WHAT DO FATHERS IN ADVERSITY NEED?

Sarah Rogers
Brock Lueck
Alan McMaster

Chaired by Paul Bradshaw
How non-resident dads can stay connected

Sarah Rogers
Centre for Research on Families & Relationships University of Edinburgh
Background

• PhD project exploring child well-being in non-resident father households in children’s early years.

• 28% children living in a lone parent household headed by mother in 92% of cases (Scottish Census, 2011).

• Over 50% of births in 2014 registered to unmarried parents.

• 11% of births registered to non-cohabiting couples.

• 5% of births registered solely by mother (GRO, 2015)

• Fragility of cohabiting relationships in children’s early years (Goodman & Greaves, 2010).

• Increasing evidence of importance of children’s early years experiences for later life outcomes (Woodhead, 2006).
Data & Methods

• **Growing Up in Scotland study:** a large scale longitudinal study – following the lives of a national sample of children from infancy onwards.

  • **Birth cohort 1:** approximately 5000 children born between June 2004 and May 2005 – data collected annually from families when children aged between 10 months and just under 6 years then periodically until children in Primary 6.

• **Current analysis** uses data from sweeps 1-4 to explore the circumstances and characteristics associated with the maintenance of contact at age four.
Using maternal reported data to explore non-resident fatherhood

• Limitation of current research?
• But, importance of understanding the circumstances and characteristics of resident mothers associated with the maintenance of contact.
Non-resident fatherhood in GUS at age 4

- 21% of children had a non-resident father
- 33% of children with a non-resident father were not currently in contact
Research question

What circumstances and characteristics are associated with the maintenance of contact between non-resident fathers and their children in the early years?
Correlates of contact

• Child characteristics: gender, age
• Parental relationship history: father ever resident, parents ever married
• Circumstances surrounding the pregnancy: pregnancy jointly planned, maternal perceptions of fathers’ happiness on learning of pregnancy, fathers’ attendance at ante-natal classes
Correlates of contact

- Socio-economic characteristics: maternal age at birth of child, maternal level of education, maternal ethnicity, maternal employment, household income
- Situational factors: maternal relationship status, presence of siblings in household
Factors associated with maintenance of contact

Parental relationship history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Father previously resident</th>
<th>Parents previously married</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All non-resident father households</td>
<td>Contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father previously resident</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents previously married</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors associated with maintenance of contact

Circumstances surrounding the pregnancy

- Pregnancy jointly planned: 30%
  - All non-resident father households: 33%
  - Father happy on learning of pregnancy: 13%
  - Father attended antenatal classes

- Contact

- No contact
Factors associated with maintenance of contact

Maternal age at birth of child

- Mother under 20 at birth of child
  - All non-resident father households: 23%
  - Contact: 20%
  - No contact: 30%
Factors associated with maintenance of contact

Maternal employment

- All non-resident father households
- Contact
- No contact

50% of all non-resident father households have contact, whereas 45% do not.
Factors associated with maintenance of contact

Maternal relationship status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lone mother household</th>
<th>All non-resident father households</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>No contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors associated with the maintenance of contact

- Multivariate analyses indicated there to be a higher likelihood of contact occurring where:
  - Father had been previously resident
  - Parents had been previously married
  - Pregnancy had been jointly planned
  - Mother is a lone parent
Implications

• Supporting the inter-parental relationship from pre-birth and beyond.

• Working with parents to promote the potential benefits of contact for both parents and children.

• The role of ante-natal and post-natal services?
References

• Office for National Statistics. (2014) 2011 Census: Lone parent households with dependent children, Table KS107UK [data file]
Brock Lueck, Manager
Fathers Support Service
One Parent Families Scotland
What do single and contact dads need?
Engaging Fathers

- a Mellow Parenting experience

- Alan McMaster
- (Development officer – Mellow Parenting)
Charity incorporated in 2006 based in Govan
- Research, design and implementation
- Created a family of attachment/relationship based parenting interventions from the antenatal period until the child is around 3 years old
- Training organisation
- Typical client group -
  - Children on child protection register
  - Drug/alcohol issues
  - Mental illness
  - Domestic Abuse
  - Involved with Criminal Justice system
What is Mellow Parenting and Mellow Dads?
Positive involvement of fathers has been implicated in the subsequent development of fewer behaviour problems and improved cognitive outcomes (Ramchandani, 2013).

Lack of paternal responsiveness is associated with multiple indicators of poor child outcome, including social and academic impairment (Wilson 2010).

Fathers have very low participation in family learning programmes not targeted at men (Goldman.R (2005))
14 week parenting group work, mirroring the Mellow Mums programme but with a gender specific angle with a view to engaging Fathers/Male carers

- Works on examining past history
- Video work - Exploration of father child interaction
- Practical sessions with children
Three year roll out of Mellow Dads across Scotland, funded by BIG Lottery (TSEIF)

Targeted to deliver 5 groups per year of the fund

Delivered 23 in years 1 and 2, with 19 planned for year 3

Attrition rate of 20.3%

Preliminary qualitative and quantitative data is very encouraging
* Indicates significance (p<.05)
n = 50
* Indicates significance (p<.05)
n = 31

Parenting Daily Hassles Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>0.015*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassle</td>
<td>0.005*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Tasks</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging Behaviour</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Indicates significance (p<.05)

n = 38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Problems</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct Problems</td>
<td>.007*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperactivity</td>
<td>.006*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Problems</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial Behaviour</td>
<td>.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mellow Dads in Prison

- Pilot in HMP Greenock
- Different group structure due to prison rules
- 5 Dads completed pilot
- Process evaluation complete and to be published
Mellow Dads to be
Mellow Dads to be

- Designed to help reduce levels of stress for dads-to-be during pregnancy
- Increase understanding of dads positive and important role during pregnancy
- Improve understanding of child brain development and the importance of early interaction
- Activity based groups, each week one activity will focus on the dad and another on the baby itself
Third year of evaluation should see over 125 families benefit from the intervention, across Scotland.

Mellow Dads in prison to be evaluated for feasibility and effectiveness

Fathers antenatal programme to be shaped by initial feedback and further evaluated for feasibility and effectiveness

Year of the dad 2016

Increased use of Mellow Dads as a tool to engage male carers to improve child outcomes.
Any questions?

Mellow Parenting
Phone: 0141 445 6120
Email: alan@mellowparenting.org
DISCUSSION