

'Fathers Matter' - Government perspective

Peter D. Clark
Child Protection
Division, DCSF
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department for
children, schools and families



Outline of the presentation

- The Government's vision
 - Importance of fathers and families in children's social care
 - Policy focus on fathers
 - Key steps:
 - Family Pathfinders
 - Care Matters
 - Support for fathers
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The Government's vision

“The Children’s Plan aims to make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up.”

“Based on our consultation, five principles underpin the Children’s Plan:

- government does not bring up children – parents do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families;
 - all children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them;
 - children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life;
 - services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries; and
 - it is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.”
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Principles of intervention

- “In the great majority of cases, it should be the decision of parents when to ask for help and advice on their children’s care and upbringing ... Only in exceptional cases should there be compulsory intervention in family life – e.g. where this is necessary to safeguard a child from significant harm. Such intervention should – provided this is consistent with the safety and welfare of the child – support families in making their own plans for the welfare and protection of their children.” (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2006).



Principles in children's social care - safeguarding

- Use of 'parent', 'carer'
- Working Together to Safeguard Children:
 - Child centred approach
 - Holistic approach
 - Build on strengths as well as identifying difficulties
 - Involve children and families – shared responsibility
 - Role of Family Group Conferences
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families:
 - Separately consider father or father figure (as well as other important family members) in assessment on *parenting capacity*
 - Family history and functioning, wider family, to be included in assessment of *family and environment factors*



Focus on fathers

- “We also want to improve the way services engage fathers. Children benefit enormously from having strong relationships with their fathers. Yet public services often don’t reach out to fathers, particularly when the father does not live with the child.” (The Children’s Plan for Parents and Families)
 - “Fathers have told us they want to have more opportunities to share in the care of their children and to be involved by schools, children's centres and health professionals in all aspects of their child's development. I want to see a revolution in how teachers, midwives, doctors, early years and all children's services staff routinely talk to and provide opportunities for the involvement, not only of mothers, but also fathers from pregnancy and right through childhood and adolescence.” (Beverley Hughes, March 2008)
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Focus on fathers

- Commitments to:
 - make sure that people who work with children and young people are trained to engage with both fathers and mothers where appropriate
 - Sure Start Children's Centres will seek to involve fathers, offering them parenting skills support where necessary
 - expect schools to keep contact details of all parents living apart from their children, to involve them where possible
 - take account of ways in which information can be made more easily accessible for fathers.
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Research on fathers

- DCSF commissioned research "A Review of How Fathers are Recognised and Supported through DCSF Policy". Carried out by GHK.
 - Focus: how DCSF policy affects fathers' engagement with family services including:
 - the extent to which DCSF policy recognises and supports fathers
 - how DCSF policy influences local authorities and family services
 - what the policy barriers are to further engagement with fathers in family services
 - To be published this Summer.
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Family Pathfinders

- To implement and test the 'think family' approach – key step in Social Exclusion Taskforce work.
 - To improve the coordination between adults' and children's services to support families at risk.
 - Incorporating elements of practice from Family Intervention Projects
 - Will run for three years from April 2008
 - Aim to push forward change at all levels within local areas, from frontline delivery to strategy and governance.
 - Supported by a national implementation team, run by DCSF
 - An independent evaluation will be conducted to review and examine implementation processes as well as the impact of the Family Pathfinders on the outcomes of families at risk.
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Family Pathfinders

- £16 million for the 3 years:
 - £13m to provide 12-15 Family Pathfinders for 2008-2011, plus
 - £3m for up to 6 Extended Family Pathfinders for young carers.
 - Family Pathfinder areas: Blackpool, Bolton*, Brighton and Hove, Durham, Gateshead*, Islington*, Leeds*, Salford, Somerset*, Walsall, Warrington, Southampton, Southend, *Sunderland and Westminster.
 - * shows areas with additional funds for young carers services as part of the Pathfinders.
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'Care Matters' – Kinship Care

...it may be possible for care to be shared with other members of the family or close friends. We believe that this is much better for most children than entering care, and children have told us they feel the same.

Care Matters

- Variation across the country in extent to which family and friends placements used
 - Messages for local services around: valuing the extended family, raising the profile of family and friends care, creative thinking and consultation about services delivery
 - Support needs
 - Children brought up by birth or wider family where possible
 - Lowest level of intervention consistent with safeguarding and promoting welfare
 - Ensure that wider policy developments 'think family and friends'
 - 'Gateway approach' to family and friends care- to be considered at each stage of decision-making
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'Care Matters' - Family and Parenting Support

- All local authorities to provide appropriate services for children in care and vulnerable children living with their families;
 - Funding the development of Multi-systemic Therapy (MST) - specialist intervention for young people on the edge of care;
 - £280 million for a step change in short break provision for parents of disabled children to reduce family stress and ensure they are better supported in their families, as set out in *Aiming Higher for Disabled Children*;
 - Ensuring children's services continue to work with birth parents while the child is in care and the right support is in place to support a child or young person's safe return home.
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Support for fathers

- DCSF funding for work to provide information and support to fathers (and others)
 - Parent Know How. A three year programme made up of a suite of 18 services to provide information, advice and support to parents. Some targeted specifically at fathers: Dads Space, Dads Team, Dads Talk. Almost 300,000 fathers projected to access Parents Know How during 2008-09.
 - DCSF funds via the CYPF grant programme a number of third sector organisations (Fatherhood Institute, Families Need Fathers and the Trust for the Study of Adolescence) and projects that support and provide information to fathers.
 - The new National Academy for Parenting Practitioners (NAPP), established and funded by DCSF, sets expectations for the practitioners it trains - working in children's centres, schools, Youth Offending Teams and other local settings - to engage fathers in the parenting programmes and general support they provide.
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