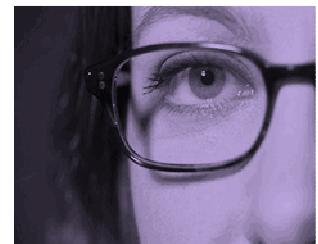


Child Welfare Needs and Rights



Research Supporting The Importance of Shared Care



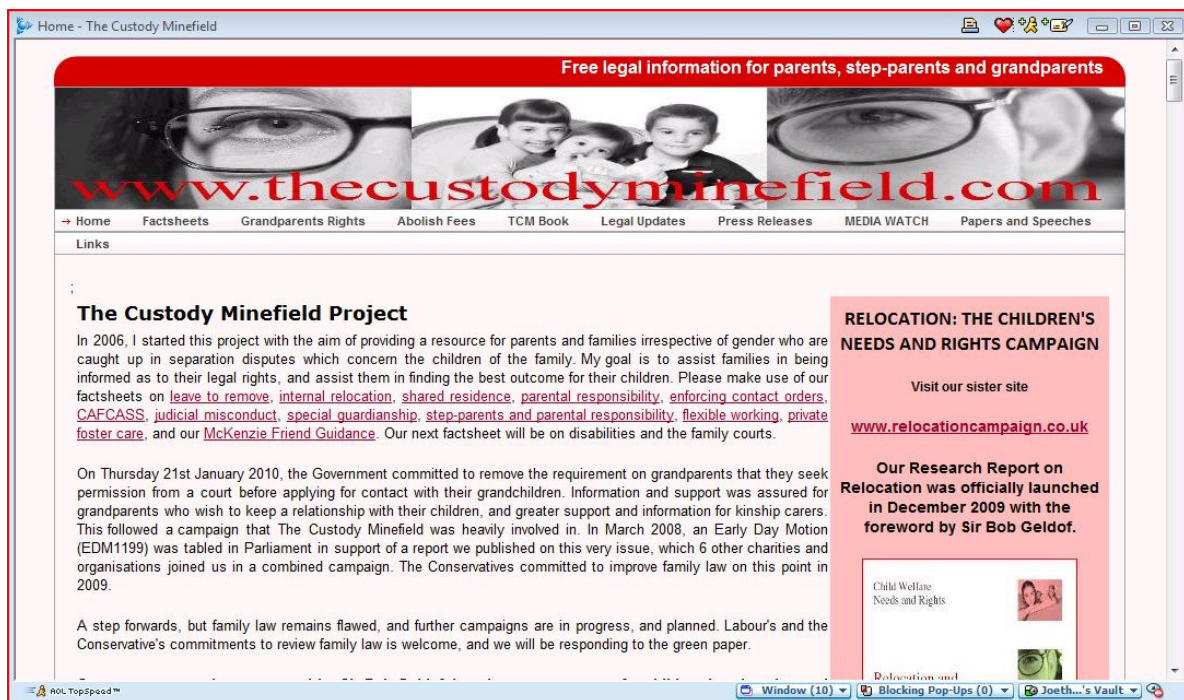
A Compilation of Research by The Custody Minefield
The UK's leading internet based information resource
on relocation, leave to remove and shared residence
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Contents

1.	Relocation: The effects on Children	
1.1	UK Research: The effects on Mental Health and Psychological Development	2
1.2	UK Research: The effects on Schooling and Educational Development	4
2.	International Research	6
3.	Research supporting the benefits of Shared Parenting	7
4.	Changing society	8



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1. UK Research Supporting the benefits of Shared Care

1.1 UK Research: Effects on Mental Health and Psychological Development

1.1.1 'Involved Fathers Key For Children'. Dr Eirini Flouri and Prof Ann Buchanan for The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) 2002

Girls whose fathers are involved in their upbringing are less likely to have mental health problems in later life whilst good father relations can prevent boys from getting into trouble with the police says research released during National Science Week 2002.

'Good father-child relationships are associated with an absence of emotional and behavioural difficulties in adolescence and greater academic motivation too' say Dr Eirini Flouri and Prof Ann Buchanan co authors of the research. **'Teenagers who have grown up feeling close to their fathers in adolescence also go on to have more satisfactory adult marital relationships'** she adds.

The ESRC funded research at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of Oxford aimed to discover whether it could further support US research showing positive outcomes for children whose fathers were more 'involved' in their care. **'An involved father is one who reads to his child, takes outings with his child, is interested in the child's education and takes an equal role in managing his child'** explains Dr Flouri. 'That does not necessarily mean that he lives with the child's mother or is even the biological father of the child' she adds.

The research also shows that a good relationship with the father or father figure can also protect against adolescent psychological problems in families where the parents have separated. **'There was a particularly strong association between father involvement with daughters during adolescence and a lack of psychological distress in adult life'** says Dr Flouri. 'For boys who have involved fathers it was quite marked that they were less likely to be in trouble with the police as they grew older' she adds.

Involvement of the father or a father figure has a significantly protective role against psychological problems in adolescents in families where parents have separated. This finding is independent of whether mothers are also involved.

ESRC Report 2001, Father involvement and outcomes in adolescence and adulthood.

1.1.2 'The Role of Father Involvement and Mother Involvement in Adolescents' Psychological Well-being' Dr Eirini Flouri and Prof Ann Buchanan. British Journal of Social Work 2003; 33: 399-406

This study of 2,722 British adolescents aged 14–18 years explored whether paternal involvement can protect against low levels of well-being even when maternal involvement and risk and protective factors are controlled for. Results showed that **although both father and mother involvement contributed significantly and independently to offspring happiness, father involvement had a stronger effect.**

Fortnightly amusement-park parenting (the old 80:20 formula) contributes little to developing meaningful parent-child relationships.

Laumann-Billings L & Emery RE. Distress among young adults from divorced families, Journal of Family Psychology 2002; 14:671-687.

1.1.3 'A Good Childhood: Searching for Values in a Competitive Age'. Richard Layard and Judy Dunn. The Children's Society (2009)

Based on the experiences of 30,000 children, the research found that 'a child's performance at secondary school, self-esteem and well being as an adult is linked especially to the father's input' and **'children are 40% more likely to suffer mental health problems when separated from their fathers'** and 'on average, children are less likely to fail at school or suffer depression the more they see their separated father.'

Fathers and mothers have different kinds of input to their children, both necessary.

Dr MK Pruett Ph.d, M.S.L, Fatherneed: why father care is as essential as mothercare for your child, Free Press New York 2000.

1.1.4 'The role of father involvement in children's later mental health'. Dr Eirini Flouri and Prof Ann Buchanan. Journal of Adolescents 2003; 26; 63-78

Data on 8441 cohort members of the National Child Development Study were used to explore links between father involvement at age 7 and emotional and behavioural problems at age 16, and between father involvement at age 16 and psychological distress at age 33, controlling for mother involvement and known confounds. **Father involvement at age 7 protected against psychological maladjustment in adolescents from non-intact families, and father involvement at age 16 protected against adult psychological distress in women.**

1.1.5 'Life satisfaction in teenage boys: The moderating role of father involvement and bullying'. Dr Eirini Flouri and Prof Ann Buchanan. Aggressive Behaviour 2002; 28: 126-133

It has been suggested that bullying at school and low social support are related to relatively poor mental health in schoolchildren. Based on data from 1344 adolescent boys aged 13-19 years in Britain, this study explored whether father involvement, as an underestimated - in the related research - source of social support, can protect against low levels of satisfaction with life. Multiple regression analysis showed that **low father involvement and peer victimisation contributed significantly and independently to low levels of life satisfaction in adolescent boys**. There was also evidence relating to a buffering effect of father involvement in that this protected children from extreme victimisation.

Father absence through divorce is strongly associated with diminished self-concepts in children.
(Parish, 1987).

1.2 UK Research: Effects on Schooling and Educational Development

1.2.1 'The Impact of Parental Involvement on Children's Education'. The Department for Education and Skills 2003.

Fathers play an extremely important role in their children's lives and a plethora of research indicates that father involvement is significantly related to positive child outcomes. A father's interest in a child's schooling is strongly linked to educational outcomes for the child. Fathers who devote time to their sons are giving them a greater chance to grow up as confident adults. Boys who feel that their fathers devote time, especially to talk to them about their worries, school work and social lives, almost all emerge as motivated and optimistic men. **Father involvement in children's education at age 7 predicts higher educational attainment by age 20, in both boys and girls.** For boys, early father involvement protects against delinquency in later life. The involvement of fathers exerts an influence on children's positive attitudes to school.

Father involvement is associated with good parent-child relationships in adolescence and also with later satisfactory partnerships in adult life.
ESRC Report 2001, Father involvement and outcomes in adolescence and adulthood.

1.2.2 'Early father's and mother's involvement and child's later educational outcomes'. British Journal of Educational Psychology 2004; 74: 141-53.

Father involvement and mother involvement at age 7 independently predicted educational attainment by age 20. The association between parents' involvement and educational attainment was not stronger for sons than for daughters. Father involvement was not more important for educational attainment when mother involvement was low rather than high. Not growing up in intact two-parent family did not weaken the association between father's or mother's involvement and educational outcomes. **CONCLUSION: Early father involvement can be another protective factor in counteracting risk conditions that might lead to later low attainment levels.**

Even very young children can benefit from overnight stays with their other parent.

Kelly J B & Lamb M E (2000) Using child development research to make appropriate custody and access decisions for young children, Family and Conciliation Courts Review, 39, 297-311.

1.2.3 'Father's Day: The Importance of Dads'. Dr Daniel Nettle of Newcastle University and the Institute of Neuroscience in the Journal of Evolution and Human Behaviour.

Nettle used the National Child Development Study, which traces the lives of every Briton born between 3 and 9 March, 1958. Surveys taken in the 1960s and 70s asked mothers to rate the father's involvement in his child, from "inapplicable" to "equal to the mother". These and later surveys through 2005 tracked intelligence, income, and education of the participants.

Dads who play an active part in their children's upbringing help them to be more intelligent and successful was the finding of a second study published in the journal Evolution and Human Behaviour.

With paternal investment, however, time seemed to be the most important currency. At age 11, children of highly involved fathers boasted markedly higher IQs than children with less present dads. "This is not half a point, this is a few points of IQ, on average," he says.

Inter-parental conflict decreases over time in shared custody arrangements, and increases in sole custody arrangements.

Bauserman 2002.

2. International Research

2.1 Child Custody, Access and Parental Responsibility: The Search for a Just and Equitable Standard. Erik Kruk M.S.W. Ph.D. The University of British Columbia. December 2008.

Sole maternal custody often leads to parental alienation and father absence, and father absence is associated with negative child outcomes. Eighty five per cent of youth in prison are fatherless; 71 per cent of high school dropouts are fatherless; 90 per cent of runaway children are fatherless; and **fatherless youth exhibit higher levels of depression and suicide, delinquency, promiscuity and teen pregnancy, behavioural problems and illicit and licit substance abuse** (Statistics Canada, 2005; Crowder and Teachman, 2004; Ellis et al., 2003; Ringback Weitoft et al., 2003; Jeynes, 2001; Leonard et al., 2005; McCue Horwitz et al., 2003; McMunn, 2001; Margolin and Craft, 1989; Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996; Vitz, 2000; Alexander, 2003).

These studies also found that fatherless youth are more likely to be victims of exploitation and abuse, as **father absence through divorce is strongly associated with diminished self-concepts in children** (Parish, 1987).

Children of divorce want equal time with their parents and consider shared parenting to be in their best interests. Seventy per cent of children of divorce believe that equal amounts of time with each parent is the best living arrangement for children, and children who have had equal time arrangements have the best relations with each of their parents after divorce (Fabricius, 2003).

A recent meta-analysis of the major North American studies comparing sole and joint physical custody arrangements has shown that **children in joint custody arrangements fare significantly better on all adjustment measures than children who live in sole custody arrangements.** Children in joint custody arrangements had fewer behavioural and emotional problems, higher self-esteem, and better family relations and school performance than children in sole custody arrangements. **The positive outcomes of joint custody were also evident among high-conflict couples.**

3. Research on the benefits of shared parenting

3.1.1 Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody versus Sole-Custody Arrangement: A Meta Analytic Review. Robert Bauserman, *Journal of Family Psychology* 2002; 16: 91-102

Children in joint custody arrangements fare significantly better on all adjustment measures than children who live in sole custody arrangements.

The fact that joint custody couples also reported less current conflict is important because of the concern that joint custody can be harmful by exposing children to ongoing parental conflict. In fact, it was the sole-custody parents who reported higher levels of current conflict.

3.1.2 'Drifting Towards Shared Residence' Smart *et al* 2003.

This small study only looked at the experiences of 30 teenagers and young adults but has shaped policy since it was published in 2003. We only mention this report because it is often incorrectly cited as calling into question the benefits of shared residence, but few who refer to the summary are aware of the diminutive and unrepresentative sample used in the underlying study.

As the authors admit, their title is confusing, in that the study was not into shared residence but the experiences of a few teenagers who were understandably unhappy with a rigid 50:50 division of time between parent's homes. The teenager's unhappiness seemed further compounded by poor parenting.

4. Changing society

4.1 'Completing the Revolution: The Leading Indications', Equal Opportunities Commission 2007, London

British fathers now undertake approximately nearly half of all childcare. Mothers recorded an average of 2 hours 32 minutes per day looking after their own children, compared with 2 hours 16 minutes by fathers.

4.2 'Working Fathers, Earning and Caring', Equal Opportunities Commission 2003, London

The amount of time that fathers of children under the age of 5 spend with them on child-related activities has gone up from less than a quarter of an hour per day in the mid 1970s to two hours a day by the late 1990s.