

WELLCHI OSLO December 1-2 2006

**The relationship between children and non resident fathers and the impact
on their well being**

Legal framework and political intervention

The Children and Adoption Act 2006

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Abstract

Over the past five years in England we have experienced rapid development of fathers groups, both those who are responding positively to the increase in paternal time spent with young children developing support networks, and working on developing parenting skills including cookery for the under 5 s. But sadly there are also a few extreme minority groups who are in dispute with the resident parent , and have framed demands for more time with their children in the language of adult rights rather than child welfare.

These groups achieved a high profile, and elicited a response from government which aroused widespread sympathy for the claim for a legal presumption of 50/50 contact . However the research evidence strongly supported maintaining the legal principle of the paramountcy of the child's welfare, and this has need maintained in the recent Children and Adoption Act, which does not include any statutory presumption of a right to contact.

This paper describes how the act reached the statute book in this form, and argues that the emphasis on the welfare of the child (despite all the accepted problems associated with making such decisions) is the most likely to maintain a focus on the needs of the child rather than the arguments of the adults, and provide flexible framework which may accommodate and benefit from the growing body of empirical evidence.