All Party Parliamentary Group for Parents and Families
The Changing Role of Fathers
Tuesday 3rd March 2015 14:30 – 16:30
Committee Room 4A

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

Ross Matthewman          Sybil Qasir           Suzanne Beckley
Ellen Broome             Ben Cox               Professor Brenda Almond
Stephen Dunmore          Siobhan Bryant       Paul Williams
Krys Pinches             Anooshah Farakish   Ruth Sutherland
Warren Borg              Holly Conroy         Ed Rennie
Duncan Lugton            Jen Metcalfe          Emma Willars
Bishop Paul Butler       Judith Longstreth    Charlotte Fairclough
Lord Christopher         Dr Alice Haynes       Mary Crowley
Northbourne              Noel Janis-Norton    Lambert Allman
Earl Francis Listowel    Rosalie Ward          David Grafton
Baroness Elspeth Howe    Caroline Julian      Rebecca Asher
Mike Thornton            Judy Corlyon          Suzanne Foster
Baroness Hilary Armstrong Dr Jonathan Evans    Ian Twinn
Baroness May Blood       Iryna Culpin          Joanna Apps
Lord Andrew Phillips     Carmel Blackie        Professor Margaret O'Brien
Lizzie Poulton           Alison Addy           Alvin Carpio
Matt Jones               Pete Paterson
Tina Miller              Amy Skipp

Minutes

Welcome and introductions from the Co – Chair, The Bishop of Durham

Jonathan Rallings, Assistant Director of Strategy at Barnardos

- Findings from a report exploring the issues faced by young fathers from two years ago.
- Parenting advice must be tailored towards men specifically and the need for this to be incorporated in to the training and development of midwives.
- The need for schools to help teenage dads.
- Housing prioritised for mothers and babies. Fathers also need a fair opportunity to be supported.
- Greater need for public services to do more to support dads and the need for a cultural shift.
Lucy O’Sullivan, Head of Policy and Research at Relate

- Discussion of ‘The way we are now’ report and the state of relationships in the UK.
- The help seeking behaviour of men means that they are less likely to seek help, women are more likely to be the instigators, whilst men try to solve the problem on their own.
- Public services are geared towards supporting women and are both feminine in nature and staffing.

Adrienne Burgess, Joint CEO of the Fatherhood Institute

- Question posed whether the role of fathers had changed with there being huge diversity across the globe in the role of fathers.
- Fathers suffering from “role strain” concerned about how engaged they are with their children.
- Some concern from mothers about becoming more and more involved and treading on their toes.
- Cultural issues which undermine the role of fathers such as television commercials which are sexist against dads.
- Expressed support for the original government proposal for shared parental leave based on Swedish model which was defeated by interest groups.
- Criticism of ‘1001 Day Report’ for only mentioning fathers twice

Representatives from the Young Dads Council

- Greater engagement needed between father and support services.
- The absence of a ‘fatherhood’ practitioner and the lack of information about services available to young dads.
- The need for services to be orientated toward fathers and examples of practical difficulties fathers face.
- Social workers target support towards mothers whilst fathers seen as risk to families.
- Embarrassment among young fathers due to perceived expectation of the father as the breadwinner and authority figure.
- Need for fatherhood practitioners and positive role models.

Ross Jones, Policy and Communications Manager at Families Need Fathers

- Issue of schools lack of interaction with estranged fathers, cut out of loop as no longer seen as primary carer.
- The important role schools can play in terms of information and extracurricular activities.
- Parenting engagement strategies.

Open Q&A session, led by the Bishop of Durham, with questions from the floor to speakers. The following points were made during the discussion:

- The link between single parent fatherhood and depravation.
- Difficulties for young men from poor backgrounds
- Deeply ingrained views amongst social services of men as a threat rather than a resource.
- The need for more men in family support roles and as support workers in early years.

Thank you and conclusion from the Bishop of Durham