

# How do workplaces and work-family policy influence dads' involvement at home?

**Dr Helen Norman**  
**University of Manchester**

**21<sup>st</sup> June 2017**

**Fathers Network Scotland:  
'How employers can #dadup'**

**Lloyds Banking Group, Edinburgh, Scotland**

# Presentation outline

- **Introduction**
  - How work and care is divided in the UK
- **Work-family policies in the UK**
  - Shared Parental leave, childcare, flexible working
- **Our project: Which fathers are involved in looking after their children?**
  - Helen Norman, Mark Elliot and Colette Fagan, University of Manchester.
  - Project partner: *Working Families*
  - <http://projects.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/involved-fathers/>
- **Conclusions**



# How work and care is divided in the UK

- Men are doing more childcare and housework than they used to, but still do much less than women.
- Ideas about what it means to be a 'good' father have shifted to include being involved in childcare, but being the (main) economic provider remains important.
- Women often switch to part-time employment after having children.
  - *Employment rate for mothers with dependent children (aged <5) = 61% in 2014. Of those in employment, 54.3% worked part-time (ONS, 2014).*
- Mothers with a pre-school child are more likely to work full-time if they are in a well paid or manager/senior professional position.
- This 'one-and-a-half earner' family model is perpetuated by public policy and widespread beliefs that children suffer if their mothers are employed full-time.

# Work-family policies in the UK

- Long maternity leave
- Short period of paternity leave
- Parental leave – recently reformed to facilitate take up amongst fathers
- Pre-school childcare
- ‘Right to request’ part-time or flexible hours

*But do these policies help mothers and fathers strike a satisfactory balance between work and care?*



# Shared Parental leave (SPL)

- SPL is a new right for parents with children born or adopted after 5 April 2015
- Eligible parents can share 50 weeks' leave and 37 weeks' pay available to the mother
- Benefits:
  - More flexible – leave can be taken in one week blocks
  - Parents can take leave simultaneously

*However, so far take up has been low...*

***0.6% of eligible fathers took APL in 2011-12***

***2-8% of fathers estimated to take up SPL***

***1% of male employees, out of 200 organisations surveyed, took SPL in 2015 (My Family Care, 2015)***

# Fathers Network Scotland's assessment of SPL

- SPL is an important step in the right direction
- Accelerates a cultural shift towards an acceptance of fathers as hands-on parents
- Although only 1% of male employees surveyed by *My Family Care* had taken SPL in 2015, many were positive about using it in the future
- Research by FNS (2015) suggests that taking leave soon after the birth of a child enables fathers to be more engaged employees. However:
  - Financial constraints are a major obstacle for sharing leave
  - SPL is still perceived negatively at work
  - Mothers are often reluctant to give up part of their maternity leave
- SPL should be an individual right and properly paid

Sources:

Thorpe, N. (2015): Shared Parental Leave is here! Fathers Network Scotland blog post

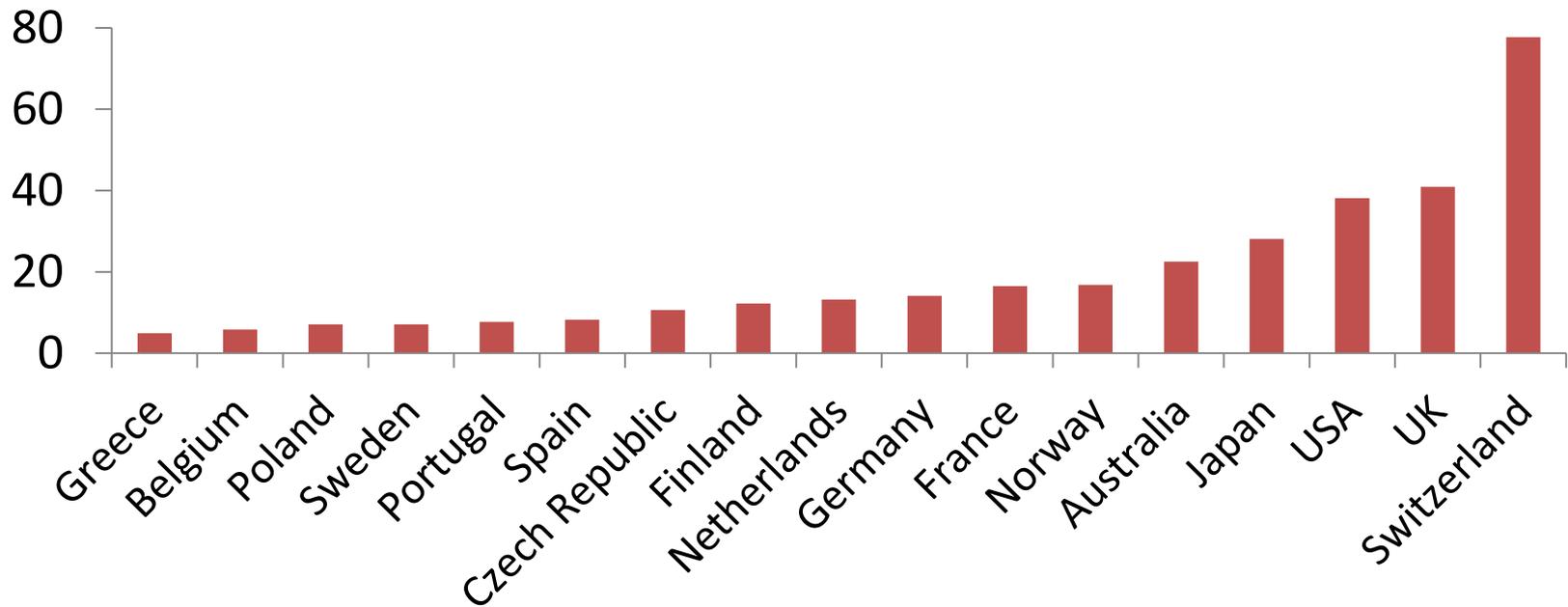
Fathers Network Scotland (2015) Fathers in the Early Years, Scottish Government: Edinburgh

Fathers Network Scotland (2017): Written submission to the *Fathers and the Workplace* Govt. Enquiry

# Childcare

- Free, part-time early education for all 3-4 year olds (and extended to 40% of disadvantaged 2 year olds in 2014)
- Tax free childcare

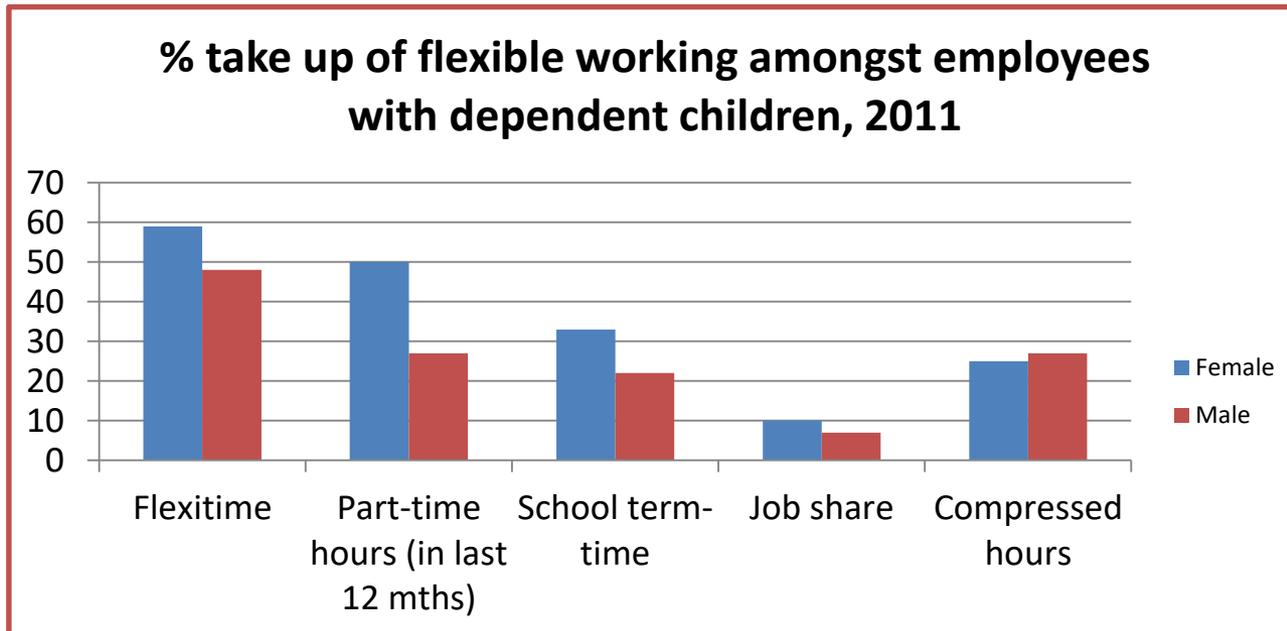
Net cost of childcare, % of average wage



Source: OECD, 2011

# Flexible working

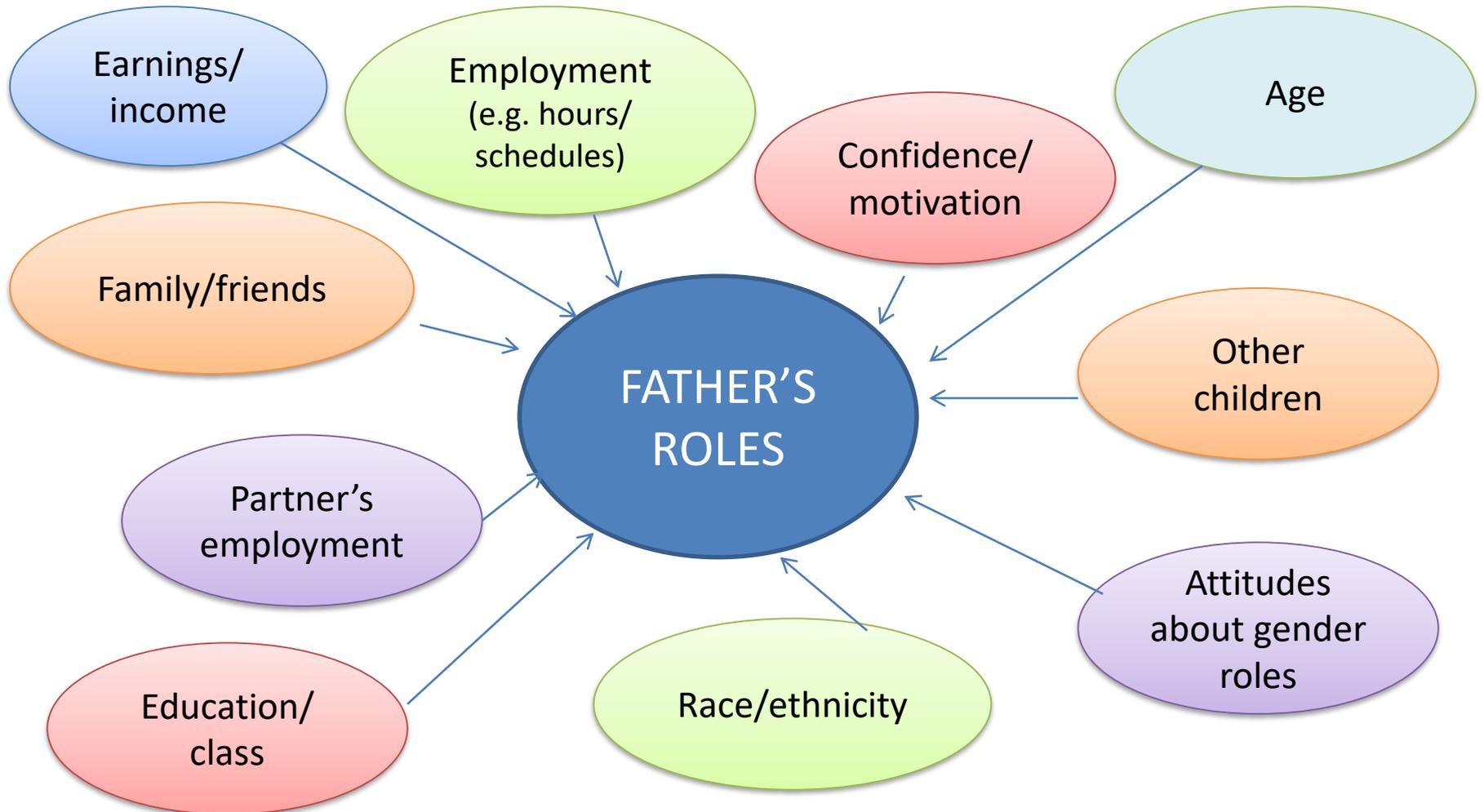
- ‘Right to request’ flexible working (introduced in 2003; extended in 2007, 2009 and 2014).
  - In 2011, 28% of employed women and 17% of employed men made a RTR
  - Most requests were accepted (approx. 60%) but men were more likely to have their requests declined (18%) compared to women (10%).



Source: Fourth Work-Life Balance Survey, 2011 (n= 2,765)

# What influences father involvement?

*What do we know from previous research?*



# Which fathers are involved in looking after their children?

## Identifying the conditions associated with paternal involvement

- **Research questions:**

- What influences father involvement in childcare at different time points of a child's life? (i.e. 9 months, 3, 5, 8 and 11 years old)
- Does a father's childcare and employment behaviour in the first year of a child's life affect how involved he is when the child is older?
- Does paternal involvement impact on the stability of the relationship between the mother and the father?

- **Data:**

- Longitudinal analysis of information at 5 points in a child's life ( at 9 months, 3 years, 5 years, 8 years and 11 years old) from the UK's **Millennium Cohort Study** (2000-2012).

# What influences dads to be involved?

## Focus for today

- Fathers' involvement when the child was 9 months old (2001/2) and subsequently when the child was 3 years old (2003/4) in two-parent heterosexual households.
- >9,000 households across the UK

## What % of dads are involved?

- When the child was 9 months old:
  - **35.8% fathers shared childcare roughly equally**; 63.7% fathers did the least and 0.5% fathers did the most
- When the child was 3 years old:
  - **25.9% fathers shared childcare roughly equally**; 74.1% fathers did the least

*Sources: Norman, Elliot and Fagan (2014); Fagan and Norman (2016)*

# What makes dads involved when the child is aged 3?

Father involvement when the child is 3 years old is...

**1. Shaped by the parents' family and work-time arrangements when the child is 9 months old.** The father is more likely to be involved when the child is aged 3 if....

- He shares childcare when the child is 9 months old
- The mother works full-time (31 hours + p/week) when the child is 9 months old;
- He works standard (30-40 hours p/week) rather than long full-time hours (48+ hours p/week) when the child is 9 months old.

**2. Shaped by the couples' work-time arrangements when the child is aged 3 years old.** The father is more likely to be involved when the child is aged 3 if....

- The mother is employed full-time (31 hours p/week or more);
- The father works standard (30-40 hours) rather than long full-time hours.

# Conclusions

A more supportive infrastructure could be achieved by:

## **1. Helping fathers to balance their work and family roles in the first year of parenthood**

- Parental leave that is well paid and has a period reserved specifically for the father
- Limits to long hours working
- Promotion of flexible working to men

## **2. Supporting mothers back to work after having children**

- Good quality, flexible and affordable childcare
- Quality part-time employment
- Closing the gender pay gap

# References

- Norman, H., Fagan, C., Elliot, M. (2017) How can policy support fathers to be more involved in childcare? Evidence from cross-country policy comparisons and UK longitudinal household data, evidence published by the Women and Equalities Committee 'Fathers and the Workplace' inquiry: <http://bit.ly/2r0Kgi7>
- Norman, H., Fagan, C. (2017) What make fathers involved in their children's upbringing?, *Working Families* WorkFlex blog, 20 January 2017
- Norman, H., Fagan, C. (2017): Shared Parental Leave – is it working? Lessons from other countries, *Working Families* WorkFlex blog, 5 April 2017
- Fagan, C., Norman, H. (2016): 'What makes fathers involved? An exploration of the longitudinal influence of fathers' and mothers' employment on father's involvement in looking after their pre-school children in the UK' in Crespi, I., Ruspini, E. (ed): *Balancing work and family in a changing society: the father's perspective*, Palgrave MacMillan: Basingstoke
- Norman, H. (2015): Paternal involvement in childcare: how can it be classified and what are the key influences?, *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 4(3)
- Norman, H., Elliot, M. (2015) : Measuring paternal involvement in childcare and housework, *Sociological Research Online*, 20(2), [7]
- Norman, H., Elliot, M. and Fagan, C. (2014) 'Which fathers are the most involved in taking care of their toddlers in the UK? An investigation of the predictors of paternal involvement', *Community, Work & Family*, 17:2, 163-180