

 a **working families** publication

# Daddy's Home!

**A Life Planner for Fathers**

## About this book

Most of the quotes in this book come from fathers who are practising some kind of flexible working. When we decided that we wanted to find dads who were working flexibly, we weren't sure how to locate them. In a world where women do a lot of childcare, it's hard to find men at the playgroups and nurseries where mothers often meet. The school gate seemed the most likely place to find fathers who were actively involved with childcare, and the afternoon pickup was chosen as the most likely time to find dads who had flexible work arrangements which allowed them to be there at 3pm on a weekday. The fathers we talked to come from a wide variety of employment sectors, from manufacturing to education. Our researchers visited schools in London, Cardiff and Sheffield to talk to fathers; interviews were carried out at the school gate, or later via telephone. Additional research was gathered in a facilitated focus group discussion; this appears in 'Sometimes it's hard to be a man'.

# More than 50% of fathers want to slow down their careers as family demands grow\*



## Introduction

This booklet is designed with fathers in mind. In the last 20 years, it has become more common to find people working in new ways as they try and get a balance between work and their home life. These flexible work patterns come in a variety of forms: part-time working, flexi-time, term-time working and job-sharing are just some of the methods people and businesses use. But there is one unifying strand that links all these different flexible working arrangements – they're mostly done by women.

So do men even want to spend more time with their families? The answer is yes. There are more men working flexibly today than ever before, successfully balancing their job and their home life. This booklet introduces you to some of them. It looks at what made them decide to change the way they work, and shows how they made that change.

# Fathers' rights

Paternity leave

Change in working pattern

Emergency leave

Parental leave

According to academic studies, fathers who are closely involved with their children's upbringing have a positive impact on their children such as:

- **Better educational attainment**
- **Less likelihood of trouble with the police**
- **Good relationships in adolescence and adulthood**

→ What employment rights do fathers have at work to help them get a balance between their job and their families? At the most basic, depending on the length of their employment, men have the right to time off for paternity leave and the right to request a change to their working pattern. All parents also have the right to emergency leave in a crisis (usually unpaid), and, with a year's employment, up to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave. Some employers go further than these legal minimums, though, and offer enhanced paternity leave schemes and a variety of flexible working options. Check with your personnel department to see what your organisation's policy is, and what options are available to you. For a fuller description of your legal rights, visit the Working Families website at [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk). You can also call the Working Families legal helpline on freephone 0300 012 0312.

## **Right to Request Flexible Working – not just a woman's right**

All employees have the right to request flexible working to help them look after their children. Employers are legally required to take any request seriously, and there is a detailed procedure to help employees and employers deal with requests for a change in working hours or work pattern. To be eligible to make a request you need to have been working for your employer for 26 weeks. For detailed information on this right, visit [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk).

## **Paternity leave**

Since April 2003, most fathers have had the right to two weeks paid paternity leave. Currently this is paid at £139.58 per week, but some employers pay fathers their full salary for the duration of the leave – check to see what your employer's policy is. To qualify for paternity leave, you must have worked continuously for your employer for 26 weeks before the 15th week before the baby's due date.

## **Shared Parental Leave**

For babies due on or after 5th April 2015, Shared Parental Leave is available. Parents can share a pot of leave, and can decide to be off work at the same time and/or take it in turns to have periods of leave to look after the child. Fathers must usually be an employee to qualify, and their partner must be entitled to some form of maternity or adoption entitlement.

For more details visit [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

# Why work flexibly?

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## → Why should dads want to work flexibly anyway?

There are lots of different reasons for fathers to change their working hours – for childcare, for financial reasons, to help their partner or simply to improve the quality of their family life.

**“Before my daughter was born I worked four days a week and my partner worked full-time. We couldn’t afford to pay for childcare, and we both wanted to be involved with our child. Quality of life was more important than money.”** Father, 43, with six year old daughter. Works in retail.

**“It is important to respect your wife’s career, and to appreciate that she has probably got more to worry about than you.”** Father, 34, civil engineer, two children. His partner works full-time as a teacher.

Many fathers feel that they want to be more involved in family life than the previous generation were able to be.

**44% of women now earn as much, or more than, their partners – a percentage that is climbing sharply\***



**“You’ve got to be honest to yourself. You’ll never get those years back. Make the most of your children. I met a man only a year older than me who didn’t see much of his son growing up as he was establishing his own business. Now he has made all the money he wants, but his son is a teenager.”**

Graphic designer, two children, works part-time

**Men are doing 16 hours housework and childcare per week today, as opposed to 10 hours in the 1960s\*\***



“It’s a very liberating thing to know that we both contribute to bringing in the money. It means that if one of us loses our job, for whatever reason, we’ve still got an income. But overall it’s about balance. I don’t feel responsibility as a sole provider.”

**Manager, father of three, works part-time**

**“I completely share looking after the children. We share domestic chores and cooking, depending on who is around. I take my daughter to piano lessons as well.”**

Father of three, works early morning shifts

## On the home front

→ Working flexibly means that fathers can spend more time with their families. Dads are finding that their roles are changing at home, taking on more domestic chores than they used to. The effects of trying to strike a better work-life balance often reveal themselves in the details of family life, with men taking a much more active role in day to day home life.

One father found that work was affecting how he was able to engage with his children, saying that, even when he was with them and reading them a bedtime story, he would be constantly thinking about work. He decided that he wanted to change this, and left his job to work for himself so he could spend more time with his family. He now says that he would encourage other men to take the chance to work flexibly.

One of the effects of men working flexibly is that it can often allow their partners to work as well, instead of bearing the full responsibility for childcare. Most of the men we interviewed said that their wife or partner worked, continuing their careers without having to leave employment altogether to look after the children.

Work-life balance isn’t just about time for childcare, though. Increasingly many of us will find ourselves having to provide care for elderly parents or relatives. Many employers are recognising this, and are making provisions for their employees to work flexibly not just when they have young children, but throughout their careers as well. Carers UK estimate that, as the population ages, three out of five people will become carers at some point.

# At work

→ One of the biggest barriers to men working flexibly is that they don't see many examples of people doing it within their own organisations, despite legal rights to help them change the way they work. It's easy to see why many men believe that their company doesn't offer flexible working, or that is just a 'woman's right' which doesn't apply to them.

One of the biggest concerns that men often voice is that working flexibly will damage their careers. But is this really true? **"I think my career has benefited. For me it's about a good balance in life. I have a good job, which I enjoy, yet see my family and spend quality time with them."** Father 35, designer. Changed from working in the office to working at home.

Some fathers believe that it has had a positive impact on their working life.

**"I have raised my game since working compressed hours. I have to be more organised and more efficient in my approach to work, and I've probably enhanced my career prospects."** Father, one daughter, policy officer

Working flexibly doesn't necessarily mean career death. This father, for example, acknowledged that in the short term his career may have been affected, but wasn't worried about long term effects: **"In terms of my career in the academic world, I am a bit behind. But I am not desperately worried about that... Go for it if you can."** Doctor, father of two, works flexible hours.

The good news is that as more fathers begin to work flexibly, the less likely it is to be seen as unusual and damaging to your career.


Worrying about your employer's reaction to a request to work flexibly, and fear of being seen as less committed to the job for doing so are common barriers fathers face. Some men feel that just 'coming out' as a dad can be



seen as a negative thing. **"In the area where I work it is not seen to be very masculine to ask for work time off so you can spend more time with your children. It is seen to be the role of women. A massive cultural change is needed."** Businessman in engineering, with three children. Leaves work early to collect children.

But just because no one has made a similar request before doesn't automatically make flexible working a non-starter, as this father of two discovered when he wanted to work from home: **"I was asking for something that no other male had asked for. They went away and thought about it."** After careful consideration his company agreed to his request. Employers often need convincing that flexible working arrangements can work, as this father found when he





Average childcare costs more than £115 a week. To put a child in nursery for 25 hours a week costs £6000 each year. After school care costs almost £50 per week.\*

wanted to work compressed hours: “Initially my request was met with some scepticism. However, not being in the office on Fridays has become part of working life... Colleagues have got used to me not being around on Fridays.”

Generally, the men we spoke to said that there had been no negative effects as a result of changing their work patterns. A lot of them, in fact, pointed to an increase in other fathers taking advantage of different ways of working as a result of seeing them do it. Work colleagues have been supportive and there had been a change in attitudes: “There is a value placed on individuals who care about their families and are active about what they do... (Other colleagues) might not have taken steps to apply for compressed hours if I had not.”

\* Source: Family and Childcare Trust

## Common types of flexible working

### **Part-time working:**

Anything below the standard working week. It might mean you can leave early enough to pick the children up from school. Part-time workers must not be treated less favourably in the terms and conditions of their employment just because they work part-time.

### **Flexi-time:**

Where you can vary your hours but have a fixed core time and can take banked hours as flexi leave.

### **Job-sharing:**

Where a job is split between two individuals.

### **Term-time working:**

Allows you to be in a permanent full or part-time job while taking unpaid leave during agreed school holidays. Your pay may be averaged out over the year.

### **School hours working:**

Where you work during school hours only (lets you drop the kids off and pick them up).

### **Compressed hours:**

Where you work more hours each day, but fewer days of the week.

### **V-time:**

Born in the USA but now in the UK, V-time (voluntary reduction in hours) allows you to reduce your time at work by an agreed period.

### **Working from home:**

Where you can work from home all or part of the week. Research suggests that professional and clerical jobs are the most suitable for home working. Whilst it can be done with older children, don't expect to be able to work and look after a baby or young child at the same time.

## Five good reasons to take paternity leave:

- 1** It's a good time to finish off 'nest building' in preparation for a new baby at home. Studies have shown that men frequently take on DIY projects to get ready for a new child.
- 2** Mothers say that fathers are their main emotional support around the time of the birth. Mothers state that their ability to cope with a new baby is related to their partner's ability to do likewise.
- 3** Fathers report that being around for the birth and first days of their baby's life makes them feel closer to them.
- 4** The first couple of weeks can be exhausting for new mothers, with the birth to recover from and interrupted sleep. Fathers need to be around to help out as much as they can.
- 5** Set a positive example to other men in your organisation – after all, it should be seen as the normal thing to do to take time off at the birth of your child.

# The fatherhood timeline



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## 1 Birth of first child 🍼

→ This is often the point where most men will take up some of their rights to time off for family life, when they take paternity leave around the time of the birth of their first child. Men should check with their employer what the company policy is, as many good employers offer enhancements to the statutory minimum of two weeks off paid at £139.58 per week. Mothers are entitled to take up to one year off on maternity leave (usually, only nine months of this is paid). Many women return to work around six months, and it is at this point that decisions have to be made around balancing work and childcare, as this father explains:

“There was a requirement to work less hours when we had children, especially when my wife went back to work. I became more involved with childcare, to help my partner go (back to work). The aim is for childcare to be split equally between myself and my wife.”

## Children – the impact on women’s careers

Women bear most of the responsibility for childcare in the UK. The Equal Opportunities Commission estimated that women spend three times more time than men on childcare. 73% of women return to work after having a baby, many on reduced or flexible hours. Many women say that after going back to work after having a baby they find their careers are not progressing as fast or as well as they were before they had children. Men working

flexibly can have a positive impact here. Not only do the children benefit from having more father involvement, but fathers sharing childcare allows women to devote more time to their careers. As one father put it:

**“It relies on each of us having mutual respect for each other’s career, one is not more important than the other. We do try and share childcare as equally as we can.”**



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## 2 Birth of second child

→ This is a key event in making men decide to start working flexibly. Of the men we interviewed for this report, over half said that it was the arrival of their second child which convinced them to change their working arrangements.

This father of two, who works in finance, describes what happened:

**“Initially both me and my wife worked full-time with our first child. Grandparents helped out with childcare. But when our second child came along, the grandparents weren’t able to cope with looking after two young children. I asked my employer if I could change my hours to part-time and they agreed. Now I have above average involvement looking after my children and this solution (wife works part-time as well) is ideal.”**

A potential doubling of childcare costs is one reason why some men are taking the opportunity to change their work patterns and share the caring responsibility with their partners. With a part-time nursery place costing more than £115 per week on average, putting a second child into daycare is a serious financial consideration.

This father, who works as a policy adviser, explains:

**“Childcare costs were our main consideration. When my wife went back to work, she went back four days. We decided that she would take Monday off and I would take Friday. That way we would only have to pay for three days childcare.”**

He adds that as parents, they wanted a balance of nursery and parental care.

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### 3 Children going to school

→ The time when children start school is a crucial one for parents. Not only do they want to be around for this important period, but it also means changing from established childcare routines to new ones based around the school day. With the typical primary school day not starting before 9am or finishing much later than 3 or 4pm, parents are often presented with new childcare problems around dropping off and picking up children. For many people, this is where a flexible working scheme like flexi-time is invaluable, allowing employees to come in later than normal every day in return for making up the time perhaps by working later in the evenings. Many of the fathers we talked to were at the school gate picking up their kids in the afternoon, and they described the work arrangements they had made which allowed them to be there.

**“I drop my children (six and four) off to school every day, and collect them from the after school club. I have adjusted my work hours to let me do this – I work 9.10am to 5.30pm.**

**“My employers were very understanding, and the fact that I do the school run has generally been accepted by my colleagues.**

**“I can’t say if it has harmed my career – it could have done. For instance I can’t make early morning meetings. Overall I feel lucky to be involved in childcare, although there are sacrifices you have to make financially.”**

Some men said they were able to be involved in looking after their children purely by the type of work they did: **“I work day and night shifts – one week on, one week off. When I’m working nights I’m able to drop off and pick up the children from school. On the alternate weeks aunts and grandparents muck in with the childcare. I do most of the housework.”** Father of two, wife works full-time.



Another dad found shiftwork suited his arrangements: **“I work from 5am to 1.15pm or later, six days a week. I haven’t had to make any specific arrangements to be able to pick up my daughter from school, as it fits with my shift pattern. But my local boss is very flexible and several of my colleagues do take time off associated with their children and it is not seen as a problem.”**

Some of the fathers we spoke to didn’t expect to share the picking up and dropping off 50:50 with their partners, but they had made some changes to do what they could: **“I pick up my children on Fridays. The rest of the week we use childcare. It is very difficult, as my**

## Lone Fathers

Lone fathers, or dads who are separated or divorced, can find it difficult to get the balance right between work and spending time with their children. The need to fit work around fixed access arrangements, or, in the case of fathers who are the sole carers of their children, around childcare, can be tough. But the positive news is that through establishing a pattern of being involved with your children, you can build a clear map of your working life and family life. And in the long run this should help you to organise your own work/family balance, however individual your situation.

This dad put it very well: **“I have been separated for 14 years and I’ve always been involved with my children. I was determined that I didn’t only want to be a weekend father. I didn’t want my children to be seeing me just for treats... In order to be involved with the children during the working day, I put in more hours during other parts of the week... Both of us thought it was important for the children to have regular access to us both, so it was in our interests to organise ourselves in that way.”**

Father of four, picks up children from school.

firm is an hour’s drive away, so I have to leave on Friday at 2pm. I feel very positive about my involvement with the children, but it is very difficult if you both work full-time.”

Some fathers combine different types of work arrangements to allow them to help with the school run: **“I negotiated reduced hours over a year ago and it wasn’t any problem at all. In fact my line manager was applying to reduce hours at the same time. I have Friday off every week. I always pick my daughter up on Fridays, and sometimes on other days as well, as I work flexi-time too.”**

## Changing times

It’s worth remembering that flexible working arrangements don’t have to last forever. The current legislation stipulates that you can make one application under the right to request flexible working per year. That means that the way you arrange your working time can change as family commitments change over time. This was something that a number of men who spoke to us felt:

**“I certainly do not regret being involved with the children and continuing to be involved, picking them up from school. Go for it if you can. It is only four or five years and it is well worth it.”**

GP, two children.

## What type of dad are you?

Researchers identified four different types of father

### **Enforcer dad:**

Hands off role in looking after children; leaves childcare and household tasks to his wife or partner; responsible for discipline

### **Entertainer dad:**

Provides entertainment or distractions while mother gets on with tasks like cooking or ironing; organises 'fun' activities like going swimming to give mum a break

### **Useful dad:**

Takes his lead from mum with childcare and household tasks

### **Fully-involved dad:**

Shares all the chores with his partner\*



## 4 Family involvement

→ Being more involved in family life is the major gain for fathers who choose to work flexibly. This father eloquently expresses the benefits he feels working from home has brought him: **“There’s a clear and tangible benefit from having spent a lot of time with my children – otherwise I can’t see much point in having kids – I can’t see any point in being a distant dad, just paying the bills, going on holiday and playing footie in the park... I don’t see childcare as something that is a problem. I take them to and pick them up from school. I take them to Brownies and swimming and I cook the tea. Beyond that, it’s much more flexible. If you’re going to have a picnic, is that childcare? There’s a lot of what you do with kids that is like that. I’ve been reading them stories since they were young. A lot of people don’t do that. I believe that’s quite a fundamental thing. That’s another half an hour a day – is it childcare or is it family life?”**

As children grow into teenagers, they don’t require so much everyday care, but will often need an even more



## Boomerang children

Increasingly children are living with their parents for longer. As housing costs rise, fewer young people are able to afford a place of their own. Over a quarter of adults aged 20-34 are still living with their parents.

flexible response from both their parents. Fast-changing enthusiasms for sports, hobbies or friends will regularly require support (even if it is just as a chauffeur!), while emergency calls for school visits, homework disasters or, more seriously, problems with bullying or truancy need quick responses. Fathers who leave all this to their partners or who are never available for after school or late night heart-to-hearts will find themselves losing touch with their soon-to-be-grown up children.

**“Try and enjoy your children as much as you can... In this day and age I think education is one of the most important stages of their lives and I would say try and become as much involved in it as you can.”**  
Father of three, works flexible hours.

### 5 College and beyond

→ Once children have reached and passed their mid teens, the need to organise work around childcare has

diminished in most cases. But other responsibilities, particularly financial, come to the fore. The costs of university and college are high and rising, and many parents try to help their children with this financial burden. Similarly, children will need ferrying around the country to university and back, activities which many dads would expect to do. Although working time arrangements may require little adjustment to meet these needs, there will certainly be financial considerations. It's worth noting that women who did not work at all when their children were young generally find themselves in lower paid and lower status jobs than those women who returned to work. This will have an effect on the earnings that couples can expect to have once their children have left home. If working flexibly as a man allows a wife or partner to return to work, this may have financial benefits later in life. Supporting children through education and beyond means that many parents will not be building up the financial cushion they would like for their retirement, leading to a 'dash for savings' in the last few years of their working lives.

**Seven out of 10 carers under 50 and eight out of 10 carers aged 50-60 had had to give up work because of caring responsibilities\***

**Carers often face significant barriers in returning to work, and risk long-term financial and social disadvantage**



## 5 Caring

→ It is likely that at some future point many of today's parents will have to become carers for elderly relatives. Men have a 5.8% chance each year that they will become a carer, and this will increase as the population ages. This will have a major effect on working patterns in the UK, something many employers are already recognising with the introduction of flexible working for all their employees, not just parents of young children. Many people are unprepared for becoming a carer, and struggle to reconcile new caring responsibilities and holding down a job at the same time. Nearly one in five people has had to leave a job or not been able to take a job up because of caring responsibilities. Although it is difficult to plan for possibly having to be a carer, it is worth researching what policies your employer has about helping carers balancing work and caring responsibilities. Some employers have specific policies aimed at carers in the workforce. Others have made flexible working options available to people with caring responsibilities, for example encouraging part-time working or compressed working weeks.

## 6 Grandparenthood

→ As flexible working continues to grow, and more women with children are working, so the role of grandparents is changing. Grandparents today are taking on more of the childcare responsibilities for their grandchildren than ever before. Grandparents spend at least 40 days a year on average looking after their children's children, and it's estimated that six out of ten families turn to grandparents to provide care, (estimated being worth £11 billion each year). The advantages for parents are clear, with the reassurance that their children are going to a safe and stable environment, and for grandparents it provides an opportunity to form a stronger bond with their grandchildren than previous generations had. Many grandfathers say that caring for their grandchildren is like a second chance, when perhaps they weren't able to devote the same amount of time to their own children growing up because of work pressures. But if you're still working, how can you balance your children's desire for you to look after your grandchildren with your job? The answer lies in rearranging work time to accommodate both. A few





## The Pivot Generation

Caring responsibilities for elderly relatives at the same time as caring for children or grandchildren affects so many workers that they have been given their own name – the ‘pivot’ generation. Pressured by demands from their children to provide childcare and at the same time having to look after their own elderly and frail parents, whilst trying to carry on with their full-time job means that these people are often caught in a sandwich. Many employers are now recognising that these employees need support, and are developing and extending flexible working policies to help them.

years ago this would have seemed an unlikely scenario, but with changes to the way we will be working as we age, and the age when we stop work altogether, flexible working arrangements later in a career will become more usual (see next step: Retirement).

## 7 Retirement

→ Traditionally the retirement age for men has been 65, with many people actually leaving work earlier to take early retirement in their 50s. But this picture is changing, with the default retirement age now abolished. With an ageing population, employers are going to need to take action to retain sufficient employees in the workforce. Coupled with this is increasing life expectancy, which means that people are living longer after their retirement. This poses a pensions problem – how can workers save enough throughout their careers to pay their pensions through an increasingly long retirement, especially with fewer working people making tax contributions? The

government has already responded by pushing the state pension age up to 67 from 65 by 2028. Management guru Peter Drucker calculated that in the next 20 or 30 years retirement age would have to move up to 79, this age corresponding, in terms of health and life expectancy, to 65 in 1936. Although not many people want to carry on working until they are nearly 80, there is an alternative in flexible retirement. Typically this is where an employee starts to scale back their working hours over the course of a few years before retirement – a kind of phased retirement. Alternatively it may take the form of taking paid work during retirement, without incurring pension penalties.

**Both these options are attractive ones, allowing older fathers who are grandparents or carers to mix work and family life into the final phases of their working lives.**

For men in their 20s and 30s now, it’s likely that flexible retirement will be much more widespread by the time they are due to retire.

# Sometimes it's hard

→ Statistics tell us that although the proportion of men working flexibly has never been higher, it's still evident that there's a long way to go before anything like the same number of men as women are adapting their working patterns in favour of family life. But what are the barriers that men face, and what effect does having children have on men who struggle to find flexibility in their working lives? We gathered some men together to question them about the conflicts between work and family. Here are the common issues that came out of this discussion.



## Becoming a father changes the roles at home

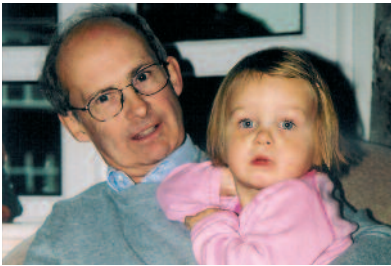
If both parents are full-time earners, dads often feel under pressure with the arrival of children. The financial contribution that their partner used to make disappears or decreases, leaving the father as the main provider, often on a permanent basis. Furthermore, men have to provide support to their partner, who is coming to terms with their role changing to that of being a mother and perhaps leaving their job behind.

## My old man's a new man

It's difficult as a father today. The old traditional model of a father, whose main role is that of provider, does not sit easily with more modern ideas of fatherhood where dads take on more of the childcare responsibility. And dads also feel that the squeeze on their time that being a father entails mean that they have to give up hobbies and activities which they previously enjoyed.



# to be a man



## Quality of life

None of the fathers who we spoke to regretted becoming a father. But there is concern amongst them that harsh financial realities might reduce their quality of life. High house prices make this problem more acute as new babies make more space a necessity, but moving into a larger house or flat is often a daunting prospect at a time when family income is likely to reduce.

## Working life

Almost universally, men really struggle to balance the demands of work and having a family. There are worries about compromising their careers by appearing less than 100% committed to the company if they take time off or leave early for childcare reasons. Some men reported feeling guilty if they went home before 6pm, worried that colleagues were logging the fact that they were doing a short day: “I feel that when I leave a spotlight shines on my seat, highlighting the fact I’m not there.” And they were also worried about letting down their colleagues, feeling that they were letting them down if they went home whilst the others remained in the office. Work culture also showed the difference between being a working mother and a working father; it is more acceptable for a women to leave to pick up children than it is for men.



## Dads Anonymous

There was a sense that whilst it was OK for women to talk about children and childcare at work, it wasn't the same for men. As one father put it: “**People don't empathise with dads.**” Although they were sharing the problems of working whilst having children, fathers didn't see themselves as having acquired the same rights as mothers to share their issues and problems. This had knock-on effects at home and at work. Work demands meant that coming home late caused problems at home, whilst trying to meet childcare responsibilities inevitably led to being less flexible at work, causing a lowering of stock there.

# From them to you

→ What do we know about how fathers are balancing work and family life today? We know that more men than ever before are working flexibly. And we can also see that flexible working isn't something that only occurs when children are very small, but is something that can carry on in different forms throughout a father's career. What type of arrangement it is depends on the family needs; it may be taking paternity leave and parental leave at first, to arranging work time to pick up or drop off kids at school later on. Finally, as a grandfather, it might involve flexible retirement to allow time to look after grandchildren or fulfil caring responsibilities.

But what do the men we've talked to for this book, the ones who have taken the plunge to work flexibly, think? We asked them what advice they would give other dads who are thinking of working flexibly. This is what they said:

**“I would do it again – no question about that and no regrets whatsoever. It is working out really well. I would recommend that men consider it and it is the case that, if you don't ask, you are never going to change an organisation's policy.”**  
**One child, works compressed hours**

**“You can't retrieve your children's childhood at a later stage when it's more convenient. It's important for employers to realise that if their employees are more fulfilled generally in their lives, they are more likely to be better at work.”**

Father of four,  
works flexible hours



**“You've got to put family life first. I hardly ever saw my father. He came in after I was in bed. You do miss out. Amongst my colleagues it is as normal to be as involved with their children as I am.”**

**Father of three, postman**

**“It's important to work around kids rather than the other way round.”**  
**Two children, works in finance**

**“You don't say on your deathbed 'I wish I'd spent more time working.' I would like to spend more time with my children, but it is a difficult balancing act.”**  
**Father of three, collects children from school**

**“A lot of people live to work and then come home and flop. I enjoy what I do at work, but it is not my purpose in life. The most important thing to me is bringing up the children.” Father of three, works part-time**

**“My dad was a very work-orientated person, but I made a decision to be different. It works because overall I get more out of work, family and doing other things. I prefer work now as I don’t feel such conflict anymore.”** Father of three, works part-time

“Give yourself time to enjoy your children. The world of work is never going to be as efficient once you have children.”

University lecturer,  
two children



“Trying to do it does generate a lot of stress in itself, because it does make demands on your time. But once you are focussed on what you are doing, rather than worrying about getting to work and getting home, it is very fulfilling. I think it is a bit of a sacrifice, but it is essential to be able to do it.” Father of two, works flexible hours

The final word goes to this dad, who has two children of seven and nine. He works from home as an editor:

**“You should warn dads that there is likely to be friction. You can’t adjust your life around the children easily and without upset; it takes hard work on both sides to make it fly. My advice is don’t put it off, because the first five or six years are magical. I think it is possible to hear about people like me at dinner parties and think that’s a good idea, and it goes on your ‘tomorrow’ list. But then your kids are halfway to university before you’ve figured it out and they don’t need you anymore.”**

## For further help and information

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