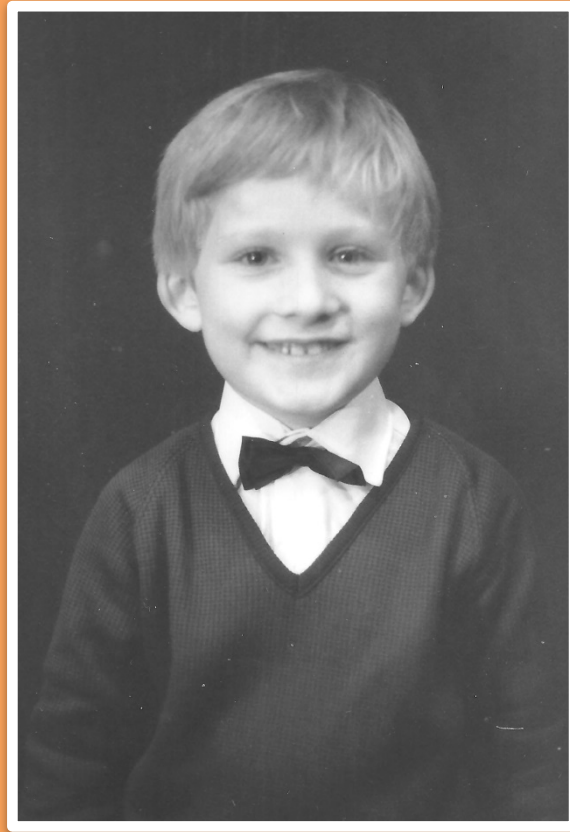


# Suicide: Men & the role of family courts

# WHO AM I ?



**Paul Apreda MA Cantab MBA**

National Manager, FNF Both Parents Matter Cymru

# WHAT WE DO?

- **Children's rights & parenting support charity in Wales**
- **Helpline – around 1100 calls per annum**
- **Face to Face support meetings – 10 locations across Wales**
- **Service users – c. 70% male**
- **Lobbying / campaigning / research on Family Justice and Domestic Violence issues**

# THE LANDSCAPE OF FAMILY JUSTICE

- (i) 48,244 applications made in Private Law - up 11% on 2015 - source MoJ Family Court Statistics 2016**
- (ii) 165,000 children were involved in Private Law orders made – source – as above**
- (iii) 1.3 million children have no real contact with their fathers – source – Centre for Social Justice – Fractured Families 2013**
- (iv) 96% of all ‘Contact’ applicants were made by fathers - source – Harding 2016**

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT SEPARATING FAMILIES & THE COURTS?



NOT A LOT.....!!

- **Process driven – ‘were the reports filed on time’ / ‘what was the duration of the case etc’**
- **Lack of meaningful data – direct / indirect contact**
- **‘A system designed by lawyers for lawyers’**
- ***‘Why should I have to pay thousands of pounds just to see my own kids.....?!’***

# CLOSING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

- **20% of adults in Wales have suffered Parental Separation** - Adverse Childhood Experiences - Public Health Wales 2015
- ***‘Our wide-ranging consultation and desk research highlight significant shortcomings in the UK evidence base on family separation’***  
Bryson, Purdon, Skipp et al 2017
- **the number of all children aged 16 and under living without both biological parents was 55% for low income households – DWP 2013**

what's it like going to Court to see your children?



**Sir James Munby – President of the  
Family Division – March 2017**

## **EXPERIENCES OF THE FAMILY COURT**

**‘...the very large majority of users of the family courts do not find it an appropriate experience - nothing to do with the outcome - the process, the experience is simply not what it ought to be. The problem starts even before you get in through the front door of the court, the actual state of some of our courts is shocking....’**

# Separation & suicide – is there a link?

Divorced men are significantly more likely than married men to die from cardiovascular disease, hypertension and stroke, and substance abuse, and are also more prone to depression and suicide than married men (Felix et al, 2013).



# **Suicides and 'Intimate Partner Problems'**

**In the USA intimate partner problems precipitated suicide in**

**2,031 men & 439 women**

**Surveillance for Violent Deaths report – (Karch et al 2009)**

**It is most often men who lose the children, the home, and perhaps their sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem along with being ordered to pay alimony and child support. All of the above are issues that include emotional and psychological life-altering stressors, that may depress some men and drive some to suicide because they now have lost everything they have worked for**

**(Frankel, 2009).**

# THE WELSH DADS SURVEY 2017

- **419 individual responses**  
– equivalent to a UK sample size of 8700
- **General survey of all fathers**
- **Only 13% identified as Non-Resident fathers**
- **Experiences of engagement with statutory services eg Health, Education, Police, Family Courts etc**
- **New question on mental well-being**



**BOTH PARENTS MATTER**  
**CYMRU**

Being a 'dad' can be difficult sometimes. The charity Mind suggest that more than 1 in 5 men can experience poor mental health after becoming a father. Thinking about your own experience have you faced any of the following?

- **suffered from stress sufficient to require time off work - 102 / 28.9%**
- **sought help from your GP or other health service – 102 / 28.9%**
- **talked about your low mood or feelings with friends / family / colleagues – 146 / 48.6%**
- **suffered depression so that you had time off work - 69 / 19.55%**
- **felt suicidal and unable to cope – 75 / 21.25%**
- **I've never really had any of these problems – 145 / 41.08%**

112 comments were left by respondents to this question

# WELSH DADS SURVEY 2017

## loss & powerlessness

- *‘The loss of not seeing your children takes away the ability to cope with the day to day stuff and the thoughts become all consuming of the loss.’*
- *‘Unless you have experienced it you cannot imagine the heartache of being apart from your children. I have gone through all of the above emotions. When you have a mother who is a parental alienator it is devastating for your children and yourself.’*
- *‘I’ve got a 6 year old girl and the things she tells me makes worry about her health up bringing and safety and there’s nothing i can do help her.’*

# WELSH DADS SURVEY 2017

## contact problems & suicidal ideation

- *Having my children taken away from me. I was very close to my sons. Then having 42 allegations against me just so that she could get legal aid. Suicide seemed the best option. Twice I tried to hang myself and once I stood on a railway track. The Samaritans talked me off the track.*
- *I feel like ending it all sometimes because the system of the family court, cafcass and others help the mother behave appallingly and do not intervene when she is trying to stop me from seeing the children. It's a tragedy that I am being exploited and controlled by my ex telling me when I can have the children etc otherwise she'll stop contact. I can't take it anymore.*
- *its been about 6 years now since seeing her every night I wake up thinking about her I can not sleep I have sat in my car many a time wanted to end it all . I take things out on my wife I have to go to work but when I am home spend a lot of time on my own up all night . When in work I put on a face they don't know the half of it*
- *I attempted suicide ten years ago when my ex wife told me if I didn't hand the house over to her she would tell enough lies to ensure I never saw my children again*

# THE FINAL WORD...?

- *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?*

# A BETTER WAY.....

- **A new vision for Family Justice**
- **Putting the needs of families before lawyers**
- **Greater predictability**
- **Improved education and advice**
- **Less conflict – inquisitorial vs adversarial**
- **Focussed on the needs & rights of children**
- ***‘I’m no-one’s possession’***

# CONTACTS

- WEBSITE – [www.fnf-bpm.org.uk](http://www.fnf-bpm.org.uk)
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- Facebook - ***Families Need Fathers - Both Parents Matter Cymru***
- Twitter - [@fnf\\_bpm\\_cymru](https://twitter.com/fnf_bpm_cymru)

**ALSO, COMING SOON**

