

# **Policies to increase fathers' use of leave**

Peter Moss

Thomas Coram Research Unit  
Institute of Education University of London

# Evolution of leave for fathers

- Maternity leave
- ‘Gender neutral’ Parental leave (family entitlement)
- Entitlements for fathers only
  - Paternity Leave (at time of birth)
  - Non-transferable Parental Leave (individual entitlement, e.g. EU Directive, fathers quota)  
...all or part of leave; unpaid or paid

# Policies to increase use

- ***Penalty*** for *not* using (use it or family lose it)
- ***Incentives*** to use: bonus payment, time e.g.
  - Italy : additional month if take 3 months ParL (for father)
  - Finland : 12 ‘bonus’ days if take 2 weeks (for father)
  - Germany: 2 months extra paid ParL if father takes 2 months of ParL (for family)
  - Portugal: 15 days ParL at full earnings if taken immediately after MatL (otherwise unpaid) (for father)
  - Basque : regional government payment for parents taking ParL, higher benefit for fathers

# Policies to increase use

## *Compulsion*

- Portugal: 5 days PatL are obligatory

# Transfer of maternity leave to fathers

- In exceptional circumstances
- As a general option
  - Spain: 10 of 16 weeks to fathers (Castilla-La Mancha gives extra payment to men taking 3+ weeks)
  - Portugal: 11 of 17 weeks to fathers
  - UK (proposed): up to 6 of 12 months as ‘additional paternity leave’

## Beyond separate types of leave

Maternity leave+Paternity leave+Parental  
leave ▶▶ ▶▶

‘Postnatal leave’ equally divided, e.g. Iceland  
– 9 months of well-paid ‘birth leave’  
(*faedingarorlof*) =3 months for mother+3  
months for father+3 months for ‘family’

“Law makes no distinction between different  
types of leave taken by mothers and fathers  
[but] a distinction is made in everyday usage”

# Take-up

- Fathers use well-paid ‘fathers only’ leave
- Fathers do *not* use poorly paid Parental leave
- If there is a well-paid ‘family entitlement’, fathers:
  - Do not use it if there is also a fathers entitlement
  - Make limited use if there is no fathers entitlement, i.e. mothers use most of leave

# Take-up

## Iceland

Fathers take 96 days leave, mothers 182 days

17% fathers use some of 'joint rights' compared to 91% of mothers

i.e. Fathers use 3 months fathers leave; mothers use 3 months mothers leave + 3 months 'family entitlement'



# Take up

## Slovenia

15 weeks MatL+15 days PatL+37 weeks ParL  
@ 100% + 75 days PatL at very low pay

$\frac{2}{3}$  fathers take PatL – but 91% only take 15 days

All mothers take ParL - but only 2% of fathers

Nada suggests low take up because of: social attitudes,  
employers' expectations, absence of positive image of  
fathers who take more family responsibilities

# Take up

## Denmark

18 weeks MatL + 2 weeks PatL + 32 weeks of  
ParL @ 100%

On average, mothers take 351 days, fathers 25  
days

## Well-paid leave for fathers only

None: Australia; Austria; CzechR, Germany;  
Ireland; Italy; Poland; UK: US

2 weeks or less: Belgium; Canada; Denmark;  
France; Greece; Hungary; Netherlands;

1 month: Finland; Portugal; Quebec (3-5 weeks);  
Slovenia & Spain (3 weeks)

2 months: Norway; Sweden (2.5 months)

3 months: Iceland

# Some observations

- How do fathers use leave—do they go hunting?
- Do ceilings on benefit payments act as a greater disincentive for fathers than mothers?
- How far can ‘well paid fathers only’ leave policy work, e.g. 3 ►► 6...9...12 months?
- Fathers who are not co-resident. Eligibility? Use? Mothers? Statistics?
- Other influences on use of leave: mothers, workplace, cultural norms etc

# Some observations

Need for wider, coherent and monitored policies to “promote and encourage...increased participation by *men*” (Article 6, 1992 Council Recommendation on Child Care) in care and upbringing of children.

# Some observations

Other measures to promote and encourage  
-fathers after early childhood (e.g. leave for sick  
children, shorter hours, preschool & school)

-men's employment in services – only Norway has  
national target for men in ECEC

More participant fathers+increased ECEC ►► care and  
upbringing of children remains gendered

-???????

***Choice or presumption?***