

What makes fathers involved in their children's upbringing?

Colette Fagan and Helen Norman
University of Manchester

6th December 2016

**Working Families' Manchester Breakfast Briefing:
'Fathers and Care: are the odds stacked against them?'**

RBS, 1 Spinningfields Square, Manchester, M3 3AP

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 (Co-I) and Colette Fagan (Co-I), University of Manchester.
 - Project partner: *Working Families*
 - <http://www.cmist.manchester.ac.uk/research/projects/which-fathers-are-looking-after-their-children/>
- **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 a central feature.
- Women usually 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 Additional Paternity Leave 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)

Working Families' assessment of SPL

- SPL is an important step in the right direction
- Sends out a message that father involvement in childcare is important
- Although only 1% of fathers surveyed by *My Family Care* had taken SPL in 2015, many were positive about using it in the future
- WF 2015 survey found most employers to be supportive of SPL:
 - Positives – concerns about staff taking leave in discontinuous periods have not materialised
 - Negatives – complexity of SPL and cultural barriers remain. Mothers are often reluctant to give up part of their maternity leave
- SPL should be an individual right and properly paid

Sources:

Working Families (2016): SPL: the perspective from employers, *WF Briefing*

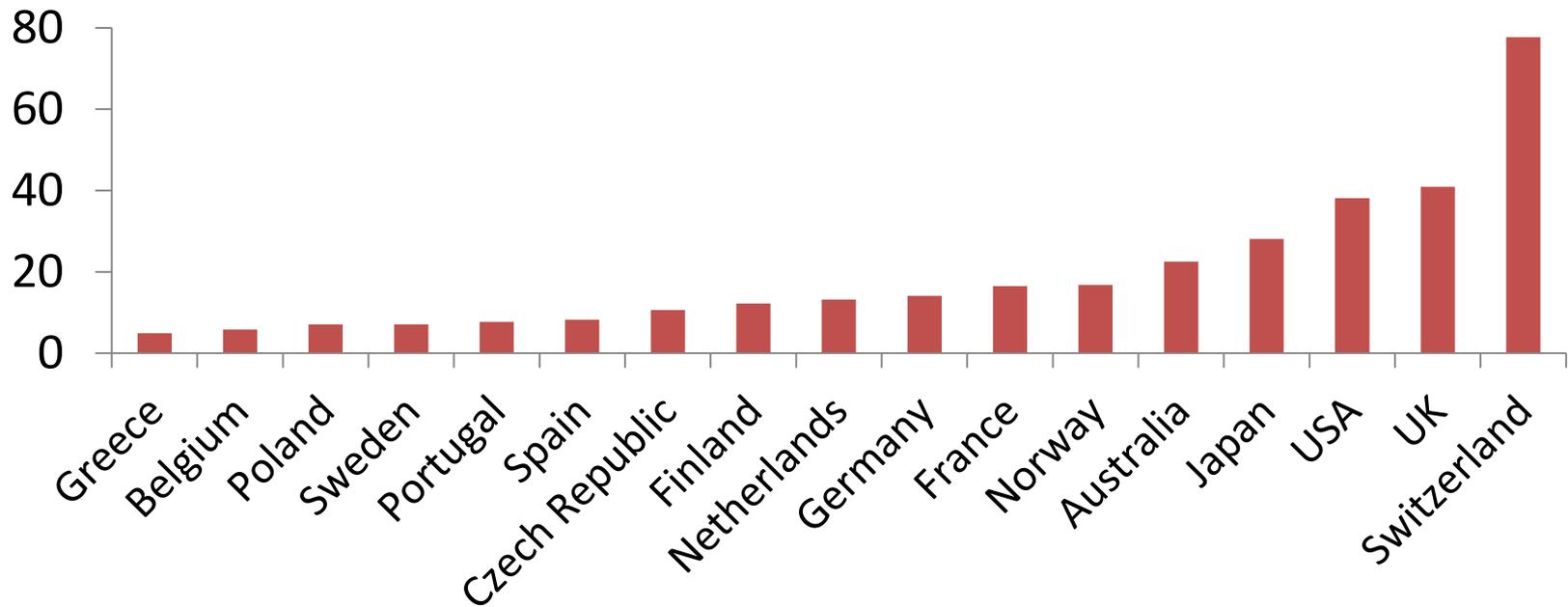
S. Jackson (8 April 2016): SPL: behind the headlines, *WF blog post*

S. Jackson (5 June 2014): SPL: the beginning of a quiet revolution?, *WF blog post*

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 (from 2017)

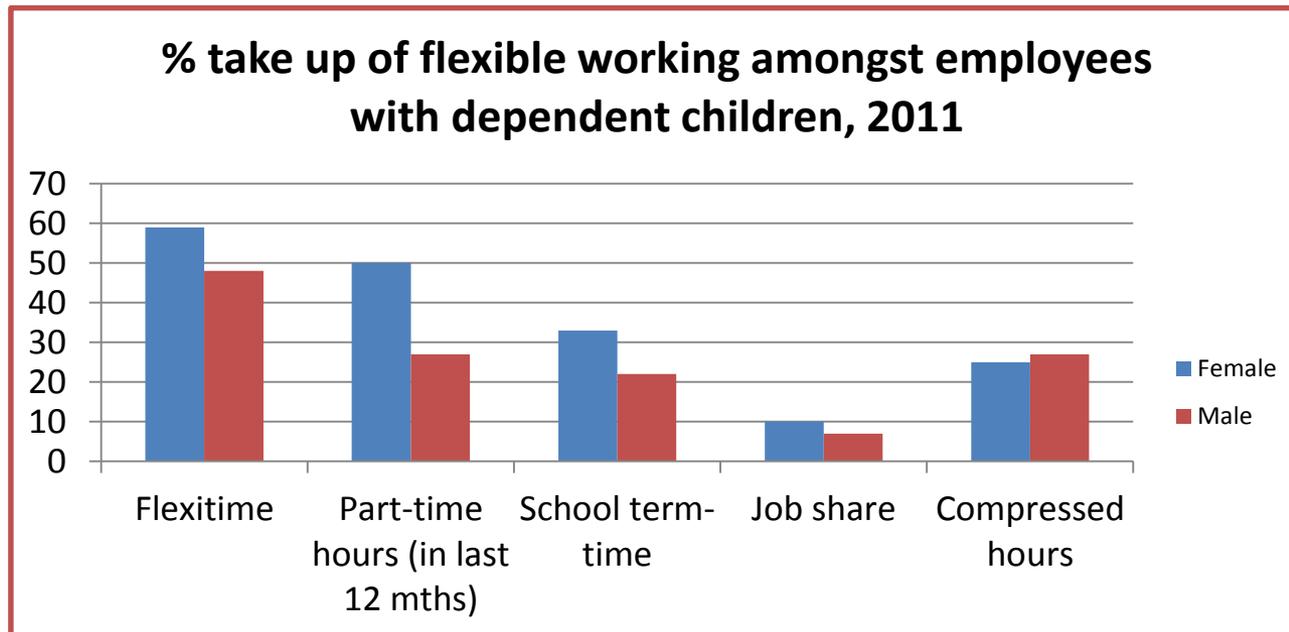
Net cost of childcare, % of average wage



Source: OECD, 2011

Flexible working

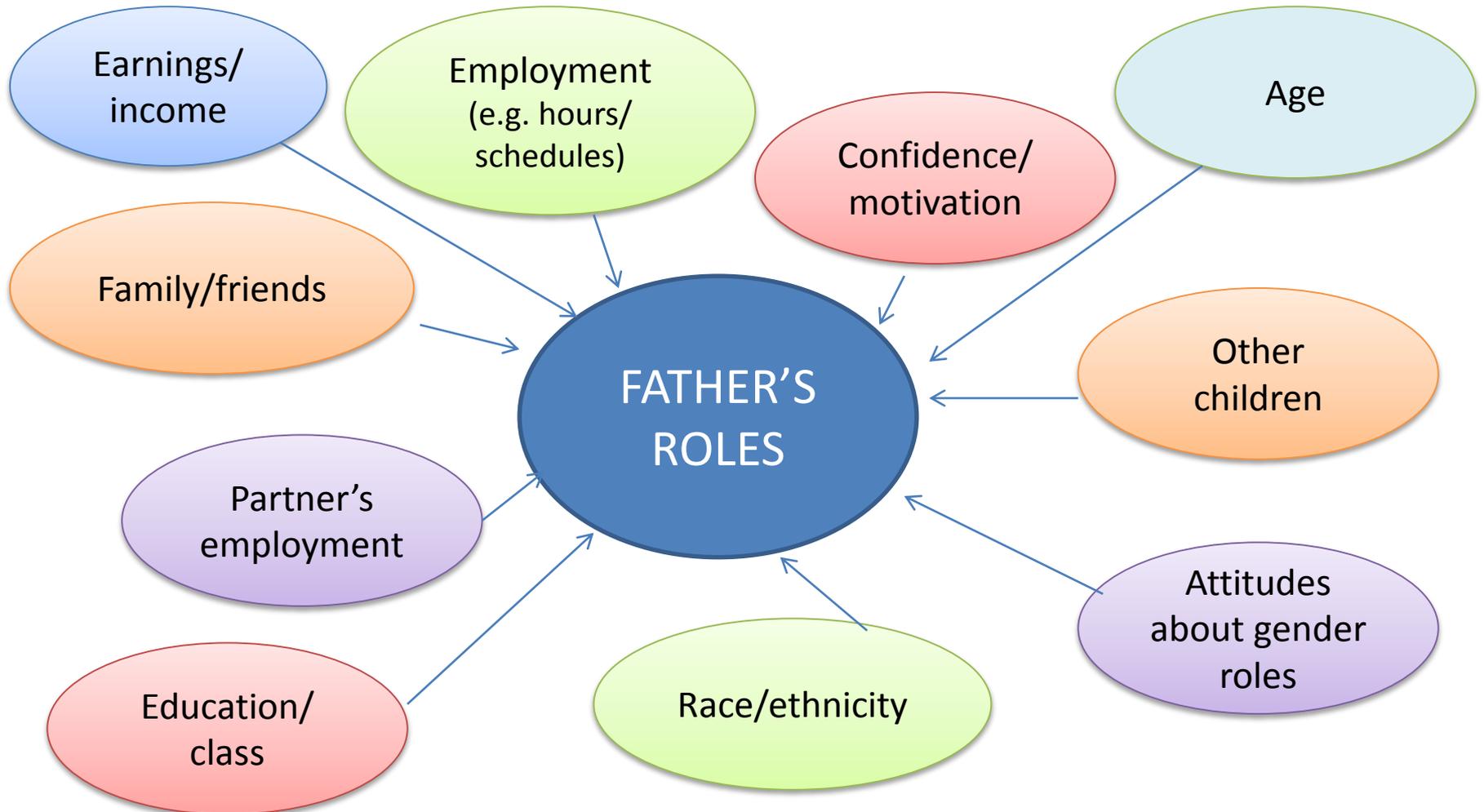
- ‘Right to request’ flexible working (introduced in 2003; extended in 2007, 2009 and 2014).
 - In 2011, 28% of employed women and 17% of employed men made a RTR
 - Most requests were accepted (approx. 60%) but men were more likely to have their requests declined (18%) compared to women (10%).



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

- 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., 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
- Fagan, C. and Norman, H. (2013) 'Men and gender equality: tackling gender equality in family roles and in social care jobs' in F. Bettio, J. Plantenga and M. Smith (Eds) *Gender and the European Labour Market*, Routledge: Oxon, UK.
- Fagan, C., Norman, H. (2012) "Trends and social divisions in maternal employment patterns following maternity leave in the UK." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 32, no.9 : 544-560
- 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. (2010) *Involved fatherhood: an analysis of the conditions associated with paternal involvement in childcare and housework* Manchester: University of Manchester.