

# The role that Children's Centres staff can play in supporting couple and co-parenting relationships: **so much more** than father involvement or parenting

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# Children's Centre staff have a critical opportunity to make the earliest, or latest, intervention...

- Early intervention works – generally, and for the parental couple or co-parenting relationship too
- With careful help and training Children's Centres staff can be enabled to 'have a couple thought', ask a 'couple question' and have a couple conversation with most parents in their settings
- Very few have structures surrounding them that require them to 'think couple', how many CAFs have a couple question?

**Common Assessment Framework  
for children and young people (CAF)**

**CAF form**

Notes for use: If you are completing form electronically, text boxes can be expanded to fit your text. Where check boxes appear, insert an 'X' in those that apply.

**Identifying details**

Record details of unborn baby, infant, child or young person being assessed. If unborn, state name as 'unborn baby' and mother's name, e.g. unborn baby of Ann Smith.

Name  AKA<sup>1</sup>/previous names

Male  Female  Unknown  Date of birth or EDD<sup>2</sup>

Address

Contact tel. no.

Unique reference no.

Version number:

Post Code  Religion:

**Ethnicity**

White British  Caribbean  Indian  White & Black Caribbean  Chinese

White Irish  African  Pakistani  White & Black African  Any other ethnic group

Any other black background  Bangladeshi  White & Asian  Not Given

Any other White background  Any other Asian background\*  Any other mixed background\*

\*If other please specify  Immigration status

Child's first language  Parent's first language

Does the child have a disability? Yes  No

If 'yes' give details

Is an interpreter or signer required? Yes  No  Has this been arranged? Yes  No

Details of any special requirements (for child and/or their parent)

1 'Also known as'  
2 Expected date of delivery

# Why bother, when it is so difficult and painful?



- We have needed to convince staff with research (plenty of it)
- Skills training in thinking and asking questions
- Overcoming the “yes, but.....” that every group has presented us with
- The most convincing argument is the one that runs,
- **“why work with only 50% of the parenting resource this child has?”**
- *It is private*
- *It is too personal*
- *It is dangerous*
- *“It’s like a quicksand, all boggy, up to your neck before you know it”.*
- *I just don’t know how*
- *It’s not important*
- *I don’t work with couples, only single parents here*
- *Don’t ask me to promote marriage, what about gay and lesbian couples?*

# We show workers that the father lives in the child's mind

- Aaron's mother hated his father
  - Aaron's mother thought that Aaron should hate him too
  - Aaron's anguish was plain to the Children's Centre worker who also knew how important the 'lost' father could be
  - Aaron now sees his father and paternal grandparents, clever thoughtful work by agreement
  - Probably sensible to celebrate Fathers' Day?
- Aaron's picture of his father, whom he had never met



# Why it is worth a candle, involved fathers are the bee's knees....and are involved when their relationship with the child's mother has good quality

## **Behavioural benefits**

- Reduced contact with juvenile justice
- Delay in initial sexual activity, reduced teenage pregnancy
- Reduced rate of divorce
- Less reliance on aggressive conflict resolution

## **Educational benefits**

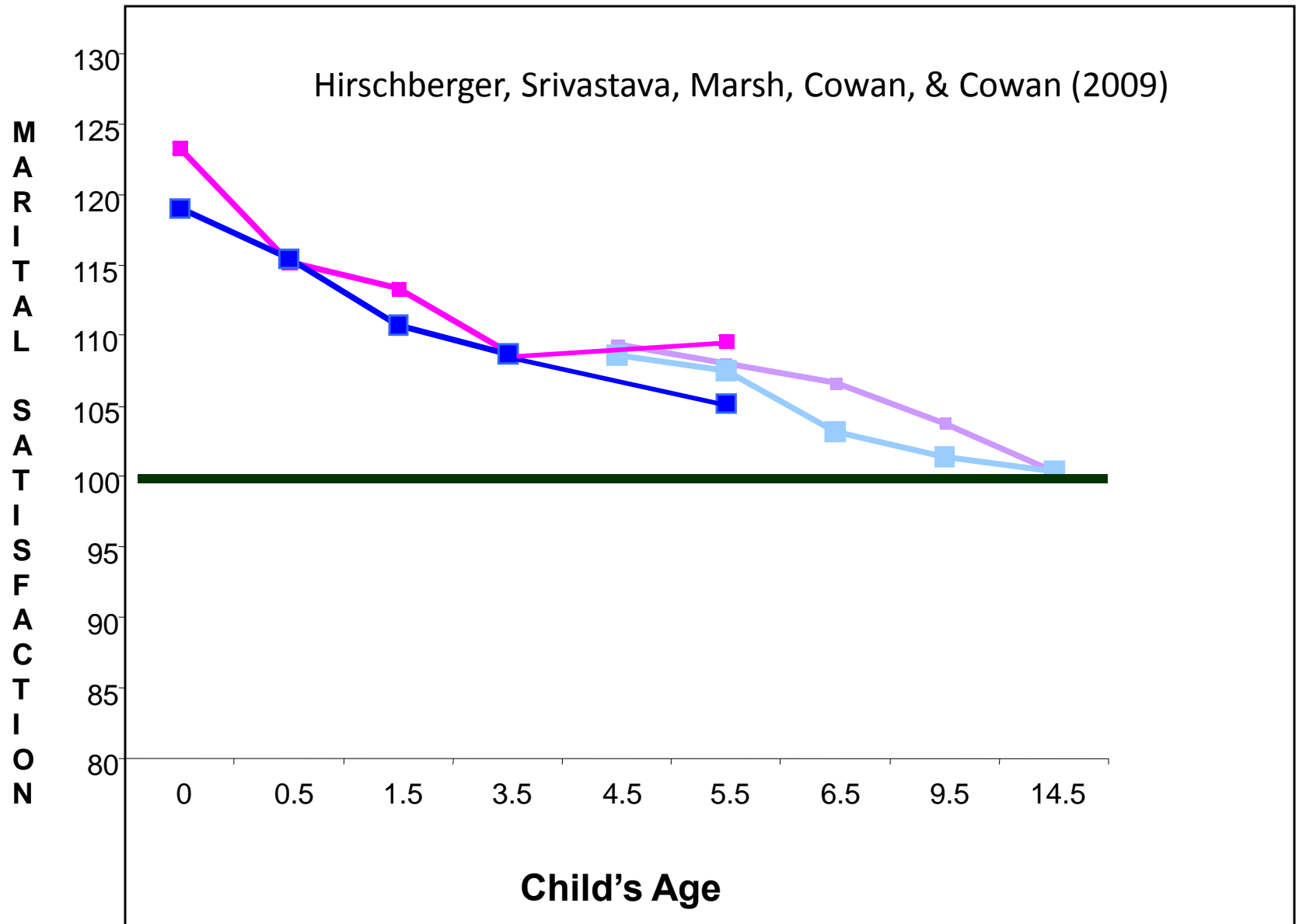
- Higher/further education and higher income
- Maths competence in girls
- Verbal strength in boys and girls (literacy)

## **Emotional benefits**

- Greater problem-solving competence, and stress tolerance
- More empathy, moral sensitivity; less gender stereotyping



# But we all struggle....Parents' Average Marital Adjustment Over Time



# So what more can we all do together for best effect?

- Make Children's Centres Family (Resource) Centres
- The shock of the old
- Add the parental couple research to all EYS/Early Help/Family & Adult Mental health workforce's professional curricula
- Add ongoing skills training
- Make it an integral part of every important conversation
- Make it measurable (it is very measurable, I'd be delighted to help you) and ask for information on these outcomes
- Make it part of everybody's business, like children's mental health work has done
- Help everyone understand it is the key intervention we can make to improve outcomes for children
- Don't dilly dally, we haven't got long to save the £46bn+ that family breakdown costs us all

