As a father, this review caught my eye as I only too readily recall the challenges I faced when my children were born and, sadly, these do not appear to have improved and, indeed, may have become worse.

My relationship with my children's mother ended before they were born, but I was determined to be fully involved in raising them with their mother.

However, as we were not married I had to go through a very long, tortuous and expensive process to obtain a Parental Rights Agreement giving me agreed access to them. I went through some long periods of having no access to them as their mother would refuse access, as and when she wished, and sometimes as a punishment she felt I deserved.

This made life for me as a loving father very, very difficult. There is no pain I had experienced up to then, and since, like not being allowed to see your own children. I know of many other men in similar circumstances who have struggled even more than I and, in some cases, who have given up on gaining access as they have felt it was too painful and easier for everyone if they removed themselves from their children's life.

I am now married custody of my children is shared with their mother and relations between their her, and I, is now excellent.

During the first 5-10 years of their life, however, the challenges were difficult, and many. I had an excellent solicitor (expensive but a God-send) who was able to guide me through a difficult time. However, without a loving family around me I would never have emerged from this period of my life intact. I know there are many fathers in Scotland who have not been as lucky as me.

Even though I had a steely determination there was no support available and the balance of rights, and access, were favoured heavily towards the mother of my children, and this was to their detriment. Given the high suicide rates in young men in Scotland I would not be surprised if there was a correlation to father's denied access to their children.

During my struggle for access to my children there were incidents of both physical and verbal abuse that required police intervention. None was satisfactorily forthcoming, and indeed, my experience was dismissed as a domestic situation they did not want to get involved in.

Therefore, I would urge you to consider very strongly the support available to single father's, and indeed to both parents, finding themselves in a similar situation as my experience was of feeling very much alone, save for some loving family and friends.
I would be willing to discuss my experience further or provide more detail, if required.

I am thankful for being given the opportunity to submit my thoughts and encouraged that our political leaders are looking at this issue.

14 January 2014