

Happy Father's Day – now get lost!



Many Welsh Dads experience 'institutional sexism' from public services it has emerged from a wide scale survey of 419 fathers, grandfathers and father figures. In the largest poll of its kind ever conducted in Wales the message that comes out loud and clear is that separated fathers in particular face widespread hostility to their role as parents from most public services although all 'dads' feel that the 'system' is against them and doesn't value their role

- 2/3rds feel their role isn't valued equally with the mother's by authorities & society
- Nearly 80% think the Government should do more to help fathers

Just 13% of respondents to the survey identified as 'Non-Resident Parents' – fathers who don't live with their children all the time. Most men don't have major problems if they are still living with the mother of their child – although even these men experience a sexist attitude that sees them as either an irrelevance or a problem. Typical of the comments featured in the survey report were

'Most family services don't want to know about dads. They only deal with mothers - particularly when you're separated'

'The whole system is sexist! That mum gets to stop a loving father seeing his children. No point going to court, the old aged ivory tower ts live in the 50's!!!! Awful, but nobody cares!!!!'***

Comments about a range of interactions with professionals delivering public services included

'Getting information from specific people eg children's GPs, hospitals and dental practices has proved very difficult to obtain without extensive chasing up and requirements of proof of PR, etc.'

'Health visitors refusing to share information and showing institutionally sexist behaviour'

'While taking my daughter for jabs I was asked by the nurse if her mother was aware I was bringing her in.'

'My impression of home visits (midwife, health visitor, etc.) is that I am being scrutinised for being there (e.g. does he seem overbearing because he's answering questions about the child rather than my wife? Is he controlling?)'

'Was invited to one parenting class and was made to feel invisible. Asked questions and answers were directed towards my wife!!!'

Paul Apreda, National Manager for the parenting support charity said

'The response has been terrific. We've doubled the number over last year's survey. We should of course recognise that most fathers don't really experience any major problems – even if they do feel marginalised and unsupported. However the evidence is very clear that the experience of separated fathers is overwhelmingly negative.

We've called on the Welsh Government to record the details of how successful they are in engaging fathers in support services funded by the taxpayer. Sadly they confirm that 'recording the gender of parents accessing parenting support would be a disproportionate administrative burden'.

Perhaps the strongest comment the survey received was from one separated father who had sought help to avoid being alienated and excluded from a relationship with his children

***I never stop thinking about taking my own life. There is NO help available. I just want to share my daughters' lives, that's all. I don't want to be told I'm depressed etc etc. I know that. My life has become totally impossible. I never did anything wrong. I have lost my entire family who have chosen to believe my Ex's lies and my children's not wishing to see me being my own fault. I am completely alone and will almost certainly kill myself at some point; which, as all the mental Health specialists acknowledge, would be a perfectly rational and reasonable thing to do.
Its only about....when?***

Paul Apreda

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You can access the full report here

https://www.fnf-bpm.org.uk/image/upload/branch/cymru/WELSH_DADS_SURVEY_2017_report_FINAL.pdf

and the data tables here

https://www.fnf-bpm.org.uk/image/upload/branch/cymru/WELSH_DADS_2017_Data_All_.pdf