



Meeting of the APPG for Fatherhood

3pm Wednesday 20 July 2022

Minutes

This was a hybrid meeting in Room Q, Portcullis House, and on Zoom.

Attendees

In person:

Lord Kahn of Burnley (Chair)
Sir Peter Bottomley MP
Owen Thomas (Future Men)
Charlotte Grievson (Future Men)
Adrienne Burgess (The Fatherhood Institute)
Griffin Mosson
Dr Jasmine Kelland
Elliott Wright-Clarke
Michael Lewkowicz
Tim Soper

Online:

*There were a number of virtual attendees.
Questions / comments were received from the
following:*
Tina Miller
Barrington Reeves

1. Welcome and Introduction

The meeting was opened shortly after 3pm. Lord Khan introduced himself and explained that he was Chairing this meeting of the APPG in Andrew Gwynne's absence. On behalf of the meeting, he sent condolences to Andrew for his recent bereavement.

2. Overview of Current APPG Status

No updates.

3. Presentation by Adrienne Burgess, Head of Research and co-Chief Executive Officer of the Fatherhood Institute

The Chair introduced the speaker, who gave a presentation on two recent reports by the Fatherhood Institute – *Who's the Bloke in the Room?* (2018) and *Bringing Home Baby* (2022). (For content, please refer to her PowerPoint presentation).

4. Q&A / discussion

The speaker welcomed questions from participants.

Dr Jasmine Kelland (University of Plymouth) asked about low take-up of shared parental leave. Adrienne answered by saying that only 3 out of 7 couples qualify for shared parental leave. She said that enhanced pay from employers could help – though some offer paternity leave at 100% pay, it is usually only for the first two weeks away from work. She suggested that if companies offered 80% of pay to both mothers and fathers, that would be enough since there are financial savings when not going to work, but not enough are doing this.

Barrington Reeves (Sewing Seeds Inc.) made a comment about Adrienne's research. He said that he has been working with Homestart in Manchester in antenatal clinics. He talked about work he had done in 2008 with St Mary's Hospital, the main maternity hospital in Manchester, where there was positive collaboration and partnership with the consultant obstetrician. He said that since that time, though the understanding of the importance of fathers' roles in the maternity process had improved, actual practices have been scaled back. He criticised the pathologized and risk averse idea of men's involvement with their families. Barrington noted the Fatherhood Institute's work in establishing what a father brings to a child's life but said that the challenge now was in getting practitioners to implement approaches on the ground. He recognised that most men operate on instinct and said that we must look at human beings as whole people.

Tina Miller (Oxford Brookes University) thanked Adrienne for her presentation. She said that the birth of a child offered a critical opportunity to involve men in their child's life but that so many structural factors work against doing that. She mentioned the importance of 'solo caring' during the first year of a baby's life in establishing a relationship where a father plays not just a supporting role but is an equal parent with the mother. Tina asked what area should researchers be focussing on to make their work count? Adrienne answered that it was a very difficult question and that changes were needed in the design of parental leave. She said also that some families – not all – could actually afford for the father to take more time off work, but they just don't consider it as an option. She suggests that a father taking a month off work when the mother goes back to work would allow for that solo care. We need to look at national / policy level, and at employers, but also at family level.

Tim Soper asked whether the government had considered the wider benefits of designing policy to make help offered to new parents more equal regardless of gender. Adrienne replied that the question of support for both mothers and fathers was on for the parliamentarians to 'take away', but said that the benefits of good support for parents from companies were multiple, and included

positive business impacts.

Michael Lewkowicz asked about own-household fathers and benefits, including housing support. Adrienne agreed that this is indeed a vital area, requiring further work.

5. Matters raised by the Chair of Officers

There were no matters raised.

6. A.O.B.

There was no additional business to discuss.

The meeting was closed at 4.08pm.

The date and venue for the autumn meeting is to be arranged.