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### Fathers at work

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**Title: Fathers at work: explaining the gaps between entitlement to leave policies and uptake**

**Abstract**

Why are fathers in Scotland unlikely to use the full range of leave benefits available to them? Taking a capabilities approach allows us to explore the perspective that some fathers may experience an agency gap and thus not have the capabilities to utilise entitlements. This paper addresses the question empirically using a mixed-methods design which includes: analysis of data from the Growing up in Scotland study; 20 in-depth qualitative interviews with fathers of young children working in the public sector in dual-earner couples, as well as; an audit of extra-statutory benefits offered to fathers by employers. We argue that the reliance on an extra-statutory leave system in the UK explains at least part of the gap between fathers' entitlement to and uptake of statutory leave, as such benefits are not routinely available to all parents. The extra-statutory entitlement is more than just a 'top up' to the statutory; it is rather a conversion factor for the take up of statutory entitlement, by fathers. Organisational cultural norms support many employed fathers in taking a couple of weeks leave post-birth, but longer leave duration for fathers is not yet a usual parenting practice in Scotland, particularly lower down the income distribution.

*Keywords: fathers, leave policies, leave uptake, statutory benefits, extra-statutory benefits, capabilities approach*



## Introduction

UK fathers have almost the same statutory entitlements to post-birth leave as mothers (O'Brien and Koslowski 2017). They are also spending more time looking after children than ever before and report wanting to spend yet more time (Miller 2010; O'Brien, Connolly, Speight, Aldrich and Poole 2015). So why are so many fathers in the UK making such limited use of their workplace entitlements to leave after the birth of a child, as compared to mothers? The use of leave policies is highly gendered everywhere (Blum, Koslowski and Moss 2017) and take up of more than a couple of weeks of leave by fathers is very low (Castro and Pazos 2016; ILM 2014). Observing persistent gender divisions in the home and in the labour market, we explore how the unequal provision of extra-statutory benefits might reinforce the low uptake of post-birth leave by fathers, particularly those lower down the income distribution as suggested by Golynger (2015).

Discussions of leave policies relating to fatherhood tend to focus on statutory provision (e.g. Baird and O'Brien 2015; Blum *et al.* 2017; Browne 2013). Our contribution, is to emphasise that in the UK context, it is necessary to also take extra-statutory benefits into account in order to better understand why so many fathers are not taking even the statutory leave to which they are entitled. Statutory leave policies in the UK, as in other Anglophone countries, are not generous, particularly in financial terms, as compared to many other countries (Baird and O'Brien 2015; Blum *et al.* 2017). Indeed, extra-statutory benefits play an important

‘top up’ role in the provision of welfare in the UK context across the range of social policy areas such as unemployment and sickness (Clasen and Koslowski 2013; Clasen 2016). Thus, it is likely that extra-statutory benefits also play an important role in the take up of leave benefits by parents to care for their newborn babies.

The aim of this paper is to explore how fathers in Scotland use leave – or not – during early parenthood, in relation to the policy design of statutory and extra-statutory benefits and related workplace cultural norms. We apply a capabilities framework and the associated concepts of an agency gap and conversion factors (Hobson and Fahlén 2009; Hobson, Fahlén and Takács 2011; Javornik and Kurowska 2017). The fieldwork is conducted in Scotland, but as leave is not a devolved policy area and so not different across the four nations, we might expect findings to be broadly indicative across the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>. We take a mixed methods approach to inform our analysis, drawing upon the secondary analysis of large scale data which is representative of a population of parents; in depth qualitative interviews with men who had recently become fathers; and an indicative audit of employers’ extra-statutory leave benefits.

### **Leave policies in the UK available to fathers**

Leave policies are part of the portfolio of family policies focused on early parenthood offered by employers. Not all fathers are eligible for statutory leave benefits, in

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that regional economic differences could be correlated with the range of extra-statutory policies offered by employers, but such regional differences would need to take into account regional differences within the nations of the UK, as well as the differences between them.

particular self-employed and non-employed fathers. Of the range of benefits available to eligible employed fathers, some are statutory and some are at the discretion of the employer, such as enhanced maternity pay, referred to hereafter as extra-statutory.

In addition to child well-being, the policy aims of statutory leave policies in the UK can be said to include keeping more parents with dependent children in paid work (CoE 2009) and achieving greater equality in the labour market outcomes of mothers and fathers (Fatherhood Institute 2013). Despite these aims, the leave architecture is not integrated with the public childcare system and childcare costs to parents are among the highest in the OECD, which is likely to influence parental decision making around leave (O'Brien *et al.* 2015).

Table 1 presents the range of types of statutory leave available to fathers in 2015 in the UK. Most employees are legally entitled to paid annual leave. On top of this, most employed fathers are eligible to two weeks paternity leave after the birth of their child, though this only has to be paid at the statutory minimum, which would nearly always be much lower than a father's usual earnings. As such, some fathers prefer to use paid annual leave to paternity leave if their employers do not have an extra-statutory 'top-up' to the statutory pay. Since 2010, it has been possible for fathers to also share some of the 'maternity leave' with mothers during the child's first year via additional paternity leave in the first instance and since 2015 by shared parental leave. In addition to this, there is also an entitlement to unpaid parental

leave. Finally, all employees are allowed unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant.

*Table 1*

Less information is publically available regarding the range of types of extra-statutory leave policies, which will vary across employers. The aims of employer specific extra-statutory leave polices might include increasing employee engagement, reducing employee stress, thus improving productivity, and staff retention (e.g. Shockley and Singla 2011). Indeed, there is increasing recognition by many employers of ‘the benefits of successfully integrating working and family life’ for employees (Burnett *et al.* 2012: 5).

Surveys of parents with young children reveal that just about half of fathers report taking statutory paternity leave to be with their babies soon after childbirth (EHRC 2009). As mentioned, many more fathers use some annual leave around this time instead of paternity leave as this is likely to be much better paid (TUC 2015) enabling them to minimise or even avoid the loss of income associated with using other statutory post-birth leave schemes. Most remarkable are the statistics around the take up of additional paternity leave. Estimates suggest that fewer than 20 per cent of fathers in the UK took more than the two weeks’ statutory paternity leave after the birth of their child (ILM 2014) and only 1% of fathers took additional paternity leave (TUC 2015). Data on the usage of Shared Parental leave by fathers are not yet routinely collected by the UK Government (O’Brien and Koslowski 2017).

In comparison with fathers, mothers have historically had access to a greater range of both statutory and extra-statutory leave benefits (Kamerman and Moss 2011). This explains, in part, why both statutory and extra-statutory leave policies are sometimes explicitly gendered (for example paternity and maternity leaves). As leave policy architecture has expanded to include fathers and same sex partners, some benefits have become gender neutral by label and design (for example parental leave). However, a policy which carries a gender neutral label is still likely to be highly gendered in the nature of the employer's implementation of the policy and employee uptake of the policy (e.g. Brandth and Kvande 2009; Ranson 2012).

In summary, fathers and mothers in the UK are now eligible for nearly the same statutory leave entitlements. As might be considered usual in the UK context, statutory benefits offer very low payments levels, if any, and so extra-statutory benefits may be more relevant for understanding parental decisions around who in the couple takes which amounts of leave. However, there is a paucity of information regarding extra-statutory leave benefits and which fathers have access to such benefits. Similarly, little research has been carried out on how the interplay between statutory and extra-statutory entitlements might influence fathers leave uptake after the birth of a child. This paper addresses these issues.

## **Theoretical Framework**



Building on Sen's (1995) work, a capabilities and agency approach can provide a helpful framework for analysing what can be described as agency inequalities in leave taking: 'the disjuncture between norms/values and practices and between policies and fathers' capabilities to exercise them' (Hobson and Fahlén 2009: 214). Simply put, this allows us to assume that fathers are somehow less able to use leave than mothers even though they want to do so. Taking such an approach, we seek to identify potential conversion factors, which might help to bridge such agency and capability gaps and thus see fathers better able to realise opportunities to care for their young children.

There is some debate in the literature as to whether leave entitlement should be considered a conversion factor for realising work-life balance, as can be seen by the slightly differing approaches taken by Hobson, Fahlén and Takács (2011) and Javornik and Kurowska (2014: 623), the latter arguing that Hobson *et al.* (2011) 'conflate means with conversion factors'. In this paper, we are interested in the mechanisms (conversion factors) by which a father's individual means and resources are converted into capabilities to spend more time looking after new-borns. As such, we find it helpful to conceptualise extra-statutory entitlements as institutional conversion factors in so far as they may be able to increase 'a sense of entitlement' (Hobson *et al.* 2011:172) to make claims for spending more time caring for children, converting statutory parental leave entitlements 'into valued functionings' (Javornik and Kurowska, 2014: 624). They might do this by reducing economic constraints, but also by signalling a collective shift in acceptable work-place leave practices, reducing the need for individual negotiations with line managers. Furthermore, they can

enhance individual (rather than family or transferable) entitlement to leave for fathers.

It is important to make the distinction between ineligibility and non-take up of benefits. Assuming eligibility, economic constraints continue to be a particular obstacle for leave uptake by working fathers (EHRC 2009; Ellison *et al* 2009). In many families, men continue to earn more than women (OECD 2014), therefore parents in dual-income households might opt for fathers in particular to stay at work after the birth of a child in order to avoid the loss of income associated with taking up post-birth leave typical of the UK context. Indeed, it is well established that a key aspect of policy design that strongly determines uptake by fathers (more than mothers) is the wage replacement level of statutory payments (Ray *et al.* 2010; Blum, *et al.* 2017) and this is very low in the UK.

Given the low level of payment of statutory payments in the UK, the wage replacement level of extra-statutory benefits is likely to be crucial with regard to take up by fathers (e.g. Haas and Rostgaard 2011). Workplaces may compromise the exercise of statutory rights (e.g. Grönlund and Javornik 2014), by not offering wage replacement top ups. Furthermore, low take up by fathers may be linked to extra-statutory policies being historically designed to favour the mother in terms of generosity of payment and also in terms of duration (Golyner 2015)..

As well as structural policy design constraints, there are cultural constraints which affect decision making around leave by fathers with newborn children, namely the

idea that care work is a female activity (England 2005). These may be further entrenched by the family nature of the entitlement to the majority of paid statutory post-birth leave rather than an individual entitlement policy design (Haas and Rostgaard 2011). Parents and employers perhaps assume that post-birth leave policies are intended primarily for mothers (Gatrell *et al.* 2015) thereby reproducing long-established gender roles. Mothers may also be reluctant to transfer part of their maternity leave in the absence of father's individual entitlement (Haas and Rostgaard 2011; Duvander and Johansson 2012).

Fathers may be influenced by the leave use of other fathers in the workplace (Bygren and Duvander 2006), with workplace cultural norms shifting, as more fathers take leave (Dahl *et al.* 2014). In the absence of a strong steer from statutory policy, fathers may find it challenging to request or negotiate leave with their employers, even if they are technically eligible (Brandth and Kvanne 2009; Kaufman *et al.* 2010). Research shows that some fathers believe that taking advantage of their workplace entitlements to care for a dependent child would be interpreted as a sign of low commitment towards the job (Ellison *et al.* 2009) and adversely impact on their likelihood of being promoted (EHRC 2009). We explore how workplace norms are related to the leave policies on offer.

In the next section, we draw on a range of data sources. We begin by asking: What entitlements do fathers have to leave benefits? We then ask: Do they make use of their entitlements? Finally, building on the framework outlined above, we consider how we might explain any gap between entitlement and uptake.

## **A mixed methods approach to analysis**

There is not one perfect source of data available that could be used to address these research questions, and so a mixed methods approach is helpful. Data are analysed from the Growing Up in Scotland nationally representative survey as well as from 20 in-depth interviews with fathers conducted in early 2015. In addition, a small audit of employers was carried out to explore the range of extra-statutory provision available to fathers.

Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) is a birth cohort survey, which follows the lives of groups of children and their families in Scotland. In 2011, GUS recruited a new birth cohort, comprising about 6,000 children born between 2010 and 2011. Cross-sectional data for this article are taken from the 2011 birth-cohort sweep, when the babies were about 10-months old (51 per cent boys, 49 per cent girls). Interviews in this sweep were carried out with the cohort babies' mothers, who also provided information on the study child's father<sup>2</sup>.

GUS uses a complex sampling framework. Thus, all response frequencies presented are based on weighted data as recommended by the survey documentation.<sup>3</sup> In order to estimate how post-birth leave uptake is impacted by the simultaneous presence of a range of socio-economic indicators, including parental occupational

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<sup>2</sup> As such, data about some non-resident fathers are missing from the analysis.

<sup>3</sup> In addition, we used the "complex samples" procedure in SPSS to calculate all Chi-square values and associated statistical significance tests.

status and educational qualifications, household income and the level of area deprivation, we also fitted logistic regression models.<sup>4</sup>

Fathers were recruited for the in-depth qualitative interviews if they satisfied the following criteria in early 2015: they reside in Scotland, are employed by a public sector organisation, have at least one child under the age of 5 years, and live in a dual-income household wherein the partner is also at work (or on maternity leave and planning to return to employment after leave). The interviews were conducted during January and February 2015. The decision to focus on fathers who work in the public sector was taken according to the logic of a critical case study – if fathers are not benefiting from leave entitlements in this sector, then where – the assumption being that public-sector organisations were more likely to offer extra-statutory benefits than the private sector as a fringe benefit.

The youngest interviewees were in their early 30s and the oldest in their mid-40s. Fathers had between one and four children. The interviewees' jobs vary but can generally be classified as middle-income occupations. The findings from these interviews should be taken as indicative rather than as representative of any population. There was likely to be some selection bias into the sample by fathers with a particular interest in the topic.

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<sup>4</sup> We used the `svy` commands in Stata and the `xtmelogit` command to obtain post-estimations, in this case Wald tests and Log likelihood values.

We also conducted a small audit of 28 employers in Scotland, though the full item response rate was 15 employers. The aim here is to gain an indication of the range of extra-statutory benefits being offered to parents by employers. After searching for information on employer websites, we also emailed key contacts, followed up by a phone call. As the basis for selection of the employers, we took the award-winners and nominees for the Family Friendly Working Scotland “Scottish Top Employers for Working Families Awards”, ranging from small third-sector organisations to multinational private sector firms. We added seven other employers to the sample list who were known to us through attendance at “family-friendly working” events. As such, we expect these employers to offer above industry benchmarks with regard to their extra-statutory leave provisions. In line with their status as “family-friendly” employers, we hoped that they would be happy to share information about their policies and practices with us. However, this information was often not accessible to the public or even easily accessible to employees, which highlights the inaccessibility of information about benefits.

## **Findings**

### *Entitlement to and take up of leave*

There is no official source of data on the uptake of statutory leave benefits in the UK, and it is harder again to obtain data on the uptake of extra-statutory benefits offered by employers. GUS provides some information on post-birth leave uptake (table 2). From these data, estimates are that in 2011, 78 per cent of fathers in

Scotland took some type of leave soon after the birth of their child. Data are also available on whether the leave fathers have taken was paid for in full, in part, or not at all. The majority of fathers opted for fully paid leave (76 per cent) although 12 per cent of fathers took partially paid leave and another 12 per cent had not received any monetary compensation towards taking leave to care for their new-born children.

*Table 2*

In 2011, paternity leave was the most commonly used leave after the birth of a child. According to mothers' reports, 65 per cent of fathers who had taken leave to be at home with their new-born child, did so by using their statutory entitlement for paternity leave. The second most frequently used leave type taken by fathers in 2011 was annual leave, with 35 per cent of fathers taking such leave. Parental leave was taken by 18 per cent of fathers and 7 per cent have also taken other types of leave after their child was born. The data do not provide information on whether leave was supplemented by extra-statutory benefits.

All of the fathers we interviewed had taken statutory paternity leave, some on full pay supplemented by extra-statutory benefits and some on the reduced pay of the statutory amount. Most of the fathers whom we interviewed for the project stated that the two weeks paternity leave given by law are fair and sufficient in terms of duration. However, some fathers felt that they needed more time off from work to be with their new born child and family, in which case, the fathers extended their

leave by adding one or two weeks of paid annual or in some cases unpaid leave on top of their statutory paternity leave:

*"I didn't think that two weeks would be enough time for me to support my wife, immediately after giving birth, and anyway, it's quite an exciting thing that's happened, I wanted to spend more time, so I thought well if I can immediately take two weeks of annual leave, four weeks off it's quite a good amount of time off."*  
(Interview C).

Taking a period of leave longer than a month was not a familiar practice to them despite many of them being eligible for additional paternity leave (the predecessor policy to shared parental leave, see table 1). It was not yet a workplace norm for these fathers to do so and correspondingly, there did not seem to be the extra-statutory payment in place to support such a practice for most fathers.

The indicative audit of employers illustrated that there can be an extremely large range in the generosity (in terms of both the duration and the wage replacement value) of extra-statutory benefits made available to fathers by employers. As can be seen from table 3, the range with regard to leave available to fathers in the organisations for which we received information goes from 39 weeks full normal pay to 2 weeks statutory pay (well below the minimum wage). As such, it would appear to be somewhat of a lottery as to whether a father is eligible for extra-statutory leave benefits.



*Insert table 3 here*

*Explaining the gap between entitlements and uptake: policy design and wage replacement*

The in-depth interviews although indicative rather than representative of all working fathers provide some insight into the gaps between entitlement and uptake, particularly of longer leaves. A common belief amongst the interviewed fathers was that the number of parental leave takers and the length of leave taken is unlikely to increase as long as parents experience a substantial drop in income during this period.

*“The reason that people don’t take parental leave, or some people possibly don’t take paternity leave, is loss of earnings, so if you really want us, as a society...to encourage people to get more involved, then I think you have to be willing to pay them.” (Interview C).*

The fathers had all heard of the Shared Parental leave scheme that was about to be introduced soon after the interviews had taken place and were generally aware of the scheme’s structure. Whilst some perceived it as a positive initiative, none had taken its forerunner, additional paternity leave. Others felt that the new scheme fails to offer a valid solution for parents who want to share leave between the mother and the father for financial reasons:

*“...it’s not really going to make very many people’s lives a lot easier and, in fact,... because the men generally still earn more than women, it will be more financially worthwhile for the woman to be the one that takes the maternity leave...”*(Interview N).

Some simple cross-tabulations of the GUS data from 2011 reveal that leave uptake is not evenly distributed across the population of working fathers. There are statistically significant socio-economic differences, which vary according to the type of leave taken (table 4). Fathers’ leave uptake is positively correlated with higher household income. 90 per cent of fathers in households falling into the top income quintile took some type of leave soon after their child was born compared to only 43 per cent of fathers in households that fall into the bottom income quintile. Similarly, there is an association between fathers’ occupations and whether or not they take leave after the birth of a child (table 5). Nearly 90 per cent of fathers with managerial, professional or intermediate occupations have taken some type of leave compared to less than 70 per cent of fathers with semi-routine/routine jobs. There is a particular drop down to only 52 per cent of those working for small employers and own-account workers taking any type of leave after their child was born.

#### *Tables 4 & 5*

The proportion of fathers taking any leave who took paternity leave was fairly similar across the different levels of household income and occupations (around 64-68 per cent), though given the different baseline figures, this means that many more higher

income fathers took paternity leave than lower income fathers. It was only those working for a small employer or who are own account workers (so self-employed and thus not eligible for statutory leave) who were much less likely to have taken it (30 per cent). The social gradient is even more pronounced for parental leave uptake. In the highest income households, of those fathers who had taken any leave, 20 per cent of fathers have taken some parental leave compared to only 11 per cent of fathers taking any leave from families in the lowest income households. The drop is particularly noticeable between the second and the bottom quintile, which implies that the poorest are least able to take unpaid statutory parental leave. The stratification by household income and fathers' occupation is seen again when paid annual leave uptake after a child is born is examined. There appears to be a monotonically increasing relationship between the number of fathers taking any leave who have taken annual leave and the household's income: the higher the household's income is, the more likely it is that the father took annual leave to be at home with his new-born child.

#### Table 6

Table 6 displays the results of logistic regression models estimating the likelihood of taking different types of post-birth leave by fathers in Scotland. The significant relationships from tables 4 and 5 remain and the models confirm that fathers' (but not mothers') occupation, the household's income, and parents' educational qualifications are all independently associated with leave uptake by fathers in Scotland. Model 1 shows that fathers in managerial or professional jobs are more

likely to have taken some leave than those in routine or manual jobs, who are in turn more likely to have taken leave than fathers who work for small employers or those who are self-employed. Fathers living in the 20 per cent 'richest' households are over 6 times more likely to have taken some leave compared with fathers in the 20 per cent 'poorest' households, regardless of occupation, educational background and the level of area deprivation.

Models 2, 3 and 4 in table 6 report the likelihood of taking paternity leave, parental leave and annual leave, respectively. Taken together, the models show that regardless of the leave type under consideration, self-employed fathers and those working for small employers are less likely to take leave after the birth of a child, but the likelihood of taking paternity leave by fathers in such working arrangements seems to be particularly low. In contrast, fathers in professional and managerial roles are more likely to take have taken annual leave, but not paternity or parental leave, than those with routine/manual jobs. *Ceteris paribus*, household incomes are negatively associated with the likelihood of taking paternity leave and positively linked to taking parental or annual leave: the higher the household's income is, the more chance there is that the father has taken parental or annual leave, but the less chance there is that the father has taken the shorter and statutory minimum paternity leave.

In summary, in 2011, fathers in Scotland were much less likely to take paternity, parental and annual leave after the birth of their child if they have worked for a small employer or if they were self-employed. Similarly, fathers in Scotland were less

likely to take leave if their household fell into the lowest income quintile. Income is important for understanding both whether fathers take leave at all and also what type of leave.

*Explaining the gap between entitlements and uptake: workplace culture and extra-statutory benefits*

In addition to socio-economic factors, findings suggest that workplace cultural factors are also relevant to understanding take up and non-take up of leave entitlement. All 20 fathers interviewed had taken the two-week statutory paternity leave following the birth of their baby, so we were not able to ask any of them why they had not taken this leave. However, a number of fathers were able to reflect on whether they might have taken the leave if they had been working with a previous employer. A number of the fathers interviewed, all of whom had previously worked for private sector companies, reported that they felt that the lack of barriers for taking leave was specific to their current (public sector) workplace:

*“...a big contrast between here and my immediately previous employer was just how enthusiastic everyone was that I took my full [paternity] leave entitlement, there was not a conversation about how I could minimize the inconvenience for month end, which I’d seen elsewhere, tell me when you want to be off, crack on, enjoy it, which was nice, and helped me feel less guilty about taking the leave off.” (Interview J)*

Whilst all fathers who were interviewed for this project were fully aware of their statutory paternity leave entitlements, some interviewees seemed to be unsure about whether or not their employer offered other types of leave for parents with young children or what the leave scheme offered in their workplace actually entailed.

With regard to the new shared parental leave (to which they were not eligible) and additional paternity leave (to which they would have been), some fathers pointed out that mothers might be reluctant to give up what they perceived to be their entitlement to leave, thus highlighting the importance of individual entitlements to leave:

*"...I had this discussion with my partner about sharing aspects of leave and I think her view was "I'm the primary carer so I'm taking all my leave, I'm not sharing any of it with you!" So, okay, I understood her point of view with that" (Interview T)*

Interestingly, while none of the fathers believed that taking two or four weeks leave to be with their new-born child adversely affected their work in the short term, some expressed concerns that being away from work for a longer period of time could have such negative impacts for them (though they did not express the same concern for their partners):

*"...I think it would be nice to have both parents off for the whole of the first year...How you fit that in with keeping highly skilled...professionally fresh enough*

*that they can go back to work, reasonably comfortably, at the end of their time off, I don't know."* (Interview J)

That some fathers believed that taking four weeks leave was now 'reasonable' represents a shift in cultural norms and the new norms were supported by these fathers' workplaces implementing extra-statutory entitlements, such as wage replacements rather than the statutory minimum payments for the period now considered 'reasonable'.

In brief, some working fathers do not meet the eligibility criteria for leave at all. A second group of fathers are only offered the statutory minimum by their employers, whilst a third group have access to extra-statutory entitlements, which vary considerably across employers. Just under 80 per cent of fathers in Scotland took some leave, normally two weeks, immediately around the birth of the child. Our findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that it is not a common practice for fathers to take a longer period of leave than this. There are large differences in take up by socio-economic status with the most affluent fathers being most likely to take leave, in particular longer leaves. Material constraints would appear to be primary in explanation of the gaps between entitlement and uptake. However, cultural constraints are also present, such as how 'normal' it is in your section of the organisation to take leave and whether you have a sympathetic line manager or colleagues in supervisory positions who act as role models. There were some concerns about the signals a longer leave period might send to employers regarding career commitment. Particularly pertinent was the correlation

between the extra-statutory duration of wage replacement and the new norm for what was considered a 'reasonable' length of time for fathers in organisations which offered such enhanced entitlement.

## **Discussion**

In this paper, we have sought to better understand why fathers in Scotland are unlikely to use the full range of leave benefits available to them and in particular the role of extra-statutory leave entitlements in supporting fathers to spend more time caring for their new-borns. First, there is a wage replacement level of payment, which needs to come from extra-statutory top-ups given the low level of the statutory payment in the UK. Second, extra-statutory entitlement also acts as a conversion factor for fathers exercising agency to take leave in so far as it appears to create a 'new normal' of 'reasonable' duration of leave for fathers in a given workplace. A third enabling aspect of extra-statutory entitlement could also be that it is an individual (non-transferable) entitlement, in contrast to the main statutory entitlement, thus not necessarily negatively impacting on mothers' time, at least that offered at wage replacement level. We consider these aspects as institutional conversion factors in so far as they are able to increase a sense of entitlement in fathers to make claims for spending more time caring for children.

Not all working fathers in the UK are eligible for statutory leave entitlements, particular self-employed workers. Nevertheless, around 78 per cent of fathers took some weeks of leave immediately after the birth of their child, in 2011. Where



fathers do have access to leave, for fathers and their families to fully benefit from leave entitlement, they need to be able to afford to take leave on an equal footing with mothers. This paper contributes to the evidence suggesting that UK fathers refrain from using leave due to economic constraints. Unsurprisingly, given this situation, leave taking is socially stratified. Regression analysis shows that fathers with greater socio-economic resource are more likely to take leave and also the 'longer' types of leave.

While interviewed fathers felt it was reasonable to work in a less well-paid job provided the employer offers family-friendly policies as a fringe benefit, they were still reluctant to use arrangements that would lead to a drop in their usual income. Financial constraints were also seen as the biggest obstacle for sharing leave between the mother and the father, particularly in the context of leave being transferable rather than an individual entitlement.

Statutory benefits are very poorly paid and so extra-statutory benefits – in so far as they may exist - constitute a crucial financial top up for parents taking leave. As with some other social policy areas, extra-statutory benefits are key to understanding welfare in the context of the UK, as statutory benefits are so minimal. If employers do not create the economic conditions for fathers to take leave via extra-statutory benefits, then statutory entitlements are often not used by fathers, particularly in the case that mothers might receive better extra-statutory benefits. The proportion of fathers' taking post-birth leave, in particular beyond the two weeks paternity leave is likely to remain low, with many eligible fathers not exercising their

entitlements, as long as there is little or no financial compensation for the loss of earnings experienced by the leave taker and his family. Furthermore, those better off fathers most likely to take leave and in particular longer type leaves beyond the initial two-week paternity leave, are also those fathers most likely to have access to extra-statutory benefits. The problem with extra-statutory benefits playing a key role is that they are not routinely available to all parents. Thus, a dependence on extra-statutory entitlements is likely to perpetuate socio-economic and class differences in opportunities to care for fathers as well as gendered inequalities in capabilities to use leave.

We still need to address agency inequalities to enable fathers to use statutory leave entitlements to facilitate their work-life balance; entitlement is just the first, if crucial step. In the case of the UK, this becomes arguably more difficult than in other countries as the system is very much split between statutory and extra-statutory provision, which itself varies considerably in generosity across employers, as the audit conducted for this study illustrates. In the UK, given the very low level of statutory benefits, the role of extra-statutory benefits as both payment top-up, enhanced individual entitlement, and signal of new parenting norms plays a key role in creating these behaviour-change enabling conditions for fathers. However, perhaps the key take home message for policy makers is the importance of statutory individual entitlement to well-paid leave if many of the policy aims of leave policy are to be realised for parents and their children.

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Table 1: Statutory leave benefits available to fathers in the UK in 2015 (created by authors using [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) as source of information)

Entitlement	Description
Additional Paternity leave (APL) – introduced in 2010	Before the introduction of Shared Parental leave, fathers could take APL for between 2 and 26 weeks, starting 20 weeks after the birth and before the child’s first birthday, instead of the parents making use of the maternity entitlement.
Annual leave – since 2009 in current form	Almost all employees are legally entitled to 5.6 weeks a year of paid time off from work (pro-rata for part time employees).
Emergency leave – since 1999 in current form	As an employee you are allowed “a reasonable amount of” unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant.
Parental leave – since 1999 in current form	An 18-week statutory unpaid leave reserved for each working parent, to be taken from soon after the birth of his or her child and up to the child’s 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday (this was changed from up to the child’s 5 <sup>th</sup> birthday in April 2015).
Paternity leave – since 2003 in current form	A 2-week statutory non-transferable paid leave (£138.18 per week, or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower) for working partners, to be taken soon after the birth of a child.
Shared Parental leave – since 2015	Up to 50-weeks partially paid statutory leave reserved for working parents, which can be shared between the mother and the father as they see fit (mothers must still take 2-week leave immediately following childbirth).



Table 2: Fathers' leave use after the birth of a child

	2011
% Fathers taking any leave	78
% Fathers for whom all leave was paid	76
% Fathers taking paternity leave	65
% Fathers taking parental leave	18
% Fathers taking annual leave	35
% Fathers taking sick leave	1
% Fathers taking other leave	7

Data source: GUS-BC2, n=4,712. Reported estimates are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  or less. As reported by mother (due to the study design), when child was around 10 months old.

Table 3: Extra-statutory entitlements available in 2015: indicative audit of Scottish employers

	Maximum	Minimum	Most common in sample	Other options
Paternity leave	2 weeks full pay	Statutory pay only	2 weeks full pay	1 week full pay plus 1 week statutory pay
Maternity leave	39 weeks full pay	+£100 per week to SMP for 39 weeks	24-26 weeks full pay	6 weeks full pay plus some weeks at half pay
Shared Parental leave	39 weeks full pay	No extra payment beyond statutory minimum	No extra payment beyond statutory minimum	Companies either matched maternity or offered nothing extra
Leave for medical appointments	Paid	Unpaid	Unpaid	-
Leave for fathers to attend antenatal appointments	Paid	Unpaid	Unpaid	-
Emergency leave/Special leave	Paid	Unpaid	Unpaid	Sometime companies specified a cap to paid days and/or unpaid days
Is information on extra-statutory leave benefits publically accessible	Yes	No (on intranet)	No	-

N.B. This is likely not to be an exhaustive but rather indicative list of provisions.

Table 4: (%) of fathers taking leave after their child was born, by equivalised total household income quintile

	Top quintile (>=£40,625)	4th quintile (>=£26,000 - <£40,625)	3rd quintile (>=£17,009 < £26,000)	2nd quintile (>=£10,833 < £17,009)	Bottom quintile (<£10,833)
<b>% in quintile taking any leave</b>	90	87	84	70	43
<b>Of those fathers taking any leave:</b>					
<b>% in quintile paternity</b>	64	67	66	64	66
<b>% in quintile parental*</b>	20	19	17	18	11
<b>% in quintile taking annual</b>	41	39	35	30	19

(n = 4,203, GUS BC2, 2011. p > 0.01 unless indicated by \* when it is 0.05). Column % will not sum to 100 as leave types (in bottom 3 rows) are not mutually exclusive. Reported estimates are statistically significant at p < 0.05 or less. For more information on the construction of the income variable see Scottish Government (2013). The study design instructed interviewers as far as possible to undertake the interview with child's mother (over 98% of respondents were mothers). Interviews were conducted when the child was around 10 months old. Lone mothers were not asked about father's leave and so these data are for fathers in two-parent families.

Table 5: % Fathers who took leave after their child was born, by occupational status

	Managerial/ Professional	Intermediate	Small employers /Own- account workers	Lower supervisory /technical	Semi- routine /Routine
% in quintile taking any leave	89	88	52	80	67
<b>Of those fathers taking any leave:</b>					
% in quintile paternity	68	67	30	65	67
% in quintile parental (not SPL)	18	24	11	20	18
% in quintile annual	40	38	19	34	28

Data source: n=4,696, GUS-BC2, 2011. Column % will not sum to 100 as leave types (in bottom 3 rows) are not mutually exclusive. Reported estimates are statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$  or less.

Table 6: Logistic Regression Analyses: Leave uptake by partners (as reported by mothers), Growing Up in Scotland 2011

	<b>Model 1: Any Leave</b>		<b>Model 2: Paternity Leave</b>		<b>Model 3: Parental Leave</b>		<b>Model 4: Annual Leave</b>	
	B/SE	OR/95%CI	B/SE	OR/95%CI	B/SE	OR/95%CI	B/SE	OR/95% CI
<b>Father's Occupation</b> (Ref: Routine/Manual)								
Managerial/Professional	0.298* (0.132)	1.35* 1.04-1.75	-0.087 (0.119)	0.92 0.72-1.16	-0.106 (0.138)	0.90 0.69-1.18	0.447** (0.104)	1.56** 1.27-1.92
Intermediate occupations	0.379 (0.209)	1.46 0.97-2.21	-0.031 (0.147)	0.97 0.72-1.29	0.277 (0.178)	1.32 0.93-1.88	0.193 (0.154)	1.21 0.89-1.64
Small employers/ Self-employed	-1.315** (0.149)	0.27** 0.20-0.36	-1.741** (0.158)	0.18** 0.13-0.24	-0.645** (0.208)	0.52** 0.35-0.79	-0.511** (0.162)	0.60** 0.44-0.83
<b>Mother's Occupation</b> (Ref: Routine/Manual)								
Managerial/Professional	-0.061 (0.130)	0.94 0.73-1.21	0.191 (0.126)	1.21 0.94-1.55	-0.056 (0.146)	0.95 0.71-1.26	0.091 (0.131)	1.09 0.85-1.42
Intermediate	0.017 (0.124)	1.02 0.79-1.29	0.206 (0.116)	1.23 0.98-1.55	-0.077 (0.147)	0.93 0.69-1.23	0.002 (0.120)	1.002 0.79-1.27
Never worked	-0.331 (0.226)	0.72 0.46-1.12	-0.637* (0.286)	0.53* 0.30-0.93	0.778* (0.328)	2.17* 1.14-4.15	0.146 (0.269)	1.16 0.68-1.97
<b>Household income</b> (Ref: Bottom quintile)								
2nd income quintile	1.078** (0.122)	2.94** 2.31-3.74	-0.249 (0.193)	0.78 0.53-1.14	0.662* (0.303)	1.94* 1.07-3.52	0.577** (0.200)	1.78** 1.20-2.64
3rd income quintile	1.628** (0.160)	5.09** 3.72-6.98	-0.251 (0.191)	0.78 0.53-1.13	0.613* (0.299)	1.85* 1.02-3.33	0.688** (0.212)	1.99** 1.31-3.02
4th income quintile	1.743** (0.140)	5.71** 4.33-7.53	-0.307 (0.197)	0.74 0.49-1.08	0.761* (0.297)	2.14* 1.19-3.84	0.792** (0.207)	2.21** 1.47-3.32
Top income quintile	1.927** (0.176)	6.87** 4.85-9.72	-0.514* (0.210)	0.59* 0.39-0.91	0.923** (0.297)	2.52** 1.40-4.52	0.848** (0.217)	2.34** 1.52-3.59
<b>Area deprivation</b> (Ref: 15% most deprived areas)								
Not 15% most deprived	0.191 (0.127)	1.21 0.94-1.56	-0.075 (0.139)	0.93 0.70-1.22	0.023 (0.169)	1.02 0.73-1.43	-0.094 (0.151)	0.91 0.68-1.22
<b>Father's qualifications</b> (Ref: none)								
Standard Grades or equivalent'	0.424* (0.177)	1.53* 1.08-2.17	-0.286 (0.243)	0.75 0.46-1.21	-0.150 (0.253)	0.86 0.52-1.42	0.242 (0.254)	1.27 0.77-2.10
Higher grades or equivalent	0.511** (0.186)	1.67** 1.15-2.41	-0.165 (0.236)	0.85 0.53-1.35	-0.291 (0.265)	0.75 0.44-1.26	0.342 (0.265)	1.41 0.83-2.38
Degree or equivalent	0.580** (0.181)	1.79** 1.25-2.56	0.152 (0.243)	1.16 0.72-1.88	-0.340 (0.259)	0.71 0.43-1.18	-0.007 (0.280)	0.99 0.57-1.72
<b>Mother's qualifications</b> (Ref: none)								
Standard Grades or equiv'	0.223 (0.220)	1.25 0.81-1.93	0.379 (0.345)	1.46 0.74-2.88	-0.208 (0.352)	0.81 0.41-1.63	0.482 (0.349)	1.62 0.81-3.22
Higher grades or equivalent	0.499* (0.220)	1.65* 1.07-2.54	0.145 (0.330)	1.16 0.60-2.22	0.129 (0.347)	1.14 0.57-2.26	0.455 (0.345)	1.58 0.80-3.11
Degree or equivalent	0.608** (0.225)	1.84** 1.18-2.87	0.205 (0.337)	1.23 0.63-2.38	0.059 (0.339)	1.06 0.54-2.07	0.498 (0.361)	1.65 0.81-3.35
Constant	-0.966** (0.243)		0.956** (0.360)		-1.940** (0.466)		-2.124** (0.413)	
N	4,225		3,362		3,362		3,362	
F <sub>(17)</sub>	34.27**		8.61**		2.35**		5.19**	
Wald chi <sup>2</sup> <sub>(17)</sub>	588.25**		167.00**		36.28**		92.52**	
Log likelihood	1784.92		1985.99		-1459.03		-2122.97	

Notes: The occupation variable was derived from the NS-SEC variable (see Scottish Government, 2013). In comparison to mothers, very few fathers had 'never worked' and the number of cases was too low for statistical analysis and this category excluded. Area deprivation is measured here using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. The category 'mothers' in this table is equivalent to 'primary carer interviewed', which may include a very small number of other carers (fewer than 2% of respondents), who may have been the child's father, a grandparent, or other carer (see Scottish Government 2013). The analysis is of two-parent families.