



PRESS RELEASE

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DADS AS INVOLVED AS 1960S MOTHERS IN CARING FOR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN BUT MAJOR STUDY SHOWS MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO TACKLE INEQUALITY

Fathers Network Scotland today (Mon 11 December) backed calls for a complete overhaul of employment law and a well-paid three month period of “daddy leave” following the publication of a major UK study into fatherhood.

The ground-breaking research by the Fatherhood Institute, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, found that while fathers are now spending as much time caring for their very young children as mothers were in the 1960s, parenting is still far from gender-equal. The study – ‘Cash or Carry?’ – recommends ‘Fair Jobs for Dads’ to make it easier for fathers, as well as mothers, to care and earn for their families.

The Nuffield study reports that employed fathers are almost twice as likely as mothers to have requests for flexible working turned down, and to fear that asking to work flexibly will damage their careers. Employers are also more likely to “top up” Maternity Pay levels than Paternity or Shared Parental Leave pay levels, supporting female employees, but not their male colleagues, to take leave.

Significantly, new Scottish [research on family friendly practices in SMEs](#), also released today by Fathers Network Scotland and The University of Edinburgh Business School, found that dads crave family-friendly working practices – but that they need to be explicitly offered and modelled by senior managers leading the way. Lack of clarity around the policy and fear of detrimental effect on fathers’ careers also inhibit take-up.

Edinburgh-based employment lawyer, Alan Delaney a dad interviewed in the research, said: “As a father of two, having an agile workplace has made such a difference to my relationships both at home and at work.

“For many of our SME clients too that open culture alongside family friendly policies can attract and retain dads looking for a better work-life balance.”

Samantha Pringle, director of Fathers Network Scotland, said: “This significant research review – covering research conducted over decades – shows how far we have come in recent years but how far we still have to go. The research launched today on SMEs in Scotland shows that that dads want change. But to give them the time to have great relationships with their kids and to provide support to help raise school attainment levels, we need flexible working practices which are culturally, socially and economically acceptable.

“When it comes to those three acceptability factors, studies have shown there is disparity between dads from lower income families and those in higher earning jobs, meaning that not all families have a choice as to whether dads are as involved in the early years as they could be. Daddy leave should not be prescriptive as to where or who they work for, what they do or how much they earn.”

In Scotland, research with large public-sector organisations by Professor Alison Koslowski, an expert in parental leave policy, provides some evidence to suggest that fathers might consider moving jobs if they don’t have a work-place culture that supports them as new dads.

Scotland has already been leading the way with 2016’s award-winning Year of the Dad, a Scottish Government-funded campaign which subsequently received cross-party, cross-gender support in Westminster for its win-win approach to gender equality in both home and workplace.

A minority of fathers are currently entitled to up to 50 weeks of Shared Parental Leave (37 are paid), but take-up remains minimal due mainly to restricted eligibility and low wage replacement rates (the Statutory level is £140.98 per week – less than half the National Minimum Wage).

In the past year, Fathers Network Scotland’s #DadUp campaign has continued to encourage increased involvement with employers and schools – but it’s clear that legislation is needed at a UK level and right across government if the underlying situation is to change.

For Scottish comment and case studies, contact Fergus Reid or Emma Bain on 07971 583535 / fergus.reid@smartscommunicate.com / 0141 222 2040 / emma.bain@smartscommunicate.com

For comment specifically on the Nuffield report, contact Jeremy Davies on J.Davies@fatherhoodinstitute.org or 0780 371 1692

Evidence from the report:

1. **Fathers' caring has increased.** Today's fathers are spending as much time engaging directly in the care of very young children as mothers were in the 1960's (Atlintas, 2016). This is mainly by cutting back on personal time – and sleep (Fox et al., 2011). When time spent on earning and caring is combined, fathers work longer hours than mothers on weekdays (Hurrell & Davies, 2005.)
2. **Children do better with good care from dads.** Children's outcomes are better when their father has regularly looked after them 'solo' during their first year (Washbrook, 2007). Conversely, long hours working by fathers of infants is associated with behaviour problems in those children when aged 9-11 (Opondo et al., 2016).
3. **Employers discriminate against dads.** Fathers are almost twice as likely as mothers to have requests for flexible working turned down (Olchawski, 2016). Employers are more likely to 'top up' Maternity Pay levels than Paternity or Shared Parental Leave pay levels, supporting female, but not male, parents to take leave (Sharp, 2017). When fathers ask to work part-time they are more likely than mothers to be judged by their managers as 'not committed' to their work, (Kelland, forthcoming, 2017).
4. **Dads are more fearful about taking leave.** Fathers are more likely than mothers to fear that taking leave, or even asking to work flexibly, will damage their careers (Working Families, 2017).
5. **Equitable leave arrangements reduce the gender pay gap.** Iceland, which already has a more equitable system of parental leave, now has the narrowest [Gender Pay Gap in the world](#). In Sweden, it has been calculated that for every month of parenting leave taken by a father, his partner's earnings increase by 6.7% (Johansson, 2010). In the UK, a father

working flexibly and contributing to childcare almost doubles the chance of his partner progressing in her career (*Frith, 2016*).

6. **Fathers are misrepresented in the media:** The Advertising Standards Authority points to widespread representation of men and fathers as bumbling and incompetent at home (*ASA, 2017*). Although David Beckham is praised for involved fatherhood, politicians embracing fatherhood tend to be ridiculed (*Locke, 2014*).
7. **Government policy discriminates against them.** Government policy (*Clapton, 2014*), parenting guides (*Gregory & Milner, 2008*) and magazines (*Sunderland, 2000, 2006*) and children's books (*Adams et al., 2011*) cast fathers in a secondary role to mothers, poke fun at them, emphasizing alleged lack of 'natural' parenting skills.
8. **High family conflict because of work:** UK dads report Europe' highest work/ family conflict: 35% 'always' / 'often' worry about work when at home; 38% say family responsibilities 'often' / 'always' disrupt their concentration at work (*Speight., 2014*).

Notes for editors:

- The Nuffield Foundation is an endowed charitable trust that aims to improve social well-being in the widest sense. It funds research and innovation in education and social policy and also works to build capacity in education, science and social science research. The Nuffield Foundation has funded this project, but the views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Foundation. More information is available at www.nuffieldfoundation.org
- Our **Recommendations**, **Executive Summary** and **Full Report** can all be downloaded here: <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2017/contemporary-fathers-in-the-uk/>. (password until embargo: **cashorcarry**)
- **Further information** and to arrange interviews with the report's author, or with Will McDonald, chair of the Fatherhood Institute, please contact FI Head of Communications Jeremy Davies by email: J.Davies@fatherhoodinstitute.org or tel: **0780 371 1692**.
- **SME research in Scotland:** www.fathersnetwork.org.uk/dads_in_smes
- **Fathers in the Early Years:** www.fathersnetwork.org.uk/fathers_in_the_early_years
- If sharing or commenting on social media, please use the hashtag **#fairjobs4dads**.