

# Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

## A MANS PLACE CONFERENCE Tuesday 20 November 2012, Glasgow



### Key points and summary document

#### **Event overview**

Delegates attending the Children in Europe conference, *A Man's Place*, hosted by Children in Scotland were commended for their commitment and progress in engaging and facilitating the involvement of dads in family life. Topics discussed at length during the day included: men and parenting; men and fathers as role models; practical needs of fathers and their families; policy development in the UK and abroad and planning for the future.

Delegates also had the opportunity to view 'In Dads Shoes', a photography exhibition showing fathers enjoying time with their children.

#### **Chair & Speakers**

Chaired by David Drysdale of Fathers Network Scotland, over the course of the day a number of plenary presentations were delivered by:

- Hilary Third, Scottish Government lead on the National Parenting Strategy
- Dr Jan Peeters, Coordinator, Research and Resource Centre for Early Childhood Education and Care, University of Ghent, Belgium
- Dr Kat Allen, Policy Officers, Children in Scotland
- Roger Olley MBE, Sector expert

#### **Workshops**

Throughout the day a series of workshops offered the opportunity to discuss topics in smaller, more focused groups. Workshops were held on additional

support; balancing employment and fatherhood; men in childcare; men in fostering, adoption and kinship care and changing perceptions of dads. Practical workshops were delivered by Dad's Rock and Mellow Parenting.

### **Key points – summary**

- **The role of Dads has changed over the years and policy must reflect this.** The National Parenting Strategy (NPS) hopes to make policy reflective, recognising that we need to achieve a more family friendly culture and society in Scotland. The Scottish Government have made clear that they will be taking seriously the commitment to make policies more “Dad friendly”
- **Information, advice and how family support is provided needs further consideration** and will be the focus of the Scottish Government's work going forward.
- **Fathers are not ‘optional’ extras - involvement leads to positive long term outcomes** including improved relationships; less substance abuse, less incarceration and increased educational attainment. A number of international studies and reports all call for increased male involvement in care, and parenting, as a result of these measurable results.
- **Policy support, encouragement and engagement** at all levels will be crucial for success
- **Men and women should be recognised as equal partners pre and post birth** with as much support for men – emotionally, socially, physically – as for women.
- **We need effective parenting programmes in schools,** encouraging children to recognise the role and responsibilities of parenthood
- **Services need to be adaptable to be more accessible for working fathers.** Whilst there is the suggestion that legislation should be introduced regarding a man's right to attend classes etc, and shared parental leave is to be introduced by the UK Parliament shortly, until then services must adapt – being held in the evenings, at weekends etc.
- **There are “massive opportunities” for more services and programmes led by Dad's themselves,** however, whilst father specific resources and services are required, the adaption of universal services to be more dad / male friendly should also be a focus of development.
- **Research can play a big role in ensuring dads are heard and feed into the development process.** Programmes such as the Growing up in Scotland survey can ensure dads are represented, which then must be utilised.
- **Dads should be recognised to be a wide and varied group,**

but all must be included. Policy and planning needs to recognise the variance.

- **We need a corporate understanding of fathers** – an agreed, shared understanding of their role, their importance and what they are entitled to.
- **Measurable positive outcomes need to be shared more** – with parents, as well as with service providers, policy workers, etc. We also need to start thinking about and recognising the positive differences between men and women.
- **Seven strategies for father involvement** = senior management must lead and drive the process; team position statement and understanding developed; appropriate training to be given to all staff to give skills to meet expectations; whole team to normalise male participation; development of “fathers champions”, progress benchmarked and preparations made for active inclusion
- **We need to use the resources already at our disposal** – such as networks, research programmes and the “fathers champions” working so hard to make equality in parenting a reality.

**Children in Scotland would like to thank all the partners, sponsors and exhibitors involved in the event**

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