

Dear guest,

Welcome to The Westminster Debate for Fathers. As we welcome in a new government and follow with hopeful expectation, the latest developments surrounding the Family Justice Review, the future of single fathers is undeniably part of this new chapter. With previous Green Papers, although well meaning, failing to capture the concerns of single fathers and current working policies which continue to neglect their needs, single fathers and their children can feel very much alone at a time in their lives when they really need support.

Current research suggests that there are at least 238,000 children living with their fathers and whilst The Coalition Agreement has offered some positive changes in relation to areas like parental leave and flexible working hours for parents, neither party has extended its family policy to fully address the pressing issues surrounding fathers who are looking after their children.

After divorce, separation or bereavement, fathers can find themselves without a home, which can have several devastating consequences but none more critical than those in relation to the time children can spend with their dads. Emotional support is also a seminal concern, where the aftermath of family breakdown and separation, often compounded by the divorce process leaves many fathers feeling emotionally, physically and financially drained.

The current economic climate is a wonderful opportunity for reflection and to allow the family sector to develop its services in father friendly ways and to ensure that the father-child relationship is as positive and powerful an experience as it can be. This debate will look at the experience of being a single father in Britain today and the consequences of a system that, at present, has a very limited collection of services for single fathers. In this way, our panel of experts have been brought together to pioneer this discussion.

William McGranaghan, founder of DadsHouse and Bob Grieg of Only Dads lead this debate with their own personal experience, both as single fathers and as founders of organisations dedicated towards offering fathers support. Joining them on the panel, are Lord Listowel, John Hemming MP and Rob Williams, of The Fatherhood Institute.

Single fathers have a place in family policy and as England celebrates Father's Day this week, now is a poignant time to take a look at our culture surrounding family, to acknowledge the fundamental gaps in our system and to find solutions that keep our families, regardless of structure and size, together.

Natasha Phillips

Chair for The Westminster Debate for Fathers and founder of the project Researching Reform

[www.ResearchingReform.wordpress.com](http://www.ResearchingReform.wordpress.com)