

Quality time thrills Nordic dads [DK] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Paternity leave schemes in Denmark and Iceland are among the most generous in the world - and are proving to benefit society, experts say.

Last year, nearly all Icelandic fathers used their entitlement to three months off work on 80% of their salary.

The new paternity law came into effect in 2002. Iceland now has Europe's second highest birth rate after Turkey.

More Danish men are taking paternity leave now - 46,000 in 2004. New parents can share a year of paid leave there.

"Danish men are saying they want to change the agenda from their own fathers' agenda," Svend Aage Madsen, head of psychology at Copenhagen University Hospital, told BBC World Service radio.

"They have more contact with their own child and say 'Wow, I don't want to get away from this'," he told the Europe Today programme.

The director of one of Denmark's biggest telecoms companies has been asking fathers on his staff to take 10 weeks' leave on full wages, Mr Madsen said.

In Iceland, young fathers and their toddlers are now a common sight at midday in Akureyri's geothermal pools - a sharp contrast with the situation just a few years ago, reports the BBC's Steven Paulikas.

Icelandic parents can take nine months of paid leave for childcare - three for the mother, three for the father and the rest divided up by couples as they see fit.

- reprinted from the BBC News

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