

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2016 Welsh Dads survey captures the views of fathers, grandfathers and father figures in Wales primarily in terms of their experience of engaging with statutory services. The aim is to enable these service providers to better understand the experience of users and to help them design services to meet the needs of the 50% of parents who happen to be male.

Last year's survey highlighted problems with the perception of men and the levels of engagement with them as fathers and male carers by statutory services across Wales. Welsh Government have issued guidance to professionals around the importance of engagement with fathers but this does not yet seem to have translated into a real change 'on the ground'

The 2016 survey had a total of 209 responses– representing a more than **40% increase in participation**. (2015 – 149 responses).

Responses were received from each of the 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales ranging from 51 responses from Cardiff to just 1 from Denbighshire.

Key demographics of respondents

- 17% were under 30 – 5% were over 60 (this included grandfathers)
- 91% identified as White British, 2% Black (African etc), 1% mixed race
- 70% identified as 'Father', 8% as Single Father, 16% as 'Non Resident father'
- 9% were sole or main carer, 44% shared caring duties roughly equally, 20% provided some care and 22% said they were excluded from the care of their children.

Key findings

- **44% shared care roughly equally with the mother**
- **Children's Services – overwhelmingly negative experience by fathers**
- **Police – poor treatment of fathers involved in contact disputes**
- **Education & Health – broadly positive experiences UNTIL separation issues appear**

Next Steps

We will raise issues identified with Welsh Government and others (such as the Equalities & Human Rights Commission in Wales) in an attempt to 'turn the curve' of experience and start to improve services for fathers and children. The findings will inform the new Cross party Assembly group on fathers and fatherhood to be launched in the week leading up to Father's Day (June 19th).

We will learn from the comments contained in the 2016 survey to refresh the format for the 2017 version – seeking to find ways to make constructive comments to statutory service providers.

INTRODUCTION

1. WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

We are a shared parenting charity working to support those who are being excluded from the lives of the children they care about. Most of our service users (currently c 70%) are fathers facing contact difficulties. We have undertaken this research to collate data around their experience to inform public services as well as the third sector about the issues facing fathers in Wales.

We have also been recognised by Welsh Government and WCVA as a representative body for men as a group with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

2. THE BACKGROUND

This is the second annual survey looking at the experience of fathers, grandfathers and father figures in Wales. Our first survey published in June 2015 pointed to some successes particularly around experience with health and education, but some significant areas for concern in relation to Children's Services and a lack of engagement with parenting support services eg Flying Start etc funded through Welsh Government. The comments made by fathers also informed a redesign of the 2016 survey to include separate questions about engagement with Cafcass Cymru (a division of Welsh Government concerned with child contact disputes in the Family Court) and the Police.

The surveys have also been inspired by the **Mapping Male Engagement in Parenting Services** study that the charity undertook in 2013/14. That found deep rooted problems around the level and extent of engagement by services with men. 32 services covering all areas of Wales completed the survey. They reported engagement with 169,000 service users in the financial year ending April 2013. That survey was distributed by direct email and by a mailout to members by Children in Wales.

The services reported that only between **3 – 11% of all parents they engage with were male** – and that this 'male deficit' was particularly acute in Early Years where one service reported 181 service users only 1 of whom was male.

We recommended to Welsh Government that services be required to record the gender of parents accessing support so that detailed statistical analysis of gender difference could be undertaken. Welsh Government has rejected this proposal – most recently with the First Minister stating in August 2015 that recording gender would be 'a disproportionate administrative burden'.

The original Mapping Survey can be accessed here https://www.fnf-bpm.org.uk/article/reports_and_responses_signpost-190/index.html

3. METHODOLOGY

The research has been undertaken by FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru using an online survey tool – Survey Monkey - between August 2015 and June 2016. Service users of the charity calling our Helpline and attending our 11 monthly face to face support meetings across Wales were encouraged to complete the online survey. In addition a link to the survey was placed on our website home page and on the charity's Facebook page.

We are grateful to Children in Wales for circulating details of the survey to its membership and information distribution channels. The FamilyPoint service has also assisted by promoting the survey on its information pages.

To improve information about engagement through existing family support services paper surveys were also completed by individuals attending a Flying Start Family Fun day in Barry.

Individuals who contributed were not asked for any contact details so as to assure them anonymity.

The survey is primarily qualitative in terms of methodology seeking to capture the experience of fathers and male carers in terms of their engagement with services. This was deliberately chosen as a means of survey design because we believed that it followed on sequentially from the Mapping Male Participation Survey we had undertaken with professionals in Wales where views had been expressed about the barriers to engagement with men.

4. THE SURVEY

A total of 12 main questions were asked covering some basic demographic data eg age, geographical location, ethnicity, relationship to their child (eg father / step-father / grandfather etc). Questions were also asked about the care they gave to the subject child/ren to get a picture of the practical arrangements for the care of the subject child/ren – eg I care for my child alone / I'm the primary carer / I share the care roughly equally / I am excluded from the care of my child etc. The main elements of the survey related to the experience of fathers in terms of their engagement (or lack of it) with a variety of services – eg Children's Services, Parenting Support (Flying Start / Families First etc) Education and health services. Responding to feedback received from the 2015 survey separate question categories were established asking respondents about their experience with Cafcass Cymru and also with the Police. The final question related to an understanding and comment about the Welsh Government Parenting Strategy - specifically in relation to its information about fathers.

The survey asked individuals to express their views more fully through a comments facility in each section. These comments represented powerful testimony and provided much greater clarity to underpin the headlines from the statistical data. As a result we have decided to include many of the comments in the body of this report to assist the reader.

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DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

A total of 209 valid responses were received by 11th June 2016 when the survey was 'closed'. Responses were required to all questions in the 2016 survey.

Age The largest group who responded were aged 40-49 (72 total -34.45%) followed by 30-39 (52 total – 24.88%). 31 respondents identified they were in the important 21-29 age group (14.83%) but only 5 were aged under 20 (2.39%).

Geographical spread

We received responses from all 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales with the lowest level in Denbighshire (1 total – 0.48%) and Gwynedd, Ynys Mon and Wrexham (2 total – 0.96%) . The highest levels were in Cardiff (51 total – 24.4%) followed by Vale of Glamorgan (*) (28 total – 13.4%) Bridgend (17 total – 8.13%) Rhondda Cynon Taff (16 total –7.66%)

(*) Vale of Glamorgan figure includes 15 paper responses collected at a Flying Start Family Fun Day – summer 2015.

Ethnicity

The overwhelming response came from those who identified as White British – (190 total – 90.91%) Four responses were received from dads who identified as Black (including African / Caribbean etc) (1.91%) and a similar number from 'Other' ethnic groups including Chinese, Philipino, Malay etc.

In view of the low numbers from BME groups further effort will need to be undertaken to engage these groups in the 2017 survey.

Relationship to the child

143 respondents (69.76%) identified as a father – while 33 (16.1%) identified as a Non-Resident father. 17 (8.29%) responded to identify themselves as Single father / Parent with Care. Foster fathers (2 total - 0.98%) responded for the first time. We also had responses from 5 Stepfathers (2.44%) and the same number of grandfathers. We also had our first 'female' dad responding – who stated that she was in a same sex relationship and identified with the 'father' role.

Care arrangements for the child

92 (44.02%) respondents identified themselves as sharing care of their child/ren roughly equally with the mother / other carer – a significant increase on the figure for 2015 (32.14%). The second largest group (45 total – 21.53%) identified as being excluded from the care of their children, a modest reduction in percentage terms from last year's 25%. 19 respondents (9.09%) stated that they cared for their child alone OR were the primary carer. with the next largest group identifying as providing some care – (43 total – 30.71%).

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

More than 50% of respondents (105 total) had no experience of dealing with Children's Services. However of those who did, the most significant number had negative views of their experience.

NEGATIVE VIEWS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES BY FATHERS OUTWEIGHED POSITIVE BY MORE THAN 4:1 – A DETERIORATION FROM THE 2015 RESULT

Strongly negative – 45 total – 21.53% (2015 comparison -27 total – 18.37%)

Mostly negative – 28 total – 13.4% (2015 comparison - 20 total – 13.61%)

In contrast those who had a positive experience numbered 17 in total (2 strongly positive - 0.96%, 15 mostly positive - 7.18%)

14 (6.7%) reported that their experience was neither good nor bad.

The detail of the analysis lay as we anticipated in the individual comments (78) made by respondents. Negative comments significantly outweighed positive and were some of the strongest of all sections of the Welsh Dads Survey. The overwhelming perception conveyed by the comments is of a profession that is uncaring and sexist in its attitude towards fathers and other male carers. We suggest that there is much to be done to repair the reputation of social workers in this area.

Sexist biased poorly trained idiots who lack professionalism and are not aware of parental alienation.

Totally utterly useless in even replying to a msg after hours of persistent attempts soc services then just listened to the mother and discounted my opinions

I care for my son alone after it was found that his mother locked him in his room most of the time. Social Services were a disgrace - they did nothing to protect my son.

Corrupt, unaccountable.

Non-provision of minutes post case conference; no invitation to case conference (when minutes were obtained from meeting: the chair stated as father I should have been in attendance)

before my daughter was born i was told by social services that i was fighting a losing battle and that I'm in a no win situation. I was literally cut out of my daughter's life and was treated like a criminal and that i had no rights. Everything I said was twisted and used against me. I was never informed about important issues regarding my daughter. I was literally cut out of my daughter's life

I was not informed of any meetings held about my child including CIN or CP, even though I had PR. I felt isolated and not informed of what was happening to my child.

I have witnessed social services lie to my face and dismiss the actions of mother when i told them and showed them the bottles of medicine used to drug our sons. I was told "It's in the past"

Their advice to child's mother was to stop any contact

It's been an absolute nightmare. In my experience everything is in favour of the mother with little or no rights observed for the father. I can liken my experience to a never ending merry go round of non cooperative behaviour from the mother without any consequence of her actions at all.

Social services failed to pursue, or take notice of the mother alienating our children.

They do not include fathers in any meeting they hold and yet mothers are always included. They are biased about non resident fathers

Always felt that the social worker never listened to me as the father only to the mother of my children

Misandry is rife in children service departments

My child received a black eye covering a quarter of her face. I reported it and the mother gave the excuse that she had woken up like it. No further action was taken place and I was made to feel like the bad parent and was causing trouble where only I had concern. The attitude felt strongly sexist.

I feel that the support is only available to the primary parent and that my side is not listened to or believed when the mother is lying.

They are not reactive to emotional abuse and will only consider intervening if actually physical abuse is present.

There were however some positive comments about Children's services:

I have had no personal dealings with them. I have a sister who works as a social worker in Cardiff and often shares how difficult it is for them. I feel for them as they can't win.

The stigma around being a father with a child is that we are usually treated as idiots. My experience with my daughter has been quite different. I've been treated with respect and dignity, and have been afforded the opportunity to ask the questions which are pertinent to me.

On the few occasions I have needed advice on issues involving my grandchildren Social Services have tried to help

PARENTING SUPPORT SERVICES

We were disappointed to find that the lack of recognition of the primary Welsh Government funded programmes by fathers is even more pronounced than in 2015. It should be remembered however that even services such as Families First are not universal services such as Health or Education and so from a wider population survey it is to be expected that the levels of recognition will be lower.

ACROSS ALL PROGRAMMES THERE WAS A VERY STRONG LACK OF RECOGNITION OF ANY OF THE SERVICES – WITH MORE THAN 80% OF RESPONDENTS INDICATING THAT THEY HAD NO ENGAGEMENT OR RECOGNITION OF THE PRIMARY WELSH GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

This is particularly disappointing as we made special efforts to engage with individual service users (especially in the Vale of Glamorgan Flying Start setting) and through publicising the survey through Children in Wales and Neighbourhood Partnerships in Cardiff. There was as a result a slightly higher engagement figure for Flying Start – although 77.03% had no experience of the service.

Comments about these services included both positive and negative experiences.

Quite positive especially with Flying Start. I went along to Dad's Base and it was good.

Flying Start have worked with my sister who we live with. I may be interested in the Dad's Base

Cannot get the placement we desperately need for our youngest child

I find they are very unhelpful if you are a non-resident parent. They simply don't cater for non-resident parents, barriers to their services are very high.

A family support person helped my case to get contact with children by going above and beyond his hours of duty

Whilst they were helpful, every health visitor and practitioner couldn't seem to get it through their heads that I (the father) was my child's primary care giver, and would address questions only to my then partner

flying start was brilliant but suffers the same bias when it comes to risk assessments and dv

Not eligible for most services due to postcode.

Useless unless you're female

More stuff for dads. Very little on offer

no access for parents in work.

CAFCASS CYMRU

A division of Welsh Government delivering direct services to children, parents and the Family Court, Cafcass Cymru is primarily a social work organisation. Following a range of comments in the 2015 survey spread across the areas of Children's Services, Parenting Support and others we decided to ask a separate question about father's experiences of Cafcass Cymru.

Almost 6 in 10 respondents (121 total - 57.89%) had no experience of Cafcass Cymru – who only become involved with children and families when an application has been made to the Family Court.

THOSE WITH A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE ORGANISATION OUTWEIGHED THE POSITIVE BY MORE THAN 4:1

Individual views of Cafcass Cymru may also be coloured by the overall experience of the Family Courts – which may negatively impact in this area. Comments in this section often included information about Children's Services and the Family Court as well as Cafcass Cymru. 70 detailed comments were received about their services which represented a high percentage of those who had experience of it (88).

Cafcass became involved with Court proceedings but failed to see the grandchildren were being alienated against us.

I havent seen my son in 14 years. Cafcass and Social Services aided in the mother alienating my son from me. They are both not fit for purpose

Cafcass do not look to involve the father in any plans other than what the mother wants.

I felt that their handling of my daughters issues to be slack and not worth the trouble. They were too easily to brush the feelings of all involved under carpet too easily. There was no follow up and was easily dubbed by the influence of the mother

conflicting reports from two CAFCAS officers one extremely positive one negative re non resident parent

Cafcass officer not only turned up on wrong day but also had to be questioned by the judge about her indecisiveness. One of the main things being that she believed the mother when she claimed to be joint main carer while she worked full time and I didn't.

Waste of time..Don't give equal rights to fathers.

Biased. Ignore facts. Not beyond lying in reports and in court.

Impartial? No Gender biased: Yes. 'You have no rights here (in court)' was barked at me several times. They also refused to let me read a statement designed as an aide memoir. They refused to see me without my ex-wife.

Told by my female CAFCASS Officer that "she is aware men get a hard time"

I eventually received an apology, but the damage was done!

The person that was assigned to my case was on sick leave for long periods of time. After a few telephone calls it was revealed that a report was not generated for the case even to a date that was very close to the court date. Subsequently, the court recommended that both parents attend a parenting course which seemed more like a box ticking exercise, considering the fact that CAFCASS was of the opinion that they saw no reason to be involved in this case.

A cafcass member was made 'children guardian' but had trouble keeping up all the things needed to do which made children initial contact delayed

An S7 report was initially carried out. This was very positive. The lady that carried out the then went on maternity leave. The next one taking over told me she did not agree with the report in the court waiting area. Even though this was the first time we had ever met. Total disgrace.

Do not make decisions based on facts but hearsay disgusting organisation should be disbanded. One report was submitted without input from me in my opinion infringing the equality laws

Totally rubbished my claims to see my children under the human rights act. Said it didnt apply in family court

Not all comments about Cafcass Cymru were negative however.

They were doing the best they could for me and my child given the actions taken by my child's mother; they're heavy workload and lack of power to reign in mothers who deny access.

Cafcass England has been supportive

Phone call interview prior to first hearing was okay on the whole, however I firmly believe that a face to face interview is always best

Cafcass identified Parental Alienation.

They were fair. Made my wife and myself feel uncomfortable but were clearly far more switched on to the situation than I thought by their intense questioning. They ended up recommending exactly what I was asking for.

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

More than ¾ of respondents indicated that they had experience of schools or educational services. In the survey we invited views about all aspects of the relationship and experience of parental engagement with the school as a father eg do you receive school reports / are you invited to parents evenings etc.

THOSE WHO EXPRESSED A POSITIVE ATTITUDE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OUTNUMBERED THE NEGATIVE BY ALMOST 3:1

35 respondents (16.99%) were strongly positive and 60 respondents were mostly positive (29.13%) about their engagement with schools. In contrast 21 shared a mostly negative experience (10.19%) while a further 14 (6.8%) expressed a strongly negative view. A further 27 respondents said their experience was neither good nor bad (13.11%). Those respondents who chose to leave a comment in addition tended to have more of a negative overview than the overall survey response. However reflecting the broadly positive experience fathers have with schools comments have included:

They are fully supportive I have adequate communication regarding my children. I work night shifts and they will happily arrange meetings around my work/sleep pattern.

I received school reports.

Communication generally positive but not always good at responding to concerns. Dads involvement in school issues, however, is understood to be taken perhaps more seriously with the "if dad feels strongly enough to get involved it must be serious" kind of response!!

the support and communication from school is amazing and can see my child growing in personality and gaining extensive knowledge

School has been professional and kept me informed and invited me to parents evenings for separate appointments

However, a deeper analysis of the detailed comments reveal an underlying pattern of difficulty with engagement for some fathers – particularly those who do not live with their children for the majority of the time.

School rarely provides any information up front even though the circumstanceshave been registered with them. However, they will provide information when asked. But why should I have to ask for each and every time something is happening in school?

Although supporting by nature - they won't do anything that could potentially upset mother even when I would have any rights

My son's school are rubbish. Nothing has changed in the last 6 years, no matter how many times I've complained.

I have arranged meetings at the school and attended them until my ex wife refused to cooperate. I met with the head teacher to explain who I was and that I'd like copies of reports or incidents and I have never had anything back despite many emails asking.

Schools are reluctant to share information with non resident parent. Therefore as a grandfather we no longer invited to school functions.

Pathetic have no interest in ensuring a father who is a professional is kept up to date with their children's progress.

I had no contact from school for over a year while fighting for access.

Despite asking for copies of school reports, an information about parents evenings I am often forgotten. I need to ask each time, it never happens automatically. I feel like an afterthought.

There also seems to be a perception of a greater problem at Primary school level rather than Secondary, or of an arbitrary nature in general.

Secondary school more approachable than high school but letters sent home with children are never received by me. Primary more sympathetic and comfortable dealing with mothers or single parents

Have all contact details, high school I receive all communication junior school receive nothing

Schools have worked really hard- both Connahs Quay High and Flint High. Although more positives with CQ. Have received book home from primary only referenced to Mum!

As I have children in both Primary and Secondary school it varies from School to School. In one case it seems very good and in the other pretty poor.

Mixed feelings and experiences..... depends on individual staff perceptions, cultures and beliefs whereby have been treated good and bad!

It would appear that there are a number of issues around engagement with fathers that could be addressed by tackling the registration system – requiring schools to record the details of ALL those with Parental Responsibility for children when the child is first registered. We also see a strong case for revising and refreshing the Welsh Government guidance in this area (Parents & Parental Responsibility – A Guide for Schools 2007) as it seems to lack visibility amongst school staff. Similar guidance was revised and released to schools in England in February 2016.

HEALTH SERVICES

The experience of fathers engaging with health services was broadly positive although not as high a level as education.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH SERVICES OUTWEIGHED NEGATIVE, BUT ONLY BY JUST OVER 2:1

Although most fathers remain content with their engagement with Health Services this hides some deep rooted problems that particularly impact on Non-Resident fathers or those who are not the 'Primary Carer'.

Those respondents who expressed a view (171 total – 81.82%) were broadly positive about their experience as a dad accessing health services. 34 were Strongly Positive (16.27%) while a further 56 were Mostly Positive (26.79%). In contrast 28 were Mostly Negative (13.4%) and 16 were Strongly Negative (7.66%). The remainder saw the service as Neither Good nor Bad (37 total – 17.7%) This last figure has halved from the 2015 survey with attitudes becoming much more polarised as a result (though in roughly equal measure moving to positive and negative views overall).

As with other areas it is the detailed comments that reveal the important elements and provide the material for a lessons learned approach.

Positive views included

My son's doctor has been excellent with any aspect of his health.

The staff are great but there's not enough of them and they don't have enough time.

All good

A&E services at Heath Hospital are excellent. Prompt, professional and with sufficient material to keep children from getting bored or upset.

Good. Did not really have much contact. Had a good laugh with the midwife when I attended course.

Absolutely no concerns in this area.

My son's GP was excellent. When I had an issue to discuss about my son, I took along his birth Certificate to prove I was his father. I showed him the certificate and he asked why I was showing him. I told him the issues I'd had with other organisations, and he said you are his father, you don't need to prove that to me.

Our involvement has been with health visitors and GPs, and they have always been very helpful and eager to give advice.

Before I had custody of my child, indeed when I was having no contact at all, my son's GP was excellent in providing information of surgery visits and treatments.

Underlying many of the comments – including otherwise positive ones- is a familiar view that services tend to engage with mothers NOT fathers

Being a dad is one of the best things that has happened to me. A lot of stuff is instinctive - being reinforced by professionals giving advice. He is a model child. However no services have asked about my experience of being a dad. I feel excluded because I work most of the day. Health is very 'Mum' oriented. Midwives have been to house - talked to mum and ignored me as a dad.

Maternity and health services didn't really have anything to do with me. Not enough facilities for dads to do with kids

I generally have a positive experience with different services. However at times I have not been treated equally.

Health and education only deal with the mother. Sexist

Couldn't get my daughter vaccinated without Mums consent

Never been involved with these people regarding my child, always mother

Although sometimes men may be their own worst enemies

It's women's stuff. I leave all to the ex

You'd have to ask her mother

A familiar pattern emerges however when we see the comments primarily from those fathers who don't live with their children most of the time or who have been in conflict with the mother.

although I'm listed as my daughters father and my address is on file on my daughters health files .im never informed of any medical appointments etc

Always questioning where mum is when I take my children for appointments.

Would always address questions to my ex even though I was the one caring for the child.

I experienced problems during court having access to my sons medical records as they said his mother would need to consent. My legal rep hadn't heard of this before. It meant that medical evidence wasn't submitted when it probably should've been.

I feel that all services favour mother's opinion and views more than my own and even if mother breaks court orders nothing is ever done about it

Some respondents shared bad experiences with individual health workers – often in maternity services or where the mother was particularly hostile. As in the 2015 survey Health Visitors play a significant role in the negative comments expressed by dads.

Health visitors patronising and inappropriately understanding of individual parents' needs.

Health visitors have been poor on the whole. Often being overly cautious. They too often deferred to the Mother when we were both in the room.

Health visitor encouraged my ex wife to go down the domestic abuse route so she could get legal aid. She divulged information to my wife which she assured me would be treated in confidence. GP surgery unable to recognise a "shared residency" arrangement and still use terms such as "custody". They most definitely treat me as "non resident " parent even though we have a near 50:50 arrangement.

Other Health professionals also came in for criticism however

Midwife supposedly informed my sons mother that she doesn't have to let me see him if she doesn't want to then denied it when confronted by my solicitor but wouldn't put in writing she had/hadn't said when asked for a letter to be produced in court

Surgery refuses to include me in the loop regarding the health of our children even though I had my solicitor write to them telling them I had PR.

My daughters surgery were unhelpful, they would not step up and evidence the unreasonable behaviour of my ex, they did not want to get involved.

School nurse had to complain about as she submitted report full of lies with no checking of the facts my complaint was proven and surprise surprise nurse takes early retirement.

Surgeries have been rubbish and simply refuse to include me in the information cascade, usually by telling me that their computer system cannot accommodate me. As I work in the NHS I know this to be a lie.

But that experience hasn't been a universal one. Sometimes there may be simply a failure to understand the realities of parenting for those dads who don't live with their children all the time

Was good until partner left for another relationship. Although I've been informed by the family GP recently that I need to bring a birth certificate for my children if I want to discuss my children with their GP. Never been turned away like thus before only since we split. No safeguarding issues, both of us have PR so why make it so difficult? I've been taking children to the same GP since birth as has their mother

Again, it never seems to occur to them to share information.

Doctors reluctant to share information with the non resident parent. As a grandfather we no longer get information about the children's wellbeing.

POLICE SERVICES

We decided to include a specific question about fathers' experience of engaging with Police Services in the 2016 survey because we had a large number of comments in the previous year's survey about the Police across many of the other question areas. We had also become aware of the issues many separated fathers faced with Police actions through the series of focus groups we ran for men as part of the process of informing the Welsh Government's Equalities Strategy.

EXPERIENCE OF POLICE ENGAGEMENT WAS CHARACTERISED BY A GENDERED APPROACH WITH A PERCEPTION THAT WOMEN ARE THE PRIORITY

It is important to note that more than half of respondents (111 total – 53.62%) to the survey had no experience of engagement with Police. However for those who did the experience was a predominantly negative one – 26 Mostly Negative 12.56% and a further 33 Strongly negative – 15.54%). In contrast 13 respondents stated their experience was Mostly Positive (6.28%) and a further 9 Strongly Positive (4.35%). Finally a further 15 respondents (7.25%) stated their experience to be Neither Good nor Bad.

Many of the negative comments indicate a perception that the Police have a gendered view when dealing with child contact disputes or domestic violence

Seems they only act for mums

Inherently sexist in their approach to DV.

Police seem to believe mothers story over father

Spoke to the police when my wife first left and was made to feel like a criminal.

I have been the victim of domestic abuse and harassment. They ignore any Male reports of incidents, and then threaten the man with warning notices. They do not care about men etc. They only care about statistics for female reports.

The police defend mums position by threatening me with arrest and taking our child into police protective custody at the whim of mum. Despite no crime being committed and being informed that they have no powers to act in such a way over civil matters.

South Wales Police discriminate against non resident fathers

officers initial reaction to callout is to side with mum and try to convince child that mum is right and they should go back to her!

In some of the comments the perception of Police bias goes further with reports of actual incidents where the Police have been dismissive of a father's complaints and / or have overly supported the position of mothers when dealing with child contact issues.

Police once told me 'I need to man up' rather than explaining to my ex partner her behaviour was unacceptable. I believe my ex partner is not treated the same way as I was, for instance, she called them 12 times with fabricated lies and it took at least 6 false arrests for the police to sit up and take action. I also feel that when i do have legitimate complaints they are not taking them seriously

Told to man up when I reported domestic abuse to them. Corrupt as they come, police complaint upheld, officer disciplined.

When I reported to South Wales Police I had been assaulted by my ex the officer just laughed at me. When she falsely complained about domestic violence they were at my door constantly including very early hours of the morning.

I contacted the police after my ex wife attacked me when I was dropping the children back to her she also grabbed my son by the neck and dragged him into the house. The police arrived 4 hours later and within two weeks my ex wife was dating the officer who had been called to the scene.

The police accused me of Harrasment to my child's mother for asking to see my child

Treated as a criminal. Took 4 hours to visit when I reported my children missing with my ex. Accused me of being a bully. One of the 2 police played on their phone throughout their visit. Failed to let me know they'd found my children the following day. Complaint made & received apology and usual 'lessons will be learned'.

treated like a I had mugged a old lady Arrested and prosecuted for harassment regardless of the situations No help whatsoever in respect of making contact with child's mother

Police have been called as mother keeps making accusations. Always ends in NFA but nothing seems to be done to stop mother causing trouble. Police seem to state what they can and can't do and never will enforce a court order. So a new expensive court case needs to be reopened

Refused to take my complaint against my ex brother in law seriously after he ambushed me and assaulted me at handover. Yet when he complained to them that I still had property of his that we'd borrowed off him they meticulously pursued it. ..knocking at my door and phoning me on bank holidays threatening me with arrest.

I was being verbally abused by my child's mother in the street and yet the police would do nothing. My car was damaged and she was seen doing it, but when I reported this, nothing was done. She then started accusing me of abusing her (with no evidence or witnesses), yet I got arrested and had an injunction placed on me.

There was however a recognition in some of the comments made that the Police have a difficult job to do when called to 'referee' child contact disputes or domestic violence accusations. There was also some recognition of the extent to which Police can become involved in civil matters

Physically they were incredible; if it were not for the Police Services I would be dead now. When I went into the lion's den, so to speak, they could have severely hurt me but did the opposite. Saved my life when I tried to jump off a bridge

The police can not do anything and refuse to get involved as they consider it domestic and a civil matter

Polite, but knew they would take woman's side, asked for help retrieving clothes, things and they almost laughed, so asked a female friend to do it.

These comments mirror those that our charity receives through calls to our Helpline and attendance at our network of support meetings across Wales.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & FURTHER INFORMATION

We are extremely grateful to all those men who took part in the 2016 survey, and to the women who encouraged them to do so.

The Data Tables created from the report can be accessed via the Research section of our website

www.fnf-bpm.org.uk

Comments / queries etc should be addressed to

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