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Children in Scotland – the national network for the children’s sector in Scotland
Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality
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In Scotland and elsewhere, a far greater proportion of equalities funding is directed at women and very little at men/fathers.
Empowering women and girls is critical but changing the way men and fathers are perceived and the roles and behaviours they adopt in society is also vitally important.
‘Families, Fathers and Children’ project funded by the Equalities Unit of the Scottish Government since 2008
Main focus of work has been to add a fathers’ dimension to existing activities and services.
Examples are the non-resident parents guide for schools and the Dads2B CD-ROM ante-natal resources
Recent work has focused on pre-birth and early years. This coincides with a number of important changes in national guidance.
New ante-natal education materials

New Health Visiting pathway

New assessment process for families
• Fathers often not mentioned

• No specific advice on positive father involvement

• Few images of fathers in informational or publicity material
Contribution to reviews of guidance materials

Some materials reviewed and complementary information on fathers made available.

New materials better but still not fully inclusive – for example HV pathway asks repeatedly about domestic abuse, the assumptions being that father is not present and that he is likely perpetrator.

Ante-natal parent education generally gender neutral but refers to ‘women and partners’
Why does this matter?
A new baby puts families under additional stress in various ways and there is a high incidence of relationship breakdown in the first year of life.

Outcomes are better for children who have positive father involvement in their lives.

Children who experience inequality in other ways are also less likely to benefit from the constructive support of a father.

Unequal parenting highly correlated with gender inequality in a general way.
The vast majority of publicity material for public services that work with families contained no or few images of fathers.
Much of the guidance for staff working in ante-natal and early years services makes limited reference to fathers.
Fathers are represented as optional or, worse, as risky or dangerous
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
Most official guidance national and local for parents had no images of fathers
Even when there were, they were far fewer even in recently produced material
Pre-birth to three national curricular guidance has three pictures of fathers and twenty of mothers.
A small but important victory!
National Guidance
for Child Protection in Scotland | 2014
What needs to be done?
• Review images in all material

• Make sure that positive images of fathers and children are presented

• Review guidance and resource materials for practitioners

• Make staff aware of research evidence

• Train staff in methods of positive father involvement
• Pay specific attention to families where traditionally fathers may be less likely to be involved in their children’s upbringing

• Provide supportive services and resource materials specifically for fathers

• Make service settings welcoming and inclusive

• Take steps to increase male representation in the early years workforce

• Include non-resident and separated fathers

• Encourage fathers to use parental leave entitlement
Thank you