



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

AGENDA

7th Meeting, 2014 (Session 4)

Thursday 27 March 2014

The Committee will meet at 8.45 am in Committee Room 4.

1. **Work programme (in private):** The Committee will consider its approach to its work programme.
2. **Decision on taking business in private:** The Committee will decide whether its consideration of a draft report on Fathers and parenting should be taken in private at this and future meetings. It will also decide whether to take consideration of its approach to the Draft Budget Scrutiny 2015-16 in private at future meetings.
3. **Fathers and parenting:** The Committee will take evidence from—

Dr Gary Clapton, Senior Lecturer, University of Edinburgh;

Karen Love, Team Manager - Sure Start, West Lothian Council;

Inez Murray, NDNA Scotland Policy Committee member and Nursery owner, National Day Nurseries Association;

Fiona Robertson, Senior Community Learning and Home School Partnership Worker, South Lanarkshire Council;

Donny Scott, Service Manager, Family and Community Support, City of Edinburgh Council;

and then from—

Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People, Erica Clarkson, Team Leader – Policy Delivery Unit (Parenting, Play, Family Support and Flexible Working), and Simon Stockwell, Policy Delivery – Family and Property Law, Scottish Government.

4. **Fathers and parenting:** The Committee will consider its approach to its draft report.

Douglas Thornton
Clerk to the Equal Opportunities Committee
Room TG.01
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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Email: Douglas.Thornton@scottish.parliament.uk

The papers for this meeting are as follows—

Agenda item 1

PRIVATE PAPER EO/S4/14/7/1 (P)

PRIVATE PAPER EO/S4/14/7/2 (P)

Agenda item 3

PRIVATE PAPER EO/S4/14/7/3 (P)

Submission from Dr Gary Clapton, University of Edinburgh EO/S4/14/7/4

PRIVATE PAPER EO/S4/14/7/5 (P)

Agenda item 4

PRIVATE PAPER EO/S4/14/7/6 (P)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMITTEE

FATHERS AND PARENTING

SUBMISSION FROM UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH – DR GARY CLAPTON

Where's dad? A father-focused exploration of national and local authority publicity for family services.

"It's as if I'm not there"

('Luke', on young Scottish men's experiences of exclusion from maternity and health services, Ross et al, 2010 p. 308)

Introduction

This research provides evidence of a lack of depictions of fathers at national and local levels in material promoting services for children and families. The research goes further and demonstrates that the 'default' position regarding services to families is that, although nearly 80% of children in Scotland live with two parents, most images depict only mothers with their children, and most of the written messages are addressed to mothers. This marginalisation of fathers presents three problems. It suggests that fathers are optional in children's lives, and don't contribute to children's wellbeing. It is detrimental to mothers as it over-burdens them with sole rather than shared responsibility. It dissuades take-up of and participation in services by fathers and pushes men to accept a diminished role in the life of their families.

This is not to make the case that two parent male/female families should always be depicted. But if inclusivity of all types and sizes of families and the greatest possible involvement of the key people in children's lives is the aim, it is surely important that fathers are not excluded in this way.

Many images and references in the publicity for social work services show not only a mostly fatherless-world of families, but where fathers are depicted, these depictions are almost always negative. If not described as absent or whereabouts unknown, fathers' presence is depicted as the problem. Depictions of 'present' fathers as violent, physically and sexually dangerous to children/or alcoholic or drug using, or just neglectful are not only inaccurate, they encourage a disengagement of men from family life. Here the marginalisation of fathers can be expensive as well as potentially limiting for children's well-being. If non-resident fathers and paternal kinship networks are overlooked then costly decisions about the public care of children may be made needlessly.

This 'father blindness' in the marketing material for services for children and families reflects a wider range of obstacles to the greater involvement of fathers. These include lack of acknowledgement of the positive contribution that involved fathers can and do make in the lives of children, women, and wider families and communities (this is summarised in *Social Work with Fathers*, Clapton, 2013, Dunedin Press). Negative attitudes exist amongst practitioners and stereotypical

assumptions about fathers are held by both men and women. However the evidence of absent or negative images of fathers in the public-facing material points to the importance of creating more 'father-facing' images in the day-to-day publicity and information that seek to involve both parents in securing the best for their children.

This particular research has concentrated on education and child welfare protection. Previous work undertaken has focussed on health services and this too has found evidence of widespread marginalisation of fathers in health publicity materials.

At an all-Scotland level information on national family services invariably show women as the only parents or carers:

Scottish Families Information Services - to h...

https://www.scottishfamilies.gov.uk

Sitemap | A A A A

Scottish Family Information Service
Information for parents and carers of children and young people

Home Local Area Information Scotland Wide Information Get In Touch Useful Links

We Provide Free, Impartial Information for Families

Search type: National Information Category: Select a Category... Keyword: [] [Reset] [Search]

Welcome to Scottish Families

Providing free, impartial information for families such as:

- Childcare availability in your area including: nurseries, childminders, playgroups and out of school care
- Pre-school education places for three and four year olds
- How different types of childcare are organised and what to look for when choosing a service
- Organisations offering support, information and guidance at local and national

Twitter Facebook

Tweets

ScottishFIS @ScottishFIS
Happy International Women's Day! #ScotFIS

Play Talk Read @playtalkread
Celebrate World Book Day by finding out what the top children's books are in Scotland. Can you guess what was... fb.mai2u7EstNVTf s3 Retweeted by ScottishFIS

Scottish Family Information Service



The Care Inspectorate: Who we are and what we do
(Care for Children)

Elsewhere major national policy initiatives do likewise:

Curriculum for excellence

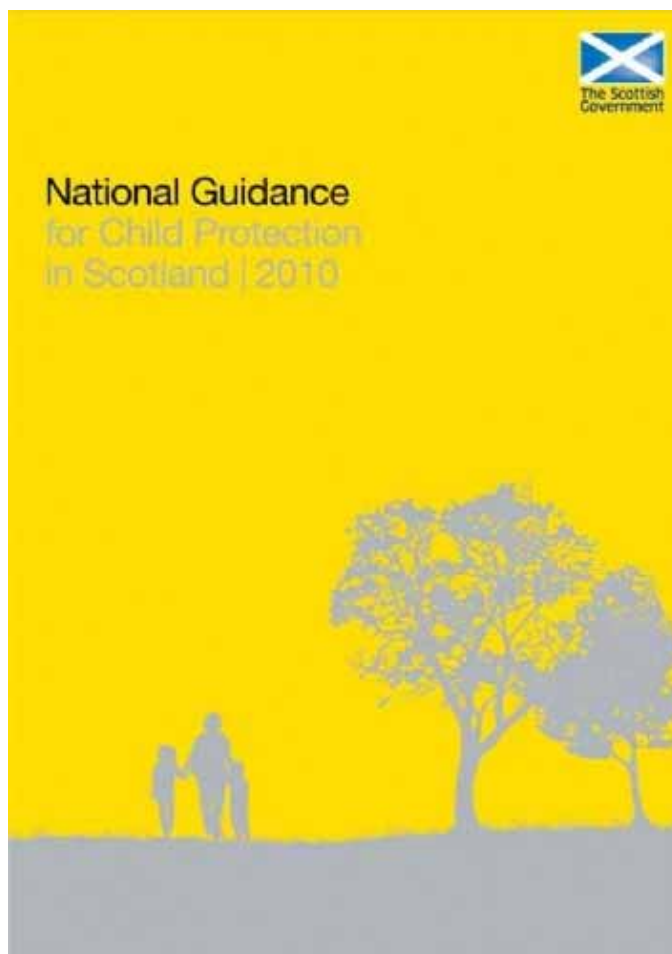


Curriculum for Excellence factfile – ‘Parents as partners’

The Early Years Framework



National Child Protection Guidelines (2010)



Woman and two children

Getting It Right For Every Child



Video materials also show only women as parents:



The impact and benefits of Curriculum for Excellence

There are exceptions, e.g. in *Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families* (2010):



(One of three images of men/fathers in a total of twenty three, i.e. the other twenty showed women/mothers with children)

Council Services

A lack of father-facing publicity is similar at a **local authority level** whether publicising school or child welfare/protection services or information for parents. The following search terms were used for all thirty-two local authorities: Parents, Schools and Child Protection and the available primary publicity scrutinised.

‘Parents’

‘Parents’ as a category did not show up as often as the other two search terms however when it did, as for the national pattern, invariably women are the only parent depicted.

Under 'Parental Support'



East Dunbartonshire



Edinburgh



'Parents help to make learning fun in Argyll and Bute'

There were some exceptions: West Lothian's parenting support leaflets carry images of men and:



'Children and Families' section, Moray

'Schools'

Overall, the same mother-only images are found when 'schools' are searched:



Midlothian



for Parents and

Schools Learning Programme in Libraries, West
Dunbartonshire



West Lothian Educational
Psychology Service: Advice
Carers

‘Child protection’

“as a non-resident parent of a special needs son – who lives with me most weekends and holidays – I was invisible to carer support agencies who wanted only to recognise his mother”. (Feedback from fathers, grandfathers and male carers, ‘Engagement with parents/carers for the National Parenting Strategy, Scottish Government, 2012).

Child welfare and protection is a particular sensitive field where negative attitudes and assumptions about fathers can have far-reaching effects on children and families, thus images and other depictions of fathers and families may be all the more necessary to review.



Moray (however, image of man/father on back cover)

Within child protection, publicity for specialist



services demonstrates a similar mothers-only slant to families and caring for children:

'Welcome Jessica and all other parents', Triple P services, Glasgow



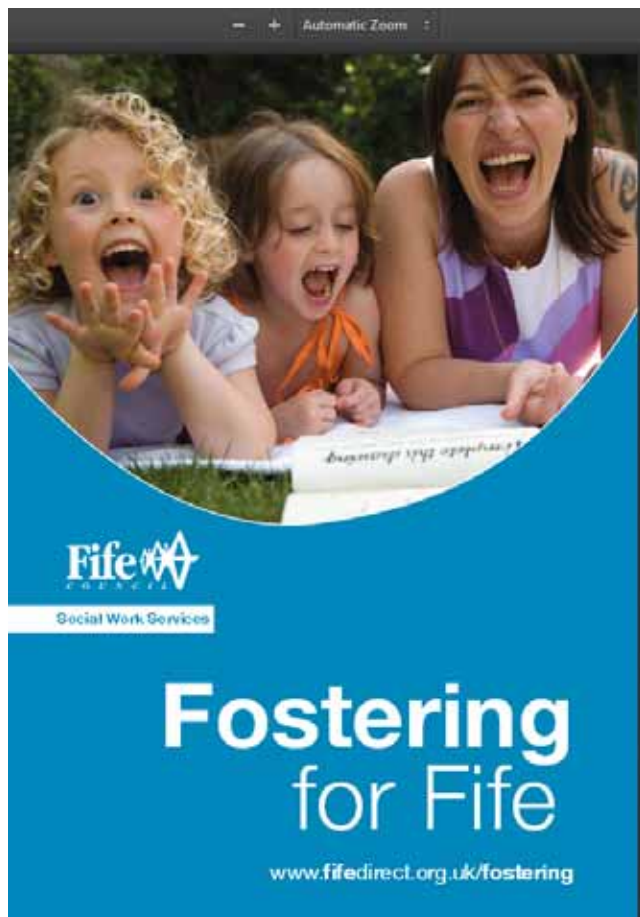
‘Paisley mum, Susan Morris, 24, had reached the end of her rope with Matthew, her four year old son. When Susan spotted scratches on his little sister’s face, she decided it was time to call Renfrewshire Council’s Triple P Team’.



‘Five steps to positive parenting’, Renfrewshire



‘Your child on a child assessment order’, East Dunbartonshire



"It's my job to care for Sophie"

Fostering
Make a living. Make a difference.

**Earn a living
as a foster carer**

West Dunbartonshire
Community Health & Care Partnership

West
Dunbartonshire
COUNCIL

Childcare and Protection Service | Dundee... fosteringbrochure.pdf


www.changetheirlives.com/files/documents/fosteringbrochure.pdf

Google

FOSTERING OR ADOPTION

General Information about Fostering or Adoption

Fostering or Adoption is about looking after children and young people who cannot live with their birth families for a variety of, often, very complex reasons.



Fostering is a temporary measure sometimes lasting from only one night to weeks or months, or perhaps longer: occasionally years, depending on a child or young person's individual situation.

The law requires that the Social Work Department's first priority is always to try to return a child to live with his/her own family, if circumstances allow. Thus a child's time in foster care may be very busy, with foster carers being expected to work closely with the Social Work Department, other professionals and the child's own family to achieve this. Older children and young people will be encouraged to be actively involved in this process. Some young people may prefer to remain with foster carers until independence, rather than return home.

If/when attempts to return a child home are not successful, then finding an alternative permanent family for that child becomes a priority, because research and experience tells us that most children, if unable to return to their own families, do best in another family setting.

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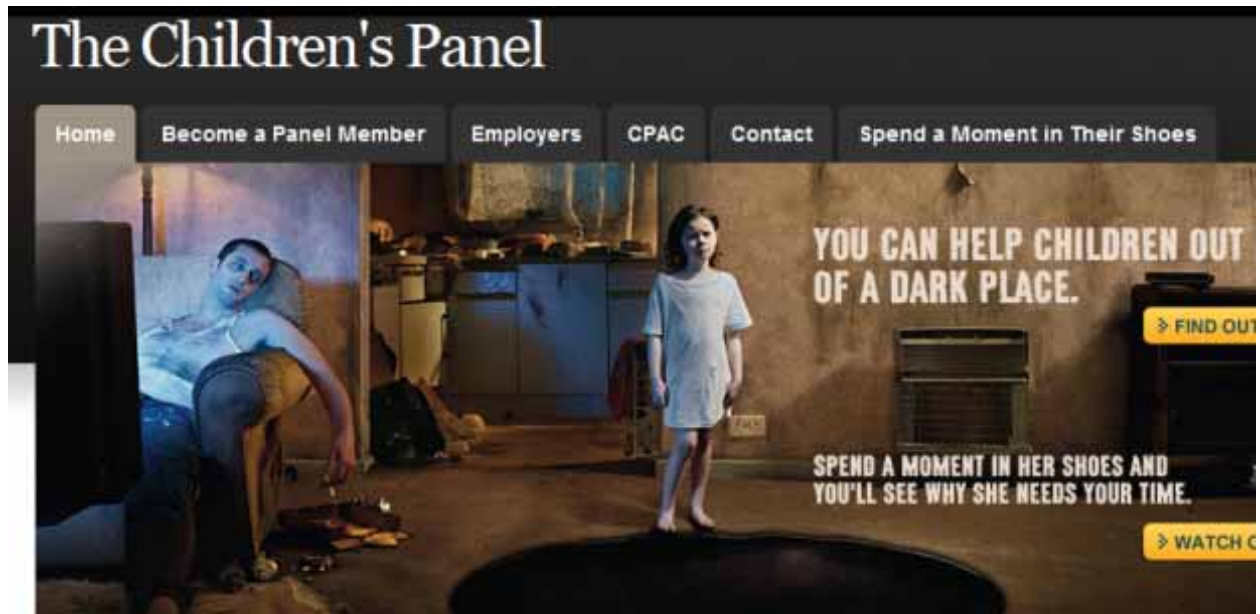
Dundee



Dundee Integrated Children's Services
Plan 2010-2012

The Visible Father

There are very few images of fathers in the publicity materials of national health or welfare agencies, the one that could be found was not positive:



At a local level there were a handful more and these were positive: East Renfrewshire child protection leaflet features silhouettes indicating male and female parents. South Lanarkshire has an image of male and female parents on their child protection page. North Ayrshire features two parents in their 'parents' section, and a man on his own with a child in the GIRFEC for parents/carers page:



Other examples of inclusiveness:



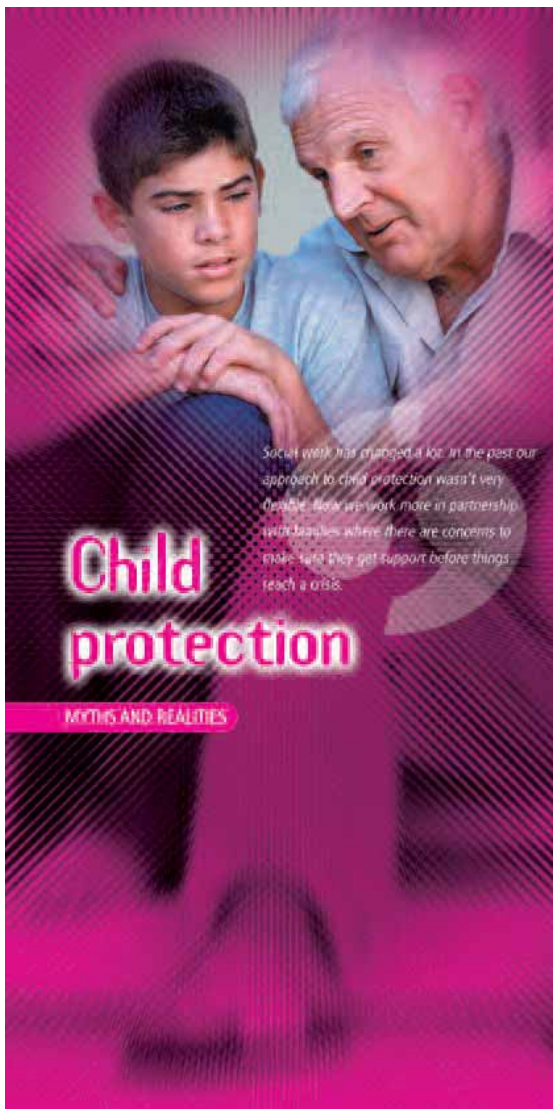
Glasgow



Foster parents Renfrewshire



Amanda and David, prospective adoptive parents (promotional video, Dundee).



Scottish Borders

However, in other more specialist child care services the pattern of women-only child caring asserts itself:



'Childminding', Midlothian



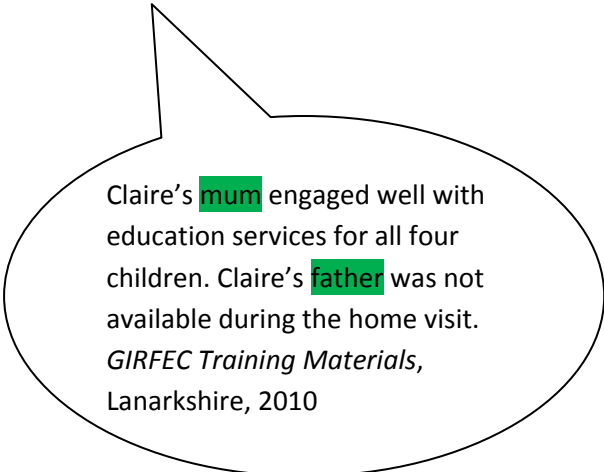
'Where can I get a list of child minders?', Shetland Council

The written-about father

No written examples show fathers in any light other than absent or risky. Nothing positive could be found either at a national or local level.

References to fathers fell into three broad categories.

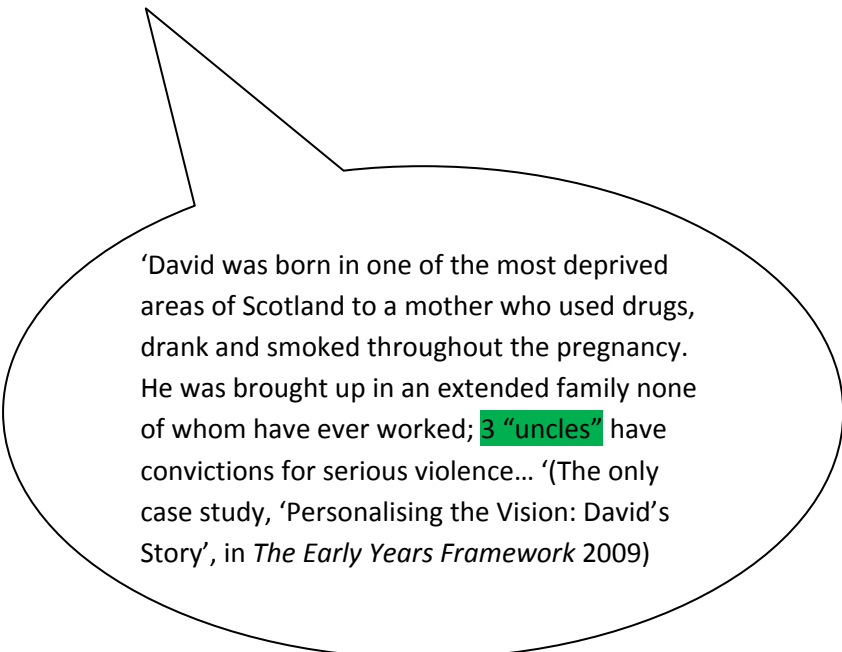
- **Familiar mother/Unfamiliar father**



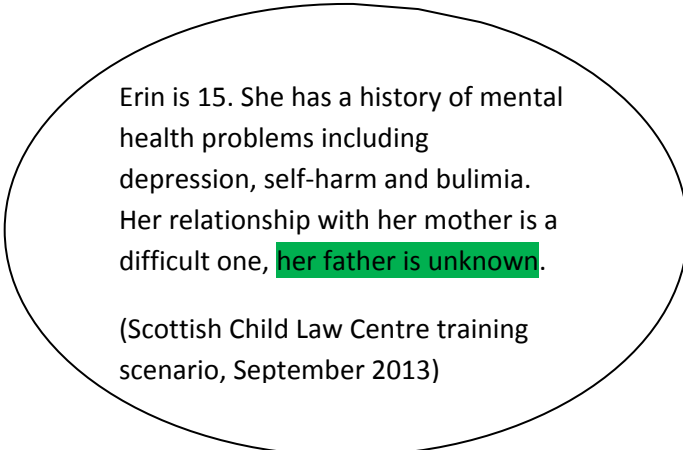
Claire's **mum** engaged well with education services for all four children. Claire's **father** was not available during the home visit.

GIRFEC Training Materials, Lanarkshire, 2010

- **The missing or unknown father**



'David was born in one of the most deprived areas of Scotland to a mother who used drugs, drank and smoked throughout the pregnancy. He was brought up in an extended family none of whom have ever worked; 3 **"uncles"** have convictions for serious violence... '(The only case study, 'Personalising the Vision: David's Story', in *The Early Years Framework* 2009)



Erin is 15. She has a history of mental health problems including depression, self-harm and bulimia. Her relationship with her mother is a difficult one, **her father is unknown**.

(Scottish Child Law Centre training scenario, September 2013)

- **The risky father**

Alison phoned the police when her niece broke down in tears and told her that **her dad touched her privates** and told her it was their secret. The police and social work are now investigating and the dad has moved into a friend's house for now.

Bob spoke to the duty social worker after his sons friend told him he was scared to go home because **his dad would be drunk and might hit his mum**. It turned out his family had a social worker who was able to speak to the friend, and checked that everything was ok at home. Both scenarios from <http://www.inverclydechildprotection.org/>

There are many references to parents, a number of references to mothers and two to fathers in the practice scenarios in NHS Education for Scotland, On-line Child Protection Module 'recognising and reporting situation where there might be a need for protection'. The recommendation for practitioners is:

'Routinely involve fathers and other male family figures when assessing risk'.

It is suggested that in the vast majority of examples provided, the absence of fathers or their negative depiction is unthinking and a matter of commission. It follows that change (and with it the encouragement of greater father involvement in families) is neither costly nor resource-heavy. Children, women, families, communities and fathers stand to benefit.

“I think quite a load of young dads do like, tend to flee, but there is the ones that do stick it out as well and I am not saying we should be thanked for it, it is like the way it should be...that image should be drawn more towards the public eye, as opposed to the young dads that are not involved at all”.

(‘Blair’, in Ross et al, 2010, p 313)

Full references available on request

Dr Gary Clapton
University of Edinburgh
21 March 2014