

Strengthening Families through Fathers:

Developing policy and practice in relation to vulnerable
fathers and their families

By Harry Ferguson & Fergus Hogan

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Foreword - Michael O’Kennedy SC, Chairperson of the Family Support Agency

As chairperson of the Family Support Agency, I am very pleased to welcome “Strengthening Families Through Fathers” which was co-funded by the Family Support Agency and the Department of Social and Family Affairs under the Families Research Programme.

Research is a key responsibility for the Family Support Agency in developing its clearly defined role in the area of family services and policy. The Agency’s first Strategic Plan, to be published in May, sets out how the Agency will progressively develop this responsibility during the period 2004 to 2006.

“Strengthening Families Through Fathers” examines what needs to be done to ensure that fathers are included in child care and family support work. The study shows how some fathers are in many respects excluded, often on the basis of their appearance alone. It looks at the role of fathers (young vulnerable fathers, working fathers, separated fathers) in families and talks about the presence and importance of fathers in their children’s lives. The research also examines how family members and professionals view fathers, fatherhood and family life.

The importance of families and family life for individuals, communities and society generally is central to the Family Support Agency’s strategy over the next three years. In that regard, and particularly in relation to the role of fathers, this excellent research will greatly inform the work of the Agency.

I would like to thank the researcher Dr. Harry Ferguson and his team for this excellent piece of research. I look forward to further research studies under the Family Support Agency’s Research Programme.

Michael O’Kennedy SC
Chairperson
Family Support Agency