

## Media Release

10/09/2010

### **Who helps the baby blues dads? Support for fathers thin on the ground**

Yesterday's Guardian highlighted the lack of support for fathers with postnatal depression, and the situation for dads in Scotland can be just as bad, fathers' networks say. Support for fathers and fathers-to-be are regularly tagged on to women's services and can demonstrate stereotyped attitudes, Children in Scotland has found.

Family services need to engage with fathers to give them the right support to fulfil their potential as parents – especially in circumstances where support can make the difference between a father being there for their child or giving up as a parent.

Services tailored to fathers' needs are generally precariously funded and under threat, and highly localised across Scotland, according to findings from *Making the Gender Equality Duty real for children, young people and their fathers*, a 3-year project run by Children in Scotland for the Scottish Government.

Men are far less likely than women to admit to feelings of stress or inadequacy, and very much less likely to visit a doctor. Groups for antenatal and postnatal support are mainly female and family services are still largely staffed by women, while working fathers can find it difficult to attend daytime courses and groups, and many fathers still feel excluded by children's services that remain tailored to the needs of mothers, the findings show.

As more men take on childcare roles and families become more diverse, with stepfathers, foster fathers and grandfathers as well as biological fathers playing an important role, the presumption that the mother is main carer is increasingly outdated.

Katrina Allen, policy officer for Children in Scotland, said:

“Individual fathers are often highly motivated to overcome their own difficulties and put their children's needs and interests first because, more than anything, they want to be good parents. If we're serious about gender equality and putting the interests of children first, it's time to focus on positive fathering as well as mothering experiences and invest in the projects behind them.”

David Drysdale, chair of Fathers Network Scotland, said:

“In our experience, when fathers are included, engaged and supported by family services, they become more confident and as a result more likely to stay active in their children's lives. We're seeing significant benefits of engaging fathers in this way – not just for their children but for their partners, their families and their communities.”

## **Notes to Editors**

1. *Making the Gender Equality Duty real for children, young people and their fathers* is a 3-year project funded by the Scottish Government's Equality Unit. The project began in 2008 and will complete in 2011. Thirty local authorities and nine NHS boards across Scotland took part in the research.
2. The public sector Gender Equality Duty came into force in 2007.
3. Up to 17,000 lone parent families in Scotland are headed by a father (based on figures from the General Register Office/Office of National Statistics).
4. **Fathers Network Scotland** promotes positive engagement with fathers by raising awareness of the importance of fathers in child development and parenting – and by supporting professionals and agencies in their work with men in all aspects of their role as fathers.
5. **Children in Scotland** is the longstanding national agency for the whole of the children's sector, reaching over 250,000 individuals through our extensive membership of more than 450 statutory agencies, voluntary sector organisations, professional associations and community groups. For further information visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk).

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