

Recruitment and retention of birth fathers in split-off households

Methodological considerations for cohort and longitudinal studies

Working Paper

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Executive summary

The aim of this project was to scope, assess, propose and test options for longitudinal and cohort studies for identifying, contacting, recruiting and retaining birth fathers of cohort members who do not co-reside full-time with their cohort child who we call 'Own Household Fathers' (OHFs).¹

The project was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved conceptualising several sub-categories of OHFs for whom different recruitment/retention approaches may be needed, alongside two desk-based reviews:

- A review of survey documentation from selected longitudinal and cross-sectional studies to identify questions used to gather information on OHFs and development of a questionnaire designed to collect data from mothers which would allow categorisation of OHFs.
- A review of wider methodological literature relating to contacting, tracking, recruiting and retaining OHFs.

The second phase comprised of a small-scale cognitive interviewing pilot designed to test a set of questions for categorisation of OHFs developed in phase 1.

Some key implications for the feasibility and design of innovations and methods in data collection in new and existing longitudinal studies are listed below:

- Successful engagement with OHFs requires development of tailored recruitment and retention options for differentiated sub-populations of these fathers, such sub-populations being based on part-time residence with, care of, and contact with the cohort child.
- There have been relatively few experimental studies of practical fieldwork strategies for engaging fathers in research, although the evidence base for engaging fathers in service delivery is more developed. Consequently, the level of evidence for any specific strategy is relatively weak and/or may not be generalizable across studies.
- Fuller participation by fathers would be more likely if their involvement is part of the scientific rationale for the study, if fathers (of all categories) are recruited from the first sweep and if they are involved as participants 'in their own right'. However, these are not sufficient to *guarantee* successful engagement.
- Success appears to be facilitated by combining this early commitment and vision to engage all fathers with sufficient resources to enable a range of strategies with fathers, including: telephone or face-to-face fieldwork; dedicated keeping in touch/tracing activities; flexibility in participation and tailored communications.
- Any future attempt to recruit and retain differentiated sub-populations of OHFs – very probably the most 'involved' OHFs - should be preceded by qualitative research with these fathers to inform the approach. Methodological pilots, experiments and analyses of response and attrition bias within each category of fathers would also be recommended.
- Questions routinely used to gather information from mothers about OHFs can be difficult for mothers to answer accurately. Capturing details of the frequency (i.e.

¹ Our term 'Own Household Father' (OHF) includes fathers who move out of the mother's or child's household during the study, and fathers who moved out of the mother's or child's household before the study began, as well as fathers who have never lived full-time or part-time with the mother or child. See section 1.2

how often), quantity (i.e. how much time) and patterns of interaction is complex and requires careful planning and testing.

1 Introduction

“One thing I would like to say, that I do regret about recruitment is that we didn’t enrol fathers separately and in their own right. Because, over the years, with family reconstitution and so on, it’s become extremely difficult to track men and to actually look at, not just their genetics, but also their influence on the family....men must be enrolled and followed up separately, and traced and tracked separately...I know men are not very good at follow-up studies, but they need to be enrolled in their own right.” A member of the ALSPAC study management team quoted in *History of the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children* (Overy *et al*, 2012:32).

1.1 Background

This project was funded under the ESRC’s survey organisation call for evidence on survey methodological innovation. The call was intended to help to inform thinking about the feasibility and design of innovations and methods in data collection in new and existing longitudinal studies. Amongst the ESRC’s areas of interest, the project focuses on innovative means to recruit and retain ‘hard to reach groups’ and those at greatest risk of dropping out. Specifically, the aim was to scope, assess, propose and test options for identifying, contacting, recruiting and retaining birth fathers of cohort members who do not co-reside full-time with their cohort child (hitherto referred to as ‘non-resident’ fathers) building on previous work (e.g. Bradshaw, 2008; Life Study development: Kiernan, 2014 & 2016; Bryson, 2014). The focus would be birth fathers of study members during childhood, adolescence and young adulthood sweeps.

Recent UK cohort studies have taken on board data collection from mothers’ cohabiting partners, predominantly resident birth fathers and stepfathers. Response rates for such interviews are relatively high. In contrast, fathers living in ‘split-off’ households² who we call ‘Own Household Fathers’ (OHFs)³ have not typically been part of cohort study data collection⁴. Yet substantial proportions of these fathers spend a considerable amount of time with their children, including regular overnights. For example, between a third and a half⁵ of OHFs have their child to stay regularly (Poole *et al*, 2016; Bryson *et al*, 2017) and can be described as part-time resident in relation to their child.

Gathering data about fathers, father-child relationships and co-parenting relationships only from mothers is problematic. This applies even where the father and mother are fully co-resident in the same household. It is important to capture both the mother’s and father’s perspective. The validity of mother-reported data about the father-child relationship is especially weak when the father is an OHF and spends time with the child in a separate location from the mother’s household; or the father has ‘virtual contact’ (telephone, email, social media) with the child independently of the mother.

² In household panel studies, such as Understanding Society, sample members who move out of the sampled household during the study into a new household which becomes part of the study in its own right whilst the sample member lives in it, are referred to as living in a ‘split off’ household.

³ Our term ‘Own Household Father’ (OHF) includes fathers who move out of the mother’s or child’s household during the study, fathers who moved out of the mother’s or child’s household before the study began, as well as fathers who have never lived full-time or part-time with the mother or child. See section 1.2

⁴ An exception has been data collection from ‘part-time stay’ fathers in the Millennium Cohort Study. These are fathers who regularly stay overnight (i.e. part-time resident) in the mother’s household.

⁵ Estimates vary across UK datasets and according to whether it is the mother or father who reports.

Additionally, when living with or in regular contact with their child, fathers are valuable informants on the child's characteristics, development and behaviours, from a different perspective to that of the mother.

Thus where studies are interested in examining childhood and family life from the perspective of a child, or in understanding child outcomes (via genetic, epigenetic and social behavioural pathways), the inclusion of fathers living full-time or part-time in another household, as well as those fully resident with the child and their mother, should be a fundamental consideration for the study design. To ensure this is done effectively, thought must be given at the earliest stages of the study as to how fathers will be included, and a father-inclusive approach applied, even if the intention is not to collect comprehensive data from fathers at the initial contact.

Our approach proposes differentiating OHFs and classifying them in sub-categories based on part-time residence (regular overnights), daytime care and 'virtual' interactions/contact in relation to the cohort member (see section 1.4); and to tailor recruitment and retention options for fathers in these different sub-categories.

OHFs may be part-time resident with the cohort member (e.g. providing regular overnight care) or non-resident - i.e. spend no regular overnights with the cohort member (Goldman and Burgess, 2018). The 'non-resident' OHFs (those who do not co-reside at all with the cohort member) may provide substantial daytime care or have regular 'in-person' (face to face) or 'virtual' (via phone, text, e-mail, letters, cards, Skype, gaming or social media) interactions with the cohort member. They may have infrequent contact, or they may have no contact with the cohort member at all. There is also a sub-category of OHFs who live in the cohort member's household with their mother for one or a few nights per week.

This approach contrasts with attempts to contact and recruit OHFs as a single undifferentiated category commonly referred to as 'non-resident' or 'absent' fathers. When recruitment is across this wide, undifferentiated category, low response and retention rates are likely overall. The responding fathers are most likely to be those engaging in more regular and substantial interactions with their children and having good relationships with them and/or their mothers (Kiernan, 2016; Bryson et al., 2017). In terms of reducing response and retention bias, we suggest that it would be better to define and aim at achieving maximum response and retention with smaller defined sub-populations of OHFs. Prioritising recruitment and retention of the more 'involved' OHF categories enables the analysis of children's outcomes in the context of both households in which they are part-time resident or spend substantial time.

While we recognise that final design decisions taken by any individual study will reflect that study's objectives, budget, context and other related parameters, we note concern internationally that failure to identify and include father-factors in longitudinal research (including a lack of data collected directly from fathers) is compromising research findings and, as a result, weakening or skewing policy and practice initiatives.

1.2 Aims and summary of methods

The aims of the project were to:

- Identify and review methodological work and attempts to track, contact, recruit and retain OHFs in (predominantly) quantitative longitudinal research studies in the UK and abroad
- Propose tailored recruitment/ retention options for sub-categories of OHFs for use in cohort and longitudinal studies

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- Scope and critique questions used to date, mainly in interviews with mothers, to identify each sub-category of OHF (building on Goldman and Burgess, 2018).
 - Propose a set of identifying questions about the child's birth father for use in interviews with mothers and which allow categorisation of fathers, for subsequent testing and future harmonised use across longitudinal studies.
 - Test the questions via a small-scale field pilot and propose refinements based on the results of the testing

The project was conducted in two separate, linked phases. The first phase initially involved extending conceptual work by Goldman and Burgess (2018) to describe several sub-categories of OHFs for whom different recruitment/retention approaches may be needed. Analysis of data from the Growing Up in Scotland study⁶ was used to establish estimates of the proportion of OHFs in each sub-category which could subsequently inform further estimates for other cohort studies. A desk-based review of survey documentation from selected UK and international longitudinal and cross-sectional studies followed which identified existing questions used to gather information on OHFs. A parallel review of wider methodological literature relating to contacting, tracking, recruiting and retaining OHFs was also undertaken. A survey questionnaire script was then developed bringing together questions designed to gather data from mothers which would allow categorisation of OHFs. This involved utilizing existing questions identified in the scoping phase and deemed suitable in their current form, adapting existing questions to improve their suitability or drafting entirely new questions to address any gaps.

The second phase comprised of a small-scale cognitive interviewing pilot designed to test the set of questions for categorisation of OHFs developed in phase 1. Interviews were undertaken with 11 birth mothers of children whose birth father is not resident full-time or at all in the same household – i.e. they are Own Household Fathers.

1.3 A note about terminology

We refer to 'birth/ adoptive fathers' as 'fathers' in the remainder of this document, whilst acknowledging that 'social fathers', for example stepfathers, can also be important influences on a child and may be another target for data collection.

As noted earlier, we propose the term 'Own Household Father' (OHF) as a 'catch-all' category for fathers not living full-time with their child but note its limitations. Binary categorisations can be helpful in some research or practice contexts, but not here where, given the variations in patterns and types of father-child interactions when parents do not live together, greater differentiation would be more productive. Unlike 'non-resident' or 'absent' father, Own Household Father permits the perception of a 'part-time resident' father based in a household in which the child may reside for part of the time. We would like to stimulate discussion in the research, policy and practice sectors about our categories and terms, and would be pleased if that resulted in extension of our conceptual work.

As Goldman & Burgess (2018) also note, there is a concomitant need to re-think the terminology relating to 'single' mothers and 'single parent families' – although this is not the topic of this document. A separated mother, like a separated father, who has sole care of their child can usefully be described as 'lone' or 'single'. However, many are actually 'majority/ equal/ minority' overnight care mothers, residing part-time with children who also spend regular overnight time in their father's household; or mothers whose children receive substantial daytime care and co-parenting input from the father.

⁶ www.growingupinScotland.org.uk

The mother's household (or a father's, if he is parenting alone full-time and without another cohabiting partner) may be described as a 'single parent household' or 'single parent family'. But it is our view that the child who has two non-cohabiting or part-time cohabiting parents involved in their life is not living in a 'single parent' household or family.

1.4 Our conceptual categories

We conceptually differentiate ten sub-categories of fathers who live in split-off households (OHFs), some of which we categorise as part-time resident. These categories draw on characteristics of part-time residence (regular overnight stays); daytime care; type and mode of interaction (e.g. 'in person' or 'virtual' – e.g. telephone, Facetime, social media); frequency and quantity (i.e. how often and for how long) and regularity and pattern.

Note that 'residence' refers to co-residence (overnight) of the birth father and cohort member - whether or not in the mother's household - and not to the cohabitation, or other forms of co-residence, of the birth father and birth mother. Many large-scale datasets do not explicitly define 'residence' for their household definitions. However, when a definition is provided, there is typically some reference to spending the night or sleeping at an address.

Part-time residence occurs when an adult or child has more than one address. Therefore, study household grid questions and rules around who is included in the household (for research purposes) are relevant, as well as questions relating to OHFs.

We intend these categories to be broad characterisations of different residence and interaction/ contact situations as a starting point for our work, in particular for critically appraising and designing identifying questions. We are aware that our categorisation will not describe the situations of all OHFs. Real arrangements are diverse and may not fit neatly into any category. Also, arrangements may change frequently or vary from week to week.

The categories are designed to be mutually exclusive. However, the types of contact and care they describe are not. For example, a 'minority overnight care' father may also have substantial term-time, 'in person' interactions (daytime, evening) and frequent 'virtual' contact. The list below indicates an order of precedence.

- **Part-time resident fathers**
 - Majority overnight care fathers. This category is included for completeness, but these fathers would usually be interviewed in the cohort member's sole or main household, and so are not within scope of this project.
 - Equal (or near equal) overnight care fathers. OHFs who have their child to stay three or four nights per week or for seven nights on alternate weeks.
 - Minority overnight care fathers. OHFs who regularly have the child to stay for an average one or two nights per week (e.g. every other weekend).
 - 'Part-time stay' fathers. OHFs who regularly stay overnight for one or a few nights per week in the mother's household and co-reside part-time there with her and the cohort member. The mother's household is not their 'main' home.
 - 'Part-time away' fathers. OHFs who live in the mother's household as their 'main/ permanent home', co-residing there part-time with her and the cohort

member, but regularly stay **away** for one or a few nights per week, for example for work or study.

- **No overnight stays fathers (i.e. non-resident)**

- OHFs who, during term-time, spend substantial and regular periods of time with their child ‘in person’ during the day or evening. These fathers see, visit or look after the child for a number of before-school, after-school and/or weekend day-time/ evening episodes each week/ fortnight.
- OHFs who, less frequently but still regularly in term-time, meet with their child ‘in person’. Similar to the previous category but on a less frequent basis and a minimum of at least once a month.
- Frequent ‘virtual contact’ fathers. OHFs who have frequent interactions with the child via messaging, social media, gaming, email, phone, Skype and/or post (e.g. cards and letters). They may also see, visit or look after the child in term-time, but do so less often than once a month. This category will also include fathers who stay with, see, visit or look after the child only in school holidays.
- Infrequent/ occasional contact fathers. Fathers who have virtual or ‘in person’ interactions with their child too infrequently to match the categories above.
- No contact fathers (who are alive).

Analysis of data from the Growing Up in Scotland study was undertaken to provide estimates for the proportion of OHFs likely to fall into each category. The analysis used data from the seventh sweep of data collection with families in Birth Cohort 1, around the time cohort members were aged eight years old. All cases where the child’s birth father was still alive, was not resident in the mother’s household and the respondent was not an adoptive parent were included. Around one quarter (24%, n=673) of families met these criteria.

Data from GUS cannot fully replicate all categories. In particular, the study does not allow differentiation between interactions/contact during term-time and school holidays. Neither can it identify ‘part-time away’ fathers (fathers based in the household with the mother and child but who stay away regularly, e.g. for work) or ‘part-time stay’ fathers. The latter categories are therefore not included. The results are summarised in Table 1:1. Further details of how each category was defined are included in Appendix A.

Table 1:1 OHFs by sub-category

<i>Base: All cases where child’s birth father is still alive, is not resident in the mother’s household, and the respondent is not an adoptive parent</i>	%
Majority overnight care	<1
Equal/near eq overnight care	4
Minority overnight care	40
Regular/substantial face to face contact	14
Less frequent but regular face to face contact	4
Frequent virtual contact	3
Infrequent/occasional contact	5
No contact	30
<i>Unweighted base</i>	673

2 Scoping review of methodological literature

2.1 Introduction

The aim was to investigate methodological work in relation to tracking, recruiting and retaining OHFs in the UK and abroad. The intention was to build on and complement the previous 'father recruitment and retention' datasets reviews carried out to inform development of Life Study (Kiernan, 2016; Kiernan, 2014; Bryson, 2014).

The following methods were used to find relevant methodological literature:

- Searches of the Fatherhood Institute's unique library of UK fatherhood research (funded by the Nuffield Foundation), which is based on systematic searches of a number of social science, health, education and social care bibliographic databases.
- Scoping bibliographic searches for international and recent UK literature.
- Searches of key organisational and conference websites for 'grey literature' (such as working papers) and technical documentation.
- Forward citation searches (in Google Scholar) looking for relevant papers (i.e. with a focus on recruiting and retaining OHFs) which cite the key methodological papers we had found using the above sources. We also screened the references cited in these key methodological papers ('backward citation searches').
- An email consultation of researchers directing major longitudinal studies in the UK, US, France and Australia to identify recent technical documentation, unpublished papers and ongoing methodological work (such as cognitive testing of questions, fieldwork experiments and qualitative development work).

Findings were extracted into a table of key themes and fieldwork strategies to inform development of recruitment and retention options. Here we propose a series of recommendations aimed at the successful recruitment and retention of OHFs in cohort and longitudinal studies based on the main messages and strategies from the literature.

A review of survey questions asked on UK and international datasets that identify our conceptual categories of fathers was also undertaken. The aim was to review and critique survey questions from large-scale longitudinal datasets which could identify our conceptual categories of fathers in split-off households (OHFs). This would inform our development and testing of a set of survey questions for use in cohort interviews with mothers.

A more detailed summary of the findings from the scoping review and further information on the review of survey questions are included in Appendix B.

2.2 Our recommendations

The scientific case for integrating fathers (both fully resident and OHFs) into the core study should be firmly established from the outset and feature in key research questions, pre-study scoping/ methodological work and study protocols

Studies examining childhood and family life or seeking to understand child outcomes via genetic, epigenetic and social behavioural pathways, should consider the inclusion of fathers living full-time or part-time in another household, as well as those fully resident with the child and their mother, as fundamental. Thought must be given at the earliest stages of the study as to how fathers will be included.

Fathers – whether fully co-resident with the mother and cohort child or OHFs – should be recruited onto the database of study participants from the first sweep of the study

If fathers are identified and recruited from the outset and recognised as a legitimate participant in relation to the child, they are then treated as a primary (core) respondent. This means all strategies of participant engagement utilised when running a longitudinal study with a main respondent are to be applied to fathers.

Almost all men who are OHFs during the child's later childhood years are fully resident, 'part-time away/stay' or otherwise 'involved fathers' during pregnancy, birth, infancy and/ or early childhood⁷. Thus identification and recruitment at the first sweep of a birth cohort study and at all subsequent sweeps, offers the potential to recruit the great majority of fathers, build a relationship between each father and the study, obtain and update comprehensive contact details - and consequently more easily track, contact and retain them at later sweeps including when they have moved to a different household.

Fathers, including OHFs, should be regarded as a legitimate and separate core sample, for tracking or maintaining up-to-date contact details

Recruiting fathers via mothers is not the only option for cohort studies and it should not be assumed that fathers are only to be interviewed if mothers are also interviewed.

Researchers should recognise that – as demonstrated through the analysis in section 1.4 - a proportion of cohort children live part-time across two households (predominantly 'minority overnight care' with the OHF). This provides a persuasive rationale for data collection in cohort studies from *both* part-time resident parents, and potentially also data collection from part-time resident step-parents, step/half-siblings and other family members living in the OHF's household.

Whilst recruitment of OHFs may suggest involvement from the birth mother, researchers should explore the feasibility of recruitment independent of mothers. For example:

⁷ Results from the Millennium Cohort Study indicate that in the early 2000s, 95% of birth fathers were in a relationship (either married, cohabiting, closely involved or just friends) with their child's mother at the time of the child's birth (Kiernan, 2004). Similarly results from the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study show that around 9 in 10 unmarried parents were either living together, romantically involved or just friends at the time of the child's birth (Fragile Families, 2002).

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- Recruit from the same sampling frame as used for mothers. This will enable (in principle) father recruitment regardless of the mother's study participation and use of sampling frame data about fathers in the sample design – e.g. in a birth cohort study, using birth registration records for OHFs jointly registering the birth with the mother⁸.
 - In a birth cohort study, approach and attempt to recruit fathers at antenatal/ hospital/ postnatal settings at the same time as recruiting mothers

Requiring explicit consent from the mother to contact the father will result in a substantially lower response. Where recruitment is via the mother, studies should consider whether implicit consent is sufficient – i.e. asking the mother for the father's contact details rather than permission to contact him. Some mothers may wish to seek the father's permission before providing contact details. Processes should be devised to follow-up such cases post-interview. Researchers should bear in mind the risk of disclosure in the minority of cases in which members of the father's current household do not know about his birth child. Generalising communications with all OHFs to remove this risk is counter to the need to present a convincing rationale to the OHF for his participation. It may be possible to obtain such information from the birth mother and adapt communications accordingly for only those cases. It is acknowledged that these issues in particular may be subject to how individual ethics committees respond.

Fathers' and mothers' contact details should be collected, individually maintained and separately labelled including for OHFs as well as for fathers co-resident in the initial study household. Separate stable contact details pertaining to the father should be collected and maintained, with the same commitment and rigour as applied to the mother's contact details.

Rather than perceiving the mother's household as the 'family' household, recognition of the father and mother as separate but related individuals should be made clear from the outset, including when both are living in the same household. Thus, there is benefit in maintaining and including fathers and mothers as distinct samples – via dedicated communications and/or through naming them individually on communications such as inter-sweep mailings (as is the case with e.g. joint bank statements).

Where there is no (admitted) birth father at the outset, this should not prevent the study from seeking information about him at later sweeps. The very few mothers who do not name the father at the outset may be willing to include him later or provide proxy information about him that may be useful to the study.

Where birth/ adoptive parents live together, and where they do not, the study's 'individualistic' approach should be described to them so that they are aware from the outset that they are receiving information as separate individuals (both linked to the child) and why this is the case. Sometimes they will receive the same information; sometimes it will be different.

Similarly, sample maintenance activities would be conducted separately for fathers and mothers. OHFs and full-time co-resident fathers would be maintained using similar 'keeping in touch' methods to resident mothers, commonplace in longitudinal studies. Some tailoring approach and documentation may be necessary for OHFs. In general, this may include more intensive contact efforts, higher sample maintenance and tracking budgets, and longer fieldwork timescales. Some targeted sample maintenance activities, different to that used with mothers, may also be required for OHFs. For example, if contact is less intensive than with mothers, OHFs may need

⁸ Currently 95% of birth parents in England and Wales jointly register the birth of their child (ONS, 2016).

additional prompts or incentives to provide information on intention to move or updated contact details. The impact of such initiatives can vary across studies and ideally any proposals would be tested to determine the optimum approach.

Even if the mother drops out, then the study may continue with the father (whether fully resident or an OHF) and cohort child with the questionnaire adjusted to reflect these circumstances.

OHF participation may also be maintained even if he has no current contact with the child. Although the father cannot provide information about the child from his own personal experience at that time, he may provide other information relevant to the study or simply be maintained as a participant. OHFs often move in and out of contact and may be re-engaged as a full study participant (in relation to the child) later.

To support all of this, there is a need to develop and maintain a sophisticated contact database and communications strategy which allows each birth/adoptive parent – whether mother or father – to be maintained individually as a primary respondent.

Initial data collection with fathers, both fully resident and OHF, should be face-to-face or by telephone at the first wave of substantive data collection

At the first attempt to gain substantive data, response rates from fathers are generally low when mothers are asked to pass self-completion questionnaires onto them, or when researchers post questionnaires to fathers based on address details obtained from mothers.

Gathering data from fathers, including OHFs, should not be tokenistic. Successful initial recruitment and engagement of OHFs cannot be achieved through cheaper and more passive data collection methods. However, initial contact may be brief to minimise costs.

In subsequent waves it may be possible to bring in different modes if the fathers are being maintained as an independent group – i.e. a sample in their own right where information is held which allows direct contact with fathers, independent of mothers. The introduction of web-based data collection for example, can greatly improve the flexibility of response for participants and minimise the intrusion and burden of an interviewer visit or telephone call. It also allows continuing participation of infrequent contact OHFs who may live abroad or otherwise outside of the study area. Similarly, utilisation of sequential mixed-mode - with OHFs initially allocated to a web survey, followed by telephone interview for those who do not respond and eventually a face-to-face interviewer visit – can create cost efficiencies by reducing face-to-face fieldwork but maintains an option for following up more reluctant participants.

Any successful survey fieldwork exercise requires data collection to be flexible to accommodate other demands on participants' time. This is also true of data collection with fathers – particularly if study recruitment occurs when the child is very young and the mother is likely to be working fewer hours than the father. Flexibility of timing, location and mode may be especially important for OHFs in terms of their time spent with children in more than one household, and to give privacy during interview.

Successful recruitment and tracking OHFs may be better achieved when using experienced interviewers. The persistence, tracing skills and survey experience of interviewers are noted as being instrumental in their effective engagement of OHFs. Furthermore, as noted in more detail below, interviewers should be made fully aware of the value and justification for having OHFs participate in the study as well as being briefed on issues and concerns specific to the context, structures and relationships of the families concerned.

The importance of gathering information confidentially from mothers and fathers individually should be communicated to each parent as an underpinning principle of the study.

Resources should be focused on recruiting more involved OHFs who are more likely to respond and in achieving sufficient coverage of each sub-population of involved fathers

Accessing and engaging less involved OHFs is extremely challenging and attempts are often wasted. OHFs are one of the most under-researched types of father in UK fatherhood research – perhaps because of a perception that it is impossible to get a representative sample. The aim, therefore, should not be to capture all OHFs but instead to achieve a more balanced and representative sample of those OHFs who are more involved. This is a more realistic and achievable objective.

This approach recognises that there is considerable variation amongst involved OHFs which may differentially impact on child outcomes and family life. The aim then, is to ensure sufficient data is captured to allow analysis of these different pre-defined sub-populations of more, and differentially, involved fathers. This may be achieved simply through focussing on involved fathers, but could also be a designed element involving setting quotas or using probability-based, responsive sampling (e.g. if mid-way through fieldwork, sufficient responses have been received from equal overnight care OHFs, then focus remaining resources on frequent virtual contact OHFs) - to support analysis, even if this means data is not fully representative. Analytically, a primary interest will be on how different types of father involvement are associated with variations in child outcomes – thus the aim is to ensure the variation on father contact is captured sufficiently. The benefits and drawbacks of a quota versus random probability approach amongst sub-categories of more involved fathers would be an issue for individual studies to consider.

Communication and fieldwork strategies should be tailored to suit fathers and specifically OHFs, and to suit different types of father and different categories of OHFs (see section 1.4)

While not precluding dedicated father- or mother - facing resources, initial focus should be on mainstream participant-facing materials. All parent and family-facing resources should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they speak explicitly to fathers' as well as mothers' situations, aspirations and behaviours and are clearly directed at both parents. This may involve including images of both men and women, and referring to 'mother/father' rather than the generic 'parent' (which is often 'heard' as 'mother') or the non-specific 'families' (which may downgrade fathers' status to that of generic family member).

Fathers are not a homogenous group – any more than mothers are. Participant-facing materials, including targeted letters, need to reflect diversity among parents of both sexes.

For the engagement of OHFs, communications need to be inclusive and present a rationale aimed at fathers who do not live full-time with their children, as well as those who do.

To counter unconscious bias against men's and OHFs' caretaking capabilities and levels of involvement, participant-facing materials (as well as interviewer/ researcher briefings) must straight-forwardly assert the salience to children of both parents; the value of OHFs' engagement in the research project (as in their families) and the value

of gathering information from both parents regardless of whether they are fully resident with their child.

Interviewer-success in reaching fathers, including OHFs, can be impacted by the ways in which questions are framed, and by the attitudes and beliefs of individual interviewers. For example, subtleties such as tone-of-voice may unconsciously invite a 'no' response. Interviewers may benefit from dedicated training on engaging with fathers⁹, including OHFs, as part of survey briefings and the interview-schedules should be interrogated to identify and amend wording which may disincentivise fathers' participation¹⁰, or may disincentivise mothers' willingness to give contact details¹¹ and support the participation of OHFs or fully resident fathers¹².

Interviewers will also benefit from briefing on a range of contextual issues specific to OHFs such as confidentiality, benefit & child support concerns, gatekeeping and delicate relationships. Study design and interviewer training should include strategies for taking account of these common concerns and barriers in asking mothers for fathers' contact details and in recruiting the fathers to the study. We found practice examples (in study documentation) of including these issues in interviewer briefings/ instructions. Of course, there is a balance between addressing common fears/ barriers, and 'putting negative ideas into the minds' of interviewers, mothers and fathers so influencing their confidence to persuade/ participate.

Much can be learned from the literature on engaging fathers in service provision where it has been found that success depends substantially on the extent to which engaging with fathers is perceived as 'core business' by all members of the team, with policy, briefings, training, supervision and support underpinning a father-inclusive approach (Raikes et al, 2005). Unconscious bias against fathers'/men's caretaking is widespread, as are underpinning false beliefs, for example as to the percentage of 'father absent' households. Such attitudes and beliefs act as disincentives to service providers in pursuing engagement with children's fathers (for review, see Burgess, 2009). Much of this is unconscious (Symonds, 2019).

Amongst fathers, as among mothers, and amongst OHFs/ OHMs, there may be a case for differentiating communication or fieldwork approaches amongst different sub-groups, including our differentiated sub-categories of OHFs. For example, communications may refer to an OHF as the mother's partner and, if this is the case, be tailored according to the type and level of contact and interactions reported by the mother. Interviewer approaches to mothers for fathers' contact details may take account of whether the father regularly spends 'in person' (face to face) time with the child during the fieldwork period, including visits to the mother's household. Similarly, in such cases, along with situations where OHFs live part-time in the mother's household (our 'part-time stay' category) it is possible that fathers visit regularly enough to be recruited as part of the interviewer's household visit. If fathers are local to the mother's household, or indeed live somewhere in the sampled geographic area (i.e. the UK), then they could feasibly be incorporated into a separate face-to-face fieldwork

⁹ We could not identify any father-inclusion training programme/ modules for researchers - not even any publicly available briefing sheets or 'top tips', although these are common in service-provision. Key factors in successful engagement fathers in service provision have been identified and published (e.g. Panter-Brick et al., 2014) and could be adapted for research contexts.

¹⁰ Such as referring to them as 'mother's partner' rather than 'father'

¹¹ e.g. "Can I ask – how many overnights, if any, does ^childname spend with ^his birth father?". Change to the less conditional/ tentative and more intimate: "How many overnights does ^childname spend with his father/ dad?"

¹² For example, failing to give good reason for *both* parents to participate. A positive introduction might be: "To fully understand ^childname's development, it's important for us to talk with both parents –with ^childname's father/ dad, as well as with you."

sample. Given the costs associated with this however, it may be necessary to use any face-to-face recruitment only for those sub-categories or specific cases of OHFs deemed 'harder to reach'.

In practice, the approach taken will also be determined by the contact information available for OHFs. For example, where a home address is not available, face-to-face recruitment will not be possible.

Other targeted fieldwork approaches are relevant for consideration including incentives and gifts.

Researchers should avoid describing fathers as 'absent', and should not describe part-time resident OHFs (including regular 'overnight care fathers') as 'non-resident'

Terms such as 'absent', 'father absence' and 'non-resident' should not be used in study documentation, fieldwork instruments or respondent communications to describe OHFs. Neither should the term 'non-resident' be used in study output to describe all OHFs. They do not reflect the large majority of situations where fathers who are not fully co-resident with their children's mothers are involved in their children's lives and where children often live with them part of the time. For example, findings from our analysis of GUS data in section 1.4 suggest that as many as 44% of children with an OHF routinely spend time living with him either on an equal/ near equal or minority care basis.

Describing fathers in those inappropriate ways may make them more reluctant to participate if they do not perceive themselves to be 'absent' or 'non-resident' and may also impact on mothers' recognition of the roles these men are playing, and the importance of their engaging in the research.

OHFs will have different types of involvement that will be of interest analytically. Descriptions of fathers should therefore reflect the variation of contact and involvement that exists. Cohort study analyses of OHFs, father-child relationships, and the impacts of parental relationship separations on children should take account of data collected about overnight stays of the child with the father, overnight stays of the father in the mother's household, and father-child time together.

Any future attempt to recruit and retain differentiated sub-populations of OHFs - most probably 'involved' OHFs - should be preceded by qualitative research with these fathers to inform the approach.

Methodological pilots, experiments and analyses of response and attrition bias within each category of fathers would also be hugely informative in determining how they may best be systematically included.

Suggestions for future methodological work include the use of mixed modes, the potential of new technologies and new sources for sampling and recruitment, targeted keeping in touch strategies and data collection methods, and the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of incentives.

3 Findings from cognitive questionnaire testing

3.1 Introduction

This section summarises the findings from the second phase of the project. This phase comprised of a small-scale field pilot designed to test the set of questions for categorisation of OHFs developed in phase one following the review of relevant survey questions asked on UK and international datasets¹³. The pilot was undertaken in July 2019.

The questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Who lives in the mother's household (household grid)
- The relationship between the mother and the OHF
- Frequency, pattern, quantity and nature of interactions between the child and his/her OHF
- Collecting the OHF's contact details

Eleven interviews were undertaken with birth mothers of children whose birth father was alive but was not resident full-time or at all in the same household – i.e. they were 'other household' fathers. In all cases, the father had some form of contact with the child.

Age of birth mother (respondent)	<i>n</i>
25-34	6
35-44	4
45 or older	1
Sex of child	
Boy	5
Girl	6
How often child sees father during term-time	
3-4 times a week	2
Once or twice a week	6
At least once a fortnight	2
At least once a month	1

Table 3.1 shows the characteristics of those interviewed. The sample was recruited from amongst previous participants in the second birth cohort (BC2) of the Growing Up in Scotland study. Information from the last wave of GUS data collection (undertaken in 2015 when the cohort child was aged 5) was used to identify eligible cases and select a sample which varied in terms of mother's age and sex of the child. On recruitment, all cases were screened to ensure the child had had some contact with his/her birth father in the previous 12 months. The aim was also to recruit a sample

¹³ Further information on the review of survey questions is included in Appendix B

which varied in terms of the patterns of contact between the child and his/her OHF. Questions were asked with reference to the GUS cohort child. As such, all reference children were aged 9 years old at the time of the interviews. This should be noted when considering the findings; questions asked with reference to older or younger children may need some further adjustment.

The cognitive interviews took the form of an interviewer-led questionnaire with showcards used on selected questions. Respondents were asked questions in sections. After completing each section, they were then asked a series of specific probes to ascertain how they had gone about answering the questions and what they thought about the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted by ScotCen interviewers and researchers trained in cognitive interviewing techniques. Appendix C contains the questionnaire and details of the cognitive probes used.

In the remainder of this section we present the findings of the cognitive testing. Where appropriate we make recommendations for revising the current wording of questions or suggest that further consideration be given to the purpose of particular questions or the level of accuracy of data required. Where revised questions have been suggested, these are included in Appendix D.

It should be stressed that the purpose of cognitive interviews is to explore, understand and explain the range and diversity of ways in which people go about answering survey questions. The sampling methods used are purposive and are designed to ensure diversity of coverage across certain key variables rather than to compile a sample that is statistically representative of the wider population. Thus, it is not possible to extrapolate about the size or extent of problems or errors identified in this report to the wider survey population.

3.2 Findings

3.2.1 Q1-4: People living in the mother's household

It was quite clear and intuitive for respondents to provide information on who was living in their household and therefore to answer these questions. Respondents generally felt that, in the case of adults, those who made a financial contribution to household expenses and/or spent time sleeping in the household were part of it. Examples such as having mail delivered to the address were also used to establish household residence.

All respondents understood what it meant to have someone 'living' in their household. Even for part-time residents, participants were easily able to distinguish, for example, between visiting grandparents and a partner who worked away on weekdays. That said, the pilot was unable to test the full spectrum of household living arrangements. In particular, there were no situations in the sample representing the small minority of cases that exist in the population where the child's birth father was the mother's partner but was living, at least some of the time, in another household.

Some respondents had difficulties with the juxtaposition of the positive and negative presented in question 3 where they had to positively confirm that the birth father did not live in the household or negatively confirm the birth father did live in the household. This made the question slightly confusing and harder to easily digest and answer.

As question 3 was only used for the purposes of routing specific to the needs of this exercise, it should not otherwise be necessary to use this question. If such a question

were required, it should follow a more intuitive structure so that 'yes' is confirming the father living in the household.

3.2.2 Q5: Travel time from OHF's home address

Participants found this question easy to answer. They reported that time can vary depending on issues such as traffic, the father's work schedule and mode of travel. Nevertheless, all respondents were able to give an answer based on the average time it usually takes the child's father to make the journey. Participants thought it was better to be asked about travel time rather than distance. Many were not aware of the distance to the father's address but could estimate the travel time.

It was clear that respondents were not always thinking about the child's father's journey from his home address to the mother's home address, as stated in the question. Sometimes they used a more typical journey which may involve the father travelling from a workplace closer than his home address. Respondents also considered occasions where the father would pick up the child from school or an after-school club – not the mother's home address.

In some cases, if the more typical journey (e.g. from a workplace to the child's school) is quicker than a journey from the father's home to the mother's home, this may be associated with a different/more frequent pattern of interaction between the father and child. However, the question would need to be altered to ensure these journeys were captured and this may result in greater confusion and inconsistency. By collecting data on the journey time from the father's home address, the information should be consistent for all cases. To support this, interviewer instructions should be included to emphasise that the time reported should be for a journey from the father's home address to mother's home address, even if that is not a typical scenario¹⁴.

This is not an essential question for the purposes of categorisation but is of wider relevance. It should be noted that a more comprehensive account of father and child interactions might include questions aiming to capture details of more typical journeys - including where the father normally travels from – as this could have a substantive impact on the arrangements.

3.2.3 Q6-9: Relationship between the mother and OHF (1)

This set of questions was challenging for participants. Overall, there was confusion over what kind of information was being collected – for example, cohabitation, legal status or some other element of the parents' relationship. Respondents had trouble with how relationships were being defined and the overlap between some of the categories. For example, mothers could perceive themselves to be 'just friends' but also not in any (romantic) relationship as well as also being separated/divorced.

The issues with the response options were raised in relation to both questions 6 and 7. At question 6, for their current relationship, several participants answered with option 5 (not in any relationship). However, responses within this option varied from parents who did not talk to each other at all to those who communicated only about the child. As well as overlapping, the categories were also perceived to be inappropriate for adequately capturing how mothers saw their relationship with fathers. Alternative descriptions of mother-father relationships offered included co-parenting, a 'civil' relationship, having no contact or having a basic level of interaction.

¹⁴ See Q5 in Appendix D for revised text.

Probing was used to explore what respondents understood by the term 'just friends' in this context. Those who chose option 5 felt that in order for them to be friends with the child's father, they would catch-up regularly and talk about their lives beyond reference to the child. One participant considered 'just friends' to mean getting on well and communicating without arguments. Some mothers, whilst acknowledging they had a (non-romantic) relationship with the child's father by virtue of sharing parenting, perceived the use of 'friends' as being too strong to describe that relationship and therefore chose 'not in any relationship'. This appeared to emerge because the other use of relationship in the response options suggests a romantic relationship. Thus, whilst the mother was friends with the father, she did not perceive herself to be in a romantic relationship.

Objections were also raised over the inclusion of separated/divorced. This was recognised as measuring the legal relationship which was qualitatively different to the other response options.

In terms of the categorisation of fathers, the primary aim of these questions is to establish whether the mother and father are or have been in a romantic relationship. Question 7 also allows confirmation of their past living arrangements (current arrangements having been established either via a question similar to question 4 above, via a household grid section elsewhere in the questionnaire or a question on overnight stays in the mother's household, such as that proposed at questions 17-19 below)¹⁵.

For cases where the parents are not living together or romantically linked, a further question aiming to capture a different range of relationship features such as only being concerned with co-parenting, not communicating at all or having a purely functional relationship may be warranted. Alternatively, a question on the quality of the relationship, as proposed at question 31 below, may be sufficient for this purpose.

Where parents have lived together, establishing length of prior cohabitation is useful as this may influence the likelihood of the birth father's recruitment and retention to the study. Errors in the response options for question 9 created overlaps between several categories. This meant, for example, that those mothers who had lived with the father for 2 or 5 years were unsure which response option to select. The inclusion of a reference to 'time spent married' was felt unnecessary given that there is no explicit reference to marriage in the surrounding questions. In addition, there is a suggestion that the question may benefit from clarifying that respondents should include time spent living together before and after the child's birth. There may also be benefit in differentiating between time spent living together part-time and full-time, though this has not been proposed below. A suggested revised question is:

3.2.4 Q10: Whether child has any interaction with his/her OHF

Some participants would have answered this question in relation to in-person contact only, but the inclusion of examples in the question helped. No additional examples of types of contact were suggested. When prompted for an alternative expression to 'contact', some respondents suggested that 'interaction' might be a better word to encompass all of the types of father-child contact included. Indeed, on reflection, we believe that the term 'contact' should be avoided where a suitable alternative term is available¹⁶.

¹⁵ See Q6 and Q7 in Appendix D for revised text

¹⁶ See Q10 in Appendix D for revised text

3.2.5 Q11-16: In-person interaction during term time

The substantive objective of these questions is to capture three aspects of father-child in-person interactions: how often they are together; the quantity of time they spend together and the overall pattern of father-child interaction.

Respondents were able to easily understand these questions. There were no issues related to specifically thinking about when the father and child saw each other 'in-person' (as opposed to virtually) nor with asking only about during the school term. Participants were also able to relate to a 'usual pattern' and did not have any trouble with this terminology.

However, many encountered difficulties in answering the questions. Responses varied widely and it was clear that those on frequency (how often) and quantity (how many days) had sometimes been miscalculated. After probing it was obvious that actual contact between the child and his/her father was usually more frequent than was indicated by the answer initially provided by the mother who tended to respond based on her perception of a 'typical' pattern and failed to include anything outside of this.

For question 11, some respondents were uncertain whether to respond in terms of frequency (i.e. how often) or quantity (i.e. how much time). For example, when the father has the child staying every second weekend from Friday evening to Sunday evening this meant they were together on three days every two weeks which, when averaged over the two weeks equates to around once a week. Thus, respondents were unsure whether this equated to 'at least once a fortnight' or 'once a week'.

Whilst mothers could relate to a 'usual pattern', the response items at question 13 were not felt to adequately capture all patterns. For example, in one case a child saw his/her father every Wednesday for dinner and stayed over every other weekend. The respondent indicated that the pattern was weekly because the father and child saw each other every week. However, when prompted it was clear the respondent believed there were actually two patterns in this instance: one for the weekday contact – which was weekly - and a different one for the weekend overnight stays – which was fortnightly. She therefore amended her answer to 'some other pattern'. However, the pattern could conceivably be regarded as having a fortnightly rotation and most likely should have been coded as such.

For questions 14 to 16, the principle issue was that if the pattern is incorrectly classified in the previous set of questions, the data collected here will also be incorrect.

A number of other issues were also encountered. For example, respondents were unsure whether to categorise Friday evenings as school days (captured at question 14) or weekend days. This requires further interviewer instructions to clarify (or a calendar collection method). Participants also queried the use of 'school days' instead of 'weekdays'. This could be changed without creating any issues.

As already mentioned, using a calendar as a physical, visual aid for respondents may improve collection of these data. The calendar would cover a defined period – perhaps four weeks – and the respondent would use it to indicate times the father and child spent together either in a 'typical' four-week period or the most recent period. Time(s) in the day would also be indicated to differentiate between morning (any time after breakfast until after lunch), afternoon (any time after lunch until child's bedtime) or overnight (from child's bedtime until after breakfast). Any interactions would be marked on the calendar by the respondent and transferred to the questionnaire instrumentally. Patterns, frequency and amount of time over a typical month or fortnight would then be identified during analysis of the data.

However, this may potentially be more time-consuming than asking a series of questions, particularly if data from the calendar was to be captured in the CAPI as part of the interview. An alternative brief approach would require focussing on the amount of time over a typical *fortnight* rather than four weeks. Quantity is the aspect most easily reported by respondents and that which allows differentiation of fathers into those with higher and lower quantities of interaction-time, for the purposes of categorisation. The suggested brief version is included as questions 14 to 16 in Appendix D. Note that this form of question will exclude fathers who live far away and see their child less frequently but for relatively long periods of time (for example, every 6 months or once a year).

3.2.6 Q17-19: Child's overnight stays with his/her OHF

Respondents generally found this question easy to answer. The order of the questions worked well as respondents were able to provide the number of nights first before thinking of the pattern/period over which the nights were spread. This question produced more accurate results than the preceding set of questions on other father-child interactions.

Some participants found the use of 'at another address' confusing. Re-wording the question to include the example of 'at ^his dad's place' or 'somewhere else he and his father stay together' may resolve this issue¹⁷.

3.2.7 Q20-24: OHF's overnight stays in mother's home

There were no instances of a father staying overnight in the mother's household (he would be categorised as 'part-time-stay' father) so it was not possible to fully test these questions.

Questions such as these are essential to identify any fathers who stay in the mother's household at certain times, as this may present an opportunity to recruit them directly to a study.

Issues reported with previous questions measuring frequency, quantity and patterns of interaction may also occur with these questions. As such, recommendations for revisions to those questions – such as asking for quantity/number of nights only – would also apply here¹⁸. Any revised questions would require testing before use.

3.2.8 Q25-28: In-person interaction during school holidays

Mothers were able to easily answer the initial question (Q25). However, in the subsequent question (Q26) they were unclear as to whether by 'most time' the question meant most days or the biggest proportion of time. For example, if a child spent two weeks with his father during the summer holidays this would only be a proportion of that holiday period. However, if he spent two weeks with his father over the spring/Easter break, that would be all or almost all of that holiday period.

There was related confusion around how to establish the period which equalled the 'most time'. For example, one participant mentioned that over Christmas the father had seen the child on three occasions for a couple of hours each time but during half term

¹⁷ See Q18 in Appendix D for revised text

¹⁸ See Q21-23 in Appendix D for revised text

they had spent an entire day together. In terms of total time spent, both were similar, and she was unclear how to respond.

Participants who tended to have the same arrangements during term-time and holidays answered question 28 with a 'formula'. For example, one respondent reported that the arrangement was the same as in term time "plus a couple of extra days" without offering a more precise response. Other respondents reported that the child split their time "50/50" with the mother and father in holiday periods. These responses required the interviewer to clarify and sometimes calculate to produce a figure.

The recall period was problematic for some. Not everyone found it easy to remember father-child interaction arrangements during holiday periods, especially when they do not follow a regular pattern.

Some clarification needs to be added to define what information the question is aiming to capture – i.e. the number of times father and child were together, the proportion of the holiday period spent together, or the amount of time spent together.

This question is important to capture information about those fathers who see their children little or not at all in term time but spend time with them during school holidays. It is not an essential question for the purposes of categorisation but is of substantive relevance.

To avoid issues with selecting the holiday in which the father and child spent 'most time' together, it would be possible to ask about the most recent holiday period. The data gathered using this approach would obviously be affected by fieldwork dates. An alternative, therefore, would be to have the CAPI programme randomly allocate participants to different holiday periods therefore ensuring data was captured on the full range of holiday periods. A simpler approach would be to ask only about the most recent summer holiday. This would potentially exclude a small minority of fathers with substantial contact in other holiday periods. As such, where there was no contact during summer, these mothers could be asked about the most recent other holiday periods. Questions 25 to 28 in Appendix D provide suggested alternatives.

3.2.9 Q29-30: Virtual interaction

Respondents understood this question and recognised the types of interactions mentioned but raised a number of issues when responding.

Awareness of these types of interactions was perceived to be dependent on the age of the child. Respondents suggested that they may be less aware of such interactions when children are older.

Some children had virtual interactions with their fathers to arrange when to see each other whereas other did not, usually because the mother made such arrangements. When the child made the arrangements, it was more difficult for mothers to answer accurately. When probed for details, it was apparent that mothers tended to underreport the frequency of the interactions especially when there was no pattern or consistency in the virtual interaction children had with their fathers.

Again, there were some difficulties around whether the question was intended to measure frequency or quantity, and how to average interactions over time. For example, if the child had interacted 'virtually' with the father six times over a three-month period but not at all in the following six months, respondents were unclear whether the answer should be based on the average number of interactions over the year. Similarly, a child may have multiple interactions over the course of one or two

days but no further virtual interaction for weeks. Averaging the number of interactions over a month may lead to a response of weekly virtual interactions, whilst responding on the frequency would suggest once a month would be more appropriate. Nor does frequency indicate the length of father-child interaction. For example, if this is through online gaming' (which was common) each interaction may last for a substantial period of time.

In question 30, the meaning of 'independently' was widely understood. For some it meant without prompt or intervention from the mother, for others without the mother's presence in the room – all of which are relevant interpretations.

The object of this question is to capture frequency of virtual interactions and allow a differentiation between those children and fathers who have frequent, regular interactions (e.g. weekly or daily) and those who may have an intense period of interaction followed by long period with no interactions. As virtual interactions appear less likely to follow a regular or consistent pattern, some relaxing of the response categories may allow mothers to more easily choose an appropriate response. This change would be supported by further interviewer instruction clarifying how the question should be answered. In addition, following the suggestion from earlier questions, changing 'contact' to 'interaction' is also recommended¹⁹.

A simpler approach would involve simply asking whether the child has interacted with his father in this way in the last month. Where there had been no such interactions in the last month, mothers would then be asked whether there had been any in the last year.

3.2.10 Q31: Relationship between the mother and OHF (2)

All respondents except one found this question easy to answer. The only respondent who had difficulties was not speaking to the father and felt she could not answer, as she felt there was no relationship to comment on.

When prompted to describe what they understood as a good or bad relationship, mothers gave a range of varied responses. Some mothers defined a bad relationship as arguing a lot, and some defined it as having no-contact. For some respondents, a good relationship was defined by considering the person to be a friend, whilst for others it was being able to spend the child's birthday together.

Some concern was voiced suggesting that by describing a relationship as 'bad' may make respondents feel uncomfortable as they could feel as though they carry some responsibility for that situation.

When prompted for alternatives to 'good' and 'bad', respondents suggested terms such as amicable, civil, being on good terms/bad terms. However, as there were no particular difficulties with the question there is no overwhelming need to make any changes.

3.2.11 Q32: Collecting the OHF's contact details

There was a mixed response to this question: some participants agreed to provide the details, some said they would have to check with the father first and some declined. All respondents considered the question appropriate. The phrasing of the request - in particular, providing an explanation of why the details were being requested - was

¹⁹ See Q in Appendix D for revised text

helpful in making the request relevant and acceptable, even amongst respondents who declined.

Where the request was declined, this was mostly because the mother anticipated that the father would not respond to or participate in any follow-up. The mother's assumption may not of course accord with the father's reaction if/when he is directly approached.

The question used here reflects the context of the pilot; there was no intention to collect the father's details. The aim was simply to gauge whether mothers would be willing to provide them and what the principal objections were. In addition, there is some debate over whether it is necessary to obtain explicit consent from mothers to contact the father as well as contact details. Arguably, in providing contact details for the father, the mother may be said to be giving implicit consent. Where she refuses to provide details, the father cannot be contacted and involved in the study unless there is some other method of obtaining his details.

Respondents must be aware that there is no obligation to provide the father's details and interviewers should be briefed specifically on this request. Studies may benefit from recording where mothers felt they had to ask for permission from the father before sharing his details. This would allow some follow-up by the study team after the interview to obtain the details. Alternatively, the mother may be asked to prompt the father to contact the research team. The latter approach would be unlikely to produce many additional details.

Taking these issues into account, a suggested alternative set of questions have been drafted and included in Appendix D.

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Appendix A. Notes on analysis of GUS data

Analysis was undertaken on data collected during sweep 7 with Birth Cohort 1 (BC1). Fieldwork for sweep 7 took place in 2012 when children were aged 7-8 years old. This was the most recent sweep of GUS to collect the information necessary for categorisation of OHFs. Further details on sweep 7 and on the wider study are available from the study website (www.growingupinScotland.org.uk) and the UKDS catalogue (<https://beta.ukdataservice.ac.uk/datacatalogue/studies/study?id=5760>).

Table A:1 provides details of the questions/variables used to construct the OHF categories.

Appendix table A:1 GUS variables used to create OHF categories	
Variable name and question text	Response options
<i>MgNFcn01</i> Does ^Childname currently have any contact with ^his natural father?	1 Yes 2 No 3 [Other parent has died]
<i>MgNFcn04</i> How often does ^childname usually see ^his natural ^father at the moment?	1 Every day 2 5-6 times a week 3 3-4 times a week
<i>MgNFtk01</i> How often does ^childname have contact with ^his natural ^father by telephone, text message, email or letters?	4 Once or twice a week 5 Less often but at least once a month 6 Less often than once a month 7 Never
<i>MgNFst01</i> Can you tell me how often, if at all, ^childname's natural ^father has ^childname to stay overnight?	
<i>MgNFst01</i> Can you tell me how often, if at all, ^childname's natural ^father takes ^childname on outings or daytrips?	
<i>MgCBSexp</i> Thinking about a typical week during term-time, do any of the providers or people listed on this card currently look after ^childname before school? Ex-spouse or partner	0 No 1 Yes
<i>MgCASexp</i> Thinking about a typical week during term-time, do any of the providers or people listed on this card currently look after ^childname after school? Ex-spouse or partner	

Table A:1 provides information on how the questions/variables were used to categorise OHFs. Only cases where the child's birth father was still alive, was not resident in the mother's household and the respondent was not an adoptive parent were included. Around one quarter (24%, n=673) of families met these criteria.

Appendix table A:2 GUS variables used to create OHF categories	
Variable name and question text	Response options
<i>MgNFcn01</i> Does ^Childname currently have any contact with ^his natural father?	1 Yes 2 No 3 [Other parent has died]

Appendix table A:2 GUS variables used to create OHF categories

OHF category	Definition rules
Majority overnight care	Child's birth father has child to stay overnight more often than 3-4 times a week [MgNFst01 < 3]
Equal/near eq overnight care	Child's birth father has child to stay overnight 3-4 times a week [MgNFst01 = 3]
Minority overnight care	Child's birth father has child to stay overnight once or twice a week or less often but at least once a month [MgNFst01 = 4 or 5]
Regular/substantial face to face contact	Ex-spouse or partner looks after child before school or after school in a typical week during term time, or birth father takes child on outings or daytrips at least once a week, or child sees father at least once a week and father is not in any previous category [MgCBSexp = 1 or MgCASexp = 1 or MgNFou01 <= 4 or MgNFcn04 < 5]
Less frequent but regular face to face contact	Child sees birth father at least once a month and father is not in any previous category [MgNFcn04 < 6]
Frequent virtual contact	Child interacts with birth father by telephone, text message, email or letters at least once a month and father is not in any previous category [MgNFtk01 < 6]
Infrequent/occasional contact	Child currently has some contact with birth father and father is not in any previous category [MgNFcn01 = 1]
No contact	Child is not currently in contact with birth father [MgNFcn01 = 2]

Appendix B. Scoping review – additional details

Introduction

Methodological research on how to maximise the recruitment and retention of any sample members (individuals, families and households) in cohort and panel studies is at an early stage (Park, Calderwood and Wong, 2018) and rarely differentiated by respondent characteristics. There have been relatively few experimental studies of practical fieldwork strategies. Consequently, the level of evidence for any specific strategy is relatively weak and/or may not be generalizable across studies.

The literature on recruitment and retention of Other Household Fathers (OHFs) primarily comprises descriptive examples of practice (sometimes presented in relation to response rates achieved); researchers' experiences and authors' views of what has been especially effective or ineffective (often in the context of a single study) and ideas and suggestions which are not explicitly evidenced.

We can look at the features of studies which have achieved higher recruitment and retention rates (Fragile Families, Longitudinal Study of Australian Children specifically for more involved OHFs²⁰, UK evaluations of initiatives for separated families). We note however, that this is not evidence of a causal link, and does not tell us which specific strategies in the fieldwork mix contributed to higher response rates. Contexts vary between countries and decades, and each study is unique.

Given the lack of strong evidence specifically on OHFs, we have also looked at recent working papers published online by the Centre for Longitudinal Studies and the Institute for Social and Economic Research. These include UK evidence on retaining 'movers' (sample members who move between sweeps) in panel and cohort studies and use of survey modes and technologies according to gender, age, household type and other respondent characteristics. Much of this derives from experimental and other methodological work on the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) and Understanding Society (USoc). This evidence can inform our methodological proposals, although we do not know whether the same findings would apply to OHFs specifically.

Scoping of survey questions asked on UK and international datasets – methods note

Our aim was to review and critique survey questions from large-scale longitudinal datasets which can identify our conceptual categories of OHFs. This would inform our development and testing of a set of survey questions for use in cohort interviews with mothers.

Our starting point was the report *Where's the daddy?* (Goldman and Burgess, 2018), which lists and critiques survey questions identifying overnight care and part-time residence. To extend that work to encompass all our conceptual categories, we searched recent online questionnaire documentation for the following longitudinal studies:

- Understanding Society (UK)
- Growing Up in Scotland (UK)

¹³ Over 90% of LSAC 'parents living elsewhere' are fathers (Baxter, 2018).

- Millennium Cohort Study (UK)
- Families And Children Study (FACS) (UK)
- Alspac G0/G1 questionnaires²¹ (UK)
- Life Study (UK) - the planned/ piloted questionnaires
- Growing Up in Australia (see Baxter, 2018)
- HILDA panel study (Australia)
- Growing Up in Ireland
- Fragile Families (US)

In addition, we reviewed the ‘family separation’ modules of the ONS Omnibus and Opinions Surveys (Lader, 2008; Peacey and Hunt, 2008; Wilson, 2010).

Our review aimed to identify questions which collected the following information:

- No contact with birth father/ Fathers who have died/ Father not known (usually in the ‘non-resident parent’ section of questionnaires)
- Face to face contact between OHF and child (sees/ visits/ outings) (usually in the ‘non-resident parent’ section of questionnaires)
- Daytime care of child by OHF (usually in the childcare section of questionnaires)
- Overnight stays between OHF and child (usually in the ‘non-resident parent’ section of questionnaires)
- Virtual contact between OHF and child (messaging/ social media/ email/ telephone/ Skype/ letters/ cards) (usually in the ‘non-resident parent’ section of questionnaires)
- Part-time residence of adults and children in sampled household (usually in the ‘household grid’ section of questionnaires)
- Moves of adults and children out of sampled household since previous sweep (usually in the ‘household grid’ section of questionnaires)
- Part-time cohabiting partners of mothers/ sample members
- Nature of relationship between mother and OHF
- Geographic distance between home addresses of mother and OHF

We also noted the mode of fieldwork (face to face CAPI, self-completion CASI, telephone, postal) and any on-screen interviewer instructions.

Secondary analyses in the UK literature (located in the Fatherhood Institute’s electronic library) was also reviewed for any methodological commentary on the questions we had tabulated (for example, item non-response/ bias and ambiguous wording).

Our drafting of a set of questions for testing also took into account key UK and international critiques of ‘father-child contact’ and household grid questions (Argys et al, 2004; Bryson et al, 2017; Fabricious et al, 2010; Haux et al, 2017; Toulemon and Penniec, 2010; Waller and Jones, 2014); and ONS and Millennium Cohort Study cognitive testing reports (ONS, 2010a/b; Chaplin and Foudoli, 2005).

²¹ Questionnaires for the G2 ALSPAC cohort (children of the 1991 ALSPAC G1 cohort) were not available.

Studies with higher recruitment/retention rates²² for OHFs

Table B:1 provides some details about those studies found to have higher OHF recruitment and retention rates. These include cohort studies and cross-sectional surveys to evaluate policies specific to separated parents.

In the less successful attempts to recruit OHFs that are described in the literature, recruitment rates range from 6% to 35% of all OHFs and field response rates range from 20% to 50%. These studies generally used self-completion questionnaires for the OHFs but include some telephone surveys (such as used by the ELFE cohort in France).

Appendix table B:1 Studies with higher OHF recruitment and retention

Study details	OHF recruitment/response rates	Mode of data collection
<p>Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), from 2003</p> <p>This cohort study set out to recruit and retain only those 'Parents Living Elsewhere' (PLEs) - both fathers and mothers - who have had 'in person' (face to face) contact with their child/ren in the past year - and has had the consistently highest PLE response rates across sweeps out of the studies reviewed.</p>	<p>Across sweeps 3-6 (2007 to 2013), interviewed around two-thirds of eligible PLEs (fathers/ mothers) with whom children had 'in person' (face to face) contact in previous year (i.e. eligible for an interview), and around half of all PLEs (including those with no recent in-person contact)</p> <p>Highest field response rate has been 80% of PLEs approached for interview in sweep 3 (excluding ineligible cases and where no contact details from mother). Remained at 70% in sweep 6.</p>	<p>Relatively unsuccessful postal survey in sweep 2). Telephone (CATI) interviews from sweep 3. Refusal rates from mothers to provide contact details of eligible OHFs (i.e. in-person contact in previous year) range from 3% to 15% across sweeps²³</p>
<p>Fragile Families (US), from 1998</p> <p>A cohort study which set out to recruit and retain all birth fathers from birth regardless of residency with child/ mother</p>	<p>In initial/birth sweep (1998-2000), 61% of all OHFs (when mother had completed an interview) completed the survey</p> <p>Response rates at sweep 4²⁴ (2003-6) were still 50 to 60% for those fathers who had not been living with the mother in birth sweep.</p> <p>Much attrition of all fathers (resident or PLE) by sweep 5 (2007-2010) - around 55% response for all fathers. Decision made not to continue with father interviews for sweep 6 (2014-17)</p>	<p>Face to face interviews (with telephone option) in birth sweep. Telephone (CATI) interviews in later sweeps.</p>

²² The response rates reported are as understood from published data (often with inconsistent figures or rate descriptions across sources for the same sweeps). They are not directly comparable across studies because each study has used its own criteria to define eligible and ineligible cases for the response rate calculation. They derive from fieldwork taking place in different decades, with response rates across a range of surveys declining substantially in the UK and other countries in recent years.

²³ In contrast, in less successful attempts by Growing Up in Ireland and by the 1997 US PSID Child Development Supplement study (first sweep), only a third of mothers gave contact details for the fathers.

²⁴ Fragile Families call this 4th sweep the 'Year 5' sweep because the children were aged 5.

Appendix table B:1 Studies with higher OHF recruitment and retention

<p>Relationship separation and child support study (UK), in 2007 An ad-hoc cross-sectional survey for policy evaluation</p>	<p>Field participation rate²⁵ was 70% of OHFs in contact with the Child Support Agency</p>	<p>Face to face interviews with telephone screen for eligibility</p>
<p>Investigation of CSA Maintenance Direct Payments evaluation (UK), in 2006 An ad-hoc cross-sectional survey for policy evaluation</p>	<p>Field participation rate²⁶ was 65% of OHFs in contact with the Child Support Agency where neither parent receiving State benefits</p>	<p>Face to face interviews</p>

Messages from the literature about the overall approach and specific fieldwork strategies

Overall approach

Integrate fathers, including OHFs, into the study from the outset because birth fathers (including their genetic/ epigenetic bequests) are a crucial component of understanding outcomes for children and mothers.

Fathers should be considered as core components in relation to key research questions, pre-study scoping/ methodological work and study protocols - “equal weight in recruiting both parents” (Bryson et al, 2017) - not as participants to be included via a separately funded and optional ‘add-on’ to the study.

- In Fragile Families, every father whether fully resident or PLE has been targeted from the first sweep for recruitment and retention. *“The Fragile Families Study has been guided by our desire to obtain better data on unwed parents, especially unwed fathers and their children. This goal has permeated every aspect of our data collection strategy...”* (Reichman et al, 2001:308).
- *“Information will also be sought from ...any non-residential parent”* (Soloff et al, 2003:8-9); *“A particular strength of the LSAC data is the inclusion of non-resident fathers ...While locating and gaining the involvement of non-resident fathers can be a challenge... it is seen as a priority in LSAC in order to have a more complete picture of the family environments within which children are being raised in Australia”* (Baxter et al, 2012:46).

It may be an advantage (for achieving initial and continuing participation of OHFs) to recruit both fully resident birth fathers (in what are commonly called ‘partner interviews’ in the UK²⁷) and other household birth fathers (including

²⁵ Field response rates exclude ineligible cases, office opt-outs/ refusals, and cases with no contact details. 8% of the selected sample opted-out at the advance letter stage, and 8% of the remaining sample refused before issued to interviewers for fieldwork.

²⁶ 3% of the selected sample opted-out at the advance letter stage. Excluded categories of CSA clients considered difficult to trace to avoid low response rate and poorer representativeness for overall sample.

²⁷ The term ‘partner interviews’, whilst inclusive of mothers’ and fathers’ male partners who are not birth fathers, and of mothers’ same-sex partners, may imply to researchers, interviewers, mothers and fathers that interviews with fathers are subsidiary to those with mothers. Partner interviews do not generally include birth fathers who do not cohabit (full-time or part-time) with the birth mother. As in Fragile Families, the term ‘(birth) father interviews’ could be used in an approach which aims to recruit and retain birth fathers regardless of residency with the mother or child. Mothers’ cohabiting partners (male/ female/ other) who are not birth fathers, including

‘part-time away’) from the first sweep of the study, in particular if this first sweep takes place in pregnancy or shortly after birth.

- A high *proportion* of OHFs during the child’s later childhood years are fully resident, ‘part-time away/stay’ or otherwise ‘involved fathers’ in pregnancy, birth, infancy and early childhood: *“We might expect that recruiting parents into a study when the family is intact, and retaining them in the study post-separation, would be more successful than recruiting both parents into a study at a time after they have already separated”* (Bryson et al, 2017:20).
- At the time of birth, in the UK and US, around two thirds of OHFs are involved *romantically* or are ‘friends’ with the mother (data from MCS and Fragile Families, see Kiernan, 2016). A proportion of these are ‘part-time stay’, regularly staying overnight in the mother’s household with the child and/or providing support to the child and mother (attend the birth; emotional, practical and financial support).
- The Fragile Families study and commentators in the literature describe the earliest time in the child’s life (antenatally and post-birth) as a ‘magic moment’ when fathers can be found and contacted in antenatal and birth settings (i.e. the researchers can make first contact with them, and/or interview them there); are most likely to be involved with their new child; most likely to be romantically involved or ‘friends’ with the mother, and consequently most likely to engage and be recruited to the study
- LSAC did not attempt to recruit OHFs in the first sweep, had an unsuccessful postal survey of more involved OHFs in the second sweep, yet did go on to achieve a successful recruitment of more involved OHFs from the third sweep using telephone interviews. So, recruiting from the first sweep may not be necessary if later recruitment strategies are effective, and perhaps if recruitment is restricted to those OHFs more involved with their children.

It is likely to be important in achieving the continuing participation of OHFs to recruit and engage fully resident birth fathers and OHFs ‘in their own right’, persuading them of the importance of their individual participation.

This allows fathers to be tracked and retained independently of mothers if fully resident fathers or ‘part-time away/ stay’ fathers move fully out of the mother’s household, or if OHFs move or change their contact details (see Kiernan, 2016). Such an approach requires sufficient funding, testing and planning of respondent communications and tracking and keeping in touch strategies from the start of the study.

- *“The Fragile Families...study was remarkably successful...the opportunity to develop a relationship with fathers over time. This relationship may serve as important capital in future contacts even if the family dissolves.”* (Hofferth, 2007:248).
- It is not clear from the information we have about Fragile Families and LSAC to what extent (following their recruitment) OHFs were treated as a truly independent sub-sample throughout the study, for example in terms of keeping in touch and tracking exercises.

Fieldwork practices, respondent communications, and tracking/keeping in touch strategies

resident stepfathers/ stepmothers and other resident ‘social fathers/ mothers’, would then be a separate sample for interview. In a comprehensive study, the cohabiting partners of OHFs (including non-resident stepmothers/ stepfathers) may also be a target for interview when a ‘two-household’ cohort child spends substantial time in the birth father’s household (overnight and/or daytime).

From looking across more successful and less successful examples recruitment of OHFs, this three-pronged overall approach – integrating fathers from the outset; recruiting from the first sweep of the study and engaging fathers in their own right - may contribute to success but does not appear to be sufficient. There are examples of studies (such as the US Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Growing Up in Ireland and the French ELFE cohort) which involved fathers from the outset and/or attempted to recruit them from the first sweep at birth or in infancy, but achieved much lower response rates than Fragile Families and LSAC.

What appears from the literature to facilitate success is combining this early commitment and vision to engage all fathers with sufficient resources (budget, persistence, timescales) to enable some or all of the following strategies with OHFs:

- telephone or face to face interviews rather than cheaper, paper self-completion questionnaires left with the mother or posted to the father, which have been unsuccessful in a number of studies
- dedicated keeping in touch exercises and bespoke tracking of the location/ contact details of fathers
- flexibility and choice for fathers - e.g. in location/ timing/ mode of interviews – though bearing in mind that initial recruitment should be telephone or face-to-face
- tailoring communications with the fathers either to ‘parents living apart’ (LSAC in a gender-neutral approach) or fathers or OHFs specifically, with a targeted narrative to give reasons for their individual research participation

None of these strategies on their own may be sufficient, necessary or consistently effective²⁸, but either they appear to feature as ‘ingredients’ of a ‘successful cocktail’ when attempts to recruit and retain OHFs have been more successful; or methodological evidence and researchers’ experiences suggest they have a good chance of effectiveness with OHFs but are not yet fully ‘tried and tested’.

There is no strong evidence for a consistently effective ‘magic bullet’ recruitment and retention solution across studies. Nevertheless, practice descriptions and researchers’ experiences and views assert that a variety of tracking and fieldwork solutions and strategies (see the list below) can facilitate recruitment and retention.

- Payment of monetary incentives is the only strategy for which we found experimental methodological work with fathers and specifically OHFs. The literature asserts that substantial incentive payments (to fathers and to mothers if fathers participate) have been a key factor in Fragile Families’ success in engaging OHFs, compared to less successful studies. The literature for longitudinal studies generally shows positive impacts of incentives, including incentives targeted at non-responding households and individuals (Park, Calderwood and Wong, 2018). Yet the results of the experimental piloting work²⁹ suggest no statistically significant impact of a conditional incentive compared to none (one UK experiment with OHFs in contact with the Child Support Agency - see Bell et al, 2006); lower versus higher value incentives (US trials with ‘fathers’ - see Cabrera et al, 2004); or conditional versus unconditional incentives (US trials with ‘fathers’ - see Cabrera et al, 2004). According to Mitchell et al (2007), a ‘lack of time’ trumps the incentive value (in relation to the recruitment of fathers in small-scale longitudinal studies). Additional

²⁸ For example, we found examples of unsuccessful approaches using telephone interviews, and unsuccessful efforts using communication materials tailored to fathers. We also found examples of successful approaches which did not tailor communications materials for fathers or OHFs.

²⁹ There is little methodological information in the accessed literature on these experimental studies, so their target population/ sample, internal validity/ bias, and relevance for the UK context cannot be assessed.

factors may come into play with OHFs. Experimental evidence shows that small monetary incentives have been effective on a US panel study to boost return from sample members of changes of contact details between sweeps (McGonagle et al, 2013), but this evidence is not specific to fathers or following relationship separation.

- We didn't find any evidence about the effectiveness of web / online modes for data collection in boosting OHF recruitment and retention³⁰; nor the effectiveness of new 'virtual' technologies (including texts and apps) for keeping in touch with these fathers.
- Taking measures to protect the confidentiality and privacy of both mothers and fathers and showing sensitivity to delicate relationships and the potential risks of the research for participants, features strongly in the literature describing the recruitment and retention of OHFs. Studies have taken these issues into account in the choice of strategies used to recruit OHFs through mothers; when briefing interviewers; the choice of interview modes; and the content and delivery of written communications.

Apart from a budget that allows for face to face or telephone data collection (see above), we do not know the minimum resource required to effectively recruit and retain OHFs, nor what would be most cost effective. Fragile Families was exceptionally well funded to engage all fathers (fully resident and OHF) but we do not know the level of funding allocated to recruiting and retaining OHFs in LSAC, which has also been relatively successful.

Analyses of recruitment and attrition bias that compare responding OHFs with non-responding OHFs (using data from earlier sweeps, interviews with mothers or administrative sources) consistently show that OHFs with a greater level of contact with their children are more likely to engage with the research.

We found examples of studies specifying that only more involved OHFs are within scope for attempted recruitment – see Table B:1. The criteria are based on the frequency of contact between the father or mother and the cohort child, as reported by the mother in interview.

Appendix table B:1 Studies with higher OHF recruitment and retention

Study	Criteria for OHF involvement
Early Childhood Longitudinal Study	Father has seen [cohort] child at least once in last month, or seen child at least 7 days in past 3 months, or been in touch (phone or in person) with birth mother at least once a month in past 3 months
Longitudinal Study of Australian Children	Parents Living Elsewhere who see the cohort child at least once a year
Pilot of postal survey for Millennium Cohort Study	Any contact between father and cohort child at that time

³⁰ Evidence for panel and cohort studies on the impact of 'mixed mode' surveys on response rate and sample representativeness is complex (Bryson, 2014; Jackle et al, 2017). Life Study had planned a pilot of the effects of mixed modes which included 'non-resident' fathers. There is little evidence relating to the use of 'virtual technologies' for retention of sample members on longitudinal studies. Compared with younger MCS teenage cohort members, LSYPE cohort members at age 25 engaged less with cohort study social media (Park, Calderwood and Wong, 2018).

Using these types of criteria for OHF father recruitment needs to take into account that the frequency and types of contact, and whether or not the father is resident with the child and/or mother, may change through a cohort child's childhood years (Bryson et al, 2017; Waller and Jones, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

We found no evidence in relation to what is effective recruitment and retention for specific sub-populations of OHFs based on contact, care and part-time residence. LSAC has set out to recruit and retain only those OHFs who have had in-person (face to face) contact with their child(ren) in the past year³¹ - and has had the consistently highest response rates across sweeps out of the studies reviewed. But the specific factors in LSAC's relative success in doing so are not clear from the accessed literature³² - these may include participant engagement elements³³ not restricted to these fathers, as well as particularities of the Australian context.

Life Study had planned options for an approach to mothers asking for OHFs' contact details according to whether the mother and father were in a relationship or the father was in the mother's household during a mother interview. They also proposed excluding recruitment of OHFs where, according to the mother, the mother and father have a 'very unfriendly' relationship "to reduce the number of situations, which are likely to be higher risk" (Kiernan, 2016 based on the fieldwork agency's recommendations).

One striking finding of our scoping review is that we did not find any published qualitative research with OHFs specifically about their participation in cohort studies, although there may be unpublished cohort reports of development work. We found equivalent qualitative work with resident fathers/ 'partners' about their own participation (MCS), and with 'lone mothers' about the participation of OHFs (Life Study).

We propose that an attempt to recruit and retain differentiated sub-populations of OHFs - most probably the most 'involved' OHFs - would be preceded by qualitative development research with these fathers and if the budget stretched, to methodological pilots, experiments, and analyses of response and attrition bias within each category of fathers.

Specific strategies for which we found practice descriptions (for example, in study technical documentation) and/or evidence of likely effectiveness or likely ineffectiveness are as follows:

Initial recruitment where birth father is an OHF in first sweep, or engaging all fathers in first sweep regardless of residential status

- Recruiting independently from the same sampling frame as used for mothers³⁴ would enable (in principle, even if not in practice) father recruitment regardless of the mother's study participation. For example, birth registration records include details of fathers for joint registrations where birth parents live apart (in contrast to Child Benefit records which carry the mother's details in nearly all cases)

³¹ Yet in an earlier decade, the US Early Childhood Longitudinal Study also restricted PLE recruitment to the more involved fathers, but was less successful, and abandoned PLE data collection after its second sweep.

³² We have asked the LSAC study team a number of follow-up questions about PLE recruitment and retention arising from online study documentation, and their reply may shed further light on this.

³³ For example, LSAC invested in substantial study branding/PR, including a TV programme.

³⁴ Had been planned in Life Study for a methodological pilot.

- Approaching and attempting to recruit fathers (both fully resident and OHF) at antenatal/ postnatal settings at same time as recruiting mothers³⁵, with the father's physical presence in these settings enabling (in principle, even if not in practice) father recruitment regardless of the mother's study participation
- Recruiting OHFs through mothers:
 - Option 1 - asking mother for father's contact details, with direct recruitment approach to the father either by the interviewer face to face or by telephone (more likely to be successful³⁶ - may be combined with advance letters/ emails or, for postal/ web questionnaires, solely by post/ email (more likely to be unsuccessful³⁷). The interviewer's recruitment role may be important in achieving higher response rates
 - Option 2 - leaving self-completion questionnaire/ cover letter with mothers to pass on to the father. This has been unsuccessful in more than one study.
 - Option 3 - OHF is present in the mother's home at time of the mother interview or at a later time during the fieldwork period, and can be directly recruited at the mother's address - this may apply in only a small proportion of cases
 - Other practice suggestions in the literature for recruiting OHFs through mothers
- Other issues in recruiting OHFs through mothers:
 - informing the mother of the value of the father's participation in the study (including where the father is less involved with the child); assuring the mother of confidentiality/privacy; including content in interviewer briefings/ instructions
 - offering an incentive (usually monetary) to the mother for helping to recruit the father
 - asking mothers for fathers' comprehensive contact information³⁸ (e.g. home landline/ work landline/ mobile/ email) not just his postal address
 - leaving a short time gap between mother interview and approaching OHF

Recruiting through older children/ teenagers/ young adults was not successful in the only documented example found, which was in the UK (Welsh et al, 2004).

Tracking changes of address or other contact details (if father moves out of mother/ child's household; or changes address when an OHF)

Evidence & practice suggestions from tracking of 'split-off' movers in panel studies include:

- Encouraging notification of change of address for individual sample members using paper cards or forms (with freepost return envelopes) left in household at completion of interviews (used on most cohort and panel studies); using the study website; study email address and freephone telephone number

³⁵ Fathers successfully recruited in this way in Fragile Families, and father recruitment began via this route for Pregnancy Component of Life Study.

³⁶ Options 1, 2 and 3 (as listed here) had been planned as permitted ways for interviewers to recruit 'non-resident' fathers in the Birth Component of Life Study.

³⁷ We did not find any evidence relating to an approach to the father solely through email, for example for an online survey.

³⁸ OHFs may move frequently, and living with or temporarily staying with relatives or friends.

- Monetary incentives for updated contact information
- More frequent inter-sweep mailings all of which prompt participants to notify of any household change of address or movers - we found evidence that may be effective on a targeted basis for sample members most likely to move.
- Obtaining and updating full contact details and 'stable contact' information ("*the contact details of two persons not living with the sample member*" in HILDA) at each sweep on an individual basis for each household member
- Asking individual respondents about likelihood of moving during the following year
- Office tracing through administrative records/electoral roll/phone directories/databases
- As part of field tracing by interviewers, or office tracing, asking current occupiers (where the whole household has moved address) or neighbours, using telephone numbers, and contacting 'stable contacts'; using community resources
- As short a time gap as possible between obtaining contact details for the mover and approaching the mover to regain contact

Evidence and practice suggestions specifically about tracking OHFs in cohort studies include:

- Placing an equal emphasis on tracking mothers and fathers, regardless of their co-residential status, and including OHFs who have not been in contact³⁹ with the mother
- Bespoke methods and "intensive field locating" such as tracking through public agencies/libraries/schools/landlords, internet search methods, social media searches and prison databases
- New technologies (e.g. texts and emails) for tracking and keeping in touch
- Obtaining and updating full contact details and 'stable contact' information at each sweep on an individual basis for each birth parent, including where father and mother are fully resident with the cohort child in one household⁴⁰.

Persuading OHF birth fathers and 'split-off movers' to participate

- Creating long-term engagement and a community of participating fathers
- Building individual commitment to the study (in contrast to 'family' or 'household' commitment) whilst fathers are resident with the mother to increase likelihood of retention if they move out
- Messages to persuade fathers to take part which take into account motivations and barriers (in communications directly with OHFs) whilst addressing confidentiality/privacy concerns and other sensitivities. Applies to communications directly with fathers/OHFs, and interviewer briefings/instructions
- Tailored written communications specifically for OHFs covering the full range of participant facing documentation utilised in cohort study – e.g. advance letters,

³⁹ This approach was taken on Fragile Families, but in the context of more limited resources, an option for the UK at this time is an emphasis on recruiting and retaining defined sub-populations of involved OHFs, as we describe in the introduction to this paper.

⁴⁰ The MCS is a cohort study which does not track and interview OHFs but collects detailed contact and 'stable contact' information specifically for resident fathers in 'partner interviews'. So this information (already collected) could in principle be used to locate birth fathers who become OHF between sweeps, depending on the quality of the contact information.

survey leaflets, reminders, inter-sweep mailings and newsletters, birthday and holiday cards, thank you cards and gifts

- Using support from mothers, as well as the OHF's family and household members, whilst taking account of ethical, confidentiality and privacy issues
- Interviewer characteristics especially experience and same interviewer over time
- Educating, training and motivating interviewers
- Re-issuing refusals
- Cash or gift card incentives for first sweep and subsequent sweeps (with experimental work - see above)

Survey modes, participant choice and flexibility

- Greater success of face to face or telephone interviews with OHFs relative to postal and other self-completion surveys
- Giving OHFs a choice of interview mode to offer flexibility, or more commonly using a second mode (usually phone) as a fall back if the first mode offered (face to face or postal) isn't taken up

Overcoming practical barriers/ lack of time/ temporary non-availability

- Flexibility in timing, call patterns and location
- Reminders (although mixed evidence for any impact of intensive interviewer follow-up on recruitment/ retention rates) including use of new technologies
- Trying again at subsequent sweeps following a non-contact or refusal

Appendix C. Cognitive interview documentation

P14027

Testing questions about families

Cognitive interview questionnaire

Serial number: _____

Interviewer name: _____

Date of interview: _____

Background Information

- Introduce self.
- Introduce ScotCen – ScotCen Social Research is an independent research organisation. We design, analyse and carry out research studies relating to various social and policy issues.
- Introduce project - being carried out by ScotCen and the Fatherhood Institute. The team is interested in how research projects such as Growing Up in Scotland collect information about family relationships and living arrangements.
- Research has found that questions used in surveys do not always accurately capture the complexity of the relationship and contact arrangements between children and their birth fathers in situations where birth parents live apart.
- Asking the right questions is important to ensure that different family relationships and arrangements are all properly understood. The findings will be used to improve questions in future studies.

Interview format

- Will ask you a series of questions, which I would like you to answer as if you were doing a survey interview.
- As we go through the interview, I will ask you about how you went about answering the questions and how you felt about answering them.
- There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise – we just want to know what you are thinking as you answer the questions and whether they are clear to you.
- Encourage criticism/comment
- Withdrawal at any time from interview as whole, or in not answering particular questions
- Timing of interview - approx 60 mins
- Thank you payment

Confidentiality

- We're obliged by GDPR and data protection legislation to make sure that all of the things that we talk about today remain confidential.
- Answers will be used solely for research purposes.
- Won't use your name or anything that might identify you in any reports.
- We won't normally pass on anything you tell us – the only situation where we might need to is if you tell us something that makes us worried that you or someone else is at risk of being hurt.

Recording of Interview

- Digital recording of interviews – check they are happy with this
- Recordings will only be listened to by researchers within ScotCen Social Research who are working on this project.
- Report, use of quotations, anonymisation
- Check if respondent has any questions?
- Check if happy to proceed?

ASK ALL

I'd like to start by getting some details about you and the household in which you and your child live.

Q1. Please could you give me a little information about everyone who lives in your household other than you and the GUS cohort child?
SHOWCARD 1

<p>Other people in your household (1)</p> <p>Gender: Male: <input type="checkbox"/> Female: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Age (years): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p> <p>Relationship to study child</p> <table border="1"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Birth or adoptive parent</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Step parent / parent's partner</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Foster parent</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Brother / sister (including half-)</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Step- or foster- brother / sister</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Grandparent</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Other</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Birth or adoptive parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Step parent / parent's partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Foster parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brother / sister (including half-)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Step- or foster- brother / sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<p>Other people in your household (2)</p> <p>Gender: Male: <input type="checkbox"/> Female: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Age (years): <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/></p> <p>Relationship to study child</p> <table border="1"><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Birth or adoptive parent</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Step parent / parent's partner</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Foster parent</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Brother / sister (including half-)</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Step- or foster- brother / sister</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Grandparent</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/></td><td>Other</td></tr></table>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Birth or adoptive parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Step parent / parent's partner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Foster parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brother / sister (including half-)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Step- or foster- brother / sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Grandparent																												
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other																												

Other people in your household (5)

Gender: Male: Female:

Age (years):

Relationship to study child

- Birth or adoptive parent
- Step parent / parent's partner
- Foster parent
- Brother / sister (including half-)
- Step- or foster- brother / sister
- Grandparent
- Other

Other people in your household (6)

Gender: Male: Female:

Age (years):

Relationship to study child

- Birth or adoptive parent
- Step parent / parent's partner
- Foster parent
- Brother / sister (including half-)
- Step- or foster- brother / sister
- Grandparent
- Other

Other people in your household (7)

Gender: Male: Female:

Age (years):

Relationship to study child

- Birth or adoptive parent
- Step parent / parent's partner
- Foster parent
- Brother / sister (including half-)
- Step- or foster- brother / sister
- Grandparent
- Other

Other people in your household (8)

Gender: Male: Female:

Age (years):

Relationship to study child

- Birth or adoptive parent
- Step parent / parent's partner
- Foster parent
- Brother / sister (including half-)
- Step- or foster- brother / sister
- Grandparent
- Other

ASK ALL

Q2. Are you living with someone in your household as a couple?

1 Yes

2 No

Q3. And can I just confirm that ^childname's birth father does **not** live in your household?

1 Yes, child's father does not live in household

2 No, child's father lives in household

ASK IF Q3=2 (if father lives in household)

SHOWCARD 2

Q4. Does ^childname's father stay overnight here all, or nearly all the time or does he stay overnight elsewhere for part of each week or month?

1 All the time (INTERVIEWER: including occasional nights away)

2 Nearly all the time (INTERVIEWER: including occasional nights away)

3 Stays overnight elsewhere for part of each week or month

4 Continuous long-term absence from household (INTERVIEWER: including occasional nights in this household, but not staying in this household regularly i.e. part of each week or month)

PROBES

- What do you understand by the term 'living in your household'?
- Were you only thinking about people who live in the household full-time?
- Does anyone live in the household part-time?
 - What do you understand by the term 'part-time'? Can you think of any examples?
- If someone lived in the household part-time – i.e. they also regularly spent time in another household/place - would you consider them to be part of the household?

Q4=Answer, Probe:

- What would you see as the difference between someone who stays in your household 'nearly all the time' and someone who stays 'overnight for part of each week or month'?

ASK ALL

SHOWCARD 3

Q5. About how long would it take for ^childname's father to get from where he lives to your household?

Think of the time it would usually take him door to door.

INTERVIEWER: time refers to the most likely method of transport by father

1 Less than 15 minutes journey

2 15 minutes to less than 30 minutes journey

3 30 minutes to less than one hour's journey

4 One hour or more away, but within the UK

5 Outside the UK

PROBES:

- Overall, was this question easy or difficult to answer?
- Does the time vary or is it always the same? Would distance be easier to answer?
- Does it differ between weekdays & weekends?
 - IF YES -What would be a better/ more applicable way to word it?

ASK ALL

SHOWCARD 4

Q6. Which of the descriptions on this card best describes your current relationship with ^childname's father?

- 1 We live together all the time or part of the time,
- 2 We're in a relationship but don't live together
- 3 We're separated or divorced
- 4 We're just friends
- 5 We're not in any relationship

SHOWCARD 5

Q7. And what was your relationship with ^childname's father at the time ^childname was born?

- 1 Living together all the time
- 2 Living together for part of the time
- 3 In a relationship but not living together
- 4 Separated or divorced
- 5 Just friends
- 6 Not in any relationship

Q8. Just to be clear, did you and ^childname's father ever live together?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

ASK IF Q8=1 (YES - If respondent ever lived with child's father)

SHOWCARD 6

Q9. In total, how long did you and ^childname's father live together – including any time spent married?

- 1 Less than 6 months
- 2 6-12 months
- 3 1-2 years
- 4 2-5 years
- 5 5-10 years
- 6 10 or more years

PROBES:

- How easy or difficult did you find it to answer this question?
- How did you feel being asked about your relationship with ^childname's father?
- What did you understand to be the difference between the first and second questions? What are we asking about?
- Were there any problems with the responses on the showcards? Did you feel there was an answer that accurately described your relationship?
- What sort of time period were you thinking about when I asked about 'at the time child was born' (years/months)?
- What does 'just friends' mean to you?

ASK ALL

Q10. In the last twelve months, has ^childname had any contact with his/her father? That includes seeing him face-to-face, speaking to him on the phone or another device, emails, messaging, gaming, social media, cards or letters - any kind of contact.

1 Yes

2 No

PROBES

- What do you understand by the term “contact”?
- What kinds of contact were you thinking about when answering this question? (note that some of this will be asked about later)
- Were you only thinking about contact in person, or did you also think about ‘virtual’ contact?
- Are there any obvious/significant types of contact we’re not mentioning as examples that are being missed?

ASK ALL
SHOWCARD 7

Q11. Other than via Skype, FaceTime or other video calls, how often does ^childname usually see his/her father **during term time** – that is, NOT including any school holiday periods?

- 1 Every day or nearly every day
- 2 Five or Six times a week
- 3 Three or Four times a week
- 4 Once or twice a week
- 5 At least once a fortnight
- 6 At least once a month
- 7 At least once a term
- 8 Not as often as once a term
- 9 Not at all during term time

GO to Q12

GO to Q17

GO to Q20

INTERVIEWER: if there is no 'usual' or 'typical' pattern please ask the respondent to answer for what happened during the most recent **full school term**.

PROBES

- What do you understand by the term 'seeing' his/her father? (e.g. are they thinking about contact in person when the father and child are physically together?)
- Did you only include more formal/organised/longer visits or did you include times where ^childname and his/her father only had brief contact?
- What do you understand by 'term-time'? Is this a useful distinction – i.e. are there term-time/holiday differences in ^childname's arrangements?
- What does 'usually' mean? What were you thinking about?
- Are the response items suitable? How easy was it for you to find the right response?

ASK IF Q11=1-6 (if father sees child at least once a month during term-time)

I'd now like to ask you about the amount of time ^childname usually spends with ^his/her father **during the school term**. This should include time spent when they're together travelling, and time spent at your home, at ^childname's father's home or anywhere else. You should also include time when you are with them.

INTERVIEWER: Exclude Skype, FaceTime or other video calls

Q12. Is there a usual pattern for the time ^childname and his/her father spend together during term-time?

1. Yes [GO TO Q13]
2. No [GO TO Q14]

ASK IF Q12=1 (if a usual pattern)

SHOWCARD 8

Q13. And is it usually weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or some other pattern?

1. Weekly
2. Fortnightly
3. Monthly
4. Some other pattern

PROBES

- What sort of activities were you thinking about when you responded to this question?
- Did you automatically exclude Skype, Facetime and other types of 'virtual contact'?
- What do you understand by the term 'usual pattern'?
 - What does 'usually' make you think about?
 - Would you suggest another way of phrasing it?
- IF THERE IS A USUAL PATTERN
 - Can you please describe the usual pattern of time spent together?
- IF 'SOME OTHER PATTERN'
 - What does the pattern of time spent together look like?
- IF NO USUAL PATTERN
 - How is contact between ^childname and his/her father organised?

ASK IF Q11=1-6 (If father sees child at least once a month during term-time)

IF Q13=1-3 - a usual weekly, fortnightly or monthly pattern

Thinking about a typical week/fortnight/month during term-time . . .

IF Q12=2 or Q13 = 4 - no pattern or 'some other pattern'

Thinking about the most recent term-time fortnight . . .

Q14. On how many school days do/did they spend time together before school?

INTERVIEWER: include the journey to school

Days

Q15. On how many school days do/did they spend time together after school or in the evening before bed?

INTERVIEWER: include the journey home from school

Days

Q16. On how many days at the weekend do/did they spend the day or part of a day together?

Days

INTERVIEWER: include days where the time spent together is combined with an overnight stay with the father [or combined with an overnight stay of the father in this household if he stays over part-time]. Examples:

- a midweek overnight stay would be counted as one 'before school' episode and one 'after school/ evening' episode.
- a Friday night overnight stay would be counted as one 'after school/ evening' episode and one day at the weekend.
- a Sunday night overnight stay would be counted as one day at the weekend and one 'before school' episode.

PROBES

- What sorts of activity/contact takes place before/after school?
- How easy or difficult was it for you to answer these questions/calculate the number of days? How did you calculate them?
- Were you counting the evenings/mornings before and after overnight stays?

ASK IF Q11=1-7 (if child sees father at least once a **term**)

Q17. Does ^childname ever stay overnight with ^his/her father, not in your household but at another address, **during term-time**?

- 1 Yes [GO TO Q18]
- 2 No [GO TO Q20]

ASK IF YES AT Q17 (child ever stays overnight with father)

Q18. About how many nights each week, fortnight or month does ^childname usually stay overnight with ^his/her father at another address **during term-time**?

	nights
--	--------

INTERVIEWER:

- if term-time overnight stays are less frequent than once a month or if there is no usual or typical pattern ask the respondent to answer for what happened during the most recent **term-time month**.
- if respondent says that care or overnight stays are split 50/50 between both parents, ask **“how many nights is this in a typical week, fortnight or month?”**
- include **all** overnight stays father and child have at another address, including those where time spent together before school, after school/ evening and/or at weekend was counted at previous questions

SHOWCARD 9

Q19. What period does that cover?

- 1 Week
- 2 Fortnight
- 3 Four-weeks/calendar month
- 4 Something else

PROBES

- Is there a typical pattern to overnight stays?
 - Can you please describe the typical pattern of these stays?
 - What does ‘usually’ mean?
- How easy or difficult was it to work out the number of nights?
- Is it easy to differentiate between term time overnight stays and those which happen in school holidays?
- Did you include all overnight stays, including those where ^childname may have spent time with his/her father before/after school or at the weekend that we discussed at the previous question?
- [IF NO TYPICAL PATTERN] – how did you generate your answer?
- [IF 50/50 CARE] – can you easily give an estimate of the number of nights this corresponds with?

ASK ALL

Q20. Does ^childname's father ever stay overnight **in your household?**

1 Yes [GO TO Q21]

2 No [GO TO Q25]

ASK IF Q20=1 (YES - if father ever stays overnight in this household)

SHOWCARD 10

Q21. How often does ^childname's father stay overnight **in your household?**

INTERVIEWER: If respondent seems in doubt, select the code that most nearly applies

1 At least once a week

GO to
Q22

2 At least once a fortnight

3 At least once a month

4 At least once every 3 months

GO to
Q25

5 At least once a year

6 Less often than once a year

7 Never

*ASK IF Q21=1-3 (if stays overnight **in mother's household** at least once a month)*

Q22. And about how many nights each week, fortnight or month does ^childname's father usually stay ***in your household?***

INTERVIEWER: if respondent refers to weeks rather than nights, calculate number of nights and enter here.

nights

INTERVIEWER: code or ask if necessary:

Q23. What period does that cover?

1 Week

2 Fortnight

3 4 weeks/Calendar month

Q24. What would you say is the main reason ^childname's father doesn't stay overnight here all the time?

SHOWCARD 11

1 One or both of us do not want to live together full-time

2 Separated/divorced

3 In Armed Forces

4 Away for other work reason

5 Studying or training

6 In hospital

7 In prison

8 My accommodation is not suitable

9 Some other reason(s) PLEASE SPECIFY

10 Prefer not to say

PROBES

- How did you feel about being asked these questions?
- IF FATHER STAYS OVERNIGHT AT LEAST SOMETIMES:
 - Are the frequency responses suitable?
 - How easy or difficult did you find it to calculate the number of nights?
 - Is there a usual pattern to overnight stays?
 - IF YES: what does that look like?
 - IF NOT: how did you work out your answer?
 - Would you say that ^childname's father *lives* in your household? What do you see as the main difference between someone who lives in the household and someone who stays overnight?

[FOR INTERVIEWER: Is the response given on how many nights easily translated from weeks etc into nights?]

ASK ALL

Q25. Thinking about the past twelve months did ^childname spend time with ^his/her father in any of the school holidays? Again, don't include time spent on Skype, FaceTime or other video calls.

1 Yes [GO TO Q26]

2 No [GO TO Q29]

PROBES:

- What do you understand by the term “spending time together”? Were you only thinking about spending time together in person or would you also have included ‘virtual’ contact via video calling etc?
- Are there differences between your holiday and term-time arrangements?
- How easy or difficult is it to distinguish between holiday and term-time arrangements?
- What holiday periods were you thinking about?
- Were you only thinking of longer periods of time spent together (e.g. full days, overnight stays) or did you also include you include times where ^childname and his/her father only had brief contact?

ASK IF Q25=YES (if spent time together in holidays)

Q26. Again, thinking about the past twelve months, in which one of the school holidays did they spend the **most** time together? Was it...READ OUT...

- 1 ...winter/Christmas
- 2 ...spring/Easter
- 3 ...summer, or
- 4 ...a half term (e.g. October or February)

INTERVIEWER: if child spent the same amount of time with father in multiple holiday periods, select the most recent

Q27. How many weeks or days were in that holiday?

weeks

days

Q28. And now thinking about the holiday period where they spent the most time together, how long did ^childname spend with ^his/her father?

INTERVIEWER: enter number of days. if response is in weeks or months then convert to days.

days

PROBES:

- How easy or difficult is it to think about contact in specific holiday periods?
- How easy or difficult is it to remember your arrangements?
- Was it easy or difficult to identify the holiday where father/child spent most time together?
- How did you choose? Was it a clear decision or arbitrary? Did you think about the relative number of days/weeks in each holiday, or the relative 'share' (e.g. a quarter or half) of each holiday spent with the father?
- Do you tend to have different arrangements in different holiday periods?

ASK ALL
SHOWCARD 12

Q29. How often does ^childname have contact with ^his/her father through letters or cards, telephone or video calls, emails and messaging, via social media or through gaming, when they aren't together?

INTERVIEWER: if the respondent is uncertain say – 'Just tell me how often you think ^childname has contact with ^his/her father in these ways.'

- 1 Every day
- 2 Several times a week
- 3 At least once a week
- 4 At least once a fortnight
- 5 At least once a month
- 6 At least once every 3 months
- 7 At least once a year
- 8 Less often than once a year
- 9 Never
- 10 I really don't know

IF Q29=1-8,10 (Child has some virtual contact with father)

Q30. Does ^childname ever have contact with ^his/her father independently, for example, using ^his/her own phone or tablet?

1. Yes
2. No

PROBES:

- How easy or difficult was it to answer this question?
- Is it clear that the question is referring to virtual and NOT 'in person' contact?
- Were you thinking about ^childname initiating contact (i.e. the child contacting the father), his/her father initiating contact (the father contacting the child) or both?
- What sort of forms of virtual contact does child have with father?
- Is respondent thinking only of times when the child and father are apart?
- How certain are you about your response? Are you aware of all virtual contact between child and father?
- What do you understand by the term 'independently'?

ASK ALL

SHOWCARD 13

Q31. Which of the responses on this card best describe your relationship with
^childname's father nowadays?

1 Very good

2 Fairly good

3 Neither good nor bad

4 Fairly bad

5 Very bad

PROBES:

- What do you understand by 'good' and 'bad' in relation to this question?
- Is use of 'good' and 'bad' appropriate? Are there other terms that might work better?
- How comfortable are you answering this question?
- What period of time are they thinking about to answer this? Has the relationship changed over time?

ASK ALL

To fully understand a child's development, it is very important to have information from both parents. We would like to be able to contact ^childname's father to ask him questions about the time he spends with the ^childname as well as questions about his health and living arrangements. The information you have provided is strictly confidential and will not be given to him under any circumstances.

Q32. Would you be willing to provide contact details for ^childname's father so that we could contact him and keep in touch (by sending him newsletters about the study)?

1 Yes

2 No

INTERVIEWER – READ OUT: Thank you, we do not actually intend to contact him. We are only interested in how people respond to this request.

PROBES:

- How do you feel about being asked this question?
- How would you feel about ^childname's father being asked to take part in a study like Growing Up in Scotland?
- IF YES:
 - Can you say why you would be happy for ^childname's father to take part in a study like Growing Up in Scotland?
- IF NO:
 - Can you say why you would prefer ^childname's father wasn't contacted to take part in a study like Growing Up in Scotland?

FINAL/OVERALL PROBES:

- How did you find answering these questions?
- Did some of them require more thinking/were they harder than others to answer?
 - Which ones? Why?
- Were there any questions which you would prefer being asked privately, in a self-complete?
- Were there any topics you expected to be asked about, but which weren't covered in the questionnaire?

Appendix D. Suggested alternative questions

Q5

SHOWCARD

About how long would it take for ^childname's father to get from where he lives to here?

Think of the time it would usually take him door to door.

INTERVIEWER: time reported should be for a journey from the father's home address to this address, even if that is not a typical scenario. Respondent should refer to the most likely method of transport by father.

- 1 Less than 15 minutes journey
- 2 15 minutes to less than 30 minutes journey
- 3 30 minutes to less than one hour's journey
- 4 One hour or more away, but within the UK
- 5 Outside the UK

Q6

SHOWCARD

Which of the descriptions on this card best describes your current relationship with ^childname's father?

- 1 We live together all the time
- 2 We live together part of the time
- 3 We're in a romantic relationship but don't live together
- 4 We're not in a romantic relationship

Q7

SHOWCARD

And what was your relationship with ^childname's father at the time ^childname was born?

- 1 We were living together all the time
- 2 We were living together part of the time
- 3 We were in a romantic relationship but did not live together
- 4 We were not in a romantic relationship

Q8

So just to be clear, did you and ^childname's father ever live together?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

IF Q8=YES - Respondent ever lived with child's father

Q9

In total, how long did you and ^childname's father live together – including time before and after the child was born?

- 1 Less than 6 months
- 2 6-11 months
- 3 1-2 years
- 4 3-5 years
- 5 6-10 years
- 6 11 or more years

Q10

In the last twelve months, has ^childname had any interaction with ^his birth father? That includes seeing him face-to-face, speaking to him on the phone or another device, emails, messaging, gaming, social media, cards or letters - any kind of contact.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q14-16 Intro

I'd now like to ask you about the amount of time ^childname usually spends with ^his father during the school term. This should include time spent when they're together travelling, and time spent at your home, at ^childname's father's home or anywhere else. You should also include time when you are with them.

INTERVIEWER: Exclude Skype, FaceTime or other video calls

Q14

Thinking about a typical fortnight during term-time . . .

On how many weekdays (including Fridays) do ^childname and ^his father spend time together after breakfast but before school?

INTERVIEWER: include the journey to school

ENTER NUMBER OF DAYS

Q15

And on how many school days do they spend time together after school or in the evening before bed?

INTERVIEWER: include the journey home from school

ENTER NUMBER OF DAYS

Q16

Still thinking about a typical fortnight during term-time . . .

On how many days at the weekend do they spend the day or part of a day together?

ENTER NUMBER OF DAYS

Q17

During term-time, does ^childname ever stay overnight with ^his father at another address – for example, at ^his dad’s place or somewhere else they stay together?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

Q18

About how many nights each week, fortnight or month does ^childname usually stay overnight with ^his dad at another address – for example, at ^his dad’s place - during term-time?

ENTER NUMBER OF NIGHTS

Q20

Does ^childname’s father ever stay overnight at your home?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

IF Q20=YES – father stays overnight in mother’s home

Q21

About how many nights each week, fortnight or month does ^childname’s birth father usually stay in your household?

INTERVIEWER: If respondent refers to weeks rather than nights, calculate number of nights and enter here.

If father stays overnight less than once a month, enter '0'.

ENTER NUMBER OF NIGHTS

IF Q21>0 – father stays at least once a month

Q22

INTERVIEWER: code or ask if necessary:

What period does that cover?

- 1 Week
- 2 Fortnight
- 3 4 weeks/calendar month

IF Q21 = 0 – father stays less than once a month

Q23

About how many nights each year does ^childname’s birth father usually stay in your household?

ENTER NUMBER OF NIGHTS

Q25

Thinking about the most recent school summer holiday, did ^childname spend time with ^his father during that holiday? Again, don't include time spent on Skype, FaceTime or other video calls.

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

IF Q25=YES - spent time together in summer holiday

Q26

Still thinking about that most recent school summer holiday, on how many days did ^childname spend time with ^his father?

INTERVIEWER: enter number of days. If response is in weeks or months, then convert to days.

ENTER NUMBER OF DAYS

IF Q25=NO – did not spend time together in summer holiday

Q27

Thinking about the past twelve months did ^childname spend time with ^his father during any *other* school holiday?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

IF Q27=YES - spent time together in other holiday

Q28

Thinking about the most recent holiday period where they spent time together, on how many days did ^childname spend time with ^his father?

INTERVIEWER: enter number of days. If response is in weeks or months, then convert to days.

ENTER NUMBER OF DAYS

Q29**SHOWCARD**

How often does ^childname interact with ^his father through letters or cards, telephone or video calls, emails and messaging, via social media or through gaming, when they aren't together?

INTERVIEWER: if the respondent is uncertain say – 'Just tell me how often you think ^childname interacts with ^his birth father in these ways.'

INTERVIEWER: Please ensure the respondent answers in relation to how *often* the child interacts with ^his father rather how *many times* they have interacted.

- 1 Every day
- 2 Several times a week
- 3 About once a week
- 4 About once a fortnight
- 5 About once a month
- 6 About once every 3 months
- 7 About once a year
- 8 Less often than once a year
- 9 Never
- 10 [I really don't know]

Q32

To fully understand a child's development, it is very important to have information from both parents. We'd like to speak with ^childname's birth father for this study, to ask him about the time he spends with ^childname as well as about his health and living arrangements. The information you have provided is strictly confidential and will not be given to him under any circumstances.

Do you have a phone number or email address that we can use to contact ^childname's birth father?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 3 Will check with father first

IF Q32=YES – phone number or email provided

Q33

And do you have his current postal address?

- Yes
No

IF Q32=NO – no phone number or email provided

Q34

Would you like to check with him first? We find that fathers are usually pleased to take part in this kind of study.

- Yes
No