop father inclusive policy and practice:<sup>38</sup>

- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children’s Centres: Practice Guidance*;

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<sup>38</sup> The Children’s Plan was not published until December 2007 and so was not included in these stages of the research

- Sure Start (2006) *Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance*;
- DfES (2007) *Every Parent Matters*;
- HM Treasury (2004) *Every Child Matters*; and
- DfES (2006) *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*.

These were generally seen as being more influential than other policy documents because they contained sustained and explicit recognition of fathers – though this applied less to *Every Child Matters* and *Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*.

Inspections of local authorities (through the Joint Area Review or Annual Performance Assessment) did not require any evidence of support for fathers, though this was seen as being a potentially powerful lever for influencing local policy and practice in future.

Based on the qualitative fieldwork, managers in different family services had varying levels of awareness of national policies that recognise fathers. From the policy review, recognition of fathers in national policy was found to be greatest for Sure Start Children's Centres and schools, yet whilst Sure Start Children's Centre managers were aware of relevant policy documents, senior staff in schools were less so. This was seen to be the case in schools partly because they faced 'policy overload', with a high number of centrally determined priorities, targets and requirements which demanded their attention and fathers were not one of these.

Most family services reported that national policy had not directly influenced their behaviour in terms of supporting fathers. The main exceptions to this were Sure Start Children's Centres, parenting support services and safeguarding and looked after children. Other family services generally reported only an 'indirect' influence through policies such as *Every Child Matters* which had led to attaching greater importance to engaging with parents in general.

As with local authority inspections, inspections of family services by Ofsted do not include an assessment of engagement with fathers.

### ***Father friendliness and engagement with fathers***

Most local authorities reported taking a number of actions aimed at supporting fathers in the survey and follow-up interviews. Generally these were seen to be a result of national policy and included producing a parenting strategy with a focus on fathers and convening multi-agency groups to respond to national policies on fathers. In a few cases local authorities had attempted to mainstream equality and diversity measures (including a focus on fathers) by integrating these into all relevant local policies.

From the qualitative fieldwork, however, it was clear that local authorities had not typically taken a strategic lead on supporting fathers in family services in their area. Rather, any local practice had generally developed sporadically and was the result of specific managers and practitioners taking an interest in the issue.

Father inclusive practice was not seen to be routine or mainstream in family services. In both the survey and the fieldwork, local authorities generally described family services in their area as being 'neutral' towards fathers, rather than pro-actively father friendly or discouraging of fathers. The types of family service most likely to be seen as being father friendly were Sure Start Children's Centres, parenting support services and teenage pregnancy services (though teenage pregnancy services were also among the most likely to be seen as discouraging of fathers).

With the exception of Sure Start Children's Centres, there was generally very little monitoring of engagement with fathers in family services or local authorities. However, virtually all local authorities that responded to the survey reported that family services were used more by mothers than fathers. Similarly, in the fieldwork virtually all family services felt that engagement with fathers was substantially lower than with mothers.

### ***Key barriers to engaging fathers in family services***

Several generic barriers to engaging with fathers in family services were identified:

- some staff in family services did not view engagement with fathers as a priority;
- staff in many family services did not think that differentiated, pro-active support was important to engaging fathers;
- the workforce was predominantly female, particularly in early years services and targeted and specialist services which may lead some fathers to think that the service was 'not for them';
- there was a lack of training and skills among managers and practitioners to help them understand the needs of fathers and engage effectively with them;
- national targets on teenage pregnancy focus exclusively on young mothers and were seen by interviewees to be a direct barrier to working with young fathers (particularly among teenage pregnancy services);
- local authorities and some types of family services (mainly schools and youth offending services) felt that they faced 'policy overload' with numerous nationally determined targets and priorities, which made it difficult to develop a strong focus on engagement with fathers;

- identifying young fathers was seen as being the biggest barrier to engagement with them (particularly in teenage pregnancy services, Connexions and integrated youth support);
- identifying and communicating with non-resident fathers was also seen as being challenging across virtually all family services;
- health services (including midwifery and ante-natal services) were not seen as adequately identifying and engaging with fathers (particularly young fathers) during the important initial stages of pregnancy and birth;
- in relation to youth offending, the courts were seen as not adequately ensuring that fathers were present whenever possible with the result that parenting orders and parenting contracts tended to be applied to mothers much more frequently than fathers (even where the father was resident or active in their child's life);
- accessing provision could be more problematic for fathers than mothers due to a lack of flexibility in the timing of services (particularly for employed fathers unable to engage with services during normal working hours and non-resident fathers that may only have access to their children on evenings and weekends);
- fathers were seen to be less likely than mothers to respond to communication (including any marketing as well as direct communication with parents) that was not addressed to them, did not refer directly to fathers or did not include positive images of fathers and their children; and
- based on a 'traditional' view of parenting (particularly among some minority ethnic groups) which sees the mother as the primary carer and the father as the main breadwinner and source of discipline, many fathers were perceived to think that family services were 'not for them'.

***Recommendations from local authority staff and family services for national policy***

Staff in local authorities and family services suggested several ways in which national policy might potentially better support fathers in family services. These included:

- making support for fathers a more explicit national priority across all family services by developing an 'Every Father Matters';
- training for managers and practitioners in family services focused specifically on engaging with fathers;
- specific guidance and best practice documents for family services;

- policy co-ordination with other bodies such as health services and the courts to ensure that fathers are involved; and
- promoting positive images of fatherhood through a national media campaign.

There were mixed opinions on whether or not national targets and / or inspection requirements related to supporting fathers would be beneficial. While it was widely accepted that this would have a major influence on local authorities and family services nationally, most interviewees thought that the potential negative effects (such as drawing resources away from other activities and fostering a 'tick-box' approach to including fathers) would outweigh the benefits.

## 6.2 Conclusions and recommendations

Improving engagement with fathers represents a major challenge across all family services and local authorities nationally. Whilst the importance of engaging with 'parents' is generally accepted, most family services are delivered in a gender neutral manner that does not differentiate between fathers and mothers and this has tended to result in unequal levels of access for fathers.

Substantial barriers to improving engagement with fathers in family services exist in relation to: recognition and support for fathers in national policy; the workforce and delivery in family services; and the wider attitudes and behaviours of fathers and mothers in society. Our recommendations are set out below in relation to the first two of these issues.

### ***Recognition and support for fathers in DCSF and its partners' policies***

Explicit recognition and support for fathers in DCSF and its partners' policies has been found to be important in positively influencing behaviour within local authorities and family services. The Children's Plan emphasises support for fathers and is likely to be influential. In addition, DCSF might wish to consider:

- producing a single document ('*Every Father Matters*') to set out the department's aspirations, highlight best practice and draw together existing policies on engagement with fathers across all family services;
- ensuring that future policy documents relevant to parental involvement in family services define 'parents' as including fathers and mothers and take account of their different needs;
- modelling future management and practice guidance for family services on the current guidance documents for Sure Start Children's Centres which address engagement with fathers as a distinct theme;

- reviewing targets (particularly the national teenage pregnancy targets) and inspection processes (with Ofsted) for family services and local authorities to ensure these support the development of father inclusive practice;
- considering how financial framework policy documents might better support engagement with fathers through the purchasing and commissioning of services;
- co-ordinating support for fathers with other key bodies such as health services and the courts; and
- clarifying and publicising the implications of the gender equality legislation in relation to fathers and mothers accessing family services.

### ***Workforce and service delivery***

Engagement with fathers in family services should be routine. However, very few local authorities or family services have begun to develop pro-actively father friendly policy or practice and, where this has occurred, it has tended to be sporadic and dependent on specific managers and staff taking a sustained interest in working with fathers. In addition to the recommendations above, DCSF could consider the following:

- supporting the development of training for managers and practitioners in family services and local authorities focused on developing father friendly practice;
- encouraging family services (where possible and appropriate) routinely and pro-actively to take steps to identify and communicate with non-resident fathers about their children;
- reviewing how family services that engage directly with young males (such as Connexions and integrated youth support services) might play a more pro-active role in identifying and addressing the needs of young fathers;
- reviewing how family services (particularly universal services such as Sure Start Children's Centres and schools but also parenting support services, for example) can recruit a higher proportion of male practitioners that have contact with parents;
- supporting local authorities and relevant family services (such as Sure Start Children's Centres and Families Information Services) to conduct more outreach work – particularly in large rural communities; and
- encouraging routine monitoring of engagement with fathers and mothers in all family services.

## ANNEX A – DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY SERVICES IN THIS RESEARCH

<b>Service</b>	<b>Universal, targeted or specialist</b>	<b>Child and young person's age (years)</b>	<b>Description</b>
Families Information Services	Universal	0-19	The Childcare Act 2006 placed a duty on local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance for parents. There may also be voluntary and private providers of information for parents.
Sure Start Children's Centres	Universal	0-5	Sure Start Children's Centres work with parents before a child's birth and provide services for families including health and family services; integrated learning and full day or sessional care for children from 0-5 years, and advice and information for parents on a range of issues from effective parenting to training and employment issues.
Early Years Centres	Universal	0-5	Early Years Centres offer full and part-time childcare and education for children aged from 0 to 5 years.
Nursery schools	Universal	0-5	Nursery schools are independent of schools for older children, though they may feed into one. Nursery schools include: state provided nursery schools, community preschools and private nursery schools.
Other childcare and play settings	Universal	0-16	This includes all public, private and voluntary provision of childcare, such as: pre-school playgroups, play schemes and childminders.
Primary schools (including extended schools and pre-school provision)	Universal	5-11	Primary schools provide education for children aged 5-11 years. Extended primary schools offer (in partnership with the local authority and other providers): childcare; a menu of study support activities; parenting support (including information sessions at key transition points); access to targeted and specialist services for children with additional needs; and, community access to some facilities.
Secondary schools (including extended schools)	Universal	11-16	Secondary schools provide education for children aged 11-16 years. Extended secondary schools offer (in partnership with the local authority and other providers): childcare; a menu of study support activities; parenting support (including information sessions at key transition points); access to targeted and specialist services

			for children with additional needs; and, community access to some facilities.
Admissions	Universal	5-16	School admissions services in local authorities aim to manage the authority's admissions procedures, whilst complying with DCSF regulations and Code of Practice and local authority policies.
Integrated youth support	Universal / targeted	13-19	Youth support (generally for teenagers, though this may also include those younger than 13) includes providing positive activities and targeted youth support services for vulnerable young people.
Connexions	Universal / targeted	13-19	Connexions provides information and advice for teenagers in England on education, training and employment, as well as access to learning and personal development opportunities.
Parenting support services	Universal / targeted	0-18	Support for parents covers a range of programmes from preventative services through to intervention and compulsory engagement through enforcement measures.
Special schools	Targeted	5-16	Special schools make special educational provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs (SEN), whose needs cannot be met fully in mainstream provision. These may be: maintained by the local authority; non-maintained special schools; or, independent special schools.
Family centres	Targeted	0-18	Family centres provide a range of services to children and their families where the child has been identified as being in need.
Behaviour / attendance / exclusions	Targeted	5-16	Local authorities provide services to support schools, parents and young people with attendance and behaviour issues as well exclusions. Local authorities also have a responsibility to provide full-time education for permanently excluded pupils and to reintegrate them into mainstream education.
Teen pregnancy	Targeted	11-19	Local authorities are required to have measures in place to meet local reduction targets in teenage pregnancy as well as working with teenage parents to reduce the risk of poor outcomes for them and their children.
Education other than at school (EOTAS)	Targeted / specialist	5-16	EOTAS services provide education for pupils unable to attend school due to pregnancy, medical or psychiatric reasons, or due to exclusion. This includes Alternative Educational Provision such as Pupil Referral Units as well as home and hospital schooling.
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	Targeted / specialist	5-16	Statutory assessments of SEN are undertaken as well as making and maintaining a statement of SEN for children with severe and

			complex needs. The vast majority of SEN provision takes place in a mainstream school setting, some with additional support from SEN services or other agencies external to the school.
Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and educational psychology	Targeted / specialist	5-16	Educational Psychology services support parents and teachers with the educational needs of children whose difficulties affect their ability to learn. CAMHS addresses a child's emotional or behavioural difficulties either at home or at school.
Youth Offending Teams (YOTs)	Specialist	10-18	YOTs are multi-agency teams that aim to prevent offending by children and young people and work with young offenders on non-custodial sentences.
Safeguarding and looked after children	Specialist	0-18	Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children involves assessing a child's needs and, as required, social services may work with parents and other adults to keep the child safe, place a child on the child protection register or apply for an emergency protection order. Looked after children are usually looked after in foster care, while some are placed in children's homes or with adoptive parents.
Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol)	Universal / targeted / specialist	5-18	Local authorities have established Drug and Alcohol Teams (DATs) providing universal advice and information, targeted prevention and specialist interventions for young people misusing drugs or alcohol.
Relevant pilot projects (e.g. Family Intervention Projects)	Universal / targeted / specialist	-	-

## ANNEX B – RECOGNITION OF FATHERS IN NATIONAL POLICY

This section presents all of the instances in which fathers are explicitly recognised and supported in DCSF (and its partners’) policies. Policy documents have been reviewed under the five policy areas identified above in Table 2. All instances in which fathers are mentioned explicitly (beyond defining a parent as including fathers) are set out in the tables below. Indirect support for fathers through DCSF policy (e.g. through extended opening hours) that is not specifically stated as being for fathers has not been covered in this phase of the research. This will be covered in the later stages through the survey of local authorities and the qualitative fieldwork, in which it will be possible to find out which policies help fathers to engage with family services in practice.

In addition, Annex B provides a comprehensive list of the policy documents that were identified and reviewed for this project. It shows which documents define parents as including fathers and whether or not there is any explicit mention of fathers.

### **Legislation**<sup>39</sup>

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Recognition and support of fathers</b>
DCSF (2007) <i>Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006</i>	Statutory guidance explains the requirements on local authorities to provide information, advice and assistance to parents, prospective parents and other appropriate persons as required by section 12 of the Childcare Act 2006.	The guidance sets out that information services should be made accessible to fathers as well as mothers, with a particular emphasis on increasing access to information for those who may be socially excluded (including young fathers).  The active interest of fathers (whether resident or not) in their child’s life is recognised as being very important in securing positive outcomes. As a result, information services should assess the information needs of fathers in their area and make efforts to provide information in formats and through routes that are likely to engage fathers.
Adoption and Children Act	Following the 2000 Department of Health White Paper <i>Adoption – A New Approach</i> , the Act aims to promote	Amends the Children Act 1989 so that an unmarried father acquires parental responsibility where he and the child’s

<sup>39</sup> For Acts of parliament the explanatory notes were reviewed

(2002)	greater use of adoption, improve the performance of the adoption service and put children at the centre of the adoption process.	mother register the child's birth together.
DfES (2001) <i>Special Educational Needs Code of Practice</i>	The SEN Code of Practice provides practical advice to Local Education Authorities, maintained schools, early education settings and others on carrying out their statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children's special educational needs.	Code of practice sets out the legal position on parental responsibility (as defined in the 1989 Children Act). It states that in relation to unmarried parents, only the mother will have parental responsibility unless the father has been granted parental responsibility by the Court or has made a parental responsibility agreement with the mother.
Children Act (1989)	The Children Act made comprehensive changes relating to the welfare of children in England and Wales. The Act enshrined the principle that the child's welfare must be the paramount consideration when the courts are making decisions about them. Of particular relevance to this research, the Act provided the foundational definition of parental responsibility (replacing the concept of parental rights).	Parental responsibility is given to both the child's father and mother where they are married to each other at, or after, the child's conception. In the case of unmarried parents, the mother has parental responsibility and the father does not have parental responsibility for his child unless he acquires it. This is achieved by the father's successful application to a court or when the father and mother make between them a parental responsibility agreement. <sup>40</sup>

### **Top level policy**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Recognition and support of fathers</b>
DCSF (2007) <i>The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures</i>	The Children's Plan sets out the government's ambition to make England the best place in the world to grow up by 2020. It sets out the department's plans in relation to the following themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- happy and healthy</li> <li>- safe and sound</li> <li>- excellence and equity</li> <li>- leadership and collaboration</li> <li>- staying on</li> <li>- on the right track</li> <li>- making it happen</li> </ul>	<p>A family policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century should recognise and be responsive to lone parent fathers.</p> <p>Fathers say they can feel invisible to health and children's services professionals and services are not offered at times that fit with their working patterns.</p> <p>Children benefit from strong relationships with their father, but public services routinely fail to engage with fathers (and particularly non-resident fathers). DCSF will work with CWDC and NAPP to ensure occupational standards and training reflect the need to engage with fathers (except where there is a clear risk to the child in doing so).</p>

<sup>40</sup> There are no official explanatory notes available for the Children Act 1989. This text is based on [http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/samplechapter/102\\_0.pdf](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/files/samplechapter/102_0.pdf)

		<p>Parent Know-How will provide information in more accessible ways for fathers.</p> <p>Sure Start Children's Centres will look to engage fathers and offer them support in developing their parenting skills.</p> <p>Schools will be expected to keep contact details of all non-resident parents. Secondary schools will develop a new relationship with parents including fathers, non-resident parents, lone parents and working parents. Governing bodies must take account of the views of fathers and working parents.</p>
<p>DfES (2007) <i>Every Parent Matters</i></p>	<p>Every Parent Matters sets out everything that the Department is doing to promote the development of services for parents and to involve them in shaping services for themselves and for their children.</p>	<p>Parental roles are changing with fathers spending more time caring for their children. The father-child relationship has a large impact on children's development (though this can be positive or negative) and is particularly influential among the most disadvantaged children. Fathers' early involvement is linked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a positive relationship with later educational achievement;</li> <li>- good parent-child relationship in adolescence; and,</li> <li>- children in separated families are more protected from mental health issues.</li> </ul> <p>However, it can be a challenge to involve fathers in services for pre-school children – especially young, Black and Minority Ethnic and non-resident fathers. Barriers to fathers' involvement in services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- services being insensitive to fathers' needs;</li> <li>- a female focus and culture among practitioners; and,</li> <li>- practitioners not recognising the significance of fathers' involvement if they are not visible to the service or are not resident.</li> </ul> <p>To address this, Sure Start Children's Centre guidance recommends collecting information on fathers and undertaking outreach to engage fathers. It is also recognised that a more male workforce may help. Fathers appreciate some services that are specifically for them and should be involved in shaping the services.</p>

		<p>Schools that are effective at engaging parents recognise that different parents (including fathers) have different needs.</p> <p>In teen pregnancy, local authorities and PCTs should mediate a positive relationship between the mother and father, where appropriate.</p> <p>Advice and support must meet the needs of fathers and mothers. In relation to schools this must provide both parents with the information, advice and support they need, taking account of context such as for separated couples.</p>
<p>HM Treasury &amp; DfES (2007) <i>Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families</i></p>	<p>Aiming High for Children is one of the policy reviews conducted to inform the 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review. It sets out the Government's vision of how services can support parents to improve outcomes for children through: a new emphasis on building resilience; greater personalisation; pro-active support for those who need it most; and, helping families to break a cycle of low achievement.</p>	<p>This document recognises that fathers play a crucial role in the outcomes of their children's lives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- boys with a father convicted of a crime are three times more likely to be convicted for a crime themselves; and,</li> <li>- fathers' involvement in their child's life at the age of seven is related to higher educational attainment in both boys and girls up to the age of 20.</li> </ul> <p>However, it can be a challenge to involve fathers and male carers (step-fathers and grandfathers) in family services – especially young, Black and Minority Ethnic and non-resident fathers. Barriers to fathers' involvement in services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- services being insensitive to fathers' needs;</li> <li>- a female focus and culture among practitioners; and,</li> <li>- practitioners not recognising the significance of fathers' involvement if they are not visible to the service or are not resident.</li> </ul> <p>Addressing this requires a culture shift in services (through, for example, the use of the Father's Quality Mark – an accreditation of practice that is inclusive of fathers). Particular recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- increased funding through Sure Start Children's Centres to support outreach for disadvantaged parents and providing parenting classes for up to 30,000 parents with a particular emphasis on reaching and supporting fathers; and</li> <li>- DfES will lead work to consider how fathers can be better supported in family services.</li> </ul>

<p>DfES (2006) <i>Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress</i></p>	<p>Two years on from the publication of their five year strategy, this document takes stock of what has been achieved, and what still needs to be done. The document highlights the priorities upon which success will be judged and identifies lessons that the Department and partners can learn from in delivering these priorities.</p>	<p>Makes reference to The Work and Families Act which would give rights to fathers to have up to 26 weeks paternity leave, which could be paid if the mother returns to work.</p>
<p>DfES (2006) <i>Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010</i></p>	<p>Seven years into an eleven year strategy, this document explores what has been achieved, and what needs to be done to reach the target of halving the under 18 conception rate by 2010 (compared to 1998 baseline).</p>	<p>There is recognition that it may be necessary to mediate a positive relationship between the baby's mother and father, and that fathers may need support to enable them to play a positive role in the child's life.</p> <p>While data on the fathers of children born to teenage mothers is limited, qualitative studies suggest that these fathers are more likely than fathers of children born to older mothers to: not be engaged in education, employment or training; live in deprived areas; have poor levels of educational attainment; and have been in trouble with the police.</p> <p>In order that more young fathers can contribute positively to their children's lives, including providing financial support, further research will explore:  how maternity services and Children's Centres can be better tailored so that they encourage young fathers' involvement – research indicates that many young fathers feel excluded due to the negative attitudes of some professionals and the overtly female centred environment in ante-natal and maternity services;  how young fathers can be supported to re-engage in education, employment and training; and  how to support young fathers to take greater responsibility for contraception – research suggests that men have a strong influence over their partner's choice of contraception to help reduce second and subsequent unplanned pregnancies.</p> <p>The document indicates that good practice guidance will be issued on engaging and supporting young fathers.</p>
<p>DfES (2006) <i>Youth Matters: Next Steps,</i></p>	<p>The Youth Matters consultation resulted in a high number of responses. This document summarises the responses to the consultation and presents how the government are</p>	<p>This document outlines a desire to engage and support parents (both mothers and fathers) in helping their children make career and life choices by making sure they are better</p>

<i>Something to do, Somewhere to go, Someone to Talk to</i>	going to deliver the youth policies.	informed and able to give up to date advice.
HM Government (2005) <i>Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parental Responsibilities – Next Steps</i>	This White Paper updates the Green Paper (above) following consultation.	In response to the Green Paper, fathers' groups were in favour of a legal presumption of equal contact.
HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI (2004) <i>Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a Ten Year Strategy for Childcare</i>	This document outlines the government's ten year strategy for delivering childcare that is universally available, affordable, offers choice and is high quality. It also recognises the importance of allowing parents the choice to spend time with their children without impacting on their employment.	The strategy recognises that fathers are playing an increasing role in caring for children and that fathers want to spend more time with their children. The government want to enable fathers to play a greater role in their children's lives, and is supporting this through: - Parental Leave - 13 weeks unpaid leave up to the child's 6th birthday; - Paternity Leave - 2 weeks paid leave; - Adoption Leave - 2 weeks paid leave; and - Offering the ability to transfer a portion of maternity leave to the father – By end of next parliament
DfES (2004) <i>Department for Education and Skills: Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners</i>	The Five Year Strategy sets out DfES's vision to provide world-class standards in education for children and young people through: greater personalisation and choice, opening up services, freedom and independence for frontline staff, a commitment to staff development and creating partnerships with parents, employers, volunteers and voluntary organisations.	The strategy notes the DfES's intention to explore options for extending support for mothers and fathers in the first year of a child's life.
HM Government (2004) <i>Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parental Responsibilities</i>	The Green Paper sets out the government's proposals to improve outcomes for children whose parents are separating. The proposals cover all stages of the separation process from information and guidance to reforming the legal process.	Recognition that fathers want to play a more active caring role and both mothers and fathers have responsibility for their children.  Describes that in most cases the non-resident parent is the father, though this is changing.  The majority of non-resident fathers are satisfied with post-separation parenting arrangements organised between the parents.  Notes a concern among fathers' groups that the law favours mothers and does not provide non-resident fathers with

		adequate access to build a full relationship with their children. Recognises that fathers' involvement in their child's upbringing is associated with positive outcomes.
HM Treasury (2003) <i>Every Child Matters</i>	Following the death of Victoria Climbié and Lord Laming's report, the Every Child Matters Green Paper sets out the Government's plans for how to better protect children at risk of harm or neglect. It connects child protection with the wider policy context to improve children's lives and sets out a framework for universal and more targeted services that cover children and young people from birth to the age of 19. In particular, it sets out five key outcomes for children: - being healthy; - staying safe; - enjoying and achieving; - making a positive contribution; and, - achieving economic well-being	The Green Paper acknowledges the vital role that fathers play in achieving positive outcomes for their children. Fathers of 7% of children (during school age) are imprisoned, which has a negative effect on financial and emotional well-being and being healthy.  Every Child Matters recommends that: - fathers (especially non-resident fathers) as well as mothers should be offered parenting support programmes; and - schools should focus on improving communication with fathers.

### ***Workforce and service delivery***

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Recognition and support of fathers</b>
DfES (2007) <i>National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres</i>	These National Standards set out key areas of responsibility for heads of Sure Start Children's Centres and define the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to fulfil them. This is reflected in the National Professional Qualification in Integrated Centre leadership (NPQICL). The Standards will be used to assess the leadership capability of NPQICL participants.	Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres must provide the vision, direction and leadership vital to the creation of integrated and comprehensive services for children, mothers, fathers and families. As a result, services should be organised to respond all groups, including fathers.  Fathers, mothers and other carers learning alongside their children model the importance and enjoyment of learning. It is this engagement and active involvement with their children that makes a difference.
HM Government (2007) <i>Extended Schools Building on Experience</i>	This document updates the 2005 Extended Schools prospectus, which set out the vision for what these schools would provide.	Parents should have access to parenting programmes using structured, evidence-based programmes, as well as informal opportunities for parents to engage with the school and each other. This support should provide: - family learning sessions to allow children to learn with fathers and mothers; and, - information sessions for fathers and mothers at the beginning of primary and secondary phases.
DfES (2007)	Non-statutory governance guidance to ensure that Sure	Fathers as well as mothers can contribute positively to

<i>Governance Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools</i>	Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools meet local needs and contribute to improving outcomes for children, young people and families.	governance and should be formally involved – whether or not they live with their children. And, once fathers become involved, they are likely to remain so. This document highlights that previous research shows fathers' involvement in parenting is associated with positive outcomes for children.
DCSF (2007) <i>Setting up a Parent Council: A Resource Pack</i>	This is a resource pack for schools, outlining how to set up a parent council (including practical guidance and support resources)	The resource pack notes that fathers are a frequently under-represented group in school activities.
MoJ, YJB & DCSF (2007) <i>Parenting Contracts and Orders Guidance</i>	This document (first issued in February 2004 and revised in October 2007) sets out guidance for Youth Offending Teams and responsible officers in relation to parenting contracts and orders, based on the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. Whilst the guidance is not statutory, there is an expectation that it will be followed unless there is good reason not to.	Children and young people subject to the attention of a YOT should always have their father and mother actively involved unless there is a clear, recorded reason not to do so. However, the evaluation of YJB's parenting programmes has shown that few fathers have been involved in parenting programmes despite these being more effective where both parents are involved.  It is also recognised that while it is often just the mother that attends court, engaging both the father and mother is most effective in changing their child's misbehaviour.
DCSF (2007) <i>Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts</i>	This guidance complements the 2006 Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps guidance on the support side of the strategy and is concerned with how to achieve better outcomes for teenage parents. It includes findings from a consultation with young fathers and mothers and sets out Government's vision of what is wanted for each local area to provide for teenage parents and what will be done nationally to support areas to deliver more tailored and responsive services. It contains a chapter dedicated to the views and needs of young fathers.	The guidance contains information about young fathers and mothers, based in part on a consultation with young parents. One of the aims of the document is to improve outcomes and engagement with young fathers.  A chapter is focused on young fathers and sets out that young fathers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- can have an important impact on the outcomes for their children but their involvement is hindered by service providers that do not recognise the role they do or could play</li> <li>- feel excluded from maternity and health visiting services as well as Sure Start Children's Centres and believe that practitioners are judgemental of them</li> <li>- are often denied the opportunity to live with the mother if she is placed in Supported Accommodation</li> <li>- do not receive adequate support themselves and not enough information about parental responsibility</li> <li>- do not receive adequate support to engage in learning /</li> </ul>

		<p>training.</p> <p>In response to this, the NSF and Sure Start Children's Centre guidance need to be delivered on effectively making services more accessible and welcoming. In addition,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the CAF and targeted youth support services should be used to identify young fathers</li> <li>- Sure Start Children's Centres should monitor work with young fathers as part of the self assessment process</li> <li>- partners of teenage mothers should be considered for support provided by a lead professional through targeted youth support arrangements</li> <li>- young fathers should be actively considered for Activity and Learning Agreement pilots</li> <li>- housing providers should consider how to promote better relationships between young fathers and mothers.</li> </ul> <p>DCSF will also monitor the extent to which changes to birth registration can support young fathers to maintain contact with their child even if they are no longer in a relationship with the mother.</p>
EOC (2007) <i>The Gender Equality Duty and Local Government: Guidance for Public Authorities in England</i>	The guidance, which is non-statutory, sets out how local authorities might respond to the gender equality duty.	<p>The guidance recognises that one of the main issues relating to gender equality in local government is that children's services need to recognise the role of fathers and address the complexity of parenting (including lone fathers, stepparents and the effect of family breakdown on children and parents). As a result, local authorities might set an objective for a specific increase in uptake of family services by fathers.</p> <p>In addition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- children's trusts should also work together with schools, local LSCs and other local agencies to ensure that appropriate support services exist for teenage mothers and fathers;</li> <li>- childcare provision should be made accessible to fathers as well as mothers; and</li> <li>- disabled fathers and mothers may need parenting support.</li> </ul>
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start</i>	The guidance has been put together with the intention of sharing good practice to make it common practice. This is	Information and activities need to be available and accessible by both mothers and fathers.

<p><i>Children's Centres: Practice Guidance</i></p>	<p>to ensure that parents receive a common service rather than experiencing geographical variations. The guidance is written in three main sections: Section 0-2 looks at running a Sure Start Children's Centre, Section 3-13 focuses on the delivery of services and section 14-21 focuses on accessing particular groups. The guidance contains a chapter dedicated to working with fathers.</p>	<p>The guidance has a specific chapter on 'Working with Fathers', therefore recognising the important role they play in bringing up a child.</p> <p>The guidance advises that it is important to seek the views of fathers when planning service provision and events should take into consideration how to engage fathers, including the choice of location and times outside of the working day in order that they can attend. Information made available to fathers should include materials on working flexibly and how fathers can increase their caring responsibilities.</p> <p>The guidance suggests that Sure Start Children's Centres should consider employing a 'fathers' worker' to help develop a strategy for engaging fathers.</p> <p>There is a recognition that Sure Start Children's Centres need to work closely with Jobcentres to help both mothers and fathers move into employment, helping to lift families out of poverty.</p>
<p>Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres Planning and Performance Management Guidance</i></p>	<p>This guidance is designed to help local authorities together with key delivery partners in the statutory, private and voluntary sectors, set up and run Sure Start Children's Centres</p> <p>This guidance covers such issues as the planning and approvals process, Sure Start Children's Centre models, involving the private, voluntary and independent sectors, monitoring and mentoring performance and inspections.</p>	<p>The aim of the network of Sure Start Children's Centres is to provide support and advice to fathers, mothers and carers in addition to early years provision.</p> <p>Sure Start Children's Centres should collect information specifically on fathers and assess how well they engage with them.</p> <p>Centres need to ensure that the needs of fathers are taken into account when planning provision, particularly teenage fathers, whose use of the service has been low in the past. Fathers should be consulted, and specific strategies should be developed and events should be held to engage fathers.</p>
<p>DfES (2006) <i>Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities</i></p>	<p>The purpose of the guidance is to support local authorities and children's trusts in their development of a continuum of support for parents. It begins with a summary of what is known about the impact of parenting on outcomes for children and an</p>	<p>There is recognition that fathers are under represented in universal services</p>

<i>in England</i>	overview of the policy context. It sets out the case for a strategic approach in designing and delivering parenting support services and explores the concept of a continuum of support. Finally it discusses the plans the Government has for taking the parenting agenda forward.	
TDA (2006) <i>Role Specific Initial Training for PSAs. Module A Handbook: Working in Partnership with Parents</i>	This is a handbook for those undertaking training to be a Parent Support Adviser. Module A covers issues associated with working in partnership with parents.	The document makes it clear that fathers, as well as mothers need to be engaged. More specifically, it highlights father friendly parenting classes as research has shown that fathers can feel uncomfortable about attending such classes.
TDA (2006) <i>Role Specific Initial Training for PSAs. Module B Handbook: Working Together for Child and Family Wellbeing</i>	This is a handbook for those undertaking training to be a Parent Support Adviser. Module B covers issues associated with partners working together for the wellbeing of the child and family.	With an acknowledgment that fathers now carry out one third of direct parental childcare, the handbook indicates that schools need to target home-school links at non-resident fathers. The handbook also goes on to discuss the role of fathers in their child's learning and highlights the need to specifically think about fathers when engaging parents.
DfES (2006) <i>Reading Connects: Family Engagement – A Toolkit for Schools</i>	This toolkit is designed to support schools in reaching out to all family members to help them encourage children in their family to enjoy reading in all its forms. It contains a section specifically on attracting fathers to literacy events.	<p>The toolkit recognises the benefits of father's involvement in their children's education, but also that fathers' involvement in family literacy initiatives is extremely low (approximately 5%). This is not because organisers did not try to attract fathers, but that fathers were not attracted to them. Planning therefore needs to take account of fathers' needs.</p> <p>A section specifically on attracting fathers notes that they are difficult to attract into schools and only 25% of children had ever seen their dad reading. There is an extensive list of points to consider when attracting fathers to literacy events which take account of the differences between fathers from different backgrounds and their different interests, motivations and approaches to mothers.</p>
DfES & DH (2006) <i>Teenage Pregnancy Next</i>	Despite progress being made on reducing teenage pregnancy across the UK, there is significant variation in local area performance. This document sets out the	The report identifies that it is as important to give information about contraception to boys and young men as it is girls and to offer to support young fathers to help them play a positive

<p><i>Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on Effective Delivery of Local Strategies</i></p>	<p>lessons learnt since the strategy began, in particular, the findings from in-depth reviews carried out by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit in 2005. Successful local areas are characterised by a number of factors, which provide the evidence base for the strategy.</p>	<p>role in the child's life.</p>
<p>DfES (2006) <i>Gender Equality Scheme</i></p>	<p>The 2006 Equality Act places a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment and promote equality of opportunity between men and women. This document responds to the Equality Act, presenting action plans to ensure the department complies with gender equality.</p>	<p>Recognition that the department has already achieved: Providing targeted support to organisations to base development work on research evidence on the impact of fathers on children's welfare.</p> <p>Recognising and acting upon gender inequalities in published documents and strategies to raise the profile of these issues – for example the joint HMT/DfES Thematic Review of Children and Young People makes reference to the important role of fathers in building the protective factors which help prevent poor outcomes for their children.</p> <p>The document highlights the need to engage both mothers and fathers in children's learning in future through working with Third Sector organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- work closely with our strategically funded father projects and place greater emphasis on targeting and delivering services specifically for men in order to overcome barriers;</li> <li>- ensure messages to schools promote engagement with fathers;</li> <li>- build capacity in the parent support sector to aid a cultural shift in service provision to include fathers in all aspects of a child's well being; and,</li> <li>- facilitate positive relationships between ex-offenders, those at risk of offending and other excluded groups, young fathers and their children.</li> </ul> <p>One action plan highlights the Department's intention to commission research into how fathers are recognised and supported through DfES policy.</p>
<p>HM Government (2006) <i>Common Assessment Framework for</i></p>	<p>The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for children and young people is a shared assessment tool used across agencies in England. It can help practitioners develop a shared understanding of a child's needs, so they can be</p>	<p>When assessing a teenage boy practitioners should ask if he is a father as his needs may be as complex as those of a teenage mother.</p>

<p><i>Children and Young People: Practitioners' Guide</i></p>	<p>met more effectively. It will avoid children and families having to tell and re-tell their story. The CAF is an important tool for early intervention. It has been designed specifically to help practitioners assess needs at an earlier stage and then work with families, alongside other practitioners and agencies, to meet them.</p>	
<p>HM Government (2005) <i>Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All – A Prospectus</i></p>	<p>A prospectus for the services that Extended Schools will offer.</p>	<p>Recognition that services provided must be attractive to fathers as well as mothers.</p>
<p>DfES &amp; DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Core Standards</i></p>	<p>This is the core document of the National Service Framework (NSF) for Children, Young People and Maternity Services. It contains the first five standards of the Children's NSF, which apply to all children and young people. The five standards are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- promoting health and well-being</li> <li>- identifying needs and intervening early</li> <li>- supporting parenting, child, young person and family-centred services</li> <li>- growing up into adulthood</li> <li>- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p>Fathers are recognised as being as important as mothers in caring for a child and a child's development. The document indicates that the role of fathers in parenting their children is frequently overlooked, yet their contribution to their child's development and well-being is important. The document outlines that research shows the significance of fathers in influencing their children's lives in a positive way. Children who have fathers living in the same household receive on average a third of their parenting from their fathers. Fathers' availability to their children is of vital importance, as is their sharing in the wider responsibilities of parenthood.</p>
<p>DfES &amp; DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services Disabled Children and Young People and those with complex health needs.</i></p>	<p>The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services establishes clear standards for promoting the health and well-being of children and young people and for providing high quality services that meet their needs.</p> <p>This standard addresses the requirements of children and young people who are disabled and/or who have complex health needs and their families. The aim of the standard is that children and young people who are disabled or who have complex health needs receive co-ordinated, high-quality child and family-centred services which are based on assessed needs, which promote social inclusion and where possible, which enable them and their families to live ordinary lives.</p>	<p>Fathers play an integral role in the family when a child is disabled or has complex health needs. However, research shows that many feel excluded from certain aspects of their child's care. Improved support, information and opportunities to access services can lead to a father feeling much more involved in the care of his child.</p>

<p>DfES &amp; DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Maternity Services</i></p>	<p>This standard addresses the requirements of women and their babies during pregnancy, birth and after birth. It includes women's partners and their families; and it addresses and links to pre- and post-conception health promotion and the Child Health Promotion Programme.</p>	<p>It is recognised that fathers may play a significant influence and support for women using the service. Maternity services should therefore seek to engage fathers. Involvement of prospective and new fathers in a child's life is extremely important for maximising the life-long well-being and outcomes of the child (regardless of whether the father is resident or not). Pregnancy and birth are the first major opportunities to engage fathers in the appropriate care and upbringing of their children. A positive relationship with the young woman during pregnancy is a key predictor of the father's involvement with his child in the early years, however health professionals may not know enough about how to engage with fathers.</p>
<p>DfES (2004) <i>Engaging Fathers: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement</i></p>	<p>This booklet identifies that taking action to include both parents in the life of the school and in their children's learning can make a significant and positive difference to children's achievements, motivation and self-esteem. It also goes on to argue that engaging fathers in their children's education can make a significant difference to the lives of both child and father well beyond the years of school-based learning.</p>	<p>This entire booklet gives advice and guidance on why and how to engage fathers in school life, not only for the benefit of the child, but also the family relationship. The document presents some of the key research findings that demonstrate the positive gains of including fathers, how schools can take positive action to involve fathers and develop long-term links and how establishing a relationship with the local authority can help engage fathers.</p>
<p>DfES, DH and Home Office (2000) <i>Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families</i></p>	<p>The assessment framework is a guidance document, setting out how professionals (primarily in social services, but also other services such as education and health) should analyse, understand and record what is happening to children and their families.</p>	<p>The guidance makes clear that assessors should gather information about and from all relevant family members (whether resident or not) and to be clear about the parenting tasks of fathers and father figures alongside those of mothers or mother figures.</p>

### **Financial framework**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Recognition and support of fathers</b>
HM Government (2005) <i>Planning and Funding Extended Schools: A Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and Their Partners</i>	The guidance is intended to help schools plan and fund their extended opportunities in order to best support children, young people and families and meet local needs, as well as to build on existing provision in the private and voluntary sectors	Parents should be involved in shaping the new services, which may require special activities to engage with fathers and mothers. No specific financial implications are set out in relation to this.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Recognition and support of fathers</b>
Self Evaluation Form for Sure Start Children Centres	The self evaluation form is intended to support the Sure Start Children's Centre and the local authority to improve performance and build capacity. It will provide a focus for the annual performance management conversation between the authority and the centre. It is designed to monitor impact and inform planning for the next year	Sure Start Children's Centres are asked to list what they have done to involve fathers, how fathers have been involved in the planning of services, what proportion of fathers have accessed services, any targeted activities. They should outline how they have sought the views of fathers, including those who are not directly involved in the Sure Start Children's Centre.

## ANNEX C – LIST OF REVIEWED POLICY DOCUMENTS

Title	Policy type	Parent defined as specifically including fathers	Explicit mention of fathers
DCSF (2007) <i>Duty to Provide Information, Advice and Assistance: Guidance for Local Authorities Childcare Act 2006</i>	Legislation	Yes	Yes
DfES (2007) <i>Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage</i>	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2007) <i>School Admissions Code</i>	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2007) <i>Statutory Guidance on Schools Causing Concern</i>	Legislation	No	No
The Children and Young People's Plan (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007	Legislation	No	No
Education, England <i>The School Governance Procedures (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2007</i>	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2007) <i>Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004</i>	Legislation	Yes	No
Childcare Act (2006)	Legislation	No	No
Education and Inspections Act (2006)	Legislation	No	No
Children and Adoption Act (2006)	Legislation	Yes	No
DfES (2006) <i>Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education</i>	Legislation	No	No
The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Public Authorities) (Statutory Duties) Order 2006	Legislation	No	No
Equality Act (2006)	Legislation	No	No
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)	Legislation	No	No
Children Act (2004)	Legislation	No	No
Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations (2004)	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2003) <i>National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding: Childminding</i>	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2003) <i>National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding: Full Day Care</i>	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2003) <i>National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding: Out of School Care</i>	Legislation	No	No

DfES (2003) <i>National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding: Sessional Care</i>	Legislation	No	No
DfES (2003) <i>National Standards for Under 8s Day Care and Childminding: Crèches</i>	Legislation	No	No
Education Act (2002)	Legislation	No	No
Adoption and Children Act (2002)	Legislation	Yes	Yes
DfES (2001) <i>Special Educational Needs Code of Practice</i>	Legislation	No	Yes
Children Act (1989)	Legislation	No	Yes
The Childcare (Provision of Information) (England) Regulations	Legislation	No	No
DfES <i>Responsibility to Provide Full-time Education and Reintegrate Permanently Excluded Pupils</i>	Legislation	No	No
DCSF (2007) <i>The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
DfES (2007) <i>Every Parent Matters</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
HM Treasury & DfES (2007) <i>Aiming High for Children: Supporting Families</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
HM Treasury & DfES (2007) <i>Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities</i>	Top level policy	No	No
HM Treasury & DfES (2007) <i>Aiming High for Disabled Children: Better Support for Families</i>	Top level policy	No	No
DfES (2007) <i>Children's Workforce Strategy: Building an Integrated Qualifications Framework, Update Spring 2007</i>	Top level policy	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care</i>	Top level policy	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Youth Matters: Next Steps, Something to do, Somewhere to go, Someone to Talk to</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
DfES (2006) <i>Children's Workforce Strategy: Building an Integrated Qualifications Framework</i>	Top level policy	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners: Maintaining the Excellent Progress</i>	Top level policy	No	Yes
DfES (2006) <i>Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care</i>	Top level policy	No	No
Home Office (2006) <i>Respect Action Plan</i>	Top level policy	No	No
DfES (2005) <i>Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils</i>	Top level policy	No	No
Sure Start (2005) <i>Ten Year Strategy for Childcare: Guidance for Local</i>	Top level policy	No	No

<i>Authorities</i>			
HM Government (2005) <i>Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parental Responsibilities – Next Steps</i>	Top level policy	No	Yes
HM Treasury, DfES, DWP, DTI (2004) <i>Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: a Ten Year Strategy for Childcare</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
HM Government (2004) <i>Parental Separation: Children's Needs and Parental Responsibilities</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
DfES (2004) <i>Department for Education and Skills: Five Year Strategy for Children and Learners</i>	Top level policy	No	Yes
DfES (2004) <i>Removing Barriers to Achievement: The Government's Strategy for SEN</i>	Top level policy	No	No
HM Treasury (2003) <i>Every Child Matters</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
DfES (2007) <i>National Standards for Leaders of Sure Start Children's Centres</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
DfES (2007) <i>Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
DfES (2007) <i>Targeted Youth Support: A guide</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DCSF (2007) <i>Guidance on Education-Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DCSF & DH (2007) <i>Teenage Parents Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts</i>	Top level policy	Yes	Yes
HM Government (2007) <i>Extended Schools: Building on Experience</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES (2007) <i>Governance Guidance for Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Schools</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
DfES (2007) <i>Providing Full Time Education from Day Six of a Permanent Exclusion: Implementation and Good Practice Guidance for Local Authorities</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2007) <i>Providing Full Time Education from Day Six of a Permanent Exclusion: Implementation and Good Practice Guidance for Schools, Including PRUs</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DCSF (2007) <i>Setting up a Parent Council: A Resource Pack</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
DCSF (2007) <i>Staying Safe: A Consultation Document</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
MoJ, YJB & DCSF (2007) <i>Parenting Contracts and Orders Guidance</i>	Workforce and	No	Yes

	service delivery		
TDA (2007) <i>National Occupational Standards for Supporting Teaching and Learning</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
EOC (2007) <i>The Gender Equality Duty and Local Government: Guidance for Public Authorities in England</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES (2006) <i>The lead professional: Managers guide. Integrated working to improve outcomes for children and young people</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
DfES (2006) <i>The lead professional: Practitioners guide. Integrated working to improve outcomes for children and young people</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Primary National Strategy: Excellence and Enjoyment: Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning – Family SEAL</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Parenting Support: Guidance for Local Authorities in England</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
DfES &DH (2006) <i>Teenage Pregnancy Next Steps: Guidance for Local Authorities and Primary Care Trusts on Effective Delivery of Local Strategies</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES (2006) <i>Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
HM Government (2006) <i>Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: Managers' Guide</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
HM Government (2006) <i>Common Assessment Framework for Children and Young People: Practitioners' Guide</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
DfES (2006) <i>Disability Equality Scheme</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Gender Equality Scheme</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES (2006) <i>Race Equality Scheme</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres: Practice Guidance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
Sure Start (2006) <i>Sure Start Children's Centres: Planning and Performance Management Guidance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
HM Government (2006) <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to Inter-Agency Working to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Home Office (2006) <i>The Respect Handbook: A Guide for Local</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No

<i>Services</i>			
Home Office (2006) <i>Respect: Family Intervention Projects</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
TDA (2006) <i>Role Specific Initial Training for PSAs. Module A Handbook: Working in partnership with parents</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
TDA (2006) <i>Role Specific Initial Training for PSAs. Module B Handbook: Working together for child and family wellbeing</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
HM Government (2005) <i>Every Child Matters: Change for Children – Young People and Drugs</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2005) <i>How to Source Parenting Provision</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
HM Government (2005) <i>Extended Schools: Access to Opportunities and Services for All – A Prospectus</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES (2005) <i>Guidance on the Children and Young People’s plan</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board (2005) <i>Working with Local Criminal Justice Boards: Guidance for youth offending teams</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2005) <i>How to Source Parenting Provision: A guide to sourcing suitable parenting provision aimed in particular at local authority and school staff wishing to support parents in order to improve their children’s behaviour or attendance at school</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
HM Government (2005) <i>Common Core of Knowledge for the Children’s Workforce</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2004) <i>National Standards for Head Teachers</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board (2004) <i>National Standards for Youth Justice Service</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board (2004) <i>Key Elements of Effective Practice – Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
DfES (2004) <i>Guide for Parents: Parenting Contracts</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Core Standards</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Disabled Children and Young People and Those with Complex Health Needs</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service</i>	Workforce and	No	No

<i>Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Children and Young People who are Ill</i>	service delivery		
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Medicines for Children and Young People</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: The Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing of Children and Young People</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Maternity Services</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES & DH (2004) <i>National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services: Supporting Local Delivery</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES & DH (2004) <i>Children's and Maternity Services Information Strategy – Supporting the Children's, Young People and Maternity Services National Service Framework</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
DfES (2004) <i>Engaging Fathers: Involving parents, raising achievement</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
LEA 2004 <i>Identifying and Maintaining Contact with Children Missing or At Risk of Going Missing from Education: Process Steps, Good Practice Guide</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2003) <i>Materials for Schools: Involving Parents, Raising Achievement</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
PAULO, Connexions, DfES, TOPSS, NTO (2003) <i>National Occupational Standards for Learning, Development and Support Services for Children, Young People and Those Who Care For Them: Support Materials for Those Co-ordinating and Supporting Learning Mentor Provision</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
PAULO, Connexions, DfES, TOPSS, NTO (2003) <i>Development of National Occupational Standards and a Qualification Structure for Learning, Development and Support Services for Children, Young People and Those Who Care For Them: Value Base to Support the Standards</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No

Youth Justice Board (2002) <i>The National Specification for Learning and Skills: For young people on a Detention and Training Order in Prison Service Accommodation</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Sure Start (2000) <i>Foundation Stage: Planning for Learning</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfEE (2000) <i>Performance Management in Schools: Performance Management Framework</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES, DH and Home Office (2000) <i>Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	Yes
Common Assessment Framework self-evaluation form	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Guidance for Youth Offending Teams on Achieving Equality (B36)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Guidance for Youth Justice Teams on Information Sharing (B47)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board (2006) <i>Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements: Guidance for Youth Offending Teams</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Mentoring: Key Elements of Effective Practice (Edition 1)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES <i>Commissioning, Monitoring and Quality Assuring Alternative Provision</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES <i>Quality Standards for Young People's Information, Advice and Guidance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DCSF <i>Home-School Agreements: Guidance for Schools</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES <i>Reading Connects: Family Engagement – A Toolkit for Schools</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	Yes
Youth Justice Board <i>Offending Behaviour Programmes</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Offending Behaviour Programmes: Key elements of effective practice (edition 1)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Parenting: Key elements of effective practice (edition 1)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Resettlement: Key elements of effective practice (edition 1)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Sustaining the Success: Extending the Guidance: Establishing Youth Offending Teams</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Targeted</i>	Workforce and	No	No

<i>Neighbourhood Prevention Programmes: Key elements of effective delivery (edition 1)</i>	service delivery		
<i>Youth Justice Board Education, Training and Employment: Key elements of effective delivery (edition 1)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>Youth Justice Board Parenting</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>Youth Justice Board Youth Resettlement: A framework for action</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>Sure Start Birth to Three Matters (including: introduction; a healthy child; a skilful communicator; a strong child)</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>CWDC Early Years Professional National Standards</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES and DH Options for Excellence: Building for Social Care Workforce for the Future</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DCSF Guidance for Local Authorities and Schools: PRUs and Alternative Provision</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>Advice and Guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Attendance and Behaviour: Handling Signs of Disaffection</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES Equality Impact Assessment Regulations Extending Use of Behaviour- Related Parenting Contracts, Parenting Orders and Penalty Notices</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES Advice to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: groups of pupils at particular risk</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfEE Education of Young People in Public Care: Guidance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES Locating advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES Locating advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Pupil Attendance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>Guidance to LEAs on the use of PACE in prosecutions for irregular school attendance</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES Advice and Guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: responsibility for educating pupils out of school and re-integrating them into school</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
<i>DfES Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: the legal framework for school discipline</i>	Workforce and service delivery	Yes	No

DfES <i>Advice and guidance to Schools and Local Authorities on Managing Behaviour and Attendance: making reports to the courts</i>	Workforce and service delivery	No	No
DfES (2007) <i>Grant for Parenting in Respect Areas 2007-08</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>General Sure Start Grant Allocations 2006/07 and 2007/08</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund Guidance Notes</i>	Financial framework	No	No
HM Government (2006) <i>Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Parenting Early Intervention Grant: Conditions of Grant and Guidance</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Dedicated Schools Grant: Guidance for Local Authorities on the Operation of the Grant 2006/07 and 2007/08</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2006) <i>Addendum to Standards Fund Circular</i>	Financial Framework	No	No
DfES (2005) <i>Children's Fund Grant Conditions</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2005) <i>Children's Fund Financial Guidance</i>	Financial framework	No	No
DfES (2005) <i>Children's Fund Strategic Plan Guidance 2005-2008</i>	Financial framework	No	No
HM Government (2005) <i>Planning and Funding Extended Schools: A Guide for Schools, Local Authorities and Their Partners</i>	Financial framework	No	Yes
Ofsted (2007) <i>Inspection of Children's Services: grade descriptors</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2007) <i>Are you ready for your inspection? A guide to inspections of childcare and nursery education conducted by Ofsted</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2005) <i>Every Child Matters Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2005) <i>Framework for the inspection of initial teacher training for the award of qualified teacher status 2005-2011</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2004) <i>A New Relationship with Schools: Improving Performance through Schools Self-Evaluation</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2004) <i>Handbook for inspecting local authority youth services</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No

Ofsted (2003) <i>Area Inspection Framework: A supplement to the Common Inspection Framework</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2001) <i>Crèches: Guidance to the National Standards</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2001) <i>Full Day Care: Guidance to the National Standards</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2001) <i>Sessional Day Care: Guidance to the National Standards</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Ofsted (2001) <i>Inspecting Youth Work: a revised framework for inspection</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Youth Justice Board <i>Monitoring Performance and Improving Practice</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No
Self Evaluation Form for Sure Start Children's Centres	Monitoring and evaluation	No	Yes
Ofsted <i>The Common Inspection Framework for inspecting education and training</i>	Monitoring and evaluation	No	No

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