WHAT DO CHILDREN NEED FROM FATHERS?

Colin Morrison
Tim Porteus/Alison Cameron/Chris Wilson
Gary Clapton

Chaired by Sarah Morton
YEAR OF THE DAD:
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Children’s Parliament

- We work with children from their early years through middle childhood to 14 years of age, occasionally older young people too (and of course the adults in their lives).
- Children’s human rights and the idea of human dignity are at the heart of everything we do.
- Our interest is in children’s voices and effective participation at home, in the community, in school, in services and policy development.
- We use creative and participatory approaches.
- Our work recognises the effort we need to make to engage all children.
- We ‘model’ how we want others to be with children; we provide training and support.
- We love and value children. It’s all about relationships.
Every child should be healthy, happy and safe when they are at home, at school and in the community.

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WE INTRODUCE CHILDREN AND ADULTS TO THE INTUITIVE IDEA OF HUMAN DIGNITY

• Every human being is important and special. We call this human dignity.

• Respect for human dignity means that we should be friendly and kind to others and it is wrong to hurt other people or make them feel bad about themselves.

• No matter how others treat you, they never have the right to take away your human dignity.

• When you learn what human dignity means to you, you are less likely to accept when other people hurt, discriminate or put someone down.

Thinking about children: What do you think a life lived with dignity means?
Dignity on the...
Our original Dads Project took place during the development of the National Parenting Strategy. We wanted to celebrate dads and their role in family life.

The purpose was to listen and respect the views of children in relation to their Dads and the role of fathers.

50 children from 5 communities took part in the initial workshops; drawing, talking and using technology to create digital portraits.

http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/dads-project.html

16 children recently revisited the topic with us and talked more about what children need from their Dad.

Who is a Dad? Our work recognises many men have a parenting role, children have talked about birth dads, stepdads, uncles and grandads.
• What are the best things about being a Dad?
• What are the challenges that Dads face?
• What do children need from their Dads?
What are the best things about being a Dad?

Spending time together and having fun, going on trips and walks.

Having children, just being a Dad and feeling proud, watching your children grow up.

Having someone to talk to, encouraging your children and giving them help and advice.

Your kids make you feel young again.
What are the challenges that Dads face?

Too much work and not spending enough time with your children.

Earning money, having enough money for food and paying the bills.

Trying to get your kids to do things. Keeping your children safe and worrying about their future.

Making the right decisions.

Being asked questions but not having the time to answer.

Being far away.
I think the biggest challenge for my Dad is money and because of how little he was being paid, it stops him doing stuff with me. Things cost a lot of money and he needs to look after me. He likes taking me to football and seeing me grow up. He wants me to do good with my education. Emma P7
This picture is my grandad and me. It’s our journey on a dirt track and there are our bikes. It feels very good because you go up jumps and you go fast. The watch is for the time he has to be at work and can’t be with me. Jamie P7
Me and my Dad are having ice-cream by the tour bus he drives. Some tourists kept taking pictures and buying me more ice-cream. Me and my Dad have a good relationship. He is a kind and good man. Me and him have fun playing video games or going to our local arcade whenever we get to see each other. Charlie P7
What do children need from their Dads?

Your Dad accepts you for who you are.
Kindness, forgiveness and respect.
Have fun, play together and spend time together.
Always be there – to live with your Dad.
Be calm, don’t argue with Mum.
Help with homework.
Your Dad tells you he loves you.
“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works... Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.”
Eleanor Roosevelt

www.childrensparliament.org.uk
Twitter: @creative Voices
MAKING SCHOOLS DAD-FRIENDLY

TIM PORTEUS
ALISON CAMERON
CHRIS WILSON
What do children want from their fathers?

Gary Clapton
University of Edinburgh
A simple question?

• ‘Research on fatherhood is adult-centred’ (Hietanen et al, 2013, p.1827)

• Special populations such as children of neglectful fathers, after parent’s separation, where there is domestic violence and so on

• Depends on who you ask, and ages
What do we know?

• economic provision, care and love (mentioned particularly by girls), and involvement in the domestic life of families. (O’Brien and Jones 1996)

• fathers ‘not okay’ if they were not there for their children, poor disciplinarians, abusive or aggressive, or if they involved children in parental disputes. Hendricks (1999)

• gendered divisions of responsibility, i.e., while mothers dealt with childcare and home maintenance, fathers were seen as financial providers. (Mayall 2001)
Four relevant studies

*What Do Children Need from their Fathers?*
Milligan and Dowie 1998: #1

- a potentially positive role model; e.g. employed or active around the house “doing the dishes”

- quality time; e.g. “going shopping with my Dad”

- supportive behaviour; e.g. “asks how your day was”
Three of these four studies involve a narrower age range (10-12 year olds) and are from contrasting cultures, and are more recent.

Richter and Smith (2006) #2

• A wide range of men can fulfil the father role

• Children have a need for a secure, constant and loving father-figure

• Appreciation of fathers’ involvement in domestic work (as an expression of love and affection towards mother and themselves)

• Children managed the contradictions between idealisation and the reality of fathers’ imperfections and inadequacies

• Hurt and anguish in the face of father absence, neglect and cruelty.
“‘Virtuoso ideal daddy’: Finnish children’s perceptions of good fatherhood’ #3 (Finland.)

Hietanen, R., Maatta, K. and Uusiautti, S. (2013)
Seven views from children in Finland

• the active father spending plenty of time with children
• the caring and nurturing father
• the disciplinarian father
• the exemplary father
• the father in a respected position
• the father participating in household work
• the fair father
Dads Project 2014

Children’s Parliament, Scotland
Dads Project #4

• Role model

• Spending time together (e.g. trips and walks but just fun): ‘throughout all the workshops, children expressed a desire to spend more time with their fathers’
Looking back to childhood?

Cawson et al, 2000
• Fathers were consistently less likely to be seen as offering closeness, support, and good role models than were mothers

• a fifth of the sample were ‘sometimes really afraid of their fathers or stepfathers’.
Thank You.