Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your consultation around equal opportunities for single fathers.

The main tenet of my response is around contact difficulties, parental responsibilities and rights for single fathers. Parental rights and responsibilities don’t exist for single dads within Scotland in my experience. The media is full of stories about “feckless and irresponsible fathers”, but what about the ordinary dads who just want to be a dad to their child?

**What day to day challenges do you experience as a lone / unmarried father in Scotland?**

The ramifications of having had to pay thousands of pounds in legal bills to get to see my own child, following him being parentally abducted and relocated to another part of the country by his mother, without my knowledge or consent has had a detrimental effect on my physical and mental health, on my finances and disposable income. The impact and stress on wider family relationships has been traumatic. My son’s grandparents cannot understand why, despite court orders regulating contact between my son and I being in place, contact is often disrupted by my son’s mother, meaning that neither me nor they get to see him. I have submitted numerous motions to court for failure to obtemper orders, but the court hasn’t done anything about it. However, I’m sure that if I were to breach an order and fail to return my son after a contact visit, there would be consequences. Surely that is an Equality issue?

I had to seek permission from my employer to leave work early to ensure that I can reach the pickup point set by the court in time to collect my son for contact weekends. My employer has been very supportive in this.

I cannot take my son on holiday for a week as the Sheriff determined that contact would be for maximum 5 day periods only. This was not based on any evidential hearing –the Sheriff just “decided it.”

My former partner stopped paying her half share of the joint mortgage, which impacted upon my credit rating, making it hard to secure a new mortgage, meaning that I had limited choice over where to live, which then had a knock on effect in terms of local amenities available to my son and I when he comes for contact weekends.

**Do you experience any particular challenges in a specific aspect of your life for example - work / family / social?**
My son stays with me every 2\textsuperscript{nd} weekend, and contact weekends involve 8 hours of travel in less than a 36 hour period, the opportunities to have a social life, or go on holiday are curtailed – as even a week away means that contact gets disrupted and I don’t want that.

My contact time with my son is also the only time that my son gets to see his grandparents and wider family – so everything is crammed into two Saturdays each month. It's not ideal.

If you said that you experience challenges, what are your thoughts on public perception and general awareness of the issue?

My view is that people are generally unaware of the issues around parental child abduction within Scotland. Clearly some parents (and children) unfortunately, need to flee their home to escape domestic abuse, violence and so on. None of that applied in my case, yet it still feels like I was treated like a criminal in court for having the temerity to ask that my child, be returned to live with me, failing which, could I at least get to see him? Courts seem to be biased in favour of mothers.