



FATHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS AND CHILDREN'S WELLBEING

This briefing summarises the key findings from the report
'Growing Up in Scotland: Father-child relationships and child
socio-emotional wellbeing'.

It is based on 2593 couple families from the Growing Up in
Scotland (GUS) longitudinal study each with a ten-year old child.
The following report provides a summary of the results and
makes recommendations for policy and practice.



KEY FINDINGS

FATHER-CHILD AND MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS



MATTER EQUALLY FOR CHILDREN'S WELLBEING



MORE THAN 8 OUT OF 10 TEN-YEAR-OLDS PERCEIVE THEIR FATHERS AS SUPPORTIVE

£ POVERTY PREDICTS LESS SUPPORTIVE FATHER-CHILD AND MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS



GOOD COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS PREDICT SUPPORTIVE FATHER-CHILD AND MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS



CHILDREN ARE LESS LIKELY TO PERCEIVE ALTERNATIVE RESIDENT FATHER FIGURES AS SUPPORTIVE (COMPARED WITH BIOLOGICAL RESIDENT FATHERS)



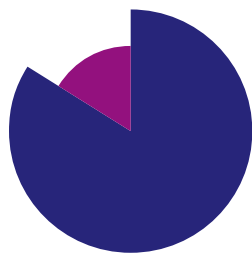
Background

The quality of parent-child attachment during middle childhood (6 to 12 years) is likely to set the foundation for later development of adolescent mental health¹. So the children in GUS families were asked a series of questions to measure the level of supportiveness of each parent, in order to understand what might determine the quality of parent-child relationships and how this influences other aspects of children's wellbeing.



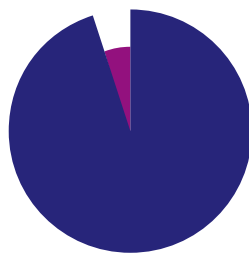
Quality of father-child relationships

As reported by 10 year old children in the GUS families.



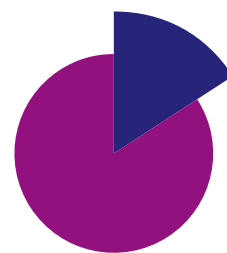
84%

of father-child relationships are classified as 'good' or 'excellent' in terms of the level of supportiveness.



95%

perceive good or excellent levels of supportiveness from one or both resident parents.



16%

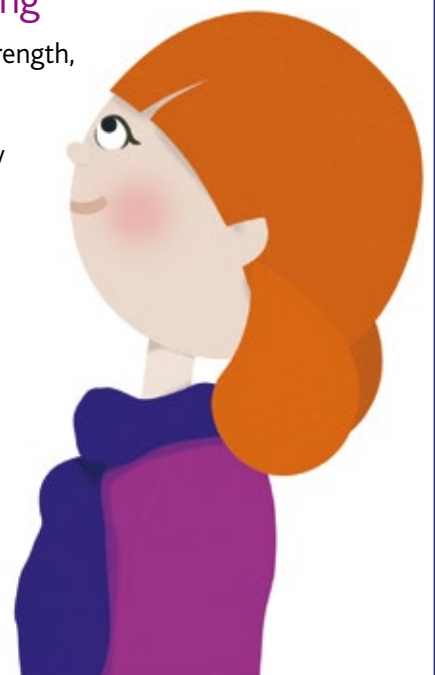
of ten-year-olds perceive a lower level of supportiveness from their resident father.

Father-child relationships and impact on children's wellbeing

The effect of supportiveness from each parent on wellbeing appear similar in strength, and equally important for girls and boys.

Conversely, lower supportiveness from either father or mother are independently associated with:

- low social and emotional wellbeing (as measured by the SDQ, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)
- low life satisfaction (as reported by children)
- low wellbeing at school (poor school adjustment, disliking school and having a poor relationship with the teacher)



¹ Bosmans, G. and K. A. Kerns (2015). Attachment in Middle Childhood: Progress and Prospects. Attachment in Middle Childhood: Theoretical Advances and New Directions in an Emerging Field. G. Bosmans and K. A. Kerns. 148: 1-14.

What next?

Fathers and mothers matter equally for children's wellbeing, underlining the principle that both parents should be regarded as important for improving child health and wellbeing.

In the great majority of families, children perceived their parents as highly supportive. Practitioners and policy makers should consider how to strengthen father-child relationships in a minority of families to improve children's socio-emotional wellbeing by:

- Improving access to parenting support for families with low economic and coping resources
- Using a whole family approach to identify difficulties and strengths to support families
- Creating a better understanding of the challenges facing resident partners who are not the child's biological father, and how support services can be developed to meet their needs.

The report was commissioned by the Scottish Government as part of Year of the Dad 2016. The report was written by Alison Parkes, Julie Riddell, Daniel Wight and Katie Buston at the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit at the University of Glasgow. This briefing was produced by Fathers Network Scotland, and the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships at the University of Edinburgh.

The full report is available from
www.gov.scot/growingupinscotland-fatherchildrelations



 @FathersNetScot

 FathersNetworkScotland

www.fathersnetwork.org.uk

Fathers Network Scotland is funded by Scottish Government
Scottish Registered Charity SCO41341 Registered Company SC38455